HOW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO

HOMOPHOBIA:

A STUDY OF ONE B.C. PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT USING ETHNODRAMA

by

Christine Perkins

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1998
P.D.P.P., University of Victoria, 1999
M.A., Gonzaga University, 2002

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Abstract

This research focuses on educational leadership and social justice in British Columbia

public schools. Specifically, the study looks at how principals and vice-principals

understand and respond to homophobia in one school district. The researcher examines

six administrators' understandings of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited,

intersex, queer, and questioning (LGBTTIQQ) issues following a critical approach and

using ethnodrama to present and analyze the data. The researcher is an insider as she is a

principal in the district being examined. The resulting tensions, confusion, and reflective

practices all assist in the exploration of the research. The study makes connections from

the general to the particular, from the personal to the institutional, and from the page to

the stage all the while examining and spotlighting thoughts, values, beliefs, and opinions

around LGBTTIQQ issues in our public schools. The research uncovers a lack of

catalytic leadership in support of social justice. Ethnodrama proves to be an imaginative

and powerful tool not only in highlighting the "truth" in the data collected but in

revealing people's inner understandings and, sadly, lack of responses, to the needs of the

LGBTTIQQ community. Not only is socially just leadership faltering, but principals are

not supported at the district and provincial levels by explicit policies, adequate post-

secondary education, or professional development around LGBTTIQQ issues. This

research aims to make visible the invisible and help lead the way toward more socially

just schools.

Preface

This research has been approved by the UBC's Behavioural Research Ethics Board

(H1002005) and The Superintendent of Schools for the district examined.

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Glossary

Definitions outlined below are from The University of British Columbia, The Positive Space Campaign and the Women's Web at the following URLs: (http://equity.ubc.ca/files/2010/06/equity_recognizing_h_and_h.pdf) (http://positivespace.ubc.ca/terminology/) (http://www.womensweb.ca/lgbt/index.php)

Gender identity – one's internal and psychological sense of themselves as female, male, both or neither. A persons' self-concepts of their gender may be the same as or different from their sex at birth (male, female, or intersex).

Sexual orientation – how one identifies oneself in relation to one's sexual, affectional, and romantic interests (i.e., to members of similar gender, different gender, or both/all genders).

Lesbian - a woman whose primary emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual attraction is to other women.

Gay – a man whose primary emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual attraction is to other men.

Bisexual – a person who has emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual attractions to members of both genders.

Transgender – a person who feels that their gender identity is different than their biological sex. Some transgender persons wish to change their anatomy to be more congruent with their self-perception while others do not have such a desire. Transgender persons can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual. Transgender is also an umbrella

term that some people use not only to include but also to unite politically all people who cross the lines of the sex and/or gender they were assigned at birth. It is not necessarily appropriate to include transsexuals in this category who, on a variety of levels, identify with the opposite gender from their biological sex.

Transsexual – a person who crosses the lines of the sex they were assigned at birth by altering their bodies. Such individuals are biologically of one sex but psychologically feel that they are of the other sex. As a result, they feel "trapped in the wrong kind of body". Transsexuals who are preparing for sex-change surgery may be conspicuous as they accustom themselves to wearing the clothing of the opposite sex and attempt to develop the appropriate mannerisms. Transsexuality is not a sexual preference, meaning that it is not a matter of sexual attraction to another person. Instead, transsexuality is a matter of self-identity or gender identity.

Two-spirited – An Aboriginal person who follows First Nations traditions of homosexuality, bisexuality and/or transgenderism. The two-spirit tradition has a rich history and was widely accepted and often celebrated among almost all tribes in North America before European colonization. To many modern gays, lesbians, bisexuals and trans people, this acceptance provided a symbol of hope and a goal to strive for, while offering two-spirits a proud, vibrant history.

Intersex – a person who, without voluntary medical interventions, possesses a body that doctors cannot neatly classify as male or female. Such people may have chromosomal sex other than XX (female) or XY (male) or they may have primary or secondary sex characteristics that defy the medical definitions of male and female.

Queer - An umbrella term to refer to all LGBTIQ people. A political statement, as well

as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid. A simple label to explain a complex set of sexual behaviors and desires. For example, a person who is attracted to multiple genders may identify as queer. Many older LGBT people feel the word has been hatefully used against them for too long and are reluctant to embrace it.

Questioning – a person who has yet to fully discover the nature of their sexuality and who may eventually realize that they are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. This questioning period may be very short or last an extended period of time, and it may occur one or more times during a person's life.

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Dedication

To Keegan

To all LGBTTIQQ students, families and staff members: May I help you feel more welcome and safe in our schools.

Chapter One: Prologue

In this reflective and critical case study, I explore and challenge the understandings of and responses to homophobia by British Columbia public school principals in one school district. The study is a microscopic look at what, as a scholar-practitioner, and educational leader, I experienced when interviewing other principals about how they understand and respond to homophobia in their school district.

Overview of the Study

It explores principals' perspective on what they see and hear students, families, and employees experience in district public schools where they are educational leaders. If a student is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, intersex, questioning, or queer (LGBTTIQQ), it is quite possible he or she feels, and is, invisible to public school administration in this district. This study closely examines both what is and is not happening when school-based leaders brush homophobia off as bullying, or worse, falsely believe it doesn't exist. It also documents ideas for implementation, policy, and professional development designed to move the district's principals forward through positive socially-just practices which lead to more inclusive, open, and safe schools for our LGBTTIQQ students, their families, and our employees. This case study is written from my perspective as a scholar-practitioner and current principal of the largest senior secondary, alternative, and Distributed Learning school in the district.

The Beginning

On Monday morning as I completed my routine check of the girls' bathroom, I heard someone throwing up. Destiny opens the door and bursts into tears. Her best friend had

just spilled her biggest secret. Her mother was living with another woman. Destiny was in pain.

Each chapter of this dissertation opens with or contains a "real life" vignette or scenario. This structure helps bring home the necessity and urgency of "acting" as educational leaders. I am writing about real lives, issues, and concerns that face educational leaders daily. How do we make B.C. public schools and, in particular, this district, welcoming to all people, especially those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBTTIQQ) communities? Do educational leaders recognize homophobia when we see it? What do we do about it? How can we help all our students, families, and their communities embrace a more powerful, positive, and inclusive way of being in the world? The opening vignette recounts a situation that occurred during my second year as a vice-principal which deeply affected me as I realized our school was still not "safe" for queer families. In fact, I learned that fear of being "outed" can have physical side-effects. Betrayal by a trusted friend can hurt. Some still feel they have to keep their family make-up secret. I know this reality first-hand.

Early in my administrative career in B.C. public schools, I became aware of members of my school and community referring to others as, "gay," "fag," "homo," "browns," or "reds." I brought this blatant homophobia to the attention of my principal. He responded with, "It's been going on in this town for years." What was I to do? What did other educational leaders do? I had my own lived experiences, biases, and judgments, but as an educational leader, how could I move this school, district, and community forward in its social justice practices?

In the U.S., researchers have recently been tackling issues around homophobia; however, they are most often embedded in bullying research. Espelage (2008) argues that "homophobia and bullying should be discussed concurrently in future research and that discussion of homophobia should be included in bullying intervention programs within schools" (p. 156). Over two million school-age U.S. students deal with issues related to their sexual orientation (Swearer, Turner, & Givens, 2008, p. 161). Sexual minority youth report higher levels of depression and suicidal feelings, as well as alcohol and marijuana use (Koenig, 2008, p. 202). Poteat (2008) argues that "countering the use of homophobia epithets and banter…should be part of the broader efforts made by administrators, teachers, and school psychologists to actively promote a positive school environment" (p. 200). While in the U.K., same-sex attracted youth report drinking alcohol alone more than their opposite-sex attracted peers (Rivers & Noret, 2008, p. 174). I argue we should not leave homophobia embedded in anti-bullying discussions. We need more explicit focus to change the culture, attitudes, and behaviours expressed toward LGBTTIQQ youth and their families from educational leaders to all members of the public.

In Canada, and British Columbia in particular, there is a growing need for educational leaders to pay attention to social justice educational practices around diversity, generally, and homophobia, in particular. A recent study concluded LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ students to report that staff "never intervened" when derogatory comments were made (Taylor et al., 2011). Four in ten reported being uncomfortable talking to their teachers, six in ten were uncomfortable talking to their principal, and seven in ten were uncomfortable talking to their coach.

Fewer than half of the participants knew whether their school had a policy for reporting homophobic incidents. Those who knew their schools had specific policies were more likely than other LGBTQ students to feel their school community was supportive (50% compared to 20%) (Egale, 2011, pp. 1-7). No Catholic school boards agreed to participate in the survey. But public school boards are not without fault. They need to pay attention to how they understand and respond to issues of homophobia ranging from name-calling to murder, which is often glossed over as "bullying" in our schools (Moy, 2008, p. 88). I argue issues surrounding homophobia are rarely discussed and, further, that my particular district is not immune.

At the beginning of my post-graduate work in educational leadership and policy in the area of human rights, the district did not have a sexual orientation policy, and the human rights code was not entrenched in school Codes of Conduct or in district policy. While the district still does not have a sexual orientation policy, most schools' Codes of Conduct have become more explicit in addressing human rights, including rights concerned with sexual orientation, but understanding and responses to homophobia are negligible. In general, this study looks at one district's current principals' social-justice practices and the values and beliefs of some of those principals around homophobia. In particular, the study demonstrates the need to discuss what principals would rather not talk about: the human rights code concerned with sexual orientation and the specific issues surrounding homophobia. This dissertation is aimed at all current and new school principals who wish to lead with socially-just practices in inclusive schools. It will also be of value to other educational researchers, public school principal and vice-principal organizations, Boards of Education (trustees), parents, community leaders, post-

secondary education institutions, and policy writers within the Ministry of Education and the public school system.

Background and Context

In 1969, the Government of Canada decriminalized consensual homosexual acts. The Canadian psychiatric profession did not declassify homosexuality as a mental illness until 1979. During the 1980s, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognized the rights of minority groups and sexual orientation was written into the Charter as a ground protected from discrimination. In 2005, the federal Liberal government's same-sex legislation passed third reading in the House of Commons, officially recognizing same-sex marriage. Prince Edward Island gave same-sex couples all the rights enjoyed by mixed-sex couples in 2009 (CBC News, December 21, 2009). Canada's latest election call managed to stop Bill C-389, a private member's act submitted by British Columbia's Bill Siksay to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and Criminal Code to include "gender identity" and "gender expression." The Act had not yet reached the Senate when it was killed by the call for an election. Exclusion of some "others" continues (Capital Pride, 2011).

The invisibility and exclusion of LGBTTIQQ youth seems to result in them being singled out, isolated, or flat out ignored.

> By the time children reach first grade, they are already familiar with what it means to be included or shunned, how it feels to be helped or to be hurt. Students in the early grades have already compiled a significant understanding - or misunderstanding - about what it meant to be queer in a heterosexist society. School educational leaders need to pay attention. (Haskell & Burtch, 2010, p. 11)

The School Act articulates that the role of public schools in British Columbia is "to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society, and a prosperous and sustainable economy" (British Columbia Ministry of Education [BCED], 2011c, p. 4). However, this seems to gloss over the things we find difficult to talk about in education and in society – exclusion due to variation of sexuality.

In 2008, the British Columbia Ministry of Education was forced to formally release a new curriculum entitled *Social Justice 12* (BCED, 2008d, 2008e); for background, see Kelly, 2011; McGregor, 2008. The course is meant to address legal, political, ethical, and economic perspectives that inform Canadian concepts of justice, equality, and equity, and includes topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, family structure, and sexual orientation (British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal, 2006). However, offering the course is optional and only offered in Grade 12, which is too late. Brave teachers willing to teach the course and even braver principals, superintendents and Boards of Education are needed to support and promote it in their districts. Educational leadership can be a slow process, but it must be done. Noticeably absent throughout the past ten years, are the voices of principals. In British Columbia, school leaders' voices are rarely heard when it comes to social justice and social justice leadership, including addressing the issue of homophobia.

One of the major problems with the *Social Justice 12* curriculum is it is not mandatory. In addition, our public schools and educational leaders, rather than being proactive, are responding haphazardly and too late to issues. Because there is a need for

increased awareness of social justice issues, how educational leaders respond is more important than ever.

This case study of educational leadership in a B.C. school district provides real-life scenarios and analyzes how some of the district's educational leaders feel they understand and are prepared to respond to homophobia in their schools. My contention is that the district's educational leaders are dismally unprepared to address homophobia and, therefore, are unable to understand and effectively respond to the needs of their LGBTTIQQ students, parents, staff, and community members in the face of homophobia.

I will discuss a variety of interventions including, but not limited to, life experience, post-secondary education, training, workshops, awareness of provincial and district programs and policies, perceptions of school district and superintendent support, and the steps and metacognitive processes educational leaders undergo when addressing social justice issues relating to homophobia in their schools. As well, I contend these are well-intentioned educational leaders who need more information, professional development, and leadership in the area of human rights. They also need to "act" to make their schools safe, caring, and free from homophobia. They do not need to wait for permission. Every school principal should ensure that each child is able to recognize themselves in their school. No child should be invisible, and no child, parent, or employee should have to hide.

Researcher Position

My two sisters and I were sitting around the pool of the Sheraton Cavalier in Saskatoon. We were discussing my nephew's upcoming graduation. "Does he have a date?" I asked. "He's gay!" my middle sister exclaimed. "So?" I questioned again, "Does he

have a date?" My youngest sister nearly fell out of her chair. This was the first time the

middle one, and mother, had publicly acknowledged what we already knew.

This one is personal and about my nephew. For a variety of reasons, my sister has had a difficult life. We have always surrounded her and her children with unconditional love. No one ever directly asked her about her son. We lived in our own "don't ask, don't tell" world. It was our secret. We waited until he and she were ready to talk. She is a terrific mother and I am very proud of her. My nephew is a highly intelligent, athletic young man determined to achieve success in all areas of his life. He has a wide circle of friends, travels all over the world, speaks several languages, and is currently working on his undergraduate degree. He is proudly "out," just completed a year as a Pride Centre Coordinator for a Canadian university, and has been accepted into second year of an art school in western Canada. My nephew is loved by his family and friends. How do I, as an educational leader, let my students know they are loved and cared for?

My dissertation is undertaken as part of the Doctorate of Education in Leadership and Policy program at the University of British Columbia, a program which encourages participants to be reflective, critical, and to examine their own practice. Relating theory and practice contributes to a more inclusive understanding of the connections between leadership, ethics, research, and policy as they inform my current practice. Exposure to critical theory has given me the courage to question, challenge, and shed light on educational practices that are not socially just. I have been a teacher at middle and secondary school, a teacher, vice-principal and principal at a junior secondary school, and am currently principal of a senior secondary school that includes an alternative program and distributed learning program. My formal education includes an undergraduate degree

in History and English, a post-degree professional training program in Education, and graduate work in Curriculum and Instruction. Teaching assignments have ranged from Advisory Groups to Social Studies and Drama in middle school to English, Social Studies, Drama, Theatre Performance, and Film & Television in secondary schools. Because of my years in the arts, I am sensitive to issues surrounding homophobia. Boys who sing and dance are often called "sissies," and men in the arts have frequently suffered derogatory comments about their masculinity.

My work is also shaped by my life experiences: four years in Jamaica as a child, returning to my birthplace, war-torn Northern Ireland during "The Troubles" of the 70s, and immigrating to Canada – a difficult period for me as a pre-teen as my accent and clothes made me "different" and, therefore, a subject of bullying. These experiences of being the "little white girl", the "Prod", and the "immigrant" have informed my knowledge of social justice and, in practice, have led me to challenge inequities and injustice in society, and at my schools. I am a privileged white, straight, female. I hold my many heterosexual and queer friends and family members near to my heart. I love my nephew and want others like him to move safely around the planet.

I must admit my initial goal was to prove how informed and positive public school principals were in tackling issues of homophobia. I expected to find them proactive, socially-just thinkers unafraid to lead in order to protect a child dealing with homophobia. Because we live in British Columbia, considered one of the most "gay-friendly" places (Tourism Vancouver, 2012), I thought public school principals would embrace posters, flags, events, and topics related to anti-homophobia without hesitation. I am ashamed to say how naive I was. The district involved in this case study is forty

minutes from Commercial Drive and the West-end areas of Vancouver, home to the largest gay population in Western Canada (Tourism Vancouver). However, conservatism, fear, and lack of knowledge prevail in these schools. Inclusive, advocacy-based leadership is lacking. The school-based principals alone are not to blame. In this district, leadership also comes from the top and, until now, has been severely lacking. Readers of this study should not feel discouraged by the results, but understand that even though legal progress has been made, at the grass-roots, school-based level much more needs to be done.

Theoretical Framework

The staff member never talked about it. Perhaps she was embarrassed or terrified. Perhaps she worried about how I would respond to her. Would she still be cared for? Would I judge her? I needed to figure out how to create a space so she would feel comfortable talking to me. Her husband had left her for another man.

I realized my staff member faced a lot of deep personal issues. I was told "on the side" that her husband had left her for another man and she had never gotten over it. When she did mention her ex-husband, she blamed his "narcissistic personality" for the damage done to her and their three daughters' lives. She did not mention that he was homosexual and that his "coming out" had ended their marriage. Anger and hurt still surface from time to time. How do educational leaders support our staff members and their families who worry about homophobia? Are we catalysts or obstacles in this social justice effort?

In this study, I draw on the work of several human rights theorists. Iris Marion-Young's (1990) social justice theory is particularly relevant, including two of her "five

faces of oppression" (p. 58-63), cultural imperialism and violence, and her "politics of identity" (p. 154-155) and "politics of difference" (p. 191). John B. Thompson's (1990) modes of ideology are used in determining how principals might view their choices when it comes to putting up anti-homophobia posters. Gary Anderson (2009) and James Ryan (1998) are employed for their interpretations of advocacy leadership and inclusive leadership. Young (1990) defines social justice as "social equality" and refers to "full participation and inclusion of everyone in society's major institutions" such as schools (p. 173).

Cultural imperialism occurs when "the dominant meanings of society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the Other" (Young, 1990, p. 58-59). Schools, in particular, are structured so as to only provide male and female washrooms. School registration forms ask for male or female only. Homophobic name-calling is frequently heard in hallways. There is little support for families with parents of the same gender. LGBTTIQQ employees frequently fear rejection from colleagues. In other words, in most schools, the LGBTTIQQ group is both invisible and "Othered." Young (1990) goes on to describe cultural imperialism as "the establishing of the norm," where the dominant group's experience and culture are more important than others (p. 59). In schools and most of society, the status quo means heterosexuality over homosexuality. Many culturally dominated groups experience a "paradoxical oppression" (Young, p. 59) where they are both stereotyped and made invisible. In schools, LGBTTIQQ students can be perceived as promiscuous at the same time as they see no positive representations in social studies texts or novels.

Those living under cultural imperialism find themselves defined from the outside, positioned, placed, by a network of dominant meanings they experience as arising from elsewhere, from those with whom they do not identify and who do not identify with them. (Young, 1990, p. 59)

Young (1990) also claims, "violence is social practice" (p. 62) and that society knows violence happens and will, ultimately, occur again. Young argues that gays and lesbians, among other groups, live "with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons, or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate or destroy the person" (p. 61). The "Growing Up Today" study of more than 7500 U.S. adolescents reports that sexual minority youth were much more likely to be bullied than heterosexual adolescents (Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman, & Austin, 2010). In Canada, the 2011 Egale Study of LGBT students across the country found that queer youth experienced a large variety of homophobic attacks including: verbal harassment, physical harassment, physical assault, sexual assault, property stolen and vandalized, and mean rumours and lies spread through graffiti, texting, Facebook. The list goes on describing the same miserable litany of ways used to torment updated with electronic innovations of the day (Taylor et al., 2011). Young (1990) says what makes violence a phenomenon of social injustice, and not simply an individual error, is its "systemic character, its existence as a social practice" (p. 62). In schools, violence seems a given, and it is a given that violence will happen again. At post-secondary institutions, for example,

the idea of hounding or teasing a gay man on their dorm floor will occur to many straight male college students. Often several persons inflict the violence

together, especially in all-male groupings. Sometimes violators set out looking

for people to beat up, rape, or taunt. This rule-bound, social, and often

premeditated character makes violence against groups a social practice. (Young,

1990, p. 62)

Group violence, Young says, approaches "legitimacy because it is tolerated" (p. 62).

Most administrators can describe situations where boys gather around another boy in the

change room after gym class while someone punches the daylights out of the victim and

yet no one seems to know who the culprit was. It does not matter if the child is gay or

straight or has done something the group thinks is wrong. "Even when they are caught,

those who perpetrate acts of group-directed violence or harassment often receive light or

no punishment. To that extent society renders their acts acceptable" (p. 62). Phrases like

"man up" and "quit acting like a girl," as if that was wrong, are used by coaches,

teachers, and administrators as a form of "positive" motivation. "The violation of rape,

beating, killing, and harassment of women, people of colour, gays, and other marked

groups is motivated by fear or hatred of those groups" (p. 62). In this moment, Young

says cultural imperialism intersects with violence. When the "Other" tries to assert

identity, they challenge the dominant group's implicit claim to universality. "The

dissonance generated by such a challenge to the hegemonic cultural meanings can also be

a source of irrational violence" (p. 63). Educational leaders need to transform their

schools into socially-just spaces by acknowledging the politics of difference.

Young's (1990) "politics of difference" claims justice in a group-differentiated

society demands social equality of groups, and mutual recognition and affirmation of

group differences. Principals, therefore, should be "attending to group-specific needs and

providing for group representation" thereby promoting social equality and providing

"recognition that undermines cultural imperialism" (p.191). One way to do this is

promoting representation by social groups. When looking at their school leadership

groups, whether made up of students or adults, principals need to consider the school

population. Do you have explicit representation of South Asian, Aboriginal, LGBTTIQQ

and French-speaking groups? Traditionally, Parent Advisory Councils are made up of

privileged, white, straight, women. Principals need to consider how they can hear more

voices, particularly those of the LGBTTIQQ community.

       This study explores the principals of one district, their attitudes toward

homophobia and the LGBTTIQQ community, their perceptions of self as obstacle or

catalyst, their behaviours toward homophobic incidents or issues, their use and

knowledge of resources, and whether they feel the need for professional development

opportunities in socially-just practices focused on homophobia.

       I will also examine some of their concerns and hesitations around hanging anti-

homophobia posters in their school hallways. I will do this through the lens of John B.

Thompson's (1990) modes of operation of ideology. Brantlinger (1996) argues

Thompson's modes of operation of ideology are "helpful in detailing the ways in which

ideology is actually manifested in the conceptions and expressions of everyday life" (p.

574). Thompson's (1990) modes of ideological operation include: legitimation,

unification, dissimulation, fragmentation, and reification, and provide a way of

understanding patterns of response as ideological. With legitimation, relations of

domination are represented as just (pp. 61-62). Thompson describes unification as when

individuals are embraced in a collective identity (pp. 64-65). Dissimulation occurs when

relations of domination are concealed, denied, obscured or in ways that deflect attention

(pp. 62-64). Fragmentation is the dispersal of individuals or groups capable of mounting

a challenge to dominant groups (p. 65). Reification indicates a transitory or historical

state of affairs as if it were natural, permanent, and outside of time (pp. 65-67). These

modes were used to analyze and critique principals' understanding and responses to

hanging (or not) an anti-homophobia poster on the walls of their schools.

I have also drawn upon the work of Anderson (2009) and Ryan (2006). As

Anderson (2009) writes, "formal school leaders, such as principals and superintendents,

since they are key players, either as catalysts for greater advocacy for children or – as is

too often the case – as obstacles," need to be examined further in educational leadership

research (p. 13). Anderson uses the term "advocacy leadership" as he calls for a "more

politicized notion of leadership" (p. 13). Anderson, in indicating his notion of leadership,

acknowledges that schools are "sites of struggle over material and cultural resources and

ideological commitments" (p. 13). Anderson claims

>political alliances of leaders may have to be built among superintendents,
>
>principals, teacher leaders, union leaders, student leaders, and community
>
>leaders in order to defend the democratic goal of public schooling against
>
>those who wish to replace political democracy with a logic of the
>
>marketplace. (p. 13)

Advocacy leaders, according to Anderson, are skilled at getting beneath the high-

sounding rhetoric and diving into the details. In particular, "they are intolerant of racist,

sexist, and homophobic language or actions and work to build a culture of tolerance" (p.

14). This discourse ties in with vision of inclusive leadership vision presented by Ryan (2006).

Ryan (2006) argues, "inclusive leadership approaches include all members of the school community in influence processes" (p. 101). This includes listening to the voices of students. One study, described by Ryan, reported "that 97 percent of students had heard homophobic comments from their classmates, and 57 percent had heard similar comments from school staff. This violence haunts young gay people not only on school grounds, but also in their own homes…" (p. 44).   He comments on the negative experiences of gay teachers and administrators who conceal their sexual identity, and thereby take on "considerable stress for fear of slipping up and being exposed" (p. 44). Homophobia impacts the lives of students, teachers, administrators, families, and communities. Unfortunately, all too often we accept violence and fear as the norm.

Educational leaders can lead as advocates for those who are oppressed by challenging improper or non-existing policies that give 'lip-service' to the serious issue of homophobia in B.C. public schools by being more inclusive in their schools and districts. Knowledge and awareness of Young's (1990) theory of oppression combined with the more hopeful theories of educational leadership as presented by Anderson (2009) and Ryan (1998) could promote a set of positive, inclusive, authentic, advocacy-based social justice practices in B.C. public schools.

Research Question

Through ethnodrama, this dissertation explores how one B.C. public school district's K-12 educational leaders understand and respond to homophobia in their schools. Detailed scenarios and interview questions can be found in Appendix A. My

goal is to contribute to the creation of professional development opportunities for existing and newly emerging principals to ensure they understand and are able to respond positively to issues of homophobia in their schools.

To What Ends?

Within this dissertation, I argue school-based educational leaders, principals in particular, must make a conscious effort to understand their LGBTTIQQ students, parents and employees. Strong leadership against homophobia in our schools depends on ending the silence, making visible the invisible, and leading the way to more socially-just schools.

> There has been deafening silence and inaction from successive B.C. provincial governments, with respect to (a) addressing anti-gay bullying and (b) producing resources which could help teachers [and principals] to make [school] safer and more inclusive for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students and families. (Pride Education Network, 2004, p. 13)

Principals need to know how to respond to homophobia by recognizing the homophobic violence when it occurs. Haskell and Burtch (2010) say,

> There is a tendency among school staff and administrators to focus mostly on visible and physical forms of harassment. Narrow definitions of bullying leave the most frequent forms unaddressed, which can have a wide range of unhealthy consequences for queer youth. (p. 57)

When I am asked why I chose this topic for my dissertation, the answer is: I want to inform my colleagues in educational leadership about the experiences of queer youth, to help other principals understand and respond in socially-just ways to homophobia in their

schools, and fulfill the dream that one day, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-

spirited, intersex, questioning, and queer youth never have to feel invisible or enter their

school in fear.

Playwright's Notes: A Guide to the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured in the following way: Chapter Two informs us

about how we got where we are. Titled, "Behind the Scenes – History and Context,"

Chapter Two contains a review of research and literature related to LGBTTIQQ issues,

ranging from the history of the (LGBT) movement, religion, the military, legal issues, as

well as educational perspectives influencing policy, advocacy, leadership, and social

justice practices surrounding homophobia in our schools. Chapter Three, "Setting the

Stage," introduces the community where the principals live and work and details the

"how" of the research design, methodology, and data collection. Chapters Four through

Six are the results of the research broken down into three distinct, yet related areas. They

are presented as three "Acts" in a play titled, "Do We Really Need to Discuss This?" The

framework used to present the research and display some of the data is "ethnodrama."

Ethnodrama refers to "the writing up of research findings in dramatic or script form and

may or may not be performed" (Leavy, 2009, p. 144). Ethnodrama is a type of theatre

that takes individual lines from actors, in this case, from the principals I interviewed, and

then compiles that research data into scenes derived from their voices. The reader, as the

audience member, then becomes involved in the exploration. Ideally, if and when the

scenes are performed in future workshops, these scenes do not end the conversation, but

begin, challenge, and act as a bridge to extend it. Each chapter (Act) is critiqued in what I

have called "Director's Notes." These are reflective pieces that deconstruct the play's

discourse and analyze what we think we just heard on the stage. The conclusion in Chapter Seven reflects my views after the "play," as this research, is over. The conclusion chronicles my hopes and dreams for a better world for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, intersex, questioning and queer students, parents and employees in B.C. public schools, and focusing particularly on the school district studied. If principals understand and respond with socially-just practices, members of our LGBTTIQQ community will feel welcome, safe, and supported.

Chapter Two – Behind the Scenes – History and Context

"Although the rule is seldom explicitly stated, the closet seems to be the only option for those who want to become administrators." (Lipkin, 1999, p. 206)

Even though the so-called "glass ceiling" had been lifted for women and minorities (some would argue, and I would agree, it has not been, but that is someone else's dissertation), there is another "ceiling" for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Two Spirited, Intersexual, Queer and Questioning (LGBTTIQQ) community and allies – the lavender one. Like women and racialized minorities, members of the LGBTTIQQ community fear restrictions on job advancement, workplace harassment, lack of mentors, exclusion from social activities, all similar to experiences of women and minorities. However, neither women nor racialized minorities has to experience the "disclosure dilemma" of coming out (Olson, 2004, Abstract). I do not want my students to feel like this as they begin their careers. How do educational leaders, at all academic levels, make work environments safe from the effects of homophobia? What is true transformative leadership all about?

In order for principals to fully understand why knowledge of LGBTTIQQ issues is so important, we need to reflect on our experiences. For the purpose of this study, the review of related research and literature will take a brief look at the history and context of this research while setting the stage for its importance. Principals and vice-principals should be aware of the many visible and invisible arenas where homophobia emerges. Each area is worthy of being the subject of an entire dissertation. My purpose is highlighting the multi-faceted history and range of oppressions that have led us to our particular context. My intention is not to gloss over the importance of each facet, but

rather to enlighten school principals about how there is much more to leading from a social justice framework than "considering" whether to hang an anti-homophobia poster in their school. Having some background knowledge should help make LGBTTIQQ educational leadership decisions much easier in all school districts. According to Gunter, knowing this history and context is "activist work" (2010, p. 523), and she agrees with both Blount (2003) and Bogotch (2002) in claiming historical research is an important way individuals can heighten awareness, inspire understanding that compels social justice leadership, assist potential allies, and provoke us to ask better questions.

Next, I will define and discuss key terms relevant to understanding this research from a historical survey leading to the modern day. This overview is by no means comprehensive, but it is necessary for administrators to become aware of this context before making decisions regarding social justice issues no matter how urgent it may appear. To that end, I assemble evidence about institutions like the church (the many denominations and their diverse opinions), military system, and legal system. Then an overview of the people and events that have influenced LGBTIQQ communities is provided, including HIV and AIDS, "coming out" experiences, Pride events, social justice perspectives, and community allies. This review serves to provide contextual understanding for interpreting my research question by reflecting upon how history and institutions may shape or constrain educators' attitudes and behaviours.

Phobias and Identity

Many people have phobias. I'm afraid of spiders (*arachnophobia*). Many fear confined spaces (*claustrophobia*). Others have a fear of speaking in public (*glossophobia*). Others fear technology (*technophobia*). The list of possible phobias is

long. Phobias are the most common form of mental disorder and are a type of anxiety; most people have at least one. They are not rational and most accept them as being so, yet many people go out of their way to avoid situations, including the object of their phobia. In the case of this study, however, phobia is used as a term for prejudice or discrimination. *Homophobia* is the fear of homosexuals or homosexuality. In 1998, Peter J. Gnomes, a professor of divinity at Harvard University said homophobia is "the last respected prejudice of the century" (Baker, 1998, p. 2). Sadly, we are well into the twenty-first century and homophobia continues.

A 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey was the first Statistics Canada Survey to include a question on sexual orientation. One percent of Canadians aged 18-59 reported being homosexual (gay or lesbian) and .7% reported being bisexual. So that means 340,000 Canadians identify as gay and approximately 240,000 identify as bisexual. No doubt this is a conservative estimate, as many respondents may not have wanted to reveal their sexual identity, while others may have felt the existing categories did not work for them. These numbers represent a large number of Canadians.

Fear is manifested in many ways, however, and often begins at a young age. "Prejudiced adults send a powerful message to children that intolerance toward gays and lesbians is acceptable and that this group of people differs in such a unique way from others that their mistreatment is justified" (Baker, 2002, p. 6). Lipkin (1999) indicates, "Hostility toward homosexuals may be linked to negativity toward women and ethnic/racial minorities, suggesting to some that prejudice reaction is a function of a bigot more than the target" (p. 46). While most people today seem less inclined to openly express sexist or racist thoughts, homophobia draws a much more binary reaction.

Monosexist approaches can be equally harmful. A *monosexist* believes only homosexuality or heterosexuality is right. A more fluid view of sexuality is needed. It will not surprise anyone that heterosexism and heterosexist privilege reign, while those who come out may experience a difficult life. "A statewide survey of 2823 New York junior and senior high school students revealed greater hostility toward homosexuals than toward racial or ethnic minorities. Student responses often included threats of antigay violence" (Lipkin, 1999, p. 46). According to Statistics Canada's 2004 General Social Survey,

> … gays, lesbians, and bisexuals reported experiencing higher rates of violent victimization including sexual assault, robbery and physical assault, than did their heterosexual counterparts. The number of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who felt they had experienced discrimination was about three times higher than that of heterosexuals. Furthermore, 78% of gays and lesbians who experienced discrimination believed it was because of their sexual orientation compared to 29% of bisexuals and 2% of heterosexuals. (Statistics Canada, 2004)

Heterosexism in schools and in society begins at an early age. Children learn from birth what is expected of them in binary female / male roles. Many parents will withdraw attention from a boy who cries and is clingy, while accepting that same behaviour in a girl as more appropriate. The overall fear is that the boy will grow up a "sissy." Boys playing with dolls and girls playing with trucks may receive disapproval or punishment from parents (Baker, 2002, pp. 32-43). Gender conformity exists deep within identity, institutions, and is a taught behaviour.

Heterosexist privilege dominates and is often taught as the only correct and normal expression of sexuality. Such beliefs can be extremely damaging for children, especially when they enter institutions such as the school, church, government, courts, corporations, and the military. Imagine growing up denying one's sexual orientation, distrusting other LGBTTIQQ people, and trying to always pass as heterosexual, marrying someone just to prove you are not gay, and hiding your own identity by deciding not to have extended friendships or relationships with others for fear of being "outed". Imagine being constantly bombarded by hysteria-laden stories about homosexuals in print and electronic media where homosexuality is tied to pedophilia. Imagine having the struggle for gay equality constantly made fun of and trivialized. Imagine institutional expectations for conforming to heterosexual norms.

Many organizations have human rights, anti-harassment, and anti-bullying policies in writing, but how many leaders within these organizations are advocates on behalf of LGBTTIQQ members? How many have really made their church, government office, courtroom, corporation or school a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space? Imagine not being able to marry who you want, collect a pension on behalf of your same-sex partner, get a job promotion, hear your principal speak about you in a positive way, or see yourself identified in the school curriculum. Imagine not being allowed on a team because you are not "masculine" enough or too "feminine."   When did these become "bad" things? The LGBTTIQQ community needs more heterosexual allies, people who openly and actively confront heterosexism, homophobia, and heterosexual privilege in homes, places of work, worship, and play. Our schools need leaders and advocates whose attitudes and behaviours show that homophobia and heterosexism are clear and

obvious social justice issues.

School leaders must become knowledgeable about LGBTTIQQ issues to ensure their schools are inclusive. Becoming aware of the language and issues surrounding the gay community can only help to create more advocates for children. It is no longer acceptable for school principals to say they are unaware of, or have never encountered, homophobia in their schools. In addition to learning about LGBTTIQQ issues, principals need to be aware of extremes such as dichotomous views when advocating for all their students.

Dichotomous views on sexuality often lead parents and school leaders to pass judgment, negate, or bury the feelings of students who are struggling with their sexual identity. *Biphobia* results when people cannot accept that someone can feel equally attracted to both sexes.

One area with even less knowledge concerns transsexuals and those who identify as intersex. Transgendered persons are different than gay or lesbian persons and also cover a wide range of sexual identity. *Transgendered* persons encompass many classifications. So called gender benders behave or dress in a gender-atypical way to express their difference from conventional society. Often referred to as cross-dressers or "drag queens" or "drag kings," gender-benders are usually homosexual. *Transvestites* are often heterosexual men who cross-dress in private for sexual gratification. *Androgyne* refers to individuals who possess or assume the characteristics of both genders to feel complete.

Aboriginal communities refer to androgynes as "two-spirited" and members of this society were once, and many argue should be again, highly revered.

Our Elders tell us of people who were gifted among all beings because they

carried two spirits, that of male and female. It is told that women engaged in

tribal warfare and married other women, as there were men who married other

men. These individuals were looked upon as a third and fourth gender in many

cases and in almost all cultures they were honoured and revered. Two-spirit

people were often the visionaries, the healers, the medicine people, the nannies of

orphans, the caregivers. (Laframboise & Anhorn, 2008)

Transsexuals experience a gender identity that does not match the body into which they

were born. Emotionally and psychologically, they do not relate to their biological sex

and may seek to change their bodies to match their identity via sexual reassignment

surgery, hormone treatment, or both. There is a higher risk of suicide for transsexual

teens due to a lack of social and emotional support and, frequently, feelings of

hopelessness. The transgender population is so small that it may also be a contributing

factor in that it may be more difficult for supportive connections to be made. In addition,

most people have probably never had contact with a person they know to be transsexual,

whereas almost everyone knows an "out" homosexual (Baker, 2002, pp.199-200).

Intersex individuals are born with mixed sexual characteristics. It has been

common practice for the parents to assign their child's sex and then try to raise them that

way. More and more, people are advocating that gender surgery should wait for the child

to reach adulthood and then they can choose. Awareness of the various gender and

transgender identities can help eliminate transphobia, homophobia, and other phobias

connected with our LGBTTIQQ community. Homophobia is not new. Educational

leaders need to engage and become self-educated in the history of the LGBTTIQQ

experience.

History

Harbeck (1997) says, "society has been confronted with the issue of the homosexual school teacher since at least 450 B.C., when the most famous educators, Socrates and Plato, educated Greek youth" (p.17). Historians find it difficult to deny Greek or Roman homosexuality existed; however, discourse on the topic at the time was highly restricted and students of history were often told ancient Greek behaviours were "unspeakable" (Tin, 2008, p. 236). Others cite homoerotic evidence in pottery and other art forms from the period, yet make strong arguments for identity coming from an individual's power status, rather than gender, rendering the concept of homosexuality unimportant (Lipkin, 1999, p. 18).

In the years that followed, the Christian era made erotic desire dangerous, followed by the agrarian economy of the pre-industrial age where identity came from family and religious life (Lipkin, 1999, p. 19). Industrialization led people away from farms and into urban centers where they found more time to consider non-procreative desires. Halperin, McIntosh, and Weeks have differing timelines for the emergence of a homosexual subculture, but ultimately Lipkin (1999) claims, those looking for persons "interested in members of their own gender could discover one another in the growing culture of growing cities" (p. 20).

Whether in rural areas or in cities, formal education remained a conservative domain. From the 1850s through to the 1900s, men held the majority of teaching roles; however, once men were no longer willing to work for such low wages, single women were hired, and then rapidly fired if they chose to marry (Lugg, 2003, p. 56). While male educational leaders eventually became superintendents by ensuring women teachers

"tended their charges properly," just as "husbands ensured that their wives tended their children" (Blount, 2002, p. 10), a paradox existed for single women teachers. By the 1920s, women were seen as "sexual beings" and the traditional "spinster schoolteacher" was now seen as a potential lesbian and possible criminal (Lugg, 2003, p. 56). Men who entered teaching in the mid-1950s were often thought effeminate unless they entered an administrative or financial role (Blount, 2003, p. 11). Older single male teachers were considered vain, odd, peculiar, selfish and delinquent members of society (Zeliff as cited in Blount, 2003, p. 13). Marriage indicated masculinity in education at a time when being single meant one's masculinity and sexuality might come into question (Blount, 2003, 13). By the 1950s, educational leaders were expected to fire anyone they suspected of being lesbian or gay. Local school boards approved the removal of "possible perverts" from their midst, and it was the obligation of educational leaders to ensure their buildings were free from "moral taint" (Lugg, 2003, p. 61).

Two significant events had occurred. In 1948, Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin released a groundbreaking study, titled *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male,* which claimed that heterosexual monogamy was not the overwhelming norm. The study argued that many American men and women had same-sex erotic experiences and further that "homosexual behavior was natural" (Lugg, 2003, p. 59). McCarthyism was also in full swing and the U.S. Senator's tactics for rooting out communists were also used to root out homosexuals (Blount, 2003, p. 16). Damaging slurs such as "commie," "pinko," and "queer," if uttered about a person often resulted in horrible consequences. "Thousands of suspected homosexuals were fired from federal, state, and local jobs, as well as private sector employment" (Lugg, 2003, p. 58), because they were considered "overwhelming

threats to security and morale" (p. 58). Worse yet, an LGBT person could be sent to a

mental hospital or insane asylum indefinitely under the McCarthy-era "sexual

psychopath" laws without due process or a trial (p. 59).

On October 11, 2011, Dr. Franklin E. Kameny died. Dr. Kameny is credited with

being the grandfather of the gay rights movement for fighting against the McCarthy

agenda (National Park Service, 2011). Unfortunately, despite Kameny's efforts, and

before hiring policies using discrimination based on sexual orientation were stopped in

1995, more than 10,000 people had lost their jobs. During that same time period,

however, more progressive changes were taking place in Canada. In 1969, Prime

Minister Pierre Trudeau's amendments passed into the Criminal Code and decriminalized

homosexuality. By 1977, Quebec included sexual orientation in its Human Rights Code.

The 1960s civil rights movement also meant the empowerment of LGBT persons

towards believing they also deserved fundamental human rights; however, "public

protests against mistreatment of homosexuals were slower to erupt than among other

minorities, but erupt they eventually did" (Baker, 2002, p. 2). The tipping-point

frequently cited by human rights activists is Stonewall. In June of 1969, when police

arrived, yet again, at the Stonewall Inn, in Greenwich Village, NYC, gay customers

resisted arrest. Raids and harassment of gays at the bar were regular events, but this

particular evening, gay customers had had enough and fought by resisting arrest. By the

1970s, Harvey Milk became a household name in California as the first openly gay man

elected to public office in the state of California (Cloud, 1999). The gay liberation

movement was underway; however, it has faced many setbacks.

In the late 1970s, early 1980s, U.S. singer Anita Bryant led a high profile campaign

called *Save Our Children* to stop a Florida ordinance that would forbid discrimination due to sexual orientation. Bryant was outraged and said homosexuals could not reproduce on their own and therefore were trying to push their "lifestyle" as an acceptable alternative to recruit children for their ranks (Gay Avenger, 2009). Proposition 6, more commonly known as the Briggs Initiative, was promoted by California Senator John Briggs. Its intent was to ban gay and lesbian teachers and their open supporters from working in California public schools (Lipkin, 1999, pp. 94-95). It failed by a margin of 58% to 42%. The vote was expected to go the other way, but a timely editorial in the *L.A. Times-Herald* by Ronald Reagan is credited with turning the vote around (Parsons, 2009).

> Back in Canada, the Gay Rights movement faced a setback in February of 1981.
> More than 300 men are arrested following police raids at four gay establishments in
> Toronto, the largest mass arrest since the War Measures Act was invoked during
> the October Crisis of 1970. In protest, about 3000 people march in downtown
> Toronto the next night. This is considered by many to be Canada's 'Stonewall'.
> (Toronto District School Board, 2011).

Religion

In their book, *Challenging Homophobia*, van Dijk and van Driel (2007) discuss how religion and deeply held beliefs can impact educators' views. Van Driel (2007) explains that while he was working on an educational project with a large group of human rights educators, he assumed they would have a "common understanding when it came to issues of tolerance, intolerance, and respect" (p. xi).

> One day I proudly took them to the Homomonument in Amsterdam, right next to

the Anne Frank House, which commemorates all 'homosexual women and men

who have suffered persecution in the past, who continue to suffer persecution in

the present and who will suffer in the future'.   I remember there being only

silence as I explained the significance of the monument.   Then the Romanian

educator turned to me and said: 'This is disgusting'.   I thought she meant the

persecution of gays, but she clearly meant the monument.   The educator from

Armenia chimed in: 'That is against nature and God'.   …I still get upset if I think

about the many young people, of whichever sexual orientation, who might turn to

these two educators for guidance on issues of human rights. (van Dijk & van

Driel, 2007, p. xi)

Over the centuries, many people, young, old, straight, and gay, have turned to the church

for guidance. According to Revol, the Catholic teaching on homosexuality "hasn't

changed much since it became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth

century, or even before that, since the Bible, as reflected in the teachings of Paul" (as

cited in Tin, 2008, p. 92).

Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor

adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy,

or drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (St.

Paul, I Corinthians 6: 9-10)

Revol goes on to say that this particular institution cannot be expected to transform or

change especially on moral issues such as abortion, sex, the role of women and the

family, and homosexuality (Revol as cited in Tin, 2008, p. 92). John Paul II, along with

Cardinal Josef Alois Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), in 2005, in the writings titled, *Some*

Considerations on the Response to Private bills on the Non-Discrimination of the Homosexual People, said, "in certain areas, taking sexual orientation into account is not unjust discrimination, for example, in the adoption of children, or placing in foster care, in the hiring of teachers and sports coaches and in military recruiting" (Revol as cited in Tin, 2008, p. 93).

In early days of Protestantism, "several men and women were beheaded, hanged, or drowned because of their alleged acts 'against nature'" (Leroy-Forgeot & Tin, 2008, p. 376). In 1533, King Henry VIII, created a sodomy law that became the first known civil legislation against homosexuality. Today, however, "even if homosexuality's stature varies from the one Protestant group to another, it is nonetheless quite remarkable that pastors have been blessing same-sex unions for a long time" (p. 376). Leroy-Forgeot and Tin go on to mention positive changes in the Northern Protestant Church of Germany, the Unitarian Universalist Movement in the U.S., and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in New York which range from blessing unions to marrying same-sex couples (p. 377). However, while small significant gains are noted, Leroy-Forgeot and Tin remind us that a 1995 *Newsweek* survey indicated 43% of Evangelical Christians believed that gays and lesbians were "Satan incarnate" (p. 377) and that recent sentiments from Protestants indicate that "God hates fags" (p. 378).

Unfortunately, many gay children and teens grow up with messages like these from religious right organizers who tell them how "wrong" they are. Some religious groups asked members to boycott Disney and its products because a Disney-owned TV channel aired an episode where comedian Ellen Degeneres' character came out as a lesbian (Baker, 2002, p. 4). The episode was, for many families in both Canada and the United

States, a "teachable moment" that initiated many much needed discussions. Youth

attending church may have heard a South Carolina Baptist pastor calling homosexuality

"demonic" and a "stench on the nostrils of God" (Sack, 1998, p. A-12). In 1999,

Southern Baptists also denounced President Clinton's declaration of June as Gay and

Lesbian Pride Month (Southern Baptists, 1999). There are many conflicting messages

surrounding us.

Leroy-Forgeot and Tin (2008) acknowledge that Protestantism has espoused some

of the most liberal *and* repressive statements about homosexuality. They argue:

This contradiction can be explained in that the homophobia which flows through

Protestant culture in fact stems from underlying and diverse causes which widely

surpass strict religious faith. In the end, religious homophobia is not simply a

question of religion. (p. 378)

Like the United States, most mainstream Protestant denominations in Canada have

moved to more inclusive positions; however, anxieties remain regarding young people's

gender learning regarding what they are taught and by whom. Many Christian

conservatives fear public school recognition of homosexuality will result in children

becoming gay, experimenting with homosexuality, or receiving wrong messages about

masculinity and femininity. Others fear children will face intolerable harassment if

others think they are sexually different. "This produces disturbing cross-border

similarities in the extent to which public schools avoid positive or inclusive discussion of

sexual diversity" (Rayside, 2011, p. 367); there are also positive trends. Advocacy for

LGBT equality in both countries has taken place within faith communities. "For decades,

networks and formalized groups have developed among Roman Catholics, all of the

mainline Protestant denominations, some evangelical churches, each of the major currents in Judaism, and more recently, Muslim communities" (Rayside & Wilcox, 2011, p. 14). These conversations need to continue and join with the queer activist movement, which has emerged largely from a secular perspective. "Deliberations that bring people of faith and members of sexual minorities together will long pose complex challenges and will need all the fair-mindedness, the capacity to understand the 'other', and the willingness to build bridges that we can muster" (Rayside, 2011, p. 373). The United States' Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in a recent speech to the United Nations said that religious traditions, teachings, and practices do not trump human rights and that gay rights are human rights (Clinton, 2011).

British Columbia churches are no different than the rest of the world. Conflicting ideas about homophobia prevail. In Burnaby, the conservative Mennonite Brethren groups' Willingdon Church and the Catholic Civil Rights League continue to challenge the school district's new anti-homophobia policy (Moreau, 2011). An ad-hoc group of parents against the policy called Parents' Voice fielded five candidates in civic elections for school board (Vancouver Sun, 2011). Meanwhile, in Kamloops, and throughout the country, the United Church of Canada is holding meetings to consult "with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and two-spirited members of the United Church to discuss homophobia and heterosexism in the church" to report to General Council 41 in 2012 (Kamloops United Church, n.d.). Results of both situations are important as they will impact the lives of LGBTTIQQ youth and their families in our schools.

Military

During World War II, the demand for military personnel was so large that millions

volunteered to join. While a ban on gay and lesbian personnel still existed, it was largely

ignored due to the extreme numbers needed. People who thought they were the only

"homosexual" in the world soon realized in being drawn together for the country's

defense needs that they had simply been geographically isolated. In reality, there were

many more people just like them (Lugg, 2003, p. 57). However, those caught were often

treated harshly. Horrific interrogation sessions, "blue" paper dishonorable discharges,

and the denial of veteran's benefits met those who were "caught" (Lugg, 2003, p. 57).

"Witch-hunts" took place throughout the military with women being disproportionately

targeted. Shilts (1993) writes, "until proven otherwise, women in the military are often

suspected of being lesbian" (p. 5).

In Europe, Nazi persecution included anti-homosexual proclamations by SS leader

Heinrich Himmler.   "Homosexuals, 'criminals against the race', were an affront to the

'vital' interest of the German people and need to be 'healed' or eliminated" (Tamgne as

cited in Tin, 2008, p. 211). In Germany, gay and lesbian movements were outlawed,

meetings were raided, the Institute for Sexual Knowledge was destroyed, homosexual

desire became a crime, concentration camps became a vehicle of "reeducation", and all

homosexuals became known as "pink triangles" (Tamgne as cited in Tin, 2008, p. 212-

214).

In the 1950s, the entire U.S. senate approved a massive search for "3,500 'sex

perverts' in government"(Lipkin, 1999, p. 77). Within a year, FBI head J. Edgar Hoover,

ironically, who is believed to be a cross-dresser and homosexual, identified 406 "sex

deviates in government service" (p. 77). President Eisenhower issued an Executive Order

10450 (National Archives, 1953), which resulted in the firing of over forty people per

month. The FBI used postal workers to "lure" men through a "pen pal club" and then traced their mail to other men. "Police set traps in public parks and movie theatres, often gesturing as though they wanted sex and then taking anyone who responded into custody" (Lipkin, 1999, p. 79). In all, 10,000 lost their jobs. Their experience is the focus of a documentary film by Josh Howard titled *The Lavender Scare* (Howard, 2012). Needless to say, change takes a long time.

In the early 1990s, former chairman of the Joint U.S. Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell said having gays in the military would be "demoralizing and would jeopardize the effectiveness of the military" (Baker, 2002, p. 4). In 1990, the Boy Scouts of America fired an Eagle Scout assistant scoutmaster when he was revealed as gay and, subsequently, banned gays and atheists from membership. Worse yet, the Supreme Court of the United States in June of 2000 backed the Boy Scout organization up by finding that "expelling a gay scoutmaster was within the organization's constitutional rights" (Baker, 2002, p. 5). In 1999, according to the Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press, 44% of military officers agreed that homosexuals should be barred from teaching in public schools (December 10).

During his first weeks in office, then President Bill Clinton signed a controversial policy which became known as "Don't ask, don't tell." The policy stated that "if you don't say you're gay and you stay in the closet, you should not be asked about your sexual orientation and you can continue to serve" (Baker, 2002, p. 168). The policy was ineffective. "It has led to more discharges on the basis of sexual orientation than had occurred prior to the policy's adoption when just the discovery that a member of the armed services was gay was enough to get him or her discharged" (Baker, 2002, p. 168).

President Obama repealed the policy on December 22, 2010.

Canada, in many ways, had a similar context. In 1992, the Canadian government removed the prohibition for lesbians, gays and bisexuals serving in the military (Egale Canada, 2011).

Legal Issues

In the1890s, the trial of Oscar Wilde in England gave Canada something on which to base its legal approach to "homosexuality." Wilde was charged with gross indecency. Wilde's attempt to clear his name "forged the identity of the homosexual as a sinful, immoral, and perverse person in the minds of the public and adjudicators of Western Canada" (Chapman, 1983, p. 99). So, just like in the United States, gross indecency and homosexual acts were demonized by the conservative leaders and mores of the day.

The Canadian context changed when a young enthusiastic Justice Minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, who was warned to tackle "a less thorny issue," went against his opponents surrounding the legal issues of homosexuality. They said, "If you want to risk destroying yourself, it's up to you" (Trudeau, 1993, pp. 82-84). Following Trudeau's comment that "there is no place for the State in the bedrooms of the nation," the Criminal Code (Human Rights Initiative, 2011) was amended and other Canadian changes followed. These include, but are not limited to: Bill C-150 which decriminalized "gross indecency" and "buggery" if committed in private between two consenting adults over 21. By 1977, homosexuals were no longer barred from immigrating to Canada (LaViolette, 2004, p. 973). By 1985, Canada adopted the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 15 (Canadian Heritage, 2010), which allowed LGBT people to challenge any discriminatory law regarding equality. Since then, the Supreme Court has

ruled that "sexual orientation" is included as an identifiable characteristic for purposes of protection or non-discrimination.

In 1995, the Canadian government recognized that hate crimes should include crimes motivated by hatred like gay-bashings and amended the Criminal Code to include sexual orientation. This also included the hate propaganda provision, which involves the promotion of hatred against identifiable groups, which now also includes sexual orientation (Parliament of Canada, 2003). Bill C-250, an Act to amend the criminal code during the 37th Canadian Parliament, and B.C.'s then MP Svend Robinson received strong criticism from the Catholic Civil Rights League. Since 1995, other rights have been won through the courts; however, little has changed in education.

In 2001, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld an order where the B.C. College of Teachers denied approval of the private evangelical school Trinity Western University's teacher-training program because it required students to sign an anti-homosexual document. The Supreme Court said graduates from the University are entitled to hold "sexist, racist, or homophobic beliefs," but are not entitled to act upon them (Trinity Western University v. British Columbia College of Teachers, 2001).

In 2003, the BC Supreme Court overturned a Human Rights Tribunal ruling because the student did not identify as homosexual. Azmi Jubran suffered homophobic harassment that "made his high school years 'a living hell'" (Pride Education Network, 2004, p. 17). Eventually, in 2005, Jubran won his case against the North Vancouver School Board in a Supreme Court of Canada ruling that upheld an earlier ruling by the British Columbia Court of Appeal (Canadian Human Rights Reporter, 2011).

Policy in Schools

While all school districts in British Columbia should have implemented the Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct in February of 2011, the BCTF took the BC Public School Employers' Association to the BC Court of Appeal. The BCTF claimed districts have not complied with the Ministerial Order which specifies that boards must ensure their Codes of Conduct contain one or more statements that address the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out by the BC Human Rights Code (British Columbia Public School Employers' Association, 2011).   These standards came out of the *Azmi Jubran vs. North Vancouver School District* case mentioned above and the province's Safe Schools Task Force, "which found that harassment on the basis of sexual orientation was a serious concern in school districts around the province" (BCTF, 2011). All of this arose from the 2011 suicide of Jamie Hubley. He was an Ottawa teen who took his life after his life had become unbearable. Jamie wrote on his blog, "I hate being the only open gay guy in my school … It f---ing sucks, I really want to end it." Later referencing the book and online anti-homophobia campaign, *It Gets Better* (Savage & Miller, 2011), in which millions of people have posted heartfelt written and video messages directed at young people struggling with their sexuality and acceptance in the world, Jamie wrote, "I don't want to wait three more years, this hurts too much.   How do you even know it will get better? It's not" (Pearson, 2011). In the *Vancouver Sun* a few days later, Randall Denley wrote, "Being the kid who wants to start the Rainbow Club and is into glee club and figure skating would put anyone at the top of the bullies' list" (Denley, 2011). Denley was irresponsible and was promoting homophobia with his remarks. There is no activity that should put someone at the top of the bullies' list. Our policies should make

that loud and clear in our homes and schools. We are the reflection of our policies, and we must be explicit.

Though a number of schools in the province have taken the additional steps to add sexual orientation to Codes of Conduct, this is not enough. Every school in the province needs to do this. To date, only 15 of 60 districts in British Columbia have explicit sexual orientation policies, with Burnaby as the latest addition (Burnaby School District #41, 2011). That number is a shameful twenty-five percent. Districts need to make it clear that no harassment and discrimination of LGBTTIQQ students, staff and/or their families, based on sexual orientation is acceptable.

A U.S. student named Jamie Nabozny successfully sued his former middle and high school administrators for not protecting him from repeated harassment and assault by other students because he was gay. "Jamie testified at the trial that he had been shoved, spit upon, beaten, and urinated upon by other students over a period of several years in both middle school and high school" (Baker, 2002, p. 167). No child, parent, or employee should have to sue educational leaders or school districts. However,

> …when leadership from individual school districts and school administrators is lacking, the leadership may have to come from higher levels. State [provincial] political leaders, such as governors [premiers] and superintendents of public instruction, have the power, *if* [emphasis added] they choose to exercise it, to recommend policies of various kinds for public schools. (Baker, 2002, p. 167)

Recently, British Columbia's Comox Valley and Burnaby school districts have been catalysts in taking positive steps in social justice educational leadership by implementing

explicit sexual orientation policies. Such policies help our LGBTTIQQ students, families, and employees know they have our support, that nothing is wrong with them, and they are protected and honoured community members.

HIV and AIDS

The stigma associated with HIV and AIDS impact policy in North America. Health and safety in public schools is front and centre, especially when it comes to stopping the spread of communicable diseases. According to Coleman and Remafedi, homosexuals and bisexuals are at a greater risk of acquiring Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) than other students (as cited in Baker, 2002, p. 110). Because HIV in the United States was first transmitted through male-to-male sex (Baker, 2002, p. 110), gay males are one of the high-risk groups. Therefore, it is critical that sex educators describe how to safely have both homosexual and heterosexual sex. In addition, special attention must be paid to teaching students about "alcohol-induced sexual forays that may put both males and females at risk for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV" (Lipkin, 1999, p. 158). Rates of HIV among younger gay men "indicate significant numbers are engaging in high risk behaviours" (Lipkin, 1999, p. 158). Such behaviours include injecting drugs, prostitution, substance abuse, and have been linked to prevalence of homophobia in a community, low self-esteem, feeling protection is a barrier to intimacy, and episodes of unsafe sex. Misinformation and fear of AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s contributed to the rise of antigay violence. However, the gay community and their allies persevered, and found the courage and will to speak out and become positive influences against the bigotry of an ill-informed West (Lipkin, 1999, pp. 96-97). Today, schools and school districts wanting to follow best practices have established policies and

procedures around the handling of HIV and other blood-borne viruses such as Hepatitis B (HBV) and Hepatitis C (HCV) to ensure that students continue to get their education with dignity and protection from discrimination. However, students can also be impacted by other circumstances and conditions, such as poor mental health, substance abuse, suicide, and hate crimes.

In 1957, Dr. Evelyn Hooker led a landmark study that changed how homosexuals were seen by psychiatrists, psychologists, and mental health professionals. Prior to this study's publication, they were trained to believe that homosexuality was a mental disorder. After Hooker's study proved there was no psychological difference between gay and straight men, it took an additional seventeen years for the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality as a disorder from their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Baker, 2002, p. 18). In the years since, however, there have been many therapists, seemingly well-intentioned parents, and religious leaders who try to rid children of their homosexuality (Baker, 2002, p. 21), for example, the recent "pray the gay away" movement (Burns, March 8, 2011). Principals, like mental health professionals, need to educate themselves on current policies affecting gay youth and adults in our schools. Knowledge of the issues, as well as knowledge about resources to assist LGBTTIQQ families in the community are critical and necessary for effective leadership. Often, stigma can lead to other issues such as suicide or substance abuse.

Suicide and Victimization

Principals and school counselors need to be aware of all issues that may arise for LGTTIQQ youth. Besides mental health concerns and risk assessment for suicide and substance abuse, school-based insults can lead to incredible harm. "Statistics on anti-gay

violence probably underestimate the actual pattern of name-calling, harassment, and physical assault that is directed to homosexual adults and young people" (Lipkin, 1999, p, 145). Taylor et al. (2011) found, in an Egale-sponsored national survey, that

> six out of ten LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation; with eight out of ten transgender participants and one in three LGB respondents reported being verbally harassed about their gender; nine out of ten transgender students and six out of ten LGB students were verbally harassed because of their expression of gender. A third of straight students were verbally harassed about their expression of gender. (p. 39)

In the Egale study, victimization escalated with physical violence where one in four were physically harassed because of sexual orientation, two in five transgender students, and one in five LGB students reported being physically harassed due to their expression of gender. Sixty-six percent of LGBTQ students and just under 50% of non-LGBTQ students reported seeing homophobic graffiti at school, while one in seven LGBTQ had been named in the graffiti. Over 50% of the LGBTQ students had rumours or lies spread about their sexual orientation at school compared to one in ten non-LGBTQ students. Thirty-three percent reported harassment through text messaging or the Internet (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 39). No wonder LGBTTIQQ students sometimes feel alone and rejected by the world.

Principals and counselors need to take all victimization reports seriously because the American Psychiatric Association's pamphlet on *Let's Talk Facts about Teen Suicide* (2011) describes the most dangerous time of a teen's life is when he or she has suffered

"a loss, humiliation or trauma of some kind." Taylor et al. (2011) report that 28.5% of LGBTQ students skipped school compared to 8.4% of non-LGBTQ students because they felt unsafe at school. "These results are, of course, important not only because of what they have to say about the degree of fear being experienced by LGBTQ youth but because of the potential impact of skipping school on academic performance" (p. 51). It is often when students are on their way to or from school that physical harassment takes place. Anti-gay hate crimes, unfortunately, begin in childhood. A 2008 study by Human Rights First reported Canada's first hate crime statistics that year which showed that 10% of all hate-crimes were motivated by sexual orientation and over 56% of these were violent compared to 38% of racially motivated crimes being violent (Stahnke et al., 2008, p. 9). "We must certainly consider that gay youth are likely affected by antigay hate crimes, both when they are victims themselves, and when they come to realize that people are beaten up or even killed just because they are gay" (Baker, 2002, p. 173). It is no wonder then that many of our youth fear "coming out" during their school years.

Coming Out

"Coming out" is the term used to describe "the complex discovery process that children or adolescents go through as they gradually recognize their homosexual identity and acknowledge it to themselves and then to others" or gay adults' "retrospective recall" about when they finally told someone they were gay (Baker, 2002, pp. 45, 53). There is limited information from boys and girls themselves partly due to that fact that until quite recently "there were few gay youth who openly acknowledged their homosexual orientation to researchers or were willing to talk about it to researchers" (Baker, 2002, p. 56). However, even that is changing, especially in environments where students feel

welcomed and safe. According to Taylor et al. (2011), "students from schools with GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances – often called Human Rights Clubs, Diversity Clubs, or Social Justice clubs) were much more likely to agree that their school community was supportive of LGBTQ people, compared to participants in schools without Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)" (i.e., 47.6% versus 19.8%) (p. 81).

There is, of course, the acknowledgement of heterosexual privilege or assumption. No one ever has to announce to others that he or she is heterosexual. Everyone simply assumes it. The gay or lesbian student, however, has to make the decision whether to share their sexual orientation. Some do not have the choice because they are easily identifiable by others. "What we do know, however, is that more and more young people are being open about their homosexuality and at younger and younger ages. The youth themselves are changing the schools and society for their generation and for older generations" (Baker, 2002, p. 62). Change, however, is difficult for some parents and school principals to accept.

Adult Responses – Attitudes and Behaviours

Studies show parents go through several stages as their child comes out. Savin-Williams and Dube's study determined that the four stages of parental "coming-out" include impact, adjustment, resolution, and integration (as cited in Baker, 2002, p. 67). Parents and extended family members are usually at first somewhat negative, drawing from familiar stereotypes and myths about homosexuality, and naturally worry about how difficult their child's future may be. They then gradually begin to accept the idea of being the parent of a homosexual child or that they are part of a queer family. In resolution, the parent and family members begin to reach out, and may attend support

groups such as PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). During

integration, they are finally fully accepting and proud of their child.   Some, but certainly

not all, may become gay activists.

I would argue many principals go through the same stages as parents. First, there

is the understanding that some of their children and community are gay, but denying they

need to do anything about it (e.g., "Just ignore it and it will go away.") Then, once they

have adjusted, they accept their school needs to be a welcoming place for all families.

Further, they realize they legally operate in "loco parentis," and they may realize they

need to do something about sexuality-based discrimination. At the resolution stage,

principals may take a professional development course, begin reading some background

materials, and publicly acknowledge their school as a safe place for all types of different

families. Ultimately, the ideal is that principals become activist allies for all the

LGBTTIQQ students, families, and co-workers in their schools. Some principals may

find it helpful to know what is occurring from a global perspective.

International Perspectives

"International exchange can be helpful in gaining an enhanced understanding of

what social exclusion really is and how it can be effectively combated" (Dankmeijer,

2007, p. 3). In 1998, Amnesty International and HIVOS (a Dutch organization whose

priority is LGBT issues) organized the first global workshop on education against

homophobia. In the West, sexual orientation identities are central in combating

discrimination against those who are LGBTTIQQ. In Europe and North America

"assuming an identity and pointing at the norm of heterosexuality as the dominant system

of oppression is central to 'the struggle' in those parts of the world" (Dankmeijer, 2007,

p. 4). In Middle and Eastern Europe "a return to religion and conservative nationalism after the fall of Communism, has created a new unsafe context for LGBT people" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 6). In the USA, the rise of GSAs in high schools has provided a safe-space and sometimes plays a role in extra-curricular education and in advocacy for safer school policies. "The participants in GSAs are both LGBT and heterosexual with the research showing that the majority of participants are heterosexual girls" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 6).

In Latin America, two concepts are more important than sexual orientation: machismo and sexualities. "Sex role patterns are extremely pronounced: the dynamic between macho men and feminine woman is crucial" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 7). However, "within the limits of a heteronormative context, there is plenty of space for experimentation and pleasure which is not heterosexual or limited to typical gender roles" (i.e., there are "fluid sexualities") (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 7). Therefore, "a single focus on homophobia would not be appropriate in cultures where almost nobody is homo: but where fluid sexualities are common practice" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 8) and "the connection of the LGBT movement to the wider civil rights movement makes it logical to focus on personal empowerment and the right to self-expression." (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 8). Ultimately, these needs "crystallize in collaboration on sex education programmes with explicit components on sexual rights and sexual diversity" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 8).

In Asia, most countries have cultures with long historical roots and deeply rigid social structures. Many are hierarchical systems such as India's caste system and others have status and respect deeply embedded in their languages, social patterns, and norms. Most are organized in a heteronormative pattern.

People who display non-heterosexual feelings or atypical gender behaviour can fall into two categories. Either they commit themselves to a social group which accepts and defines their behaviour within a traditional (low status) section of society, or they become complete outcasts. (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 9)

However, levels of acceptance of LGBT communities are quite diverse. For example, in Thailand it is "completely credible to have a *kathoey* ("third sex") volleyball team in a secondary school" (Dankmeijer, 2012, p. 262). The Philippines has made it mandatory "to teach about diversity" (Dankmeijer, 2012, p. 262) and in India, a secondary school in Bangalore "offers respect-centered sex education" based on a U.S. model that "combines abstinence education toward marriage and respect for people with different lifestyles, including *hijras* (India's "third sex")" (Dankmeijer, 2012, p. 262). Unlike Latin America, "a public display of eroticism is largely taboo except for Japan where the state religion of Shintosim created a tolerance of all expressions of sexuality of a holy nature" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 9). In the southern hemisphere, Australia has made some steps toward an anti-homophobia program through Pride and Prejudice: a six-week secondary school workshop developed by Daniel Witthaus (2011).

In many African countries, both state authorities and the general populations oppose expressions of sexual diversity. South Africa's LGBT groups "have recently started to experiment with educational interventions, such as publishing personal life stories, organizing panel discussions in school and the creation of a teacher training program" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 12). In Namibia, a range of projects focusing on capacity building of the local LGBT populations exists. AIDS prevention is at the forefront with a project for schools on its way "but will need to focus on general human

rights rather than just LGBT issues in order to placate the authorities" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 13). The Arab world puts up fierce resistance against sexual diversity, especially in countries where Sharia (Islamic law) is part of the legal system. Through U.S. capacity building of Muslim gay and lesbian activists it would seem consensus is emerging by focusing on respect and relying "on Qu'ranic references that only Allah is allowed to judge people" (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 14). Global differences and interpretations are quite far apart; however, immigration, travel, the Internet, and globalization are making the world of our students smaller and smaller. What are principals to do in schools where populations are becoming increasingly diverse?

> Global differences in interpretations of homophobia seem to be so substantial that it may be hard to agree on common grounds and to exchange learning experiences. With increasing globalization and migration this becomes even more relevant: global differences may become visible in every classroom. The growing diversity in this world needs new methods of dealing with diversity. For LGBT people, it is clear that diversity education should not just focus on celebrating – cultural or other – differences but on the common ground of self-esteem, social competence, tolerance, and respect. (Dankmeijer, 2007, p. 16)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also operates on the international level.

> In 2007, the slogan of the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) committee was 'No to homophobia, yes to education.' IDAHO President Louis-Georges Tin asked UNESCO to include 'the fight against homophobia in its

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international agenda, as education is one of its main objectives.' (Albertini, 2008,

p. 413)

On September 28, 2011, Education International welcomed UNESCO's first

international consultation on homophobia, bullying, and harassment in educational

institutions and asked members to share input on existing policies, programmes, and tools

that may help prevent and address homophobic bullying around the world (Education

International, 2011). Obviously, we still have a long way to go.

The 2008 Hate Crime Survey (Human Rights First) states that violence motivated

by hatred and prejudice based on sexual orientation and gender identity, though still

largely unseen, is an intimidating day-to-day reality for people across Europe and North

America (Stahnke et al., 2008, p. 1). The report goes on to say that there is no convention

or treaty specifically focusing on the human rights of LGBT persons.

Within the framework of the United Nations, the problem of bias-motivated

violence against LGBT persons is only just beginning to gain recognition and has

remained largely outside of the framework of the general human rights treaty

bodies, as well as those special mechanisms that deal with related issues of

discrimination and intolerance. (2008 Hate Crimes Survey, p. 2)

Despite a significant police presence, hate crimes and violence erupted at pride parades in

Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia; however, police were able to

identify violent protestors as members of extremist groups. This resulted in a variety of

responses. In some states police detained participants, while in Hungary, the assailants

were charged with group disorderly conduct, and in Slovenia, police were unable to

locate the attacker when a gay man was hospitalized.

Systemic violence is further complicated by multiple and intersecting power inequalities, including those based on organized religion, nationality, and rights vis-à-vis national states. Some may argue I am essentializing based on country, but I wish to make it clear that I believe culture and identity should be seen as "multi-layered, fluid, complex, and encompassing multiple social categories, and at the same time [be seen] as being continually reconstructed through participation in social situations" (May & Sleeter, 2010, p. 11). In addition, I acknowledge that the major Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, all have long histories of homophobia. "Asian and Latino males, Irish and Middle Eastern males, Indian and Italian males, or, for that matter, from any other ethnic groups share and display, in some way or another, sexist, misogynistic, violent, and homophobia tendencies and behaviour" (Neal, 2011, p. 2). Interpretations of sexuality within the three major Abrahamic religions range from a literal decontextualized interpretation of texts to seeing texts as written within social, political and cultural moments. Countries such as Saudi Arabia that legally prohibit homosexuality and even permit the death penalty often use the Qur'an as the excuse to do so. Christian dominated nations such as Uganda have also imposed harsh penalties. Ugandan MP David Bahati recently reintroduced his anti-gay bill in the Ugandan parliament that would institute penalties up to the death penalty for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 2012).

The current movement of Islamophobia is critical to understanding the effects of homophobia on gay and lesbians Muslims in the West. The subject of homosexuality is

addressed in the Qur'an through the story of Lut (Qur'an 7: 80-84). In the story, Lut is sent, by Allah, to warn people against committing same-sex acts, but since his warnings are ignored, many people are eradicated by a shower of brimstone. Traditional Muslims believe homosexuality is a sin and therefore "punishable by death (stoning) or flagellation," particularly in countries that apply *Sharia* law such as Saudi Arabia, Iran Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen (Hamel, 2008, p. 260). However, "nowhere in the Qur'an does it explicitly or implicitly state death is the appropriate punishment for being homosexual" (Siraj, 2009, p. 46). In addition, the idea of the "Muslim Other" during the Crusades spread the notion of Muslims as "bloodthirsty homosexual predators in Christian Europe," followed by "fear of miscegenation" during colonial times, and more recently, "the association of all Muslims with terrorism" (Abraham, 2009, pp. 83-84).

In Yip's study of non-heterosexual and bisexual Muslim women in Europe, he found that, along with "religious and cultural censure," there is a "pervasive perception in the Muslim community that homosexuality is a 'Western disease,' a reflection of the secularity of the Western culture, and its resulting moral relativism, sexual permissiveness, and cultural degeneracy" (2008, p. 105). One woman interviewed by Yip said, "If I came out to my parents, they would be shocked and sad, not only because they think I am immoral, but also because I have become too 'white,' not a proper Muslim anymore. As they say, there are no gay people in Islam, or if you are a true Muslim you can't be gay" (quoted in Yip, 2008, p. 105).

Minwalla, Rosser, Feldman and Varga (2005) argue that "the North American experience of Muslim gay men appears three-dimensional (religious, ethnocultural, and colour) when integrated with a gay identity" (p. 113). While mainstream Islam officially

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condemns homosexuality, "there is a growing movement of progressive-minded Muslims, especially in the Western world, who view Islam as an evolving religion that must adapt to modern-day society" (Minwalla et al., 2005, p. 115). The Al-Fatiha Foundation is a US-based international nonprofit organization for Muslims and their friends who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning their sexual orientation and gender identity. It currently has chapters in the USA, Canada, the UK (known there as Imaan), Spain, and South Africa. Progressive Muslims define themselves in ways that are feminist, anti-racist, anti-violent, and are committed to the greater movement and equality within the faith and within society (Minwalla et al., 2005, p. 116).

In Canada, human rights lawyer El-Farouk Khaki founded Salaam, a support group for gay Muslims and their families. A chapter exists in both Toronto and Vancouver (salaamcanada.org). The hope is that we can all keep working toward what Abraham calls the "resetting of the co-ordinates of political identities and social belonging, along the way debunking the fears that the Other is 'out to get us'" (2009, p. 94). The result of this "re-setting" would be, ideally, an acceptance, a celebration of, and increased pride in all our multifaceted identities.

Pride Events

In Canada, Pride Parades are ordinarily met with large enthusiastic crowds. The Toronto Pride Parade is one of the longest running and is the third largest Pride Parade in the world. Historically, city leadership has been extremely supportive, but first-term Mayor Rob Ford did not attend festivities and received extensive criticism for his absence (Huffington Post, 2011). Vancouver hosts the Pride Parade in British Columbia and has

been doing so for thirty-three years. Event participants often include political leaders from federal, provincial, and local levels, including the Chief of Police. The parade itself draws over 650,000 people and according to *Inside Vancouver's* Remy Scalza (2011) is one of the most festive family events in Vancouver each summer. Outside of urban centers, however, explicit support, events, and social justice education against homophobia in British Columbia is limited. Again, only 15 school districts, mostly urban, have sexual orientation policies. It is important these policies are put in place so our children learn that LGBT people are supported and that events like Pride parades in our communities are explicitly considered positive social events. Salt Spring Island held its' first Pride parade in 2008, Kelowna in 2010, and Kamloops in 2012.

Social Justice Education

In British Columbia, social justice education has taken a rather circuitous route. In addition to those expectations outlined in the School Act (BCED, 2008, p. 4), the school system is expected to promote values expressed in federal statutes such as the Constitution Act (1982), the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), the Official Languages Act (1985), the Employment Act (1996), and those in provincial statutes, including the Multiculturalism Act (1993), and the School Act (Revised 1996), and the BC Human Rights Code (1997), representing the right of individuals in accordance with the law. Within the School Act, a student "must comply with the code of conduct and other rules and policies of the board or the Provincial school" (School Act: Part 2 – Students and Parents: Section 6, (1) (b)). Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct were updated in 2007(a). School principals and leaders also have access to two other

documents, *Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework* (2008a) and *Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools: A Guide* (2008b).

> The B.C. Ministry of Education's Diversity framework:
>
> relies on a philosophy of equitable participation and an appreciation of the contributions of all people. It is a concept that refers both to our uniqueness as individuals and to our sense of belonging or identification within a group or groups" and "refers to the ways in which we differ from each other. Some of these differences may be visible (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability), while others are less visible (e.g. culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, socio-economic background). (2008a, p. 7)

The Safe Caring and Orderly Schools initiative (2008b) states school communities:

> share a commitment to maintaining safe, caring and orderly schools. They focus on prevention of problems and use school-wide efforts to build "community," fostering respect, inclusion, fairness and equity. They set, communicate and consistently reinforce clear expectations of acceptable conduct. They teach, model and encourage socially responsible behaviours that contribute to the school community, solve problems in peaceful ways, value diversity and defend human rights. (p. 9)

Other documents do exist under the Safe, Caring and Orderly schools program that deal with issues like cyber-bullying and sexual harassment. Most principals would likely comment that while the Ministry claims "safe schools" are a priority, limited funding has been earmarked for implementing the strategies outlined within these policy documents. Ironically, former Education Minister, Christy Clark (now premier) who was part of a

Safe School Task Force that came up with the Safe, Caring and Orderly schools program. Ms. Clark then returned to her work as a radio broadcaster, usurped a campaign started by high school students in Nova Scotia, David Shepherd and Travis Price, called it "Pink Shirt Day" and promoted the anti- bullying campaign as if she had come up with it. Then Premier Gordon Campbell even thanked her in a media release for starting it (Pink Shirt Day, 2009). On the positive side, funds raised from the t-shirt sales go to support Boys and Girls Clubs. None of it, though, specifically addresses homophobic bullying.

Many of these policies do little, however, to encourage community dialogue. I argue many school leaders have limited awareness of the connection between these documents to their districts, schools, or classrooms, let alone how they might assist in the promotion of social justice dialogue and initiatives in their districts. Passionate leadership, dialogue, and explicit promotion of social justice at upper management level, is still missing. In British Columbia, there has been little leadership from the top. Homophobia in B.C. public schools has been forced as an issue upon the government due to advocacy from the grassroots level, teachers, and other queer allies.

While the *Social Justice 12* program remains politically charged, the B.C. government also came out with *Making Space: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (BCED, 2008c). Again, though not explicit in the curriculum and little promoted, this policy document is intended to help classroom teachers open discussions about diversity in their classes, including sexual orientation.

The last mandatory course a student in B.C. schools takes that makes some social justice issues explicit is *Social Studies 11*. The closest this course comes to discussing homophobia or gay issues is the section on government structures which helps students

gain an understanding of Charter rights, political philosophies and parties, elections, and how to influence public policy. No explicit discussion of race, gender, family structure or sexual orientation is promoted.

Learning how to influence public policy, however, is critical to a social justice education. So much more needs to be done and educational leaders need to look below the surface, be courageous, overcome as many obstacles as possible, and ensure we create safe environments for all our students to learn. Educational leaders must be catalysts who encourage their circle of influence to act. Hannah Arendt said

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, not to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (1968, p. 196)

Renewing a common world means encouraging educational leaders who promote positive, inclusive, authentic, advocacy-based social justice practices in B.C. public schools. But we need to do more, and sooner, not later. The time is now.

In not becoming catalysts for change, we are leaving our queer families out in the cold. Educational leaders' awareness and attention focused on queer families in our school systems would go a long way to fight against homophobia. In our schools, every effort should be made to educate about alternative families. Learning that all families are

not the same at a younger age would assist in greater acceptance as children grow up. A focus on values families have in common, such as the health and well-being of loved ones and the freedoms and rights deserved by all persons, is also necessary. Same-gender families would feel welcome attending Parent Advisory Councils, parent-teacher-student nights, concerts, sports events, and other school activities. But when they know stereotypes are promoted, they will fear entering the doors of the school. Different types of spousal relationships, extended, and biological family arrangements can be taught and supported by principals.

In British Columbia, steps were made along this path on December 20, 2002, when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the case of Chamberlain et al. v. Surrey School Board. James Chamberlain, a gay kindergarten teacher, wanted to use the books *Belinda's Bouquet*; *Asha's Mums*; *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads*. The Surrey School District banned the books because they depicted same-sex parents. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled 7-2 that the School Board had been wrong to ban the books because of their same-sex content. The court said the books promoted tolerance and that "tolerance is always age-appropriate", and directed the School Board to reconsider the use of the books in accordance with "the broad principles of tolerance and non-sectarianism underlying the BC School Act" (BCTF, 2006-2011). The legal fight around these books opened up conversations that also need attention, for example, that LGBTTIQQ families are not all the same. In other words, they are no different in the diversity of their opinions than heterosexual families. They have differing voices, come from multi-ethnic families, may have children with special needs, may be adopted, may need assistance in raising their children, and want to feel welcome at our schools.

Educational Leadership for Social Justice

Educational leadership is a hot topic as we begin the 21st century. According to Tony Bush (2007), there is "widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a difference to school and student outcomes," and "educational leadership … has to be centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education" (p. 391). To that end, what is the role of the principal? How does one lead for social justice? Most people would answer that the principal is the leader of the school. But what does that mean? It is the top position in the school, but position is not, in itself, leadership. Many would say principals are managers, running the "plant" by making sure the roof does not leak, toilets do not overflow, and bells ring at the correct time. However, this is only a tiny aspect of the position. Management is not leadership. Many would state principals are administrators who look after the paperwork and fill their day with emails, voicemails, Ministry forms, School Board information requests, and generate mounds and mounds of paper, overheads, graphs, and statistics. Administration is also not leadership. Leadership is a state of mind. Gardner says leaders

> [t]hink longer term…beyond the daily crisis. They look beyond their own unit and grasp its relationship to larger realities. They reach and influence constituents beyond their immediate jurisdictions. They put heavy emphasis on visions and values and other intangible concepts related to interaction with followers. They have political skills that allow them to work with multiple constituencies. They think in terms of renewal. (Gardner, 1990, p. 4)

Leaders must not be afraid of change. In fact, true leaders must welcome it. Many people are afraid of change, especially when the proposed change affects personal lives

or jobs and results in increased anxiety, uncertainty, and fear. In addition, organizational and environmental influences may cause leaders to stagnate.

In school districts, principals may have been selected for the position because they would maintain the status quo through guaranteeing no change. The economy may impact their new vision as change in some schools requires financial input for professional development. Politicians may hold different values. Representation in groups, committees, and councils may not be reflective of the actual school community. Birth rates may be decreasing. The parent advisory group may oppose the views and proposals of the Board of Education. Religious beliefs and school choice may have children and their families choosing to attend alternative educational choices. Something that happens on the World Wide Web may bring international attention and focus to your district such as the posting of a student fight. Board members may worry about being reelected and, therefore, resist moving forward and making hard decisions such as closing schools. Often, lack of clear and open communication is at the root of any educational change. Procrastination, fear, and worry are indeed part of the educational leadership experience. All of these concerns can be used as barriers or excuses for resisting or negating positive change.

According to Witherspoon (1997), "Effective leaders understand this phenomenon and marshal ongoing attempts to renewal with attention to communicating continuously to followers the reasons, strategies, and desired results of renewal" (p. 3). Witherspoon (1997) argues a leader is an educator in "the management of meaning … one who leads others 'out of' ignorance" (p. 7). This needs to be done in 21st century organizations.

Witherspoon (1997) claims postmodern organizations include flexible structures, clear missions, have diffuse and fuzzy boundaries, and have transformational and situational leadership. Oral communication may be mediated through teleconferencing or voicemail, and labour is rewarded with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (p. 43). This goes against most school leadership literature which is rather prescriptive and indicates why principals are afraid to step up to the true meaning of leadership. Too little time is offered as an excuse. Principals claim they have too much to do already; they respond to parents, report cards, provincial exams, accountability, after-school activities, and potential ostracism by colleagues. These are the reasons or excuses for some educational leaders not becoming advocates for change. But organizations are becoming more global in scope and that includes B.C. public schools. My original intent was to find, despite oppressive systems, micro-politics, and myriad excuses, true 21st century educational leadership destined to overcome obstacles. I hoped to discover that those in leadership positions in B.C. public schools in this district were catalysts for enormous positive change in how our children see the world and are received in that world. Sadly, I was naïve. We all need to reflect on our practice and embrace a more critical leadership perspective.

Critical approaches such as Anderson (2009) and Ryan (1998) are occupied with finding ways to help schools improve the life situations of disadvantaged groups and individuals. They advance the value and practice of social justice, democracy, and equity. The late entry of critical approaches into the leadership arena has provided a valuable alternative for those interested in pursuing social justice issues.

Anderson (2009) declares

school leaders are incorporated into a narrow testing paradigm that believes that a combination of high stakes testing and marketizing education provision will solve problems that are essentially social, not only educational. Unless, a paradigm shift occurs in which leadership is viewed as a form of advocacy, we can expect educational leaders to continue to be largely timid legitimators of an unequal status quo. (p. 184)

Ryan (1998) mentions that, over the last decade, practitioners and scholars have emphasized the inability of our educational institutions to adequately address the issues associated with race and ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual preference. Ryan points out how young men and women who find themselves on the least-valued side of these categories experience disadvantages in schools (p. 258). This situation requires action and leadership if such forms of discrimination are going to be eliminated. Anderson (2009) and Ryan (1998) are supported by many other researchers promoting the need for socially-just school leadership. Bruccoleri, Lund, and Anderson's (2009) work suggests a new type of leader is needed. The emancipatory leader must be committed to achieving social justice, as one who seeks to learn from a wide range of knowledge, including educational leadership, curriculum instruction, learning theory, political theory, and cultural studies (p. 20).

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that for principals to fully understand why knowledge of LGBTTIQQ issues is important, we need to take a reflective look at the experiences of members of the LGBTTIQQ community. To do so, we examined phobias, history, various contexts within the last century, and some of the reasons why this research is important. Schools remain unsafe places for LGBTTIQQ

students, parents, staff, and administrators. Homophobia and heterosexism are problems with deep roots.

> I think there is a norm that is HUGE in elementary schools, that families have a
> mom and a dad, and that their children will grow up to be heterosexual. And that
> is the norm, and that is the right way. That is being reinforced all throughout a
> child's day through books we read, math problems, language. (Denton, 2009, p.
> 192)

By middle and high school other more dangerous patterns emerge. While unexcused truancy among straight students increases from 7% to 14% by high school, LGBTQ students begin skipping school at a rate of 22% during middle years and stay at that level right through high school.

> From an equity and opportunity-to-learn perspective, the data suggest that
> LGBTQ-identified students are not being exposed to new material as consistently
> as straight-identified students are because of the higher level of unexcused
> absences among LGBTQ youth. These lower levels of belongingness and higher
> levels of truancy are particularly pronounced in middle school; thus early
> intervention may be crucial. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that
> LGBTQ youth are disproportionately the victims of bullying, which can further
> impede learning…. (Robinson & Espelage, 2011, p. 326)

Iris Marion Young (1990) says the remedy for hetero-normative domination and oppression is "to dismantle the hierarchy" and that to move things forward "we require real participatory structures in which actual people, with their geographical, ethnic, gender, and occupation differences, assert their perspectives on social issues within

institutions [schools] that encourage the representation of their distinct voices" (p. 116).

One participatory structure is theatre. Ethnodramatist Johnny Saldaña (2011) states, "twenty-first century perceptions of reality are multiple, ambiguous, contested, and complex…Theatre is a democratic forum for multiple and diverse voices and spectators to assemble and experience particular renderings about the human condition" (p. 213). It is through their combined lens that I will analyze my data. The voices of principals will be analyzed and deconstructed to assist our current and future educational leaders listen to voices of currently invisible LGBTTIQQ groups in our schools.

If we are to move away from the current North American education system of power, which continues to come from a perspective of "Euro-heteropatriarchal dominance" (Denton, 2009, p. 58), educational leaders need to engage with the experiences of LGBTTIQQ community members and transform their schools into inclusive, socially-just places.

In 2008, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), along with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, released an empirical study entitled: *The Principal's Perspective: School Safety, Bullying and Harassment*. The study involved a survey of public school principals and concluded "the majority of principals reported that their school or district policies do not specifically provide protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression" and "that their professional development efforts during the past year addressed bullying and harassment, yet few say these address LGBT issues specifically" (p. iv).

In researching this topic, I tried to find others doing doctoral research in this particular area. Vowels' (2005) study entitled, *Assessing Principals' Perceptions of*

Heterosexism and Homophobia in a Large Urban Public School District, examines the position of American citizens in identifying and dealing with issues of diversity, specifically focused on protection for LGBTTIQQ youth in the public school system. Vowels took a sample population of 222 principals from a large southern urban school district in which nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation was part of district policy and surveyed them to explore their knowledge of (LGBT) issues within their schools. Vowels' study exposes the lack of knowledge those principals have in their perception of LGBT inclusion and awareness issues. I found no other studies dealing specifically with principals' perceptions of homophobia.

In Canada, a study that delves into the knowledge principals and vice-principals have regarding homophobia is long overdue. Sadly, I have found that much needs to be done. There is little explicit, readily available, guidance for principals and vice-principals regarding the way forward in social justice and anti-homophobia in our school district. While students, teachers, and individuals at the grassroots level have been struggling to get LGBTQ voices heard, educational leaders need to take a stand now. If we truly believe in socially just schools and equality for all of our students, staff, parents and families, then we need to know about the experiences of our LGBTTIQQ community members. We need to make them visible in our daily lives and thoughts. Research on how our educational leaders understand and respond can help us create more catalysts for fighting the oppression of heterosexism and overcome the obstacles that continue to support homophobia in our schools.

Chapter Three: Setting the Stage

Given the history and experiences of LGBTTIQQ persons, it is only appropriate to bring to life some of the experiences both principals and LGBTTIQQ students go through on a daily basis. Sometimes we do not notice the situations right in front of us. Given the multifaceted tasks principals deal with, it is easy to dismiss the student eating lunch alone, the depressed look on a normally happy kid, or even pass on dealing with the rude remark you just heard as you rush back to your office to grab a call from a parent. To that end, this chapter will explain my chosen research methodology, my experience with that methodology, and why I believe it is relevant. Explanation will also be provided for participant recruitment, a mini "remembered" ethnodrama and analysis for demonstration purposes, an explanation about the writing of the script, and creation of characters. Insight will be offered about the who, what, where, why, when and how, of the ethnodrama; and the steps one would take to read-through, rehearse, and perform the play.

What is Ethnodrama?

There are many qualitative research methodologies to choose from. In this case, I used a form of writing and research dissemination known as ethnodrama. Ethnodrama joins both the words, ethnography and drama, and is a written play "solidly rooted in nonfictional, researched reality" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 14). Multiple data sources are used in the final writing of ethnodrama scripts.

> It is a written play script consisting of dramatized, significant selections of
> narrative collected from interview transcripts, participant observation field notes,
> journal entries, personal memories/experiences, and/or print and media artifacts

such as diaries, blogs, e-mail correspondence, television broadcasts, newspaper

articles, court proceedings, and historic documents.   In some cases, production

companies can work improvisationally and collaboratively to devise original and

interpretive texts based on authentic sources.   Simply put, this is dramatizing the

data. (p. 13)

In recent decades, other areas like health care have begun to use methodological

approaches that join theatre and ethnography as tools for "knowledge translation"

(Rossiter & Godderis, 2011, p. 652). Theatre can be used to educate and inform

audiences about the complexity and nuance involved in tackling a human rights issue

such as homophobia. Rossiter and Godderis say,

Theater provides a means to (1) explore both lived experience and cultural

practices from multiple, embodied perspectives, (2) move research findings into

broader spheres, making research accessible to new audiences that might not have

otherwise engaged with scholarly activity and, crucially, (3) equip audiences with

the conceptual and narrative tools necessary to engage in informed dialogue and

critical thought. (2011, p. 653)

New ways of communicating important research are being found through ethnodrama.

"Scholars have enriched the field of performance ethnography theoretically,

methodologically, and empirically by exploring the boundaries and intersections between

ethnographic and theatrical work" (Rossiter and Godderis, 2011, p. 656). In the end, this

ethnodrama should move participants to engage in a more thorough ethical discussion

around homophobia in our schools.

Background Experience with Ethnodrama

I have had the privilege of directing two ethnodramas. The first, for the Kelowna Women's Resource Centre, was Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* (2001). It is now a well-known ethnodrama using verbatim, composed, and composite monologues from interviews with over 200 women about their views of sex, relationships and violence against women. The second was James Still's, *And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank* (1996). I directed this production for Night Owl Theatre and can say it was one of the most moving experiences of my life. In the play, actors on the stage interact with video-taped interviews with Holocaust survivors Ed Silverberg and Eva Schloss. Ed was Anne Frank's first boyfriend (described in her diary) and Eva was the same age as Anne. After the war, her mother married Otto Frank, Anne's father. This play was a combination of interviews, dramatic action, direct address, and remembrance. It was based on interviews, documentary films, fiction and non-fiction books about the Holocaust, as well as a visit to Amsterdam. The students participating in the production were emotionally impacted by their new understandings of the realities of the Holocaust.

Prior to the opening night performance, the students got to meet a Holocaust survivor, Alex Buckman, from the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver, and cried at his personal story. After meeting Alex and hearing his story, the young man who was cast as a Nazi superior told Alex he was sorry and embarrassed to be playing his role. The Holocaust survivor asked him to play it as authentically as he could because only then would the audience understand the experiences of Anne Frank and her family. Audience members honoured the cast with standing ovations, tears, and many personal

stories of their own families' experiences during the war. All the students voluntarily attended Remembrance Day ceremonies with the Holocaust survivor. Many of the students wrote to Mr. Buckman and said they would never let future generations forget what they had learned from him and their participation in this production. This is relevant to my current study because I am profoundly aware of the potential ethnodrama carries for catalytic change.

The Vagina Monologues inspired the creation of the V-Day movement, a global activist campaign to end violence against women and girls. To date, over 140 countries have gotten involved and raised over $85 million to help end violence and serve survivors. On a smaller scale, *And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank* has helped educate many young people from the U.S. to Canada and Japan to Australia about the horrors of the Holocaust, a time period with few survivors left to tell their stories. Those experiences will live on through ethnodrama and not be forgotten.

With the creation of *Do We Really Need to Discuss This?,* the ethnodrama based on my research, if I am able to impact only one district, community, school, or educational leader, I will have created catalytic change in at least one LGBTTIQQ person's life. My previous experience with ethnodrama leads me to believe the construction of my own ethnodrama requires a basis in realistic experiences and choices rather than fictionalized ones. Living human beings spoke the majority of the words used in my script. The words are not fictionalized. This *reality* is what makes *The Vagina Monologues* and the inclusion of authentic videotaped interviews with Holocaust survivors in James Still's piece so powerful. This is a personal aesthetic choice. For example, ethnodramatist Diane Conrad (2012) fictionalized her play *Athabasca's Going*

Unmanned "for dramatic effect and for ethical reasons," most of which I am sure are to protect the incarcerated, largely Aboriginal youth whom she was researching at a very specific setting (p. xii). That choice in her situation was correct and I would have done the same. The youth in my study are from a larger selection across Canada and are not likely to be easily identified; however, whether an ethnodrama is set in a youth corrections centre or generic principal's offices, it is critical the audience understands the setting. While the principals' offices in the ethnodrama will be rather "neutral", the district of the actual study is more specific.

Setting

This qualitative critical research-based study took place in a small district in British Columbia, Canada. The district includes three major centres and six First Nation communities. In total, there are nine elementary schools, one middle school, and three high schools. The K-12 public education system in this region currently serves approximately 4300 students and covers several smaller communities.

All of the schools embrace a variety of programs such as Restorative and Restitution practices, Tribes, Second Step and Roots of Empathy and have spent time in recent years updating Codes of Conduct.

Unacceptable conduct includes:

1. Abuse: physical, verbal, or psychological, including; fighting, bullying, harassing, threatening, intimidating, extorting, or showing intolerance on the basis of an individual's or a group's race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, sex, or sexual orientation, dress, or other perceived differences. This includes whether or not the abuse occurs in person,

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via cell phone, the internet, or any other wireless communication.

This excerpt is from my previous school's Code of Conduct. The school has come a long way since 2006 when the first item of unacceptable offences was listed as theft. The current Code of Conduct now follows the Guidelines of the B.C. Human Rights Act and the specific types of abuse are extremely helpful when individual incidents come up. The Code of Conduct, while not a deterrent in its own right, opens up a lot of positive conversations with children and parents.

Anti-homophobia practices, although positioned inside both sexual orientation and anti-bullying expectations, are not explicit. At the district level, there is no specific anti-homophobia or sexual orientation policy. My hope is that the true value of my research lies in the positive outcomes it might have for educational leaders and the school community at large. By using ethnography and drama, I hope to engage other educational leaders in discussing what Goldstein (2008) refers to as the "exciting possibilities for responding to postmodern challenges to realist ethnography and for representing educational and schooling dilemmas facing Other people's children" (p. 87). Ultimately, I want an explicit anti-homophobia and sexual orientation policy in our district. As an initial step, I felt it important to seek out educational leaders who would be willing to discuss the topic of homophobia in our district.

Recruitment: Volunteer Policy Leaders

Once my proposal received support from the then superintendent of the school district, and approval by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB), I proceeded to inform potential interviewees. I announced at one of the Principals' and Vice Principals' Association meetings that I was looking for K-12 public school

administrators to volunteer to participate in a study about how B.C. school district leaders respond to homophobia in schools. I was overwhelmed with the response following the meeting in person, by phone, or via email. Over twenty members volunteered. In the end, I went with the first six principals and vice-principals who indicated interest. All those interviewed are educational leaders in British Columbia. They were chosen by Boards of Education, each having significant power to influence district and school operations, personnel, parents, and students who attend their schools. They are the policy leaders within their district and schools and are, therefore, appropriate for qualitative research exploring how individual school-based educational leaders respond to homophobia. The interviewees came from both elementary and secondary schools, were made up of equal numbers of men and women, offered a range of administration experience (from two to thirty-plus years), and represented all three communities involved. All six possess Master's degrees in education, covering topics ranging from teacher job satisfaction, educational technology, distributed learning, instructional intelligence, to educational leadership. Should any one participant decide to back out of the process, I had more than enough willing participants to substitute.

I have known each of the participants for at least six years and have worked with them through the district association and on district committees; and I am grateful for their time and openness to say what might make them vulnerable. In fact, if I had any concerns, they would not have been selected. Their integrity and trust was crucial for an accurate analysis of the data. Creswell (2007), states, "the interviewer needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas" (p. 133) and that "issue-oriented questions are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and

especially, personal contexts" (p.109). I realize that I do not "know" the participants so well that I have their "story straight" (Barone, 2002, p. 260); however, none of the participants asked for something to be "off the record" or for me to leave something out. I sensed during one interview that the interviewee wanted to tell me more about their own personal situation. I came back to that feeling at the end of the interview. This "feeling" will be discussed later in the analysis process.

Each of the six participants received an Invitation to Participate (Appendix B) and an Individual Interview Consent Form (Appendix C). A consent form highlighted the option to withdraw at any time, as well as the purpose of and procedures to be used in the study. Participants were assured of confidentiality and informed about any known risks and/or expected benefits from participating in the study. The participants were informed in writing that "excerpts from transcripts would be used in a manner that protects the identity of participants" (Appendix C). Of course, no one can guarantee absolute anonymity. Although pseudonyms are used in the ethnodrama, it may be possible for others to detect who the participants are due to the small size of the district, recognition of speech patterns, or simply by being told by the participants themselves; I have, however, attempted to remain true to the intent. The consent form required both the participant's and my signature.

Individual interviews took place between September 27, 2010 and October 25, 2010, but as some administrators' schedules and demands dictated, a few interviews occurred in November, 2010. Participants in interviews were given an interview guide featuring two real-life scenarios, an anti-homophobia poster campaign used with permission from Fondation Émergence, an anti-homophobia campaign out of Quebec,

and a list of open-ended questions to preview (Appendix A). These questions were delivered at least one week ahead of the scheduled interview. The interviews were semi-structured and pre-organized into categories to assist with the thought process and analysis. For example, when the pressure was off the participants from answering "attitude" based questions to providing knowledge of "policy and procedure" information, individual principals and vice-principals gave more fact-based answers and, therefore, offered less of a personal value-based response. The interviews were approximately one to two hours in length, depending on the participant's answers. The interviews were held at a time and place of the participants' choosing. Participants received a transcript of their interview and had an opportunity to readdress their answers, either by email, phone, or in person. Again, all responses were used as part of the study. Participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study at any time. However, they were informed that data collected up to and including the point of withdrawal would be used in the study. Personal information, such as names, social insurance numbers, or any other private information, was not used in the study. At all times, participants remained anonymous and were referred to only as Principal 1, Principal 2, etc. in transcripts. In the data presentation and data analysis, I have given all six principals pseudonyms. The names chosen represent no one in particular. Data was collected using audio recording devices and notes. All data, written and audio, were backed up and will be stored by the researcher for seven years and then destroyed.

While some answers were certainly influenced by the fact they were being recorded, I do not believe the recording of the interviews in any way negatively affected participant answers. All participants remained calm and relaxed and none exhibited

nervousness, agitation, or fear. None asked me to stop and start the recorder at any time. A challenge to validity with interview use is the concept of "bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation" (Yin, 2007, p. 109). I do not believe this was the case largely because questions were asked for opinions, thoughts, experiences, and did not seek historic data, such as dates and times, and no one was accused of anything.   Most were clearly aware of current policy and programs offered within the district and had no difficulty articulating their thoughts around those matters. Participants largely believed they are doing their best for kids and would never consider themselves biased against children, whether straight or gay, in any way. Given the nature of the topic, it is highly unlikely that someone would volunteer to discuss homophobia in their schools if they had something to hide. Although one person clearly had difficulty coming to terms with the subject, they did not hesitate to participate.

If I had asked different people, might I have obtained different answers? Most certainly, I would have obtained different answers. Different because each person brings their own history, experience, thoughts, and feelings regarding homophobia; however, I feel the representation is still valid as our students' experiences are similar no matter where you are in the province. While our district is small, we certainly cover the entire range of rich to poor, Canadian born to immigrants from twenty-four countries within the district, from trades to post-secondary bound students, various religions and beliefs, and from straight to LGBTTIQQ. I would argue the three diverse communities are reflective of most communities in the province. In fact, I would further speculate this study is broadly representative of many principals around the province of British Columbia (with the exception, perhaps, of major urban centres) and, likely, represents principals and vice-

principals well beyond provincial borders as well. If this were not true, I believe the topic of this dissertation would have been done before and there would be no need for me to complete it. All B.C. public school principals and vice-principals would be confident, well-versed, and prepared to react and respond to homophobia in their schools. Sadly, this does not appear to be the case. A more critical look at this issue is clearly needed.

My role as researcher is of an "indigenous insider" (Banks, 1998, p. 7). I am a practitioner researcher who wants to blend theory and practice, to work collaboratively with principals and vice-principals to help them, and myself, reflect on practice, and help educators have the confidence to "act" in their world. Therefore, this study is a qualitative critical research-based study framed by my own worldview as a principal, co-leader, and collaborator in finding solutions to recognizing, acknowledging, and addressing social justice issues around homophobia in our district. The data is presented and analyzed from a social justice perspective through ethnodrama.

Ethnodrama provides a reflective and critical framework to examine the decisions made by school–based leaders when facing the challenges of social justice issues in B.C. public schools, particularly those embedded in sexual orientation. School-based leaders were interviewed in order to give them a "space" to describe their perceptions of and experience with educational leadership in the area of social justice and homophobia. I argue that most educational leaders are silenced when it comes to social justice issues due to their complex position in the middle of personal, legal, religious, governmental, district, parental, community, and student tensions. For some, this may be the first time they have ever been asked specifically about the topic of homophobia.

Mini "Remembered" Ethnodrama of Homophobic Experience at My School

A parent calls to say she needs to speak to me, the principal. She wants to address some "rumours" that have been in the community for years about her daughter's teacher. She is concerned that the teacher has a photograph on the wall of her classroom of her 'partner' and is talking about her opinions on marriage and not teaching Math. What am I going to do about it?

A meeting is set up and the worried mother, her daughter, the math teacher, the school counselor and I are present. At the last minute the mother decides she does not want her daughter in the room and her daughter waits in the multi-purpose room.

(At this point in the meeting, the Parent is not looking at Ms. "Y" who is sitting beside her. The counselor and I are on the other side of the table. We are in the counseling suite. All names are pseudonyms except the principal. The events are real.)

PRINCIPAL: Hi, I would like to thank you all for meeting today. If you don't mind, I think it would be beneficial for us to introduce ourselves rather than assume. I am Christine Perkins, principal at XYZ school. *(Gesture to counselor at my right)*

COUNSELLOR: I am Ms. Smith. I am the counsellor at XYZ School. Pleased to meet you.

TEACHER: I am Ms. "Y", your daughter's Math teacher.

PARENT: I am Mrs. Jones.

PRINCIPAL: Thank you. I felt it was important that we all got together and met each other face to face. I believe Mrs. Jones has some serious concerns and I wanted you to hear the answers directly from those involved. Sometimes these issues are best settled when we are face to face with the person or people we have concerns

about. I would like to suggest that we hold nothing back and agree to be open and honest as this is a sensitive conversation and real lives are involved. Mrs. Jones, would you like to begin by sharing your first concern and, hopefully, between the three of us here, we will be able to assist in the most straight-forward manner possible?

PARENT: (*Not looking Ms. "Y" in the eye)* I am concerned about rumours over the past four years that Ms. "Y" is gay and because Ms. "Y" has been telling my Grade 8 daughter's class that she does not believe in marriage.

PRINCIPAL: First, those are not rumours, Mrs. Jones. In fact, Ms. "Y" is gay.

PARENT: (*Still not looking at Ms. "Y")* Why is she talking about this in Math class?

PRINCIPAL: Perhaps Ms. "Y," you would like to answer that question.

TEACHER: I am a mountain climber and I have a photograph of my partner and myself on top of a mountain on my wall. I never draw attention to it, but inevitably, a few weeks after school starts the kids get more comfortable in my class and they get more inquisitive. They ask me who it is. I never lie to them.

PARENT: (*Still not looking at Ms. "Y")* But why do you tell them you don't believe in marriage. Why are you not teaching Math? Why do you have the picture up in the first place?

PRINCIPAL: Mrs. Jones, as you know, many people have photos of their loved ones on their desks in the work place.   I have picture of both my girls and my husband on my desk. People are proud of their families and it helps teachers and Administrators make connections with kids. They see us as real human beings with families and it helps open up dialogue. At this age, it is critical that we make

those connections with teens. No harm is ever meant by someone having a photograph on the desk or on the wall. Naturally, children are curious and they want to get to know their teachers just as we want to get to know them.

PARENT: (*Still not looking at Ms. "Y")* I don't know why you have to enter into a conversation about marriage, though.

TEACHER: Well, the kids always ask if we are married. I answer honestly that I am not. I never say I don't believe in marriage. I say it's not right for me. There are many different types of families out there and the kids know that. We talk about the many types of families there are for a few minutes and then we move quickly back to Math. It rarely comes up again, but I hope that if there is a young person out there who is afraid or concerned in any way about being gay, that they see me as an advocate. At the very least, many years down the road, they might look back and realize I was there for them.

PARENT: *(Looking straight across the table at the principal)* Well, my daughter and her friends were at my house after school the other day. They said that Ms. "Y" stares at my daughter in class. This makes her feel uncomfortable.

PRINCIPAL: It has been my experience with young teens that one wrong look and they think you are mad at them. The next day they just ignore you, and the next day, they read into every gesture you make again. They are sensitive at this age and they watch us adults like hawks. They are looking for us to care. They are looking for us to accept them. If your mind is on something else and you zone out into space for a brief second that alone can be misconstrued as staring. I have

been observing in Ms. "Y"'s class for many years now. She does not stare at her students.

PARENT: My daughter says she stares in a different way.

PRINCIPAL: Let me be more direct then. You are interpreting your daughter as saying Ms. "Y" stares at her in a sexual way. Is that correct?

PARENT: Yes.

PRINCIPAL: I appreciate your concern. I understand your fear. But let me ease your mind. Ms. "Y" is in a very loving relationship with her partner. All of us here at XYZ school know her partner very well. Ms. "Y" has absolutely no interest in your daughter.   Let me also assure you that Ms. "Y" is one of our most competent and regarded teachers. Her results in Mathematics are above the provincial average year in and year out. I would like to suggest that after this meeting you and your daughter might have a candid conversation about all of her concerns.

COUNSELLOR: Sometimes students are curious. If you would like your daughter to come and see me, I can make some time available. We have lots of brochures and resources available that might help answer her questions. This is important at this age, when sometimes they feel more comfortable talking about sexuality with someone other than their parents. Your daughter is always welcome in my office.

TEACHER: *(Shifting her own body to turn and face Mrs. Jones. This forces Mrs. Jones to turn and face the teacher)* Mrs. Jones, I have no interest, in a sexual way, in any of my students. I pride myself on being a highly professional expert Math teacher. I want them to love Math. Your daughter is a good Math student and she

is a lovely girl. She is a little chatty at times *(This causes the mother to laugh),* but I have only her best interests at heart.

PARENT: *(Continuing to face Ms."Y")* Thank you.   She is my eldest daughter and some of this is new to me as a parent.   I don't agree with your choice of lifestyle, but now that I have met you, it is easier for me to understand how the conversation came up and my daughter does like you as a teacher. If we can agree to disagree, then I feel comfortable knowing she is well supported in Math by a good Math teacher who cares for her.

PRINCIPAL: Mrs. Jones, are there any other concerns you would like to share?

PARENT: No, I think I am satisfied now.

PRINCIPAL: Thank you so much for coming in today, Mrs. Jones. Thank you also to Ms. "Y" and Mrs. Smith for your time. It takes courage to come forward and address "difficult conversations" head on, but I appreciate all of you for doing so. Mrs. Jones, please feel free to contact any of us, at any time, via phone, email, or in person. *(Hands are shaken all around and the parent leaves the building)*

Analysis of Mini "Remembered" Ethnodrama

I title this a "remembered" ethnodrama because the incident comes from memory and was not recorded when it occurred. The result of this "remembered" ethnodrama for me was that the parent had to look Ms. "Y" in the eyes and realize Ms. "Y" was not some horrible monster.   Gay and lesbian teachers have been unjustly labeled as pedophiles. In this incident, the Principal surfaced one hidden fear, that of the teacher as a sexual predator. With the joint action of the Principal naming it, the Counsellor offering a safe space for the daughter to talk, and the teacher feeling support, the teacher now had

confidence to assert her humanity to Mrs. Jones and reassure her of her professional

identity as a Math teacher. However, it was done in a way where the parent would feel

supported by having both the school counselor and principal present.

The teacher, Ms. "Y", was initially upset and did not want to attend the meeting,

but I managed to convince her this would be beneficial for her too. She would also feel

fully supported knowing that the counselor, who also happens to be the union

representative at our school, and me, the principal, would be there to support her. When

Mrs. Jones finally told Ms. "Y" that she did not agree with her "lifestyle," it was not done

in a malicious way. The parent was smiling and displayed open inviting body language.

The teacher in question did not appear to take offence. I believe some conversations

must be held in person – not via email or over the phone – or worse yet, ignored. In

addition, you have to create an environment where everyone feels safe and is treated with

dignity and respect. I saw this scenario and experience as an opportunity to lead from a

pedagogical perspective. I was purposely teaching everyone at the table by role-

modeling how I would like "difficult conversations" handled at our school. I am also

aware that my interactions as an educational leader are spoken about later, perhaps to

other staff, students, parents and District and Board of Education personnel. I used this

scenario as part of my research (see Appendix A) to learn how other educational leaders

might respond to a similar situation. In other words, even though I analyzed it here,

others may perform or read aloud the scenario to add to the discussion about how to

handle this particular instance of homophobia.

Ethnodrama: The Process of Transforming Ethnographic Data into Scripts and

Drama

Ethnodrama is also known as "performance ethnography" (Denzin, 2003), or

"performed ethnography" (e.g. Brunner, 1999; Gallagher, 2006; Goldstein, 2003, 2006,

2007; Mienczakowski, 1997; Sykes and Goldstein, 2004). Saldaña identifies over eighty

other terms that can be used for this type of study (2011, pp. 13-14). From docudrama to

metatheatre, from performance inquiry to transcription theatre, whatever it is called,

ethnodrama is "solidly rooted in nonfictional, researched reality," or an individual's own

experience (2011, p. 14). Many professional organizations embrace and endorse the arts

as legitimate interests of members who integrate traditional research with human

participants and expressive forms of documentation and reportage. Saldaña cites the

American Educational Research Association, the American Counseling Association, and

the American Anthropological Association as examples (2011, p.16). Ultimately, the

ethnodrama is read aloud by a group of participants or performed publicly to inspire

further discussion and learning. In other words, the analysis is never finished. Goldstein

(2008) says, "The incorporation of audience input can help create more ethical

relationships between researchers, their research participants, and the communities to

which research participants belong by providing an opportunity for mutual analysis" (p.

85). But before all this occurs, an ethnodrama must be created.

In writing an ethnodrama, some playwrights "preserve the precise language of the

interviewee" maintaining a *verbatim approach*, others take the unedited material and

"select portions of and rearrange the original text" into a more aesthetically shaped

adaptation, and still others may "develop an *original* dramatic composition based on or

inspired by raw interview material. A *composite character* may be created when several interviews with different participants refer to similar themes or stories" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 17). Ethnodrama is my chosen method of demonstrating and analyzing my data and telling the principals' and vice-principals' stories. By using this arts-based methodology, I hope to "decolonize the power relations inherent in the presentation of the Other" (Gallagher, 2008, p. 87). In this case, I hope to show how principals as school leaders have a lot of power and are capable of making lives quite different if they lead from a social justice perspective. For example, how different would an LGBTTIQQ students' life be if their principal announced at an assembly or in front of a class, "It's okay to be gay"? Using ethnodrama to get the message across, I believe, is more likely to influence educational leaders than preaching a prescriptive program or "guilting" people concerning current behaviour. I believe theatre can be educative and potentially transformative for principals and their future relationship with LGBTTIQQ families, staff, and youth. As a straight, privileged, white female my intention is to represent the voices of educational leaders and LGBTTIQQ students so as to do no further harm to those I am hoping to protect: students, staff, and families in the LGBTTIQQ community. "The subjects benefit through the creation of voice and space that gives evidence of the ultimate value of their existence" and, finally, "an audience will gain a switched position as they ponder 'what it is to be them [subjects] and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes'" (Cho & Trent, 2009, p. 8). In fact, I am hoping to inspire some catalytic change in our schools through what Lather (1986) calls a "reality-altering impact" (p. 272).

Writing the Script

Writing the ethnodrama involved selecting portions of and making decisions around rearranging the original research data into a more aesthetically shaped *adaptation* of reality. Some responses are in a different sequence than when originally recorded, and they certainly are put together with others' responses in an order reflective of the themed questions. Interspersing the student comments reminds performers and listeners about whom we are talking and why we are doing this work.

For the purposes of this research, I have used ethnodrama to bring all six interviewees together on the same stage in six different "school offices." This is my construct. From this moment forward, I take full responsibility for the "creation" of the script and "reuse" of the data. While participants' words are used verbatim, it is possible, even likely, that if they had been interviewed together and as a group, they may have responded differently upon hearing the response of others. There are costs and benefits to all decisions.

There are definite costs and benefits trying to facilitate change using an ethnodrama methodology. The amalgamation of principals' voices will likely require that some parts of the script go un- or under-analyzed or be open to others to analyze and interpret. As Rossiter and Godderis say, "Designing the narrative with the script is not secondary to the process of analysis, it is the process of the analysis" (2011, p. 674). While I will not be able to cover every angle, I do believe that over time most of the script will be further interpreted. I expect to be pleasantly surprised with what resonates with certain individuals or audiences at workshops in relation to what I believe will resonate. Having this method open to others to interpret is a huge benefit because it

carries on or opens up the discussion, brings in other's perspectives, and reaches my goal

of getting principals and other educational leaders discussing the issue of homophobia in

our schools. Remember, my intention is not to lay blame for principals' individual

perceptions of homophobia in our schools, but rather achieve what Goldstein (2012)

describes as the desires and goals of "many research informed theatre projects: to raise

awareness, propose alternatives, provide healing, and inspire change" (p. 8). I also see

theatre as a place for social activism and selecting a few amalgamated voices with twenty

or more in depth questions and responses provides a more nuanced story compared to

using two hundred participants with only four or five responses. If you count each

student's voice as one student, however, my study includes over thirty-six participants.

Amalgamating the student voices into one actor or casting them individually is a

director's choice. The script is designed by the writer.

Once transcribed, I entered what Cho and Trent (2009) refers to as "Stage 1:

Preperformance: Imaginative Performance as ongoing textual rehearsal" (p. 9). "The

focus of imaginative rehearsal is on making the voices of subjects relational and

evocative" as I construct texts as scripts (p. 9). To do this, I had to complete what

Madison calls "three steps to transit ethnographic data to performance script (1) deciding

what narratives to leave in or out, (2) ordering and juxtaposing the narratives selected,

and (3) grouping them into major internal themes" (as cited in Cho and Trent, 2009, p.

10). By doing this, I hope to enlighten other principals about the human rights work we

still need to do to support our LGBTTIQQ students and their families; shed light on some

of the perceptions and misperceptions principals have regarding the "real" experiences of

LGBTTIQQ persons in their schools; and ultimately support school administrators and

educational leaders who are LGBTTIQQ allies to work toward social change and the implementation of policy initiatives relevant to LGBTTIQQ persons in our school district and beyond.

At the time, I was also following Creswell's (2007) suggested template for coding a case study (p. 172). This involved coding the context and description of the case, identifying themes within each case and looking for themes that were similar and different in a cross-case analysis. The data were examined for patterned regularities and to draw connections to the larger theoretical framework on educational leadership and social justice. To do this, I used the qualitative data analysis program HyperRESEARCH to organize my data, code, recode, research conclusions, and assist in summarizing my data. Once the coding was complete, I cut and taped all the data on large portable white boards so I could see all of the dialogue. I then began to create.

In deciding what narratives to leave in, I chose to eliminate anything that did not fit with the main themes of the study. I also decided to present "true" reflections of principals' perceptions; I could not leave narratives out that might make one participant look uncaring or insensitive to the experiences of our LGBTTIQQ youth. In ordering the narratives, I decided to keep them in the main categories offered by the interview because my advisors rightly had me group and organize my questions in a themed sequential order prior to completing the interviews. Since I was including the "interviewer" in the script, I decided to keep the questions in the same order, but open each act with one of the scenarios presented. This positioned each act with a "real life" incident for the principals to discuss. The grouping into themes then followed the pattern: attitudes, obstacles or catalysts, behaviours; resources, policies, and programs; and professional development.

In creating the ethnodrama, I realized the participants were no longer responsible for their lines or for their responses to the interviewer as I had now "fictionalized" their experiences.

For the ethnodrama, I chose to have a seventh character, an interviewer, on stage with all six principals at once, each placed in their own offices so audiences could see them all at one time. The interviewer's role could be further fictionalized, depending on a particular director's choice as a member of the media. Of course, this would add another dynamic not present in the real-life interviews. Most principals are nervous when the media comes calling. With a topic like homophobia, I can speculate, they would be more nervous.

As I was cutting, pasting, and re-ordering, however, I noticed some individual interviewees' responses came across as detached and lacking in flow, so I decided to add another character, a student, to assist with transitions. The student character would either confirm or offer a counter commentary to what the various educational leaders were saying. The role of the student could be performed by one actor or multiple actors. This choice will ultimately rest with an individual director or workshop leader. Often these choices are made due to financial considerations, the number of actors available at any given time, the experience of the actors the director is able to cast, the size of venue, or the audience. I prefer the concept of multiple actors because it is one way for people to "walk in another person's shoes." Multiple people, either reading or acting the roles, will enable more ownership of the life or lives being represented. It will also allow for actors and audience members to visualize the fact that LGBTTIQQ persons come in all different shapes and sizes and look just like them. This is a subtle realization, but one worth

aiming for nonetheless; however, until the script is work-shopped, I remain torn because one really good actor could also present the student voices as equally dramatic and with impact.

Initially, I wrote all of the student lines based on experiences I had within my offices in the various schools where I have served in leadership roles. However, after discussion and consideration with my supervision team, we decided to use "real" student quotes from Taylor et al.'s (2011) study, *Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools,* which was sponsored by the Egale Human Rights Trust.

In order to use "real" student voices, I received permission from Professor Taylor from the Egale Study. By doing this, I now had authentic voices from both educational leaders and students who were interviewed specifically on homophobia in their schools at about the same time. While student quotes have been used with permission, and come directly from the research-based Egale Study (Taylor et al., 2011), their selection, use and placement in the ethnodrama is entirely mine. I purposefully selected certain quotes over others because I wanted them to address the themes the principals were discussing. I also included an occasional fictionalized student voice to make a point. In some cases the students agree with the principals, but more often than not, student perceptions are in stark contrast to principals' experiences. Students need to have a say in how their schools are run and their voices must be heard. Iris Marion Young (1990) says, "just procedures require group representation in order to ensure that oppressed or disadvantaged groups have a voice" (p. 191). Not having student voices represented in this study was not an option. The conflict concerned whether they would be fictional.

I resisted using the real student voices at first because I was nervous about putting students' comments in a performance text they may never see along with educational leaders they have never met. I was able to rationalize this doubt, however, when I realized that giving them this "space" would also allow more people to hear the students' lived experiences and offered further credibility as to why this work is important. My initial question about how educational leaders understand and respond to homophobia was ultimately focused on whether they were listening to student voices. The student data offers authenticity and further validity to this art-based research project.

The richness of ethnodrama comes from what Goldstein (2008) calls "three sources":

> … the ethnographic research from which a play script is created; the reading or performance of the play; and the conversations that take place after the reading or performance. In these follow-up conversations, research participants and other readers or audience members have input about the conclusions of the research. This allows for ongoing analysis of the research findings. (p. 85)

In my experience, theatre has the power to provoke change and I hope to inspire pedagogical and institutional change in my district and beyond through this ethnodrama about educational leaders and their understandings and responses to homophobia in their schools titled, *Do We Really Need To Discuss This?*

Reliability

I have addressed reliability earlier by clearly explaining the setting of the study, and both how and what kind of data was collected. I understand that others who may wish to replicate this study may need to contact me directly as that is the nature of this

specific ethnographic/ethnodramatic work. This work is personal and very specific. It is further complicated by the fact that external reliability will be challenged for someone who is not a public school administrator, the recognition that the participants one chooses will most likely bring different answers, and replicating the exact physical, social, and interpersonal contexts may prove difficult. However, the constructs and methods for data collection and analysis are all included in this study and should prove useful (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, pp. 31-60).

Validity

In order to inspire change, however, one must make sure the research is valid. Richardson (2000) calls for five criteria to assess the validity and quality of ethnographic texts:

Substantive contribution: Does this piece contribute to our understanding of social-life?

Aesthetic merit: Does this piece succeed aesthetically?

Reflexivity: How did the author come to write this text?

Impact: Does this affect me? Emotionally? Intellectually? Generate new questions?

Express a reality: Does this text embody a fleshed out, embodied sense of lived experience? (p. 254.)

I believe I meet all five criteria. I have also met what Lather calls "catalytic validity" (1986, p. 182) in that it " represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (p. 272). I expect to continue advocating for change within my district. I know others will

join me in making schools more welcoming to our LGBTTIQQ community members. Again, as Lather (1986) points out, "Catalytic validity is premised not only within a recognition of the reality-altering impact of the research process, but also in the desire to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and self-determinations through research participation" (p. 272). I intend do this by showing rather than telling (Hare, 2008, p. 2). From this perspective, the researcher can not be neutral.

As the researcher, I present the data as an ethnodrama to reinforce my emancipatory intent in relation to bettering the lives of LGBTTIQQ persons. Along with my advisors and other academics who may read this work, the ethnodrama will

> provide opportunities for artists and audiences [others not in academia] to more closely examine how we and others experience life, and to shape those movements into new aesthetic forms that bring us closer to notions of what is real and what is true as we individually and collectively construct them. (Saldaña, 2011, p. 213)

To this end, I know I have generated new knowledge and with each reading or performance the learning will continue.

In addition, the reading or performance of the ethnodrama will also offer "face validity," the moment of recognition that Kidder calls the "yes, of course," or the "yes, but" moment (as cited in Lather, 1986, p. 271). I have been actively involved in what Lather calls "systematic reflexivity" looking for a way to "contribute to the growth of illuminating and change-enhancing social theory" (p. 271) particularly as it applies to the

circumstances faced by LGBTTIQQ youth. I believe this critical study using ethnodrama is the way to do it.

Further, I have looked at what I knew before I started this dissertation, what I know now, how I came to know it, and realized to make this research emancipatory, I have had to embrace the idea that my advisors, the research participants, the students, the actors, the audiences, and I may never have all the answers. Rather, we are on a collaborative journey that will lead to more questions. Even when I have completed the oral defense of this dissertation, the research will continue in all the conversations, workshops, and performances of the ethnodrama and the constant reflection that will be part of my life's work. The dissertation holds me accountable to all the youth I am talking about. In my future praxis, I must advocate and insist on a sexual orientation policy in my district, a prospect I do not think I could have done when I started this journey and, certainly, not alone. Now I realize I am not alone and will have many people, including all those "authentic" student voices, on the journey with me. Also, I have become more aware of the urgency of completing the ethnodrama and ensuring it reaches a wider audience beyond the administrators in my district. The who, what, where, when, why, and how of the play is critical to fully understanding its context.

Creation of Characters (The Who?)

In this case, the characters in the ethnodrama are based as closely as possible on and reflect the participants in the research, but remain fictional. Other educational leaders may see themselves reflected in the characters and that is a positive thing.   The "Aha!" moments occur when the actor or audience member connects with what is

happening and becomes instantly engaged on an emotional level with the research data. To that end, I suggest the following mini-character descriptions:

- *Allan* is an experienced late career educational leader who has spent his entire career in elementary schools in the same district, and is nearing retirement. He is socially conservative, enjoys riding his bike with his buddies, and going hiking in the nearby mountains. Allan speaks rather loudly.

- *Anne* is a mid-career elementary school educational leader who is the most experienced with research and the study of sexuality, given that she has family members who are academics in that area and topics around sexuality were frequently and openly discussed in her home when she was growing up. Her main area of interest is literacy. She is soft-spoken and extremely articulate.

- *Ellen* is a late career secondary school educational leader who has spent both her teaching and administrative career in the district. Ellen is a runner and mountain-bike rider and enjoys reading. She is very thoughtful before she speaks.

- *Irene* is an early career elementary school leader in her late thirties who came from another province and is currently leading a large elementary school with a significant First Nations population. She has been a leader in technology and is frequently on her iPhone. Irene's speech is rapid.

- *Oliver* is an early career secondary school educational leader who came from teaching in another rural community, has a passion for numbers, and does a lot of thinking out loud. He is boisterous, fun-loving, yet deeply sensitive.

- *Tom* is a mid-career secondary school leader and family man who is actively involved in his church, likes to play guitar, and is warm to everyone he meets. He is a gentle soul.

- *Interviewer/Reasearcher* can be either an academic doing research or a reporter doing an interview. This character can be played by one or more actors as needed.

- *Student* can be played by one or more actors as the lines are woven throughout the play, but have no direct connection to one person. Student is general so as to allow directors to multi-cast or make use of a single talented performer. I have chosen to present the student as a *composite*.

The student in the play is a *composite* that creates "truth" from the following guidelines as provided by Saldaña (as cited in Leavy, 2009, p. 147):

1) from interviews: what the participant reveals about his or her perceptions;

2) from field notes, journal entries, or memoranda: what the researcher observes, infers, and interprets for the participant action;

3) from observations or interviews with other participant connected to the primary case study: perspectives about the primary participant; and

4) from the research literature: what other scholars and theorists offer about the phenomena under study.

While all or most of these elements go into the creation of the student character, they will be further "recreated" by choices the actors who perform make, and yet "recreated" again by how audience members perceive and interpret them.

In addition to being a composite, the student character could all be played by one person; however, this does not take away from the truth of all the students who offered their opinions in the Egale study. In fact,

> participant voices from two or more individual interviews can be interwoven to:
>
> 1) offer triangulation through their supporting statements;
>
> 2) highlight discomforting evidence from their contrast and juxtaposition; and/or
>
> 3) exhibit collective story creations through the multiplicity of perspectives" (Leavy, 2009, p. 148).

The student or students portrayed in the ethnodrama do all of this.

An Ethnodrama (The What?)

Do We Really Need to Discuss This? An ethnodrama about homophobia in B.C. Public Schools. The theme is expressed through the words and actions of the characters in a series of situations that make up the plot.

Location of Ethnodrama (The Where?)

A small rural B.C. school district. The setting describes when and where the play takes place and can have viewable elements.

Time (The When?)

Present. Time can be indicated by sights, sounds, or even music when added to a full production of a play.

Purpose (The Why?)

To present and discuss how principals understand and respond to homophobia in one K-12 public school district. The "why" of a play communicates feelings and ideas.

Read-through, Rehearsal, and Performance (The How?)

Usually a play is work-shopped prior to full production; however, once the decision is made, a date for auditions is posted. Once casting is complete, the rehearsals begin. With most productions, the first meeting of the cast begins with a read-through of the script. At each stage, the read-through, rehearsal, and performance, most groups will continue to analyze, discuss, and refine their interpretations and understandings. "Performance as a moral/ethical endeavor is an important means and an end in qualitative research as we continue to hope that a better vision/realization of social justice is needed" (Cho, 2009, p. 25).

Summary

The ethnodrama is pedagogical because it can teach audience members, start a discussion, or bring about further analysis of the topic. In addition, it offers a social awareness agenda by making both performers and audiences more aware of issues impacting their lives and community, in this case, the school community (Saldaña, 2011, p. 31).   It is my hope that constructive community reflexivity occurs after principals, vice-principals, and others participate in future workshops of part or the complete ethnodrama.

> The purpose of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre is to progressively advance the
> source participants, creators, body of dramatic literature, readers, audiences, and

the broader communities they involve, to new and richer domains of social and

artistic meaning.   (Saldaña, 2011, p. 32)

Both social and artistic meaning is needed for full appreciation of the research form. In

the end, I envision this ethnodrama research could be performed by any size group.   I

have only included one suggestion in this dissertation.

In summary, this chapter has demonstrated and defined what ethnodrama is,

where and how interviewees were selected, and the process involved in the creation of

the ethnodrama. Ethnodrama is part ethnography and part drama and, therefore, has had

to "satisfy the social science demands of ethnography and the aesthetic demands of

drama. When performed ethnography is also linked to the goals of civic engagement and

social change, there are pedagogical and dialogical demands to satisfy as well"

(Goldstein, 2008, p. 98).   In the next three chapters, we take a look at the finished

academic product, an ethnodrama titled *Do We Really Need to Discuss This?* I say

"academic product," because those looking for a fully realized artistic theatrical

production will be greatly disappointed. This play is specifically focused on presentation

of the data for a professional audience to interpret and analyze further. At the end of each

scene, there is my own analysis titled *Director's Notes*. For those who wish to read the

play in its entirety prior to reading the breakdown and analysis, please see Appendix E.

Chapter Four: An Ethnodrama – Act One

Those expecting a fictionalized play complete with sets, props, costumes, make-up, rising action and plot will be disappointed. The intent of the research-based ethnodrama presented here is to disseminate the research findings. To further define the parameters of *Do we Really Need to Discuss This?*, the work itself is a type of ethnographic performance known as "natural performance" and is the "re-performance of ordinary interaction" such as a recorded interview. It is intended for a "professional audience," such as other Principals at a conference, or a "participatory audience," such as education stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, teachers, Board of Education members, Superintendents), who "may be involved as co-performers or post performance critics" (Beck, Belliveau, Lea, & Wager, 2011, p. 689). Professional audiences, therefore, "are not likely looking for fully realized artistry but for things such as transparency of analysis or ethical representation of research participants" (p. 691). This type of ethnodrama, "theatre created to disseminate [research] findings[,] may … be more objective than compelling" (p. 688).

Yennie-Donmoyer states that "'presentational theatre' forms that purposely disrupt realism in favor of a Brechtian 'call to analysis and action' are valuable performance vehicles for academic audiences" (cited in Beck et al., 2011, p. 691). This ethnodrama falls at the beginning of what Beck and colleagues refer to as the "performance continuum," which ranges from "specific to broad, from performances that prioritize faithfulness to source data to those that prioritize fully realized artistic theatrical productions" (p. 695).

(A reminder: For those who wish to read the play in its entirety prior to reading the breakdown and analysis, please see Appendix E).

Presentation and analysis of data: Scenario #1, Attitudes, and Catalysts or Obstacles

Act 1, Scene 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #1 (Appendix A)

Do We Really Need to Discuss This?

An Ethnodrama by Christine Perkins

Deirdre Kelly, Shauna Butterwick, Taylor Webb   Producers

Christine Perkins   Playwright/Director

Cast:

Voice   (dramatic effect, use of P.A. system or phone calls)   Various

Allan   Educational Leader/Late Career/Elementary School

Anne   Educational Leader/Mid-Career/Elementary School

Ellen   Educational Leader/Late Career/Secondary School

Irene   Educational Leader/Early Career/Elementary School

Oliver   Educational Leader/Early Career/Secondary School

Tom   Educational Leader/Mid-Career/Secondary School

Interviewer* (Researcher)   Media

Student**   Various

(* *The Interviewer can be in the principal's offices and/or move around the stage. The positioning of this person does not have to be literal and/or could also be multi-cast. **I would also suggest that the student lines get divided up or presented by one student as a continuous thread separate from the on-going principal discussions. The fictionalized student(s) represent(s) "real" thoughts from many LGBTTIQQ students across Canada*

and some thoughts from the playwright). The play unfolds in three Acts, for a total of

eight Scenes. Director's Notes follow each scene.

Act 1, Scene 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #1 (Appendix A)

STUDENT: (*lights up on student talking on cell phone*) Yeah, I thought that was pretty

    cool. I've never had a teacher come out to the class before…all that stuff about

    same-sex marriage and her "partner." I always wondered who was in that photo.

    My parents wouldn't be too pleased but it doesn't bother me. What? You're

    crazy! She's not going to hit on you. She has a girlfriend. Oh, listen, I gotta go.

    Think my mum was listening. Text me.

VOICE: [*the phone rings, principals answer, all hear same message over sound system*]

    A parent called to say she needs to speak to you. She wants to address some

    "rumours" that have been in the community for years about her daughter's

    teacher. She is concerned that the female teacher has a photograph on the wall of

    her classroom of her female "partner" and is talking about her opinions on

    marriage and not teaching Math. What are you going to do about it?

INTERVIEWER: (*Says last line at same time*) What are you going to do about it?

ALLAN: I guess the first thing I would do is ask if she's spoken to the teacher, had a

    chance to talk to her about these rumours. That would be the first step.

INTERVIEWER: If she came back to you and wanted a more extensive meeting, what

    steps would you take?

ALLAN: I would meet with her. I want to deal with something firsthand, not second,

    not third hand. So that would be my first step with it.

STUDENT: In grade 6, there was a very open gay teacher who spoke to everyone,

including parents, about his sexuality and his openness in discussing

homosexuality. I never talked to him or ever had a class with him. Without him

and at the time, I didn't have any other gay role models or ideas of what an adult

gay male could be.[1]

ANNE: Okay. I guess there are two concerns, one being the teacher's sexual orientation,

secondly the fact that she's talking about marriage instead of math. So regarding

the first of the parent's concerns, I would be quite adamant that her orientation

has nothing to do with her professional qualifications, nothing to do with her

ability to teach the subject, and it's no different than any teacher having a picture

of their family on the wall.

Regarding the second concern about the comments about teachers talking about

marriage and not math, I think that I would tell the parent initially that I would

discuss that with the teacher, but that the code of ethics would say that she should,

prior to that, if she has concerns about the teaching, that she should discuss those

first with the teacher, but that I would be willing to support a conversation as

well. I think in our teaching, a lot of times we talk about subjects other than those

that we're directly instructing as a way to help build rapport with students and a

way to help us get to know kids and them to get to know us. But obviously if it's

gone too far afield from math, then there needs to be some sort of redirection back

to the subject.

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[1] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 97.

INTERVIEWER: So would you do all this over the telephone with a parent, or would you call a meeting?

ANNE: Well, it depends how adamant and how upset the parent is, you know? I think initially just the phone call. I would wait and see, then, if they were following up with their duty to speak to the teacher. And if there were further concerns, then sure, call a meeting.

INTERVIEWER: Would you forward this to the superintendent?

ANNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Who would be present at the meeting and why?

ANNE: Well, again, you know, depending on the level of concern by the parent, I would have the parent and the teacher and discuss what is the real problem here. And is the child being taught math satisfactorily, and if so, then that's all that is of concern. If the parent continues to press the issue of her sexuality, I would be dismissive of that. It has absolutely nothing to do with the teacher as a professional.

STUDENT: Our school has gone from having a toxic to tolerating environment in the past few years. I think the reason our school had such a toxic environment was that NO ONE had ever come out here before. Ever.[2]

ELLEN: Well, the first thing I would do about it is ask the parent if they have addressed their concerns with the teacher. If that's not the case, then I would talk to the parent a little bit about it, just to see what their actual problem is. Many times teachers will have their pictures of family or friends on their wall. I would offer to meet with the parent and the teacher. Most likely, I would give the teacher a

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[2] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 97.

head's up first. Generally, if a parent has a problem with what a teacher is doing in the classroom, they really need to address it with the teacher. I'm happy to be there. I think after I talk to the parent, I would determine if we were stepping into discriminatory ground, or what's going on. I would need to know where the parent's coming from.

INTERVIEWER: If the parent wants to push it further and doesn't feel they can talk to the teacher, what would you do?

ELLEN: Well, then I would consult with the teacher. What their feeling on everything was or what their perception of what's going on in class. Then I would talk to Human Resources and get District point of view on that. I would look at the Collective Agreement. I would make darn sure I knew what Human Rights legislation and Human Resources legislation says about what's going on and get an idea from the teacher exactly what the teacher is saying.

INTERVIEWER: At what point would you involve the Superintendent, if at all?

ELLEN: Oh, I would, right away. I think that's important because again, I would like to make sure I don't put a foot wrong. That's why I would consult with the Superintendent and Human Resources right away. I want to make sure the rights of the teacher are protected.

IRENE: All right, so I'd begin by inviting the parent in for an interview with me, and there's a couple of things that I would begin by clarifying. I might also include the daughter, maybe at a later interview, depending on what the outcome of that first interview was. First thing is having the photo of her partner in the school in the classroom is something that is acceptable, if it's an appropriate picture. And

that it's not up to us to say if the partner you know, what sex it should be or if you can post the picture or not.

OLIVER: Well, I'd certainly talk to the teacher about the concerns of the parent. I think this would generate some discussion around specifically, her views on same-sex marriage. I guess I would also share with the teacher what's appropriate and what's not appropriate for, say, a math class. And how does speaking of marriage and opinions on marriage relate to the math curriculum? I think that would be something that would be flushed out after. Throughout the conversation, I don't think I would necessarily dive right in and accuse that teacher of speaking about marriage or same-sex marriage or anything like that. But I think it would be something, certainly, that we could flush out and I could get some more information from her about what she is discussing in class and certainly express the concerns of the parent to the teacher.

STUDENT: In grade 10, one day my geography teacher gave a 40 min. lecture on homosexuality and gay youth in my high school. He was not gay himself, but he talked about homophobia and the potentiality of gay students and the actual number of gay students within a given high school. This was sort of an unexpected talk, but it helped me more than anything to continue through school.[3]

OLIVER: You know, whether it's same-sex marriage or her opinion on marriage or anything like that, I guess I would just question the intent and the purpose of talking about it in a math class and why would it be mentioned and why would it be brought up? Specifically looking at, as well …You know, we as teachers, we

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[3] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 97.

teach in certain subject areas, but we also teach students as a whole. So, I mean, there may be other teachings there that may be appropriate, may not be appropriate and that would be something that I guess I would have to discuss and find out. Certainly, if there were questions from individual students about that individual's orientation towards marriage or same-sex or anything like that, that they may answer in an appropriate manner to satisfy those questions. But again, it's one of those things that I think that you'd have to talk to the teacher and find out the context of what it's being you know, how it's being presented. Is there learning there for the students? And I would also caution the teacher, too, and say that this may not be appropriate for a classroom discussion just because there may be students in there whose parents have strong views, maybe, against it or have strong views about anything like that being discussed in the classroom. So, it may be something that the teacher's either not aware of or needs to be educated on in terms of the appropriateness of that discussion at a certain time. So, for example, if a parent is thinking that their child is in a math class and finds out that they're learning about same-sex marriage or elements of same-sex marriage, then I would say that the parent's being misinformed about what's happening in that classroom. But, in, say, a career and health class or a career and personal planning class where parents would be notified that there would be some type of education around sensitive issues like same-sex marriage, then the parents are somewhat aware that their child is in a class like that and can make a decision as to whether they want them to participate or not.

STUDENT: In my family studies class, we were talking about different kinds of families.

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When a gay family was mentioned, our teacher said that this was not an

appropriate conversation to have since there might have been gay people in the

school.[4]

TOM: So it's a female teacher, she's talking about her female partner, there's a picture

of the partner on the wall of the classroom. It's supposed to be a math classroom

and the teacher has made comments about marriage. Am I correct?

INTERVIEWER: Right, and we're talking about a female's female partner.

TOM: Yes, I understood that, okay. And so your question to me is, what do I do about

that, as the administrator?

INTERVIEWER: As the administrator, when the parent calls in.

TOM: I think almost all the time, I would enquire whether the parent has yet brought

this up with the teacher in question. Have you talked to the teacher about it, and

what kind of response did you get from that teacher about that? I would do that

with almost any issue, I think. Make sure the parent has indeed got the facts from

the teacher first, before venturing into the issue.

INTERVIEWER: And then, so say she's talked to the teacher and she's still concerned

about this teacher and her photograph on the wall and her discussions, what would

you do?

TOM: I think it doesn't sound as if there is any kind of misconduct in the scenario given

to me. I would expect that discussions of a variety of natures would happen in

almost every class and that sometimes that can be very healthy. Nothing was

given in the scenario to say that the discussion, or the opinions about marriage,

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[4] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 123

were positive or negative, homophobic, heterophobic or any of those things. So it sounds as if here's a parent who is maybe looking to stir things up, perhaps. And so it doesn't look to me as if the teacher has necessarily done anything wrong. What's the nature of the picture of the partner? Is it provocative? Is it neutral? That wouldn't be difficult to find out. I suppose if I really did want to find that out, I would pay a visit to the classroom on any pretext, just notice what's going on and draw my own conclusion about that as I saw fit.

INTERVIEWER: Would you call a meeting with the parent or suggest that you have a meeting with the parent and the teacher with you there?

TOM: Given what's been said so far, again, there's been nothing that's been indicated that the teacher's done anything necessarily wrong. And if I were convinced that something had been done that needed administrative attention, absolutely yeah. I mean, with the parent to hear their concerns, invite the teacher and respecting all of the…

INTERVIEWER: So say the parent had homophobic concerns, would you pass that on to the superintendent? Or how might you handle that?

TOM: If the parent had homophobic concerns?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, say she was worried that this teacher was promoting something she wasn't agreeing with, like, a female teacher having a female partner?

TOM: No, that's not the superintendent's business.

INTERVIEWER: So what would you do then?

TOM: Tell the parent it's the superintendent's business. [laughs]

STUDENT: If my school had broached the topic of homosexuality in the classroom and

had teachers who were not afraid to discuss it, my school would have been a

much better place. I feel that the students in my school had the ability to accept

gay people, but were never given a reason to question their stance that gay people

were bad and immoral.[5]

Director's Notes: Act 1, Sc. 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #1 (Appendix A)

Six public school administrators from both Elementary and Secondary schools

were asked to respond to this homophobic incident. Two-thirds of the administrators

suggested that the parent speak directly with the teacher. Half suggested the principal

speak with the teacher, and the others said the principal should meet in person with the

parent. One suggested getting assistance from both the district human resources

department and the superintendent. This principal put the situation into the larger context

of the Collective Agreement, Human Rights Legislation, and a possible unofficial

investigation. Only one principal suggested a visit to the classroom. Two principals said

they would not bring this situation to their Superintendent's attention. Charts were used

to visually represent understanding of principal reactions and responses to the scenario

presented (Appendix D). Although each individual was interviewed separately, bringing

them together in the ethnodrama as if they had been interviewed at the same time offers a

more powerful interaction between the research and audience by allowing for comparison

and reflection through having audience members ask themselves, "How would I

respond?"

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[5] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 123

My reaction is that this parent is trying to use her own power and influence to change the classroom. This is certainly not a new experience for principals, as parents often try to influence what is happening in their child's classroom. Navigating the various demands and sets of expectations from parents is part of the leadership role. All the principals avoided naming the issue: homophobia. The parent is obviously complaining about neither Math instruction nor her daughter's learning, rather about the conversations taking place during learning in the classroom. Without district support - from leadership, policy, or professional development - these principals are left floundering and trying to put out the fire before it gets larger. Young (1990) states, "To experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the Other" (pp. 58-59). We can discern the dominant culture operating through failure to question how certain values and goals set the norm within and around schools and failure to see and acknowledge the multiplicity of family norms. The mother, in this scenario, is upset that her daughter is being exposed to a view that does not represent her perception of the dominant group's own humanity. She wants the teacher's life to be invisible.

This scenario clearly speaks to the oppression some dominant groups try to enforce in our schools. Principals and other educational leaders must work hard in the spaces in between to balance the desires of the dominant while still representing the Other. They must consciously remain aware of and curious about intentions when complaints come to their offices. Asking probing questions and being mindful in

leadership is expected by the students and families whom principals and vice-principals serve.

An encounter with other groups, however, can challenge the dominant group's claim to universality. The dominant group reinforces its position by bringing the other groups under the measure of dominant norms. Consequently, the difference of women and men, American Indians or Africans from Europeans, Jews from Christians, homosexuals from heterosexuals, workers from professionals, becomes reconstructed largely as deviance and inferiority. (Young, 1990, p. 59)

The same-sex photo, its public display, the conversation about marriage, and the teacher's sexual orientation stirred a variety of concerns from the principals interviewed. Responses range from moral and ethical considerations to dismissal of misconduct to deflection to avoidance of the real issue. Not naming the issue as "homophobia" and deflecting responsibility to the superintendent are evidence of this. Tom clearly says, "If" the issue is homophobia (p. 105). The majority of principals took some time to react during the interview. The complainant's concerns are greeted with skepticism and, in most cases, a healthy level of suspicion. The counter interpretation could be the principals did not know how to react due to a lack of knowledge about the topic, they are not supported by explicit district policies, and are in conflict with their personal beliefs and values. In fact, there is evidence to support both of these interpretations.

In searching for truth when complaints come to the schools, principals and vice-principals try to access, consciously or not, a variety of resources, sources, experts, and, their experiences. In ensuring schooling is "more just and equitable for all students" principals and vice-principals must "model the moral courage" to defend values, vision,

and missions of their individual schools (B.C. Principals and Vice-Principals Association, 2007, p. 6). Only one principal, however, mentioned the larger picture of Human Rights legislation, Human Resources, the Collective Agreement, or even accessing the District's point of view.

Clearly, the parent "trying to stir things up" both has power and is afraid of something. Principals and vice-principals must not remain silent. Kosciw, Byard, Fischer, and Joslin claim, "While inaction to homophobic behaviour can take a variety of forms, with silence being the most common, qualitative research findings have illuminated the demeaning nature of dismissive responses" (as cited in Klein et al., 2007, p. 563). If homophobia was dismissed as the main issue here, principals and vice-principals would not be creating safe schools. All educational leaders need awareness of spaces where staff, parents, and particularly students, need to feel safe. Students dealing with homophobia report being unsafe in hallways, the cafeteria, the library, stairwells, under stairs, the gymnasium, the physical education change room, the schoolyard, washrooms, school busses, travelling to and from schools, and, as in this instance, the classroom (Egale, 2009, p. 24). The parent's complaint appears to be an effort to render the teacher, the teacher's sexual orientation, and the conversation in the classroom invisible.

> This invisibility comes about when dominant groups fail to recognize the
> perspective embodied in their cultural expressions as a perspective. These
> dominant cultural expressions often simply have little place for the experience of
> other groups, at most only mentioning or referring to them in stereotyped or
> marginalized ways. (Young, 1990, p. 60)

While the parent has a perspective, it is not necessarily universally held. Principals exhibiting moral courage can respond to the parent's concerns by acknowledging how great a role model the teacher is for those students who are curious about their own sexuality and for creating a safe place in the classroom where teachers and adolescents can have holistic discussions connecting life to the world of math. The attitude with which the principal or vice-principal approaches the topic of homophobia is critical. Curiosity and inquiry should be first steps and not judgment.

Act 1, Scene 2, *Attitude*

INTERVIEWER: In what ways, do you feel you respect and value diversity, visible and less visible differences?

ALLAN: We do a virtue of the week. And so we talk about it in the morning, it goes over the PA, classes talk about it and it really tries to address that issue.

OLIVER: It's tolerance that I think of. We had a Diversity Club… We are all diverse in some way and I think we shouldn't be ostracized or made to feel any different about it.

ELLEN: We generally don't single out any diverse group I guess we don't single out any particularly diverse group. I mean, everyone comes here. Our business is educating whomever comes in here. We have a staff and that is their mandate as well. People are treated the same regardless of their race, or religion, you know…sexual diversity.

ANNE: I come from a very liberal family who talked a lot about issues of sexuality and social justice and equality as we were growing up, so it's something that's on my

mind frequently. And you know, I think you have to have a sense of righteous indignation in this job to stand up for the underdog or disenfranchised.

IRENE: I like to consider myself …an open-minded person. I've traveled a lot and I've met…come across….multiple cultures and different kind of people and I like to think that I'm accepting of all kinds of people and respect their differences.

TOM: I embrace diversity as completely as I can…but there are some things that are challenging for me personally...I don't think there are things in terms of homosexual issues that have pushed my buttons that way. I have my opinions but they really…they haven't been challenged in a school yet.

INTERVIEWER: How are district and school-based leaders able to transmit respect for diversity throughout their districts?

ALLAN: We are in constant communication about what works and what isn't working. …open communication and talking to each other.

OLIVER: I demonstrate it. Somebody who understands diversity is obviously open-minded….promotes healthy environments around it…promotes healthy attitudes toward it. You exude that …just in the way you converse with people….when people feel comfortable with different diversities, or different, say, orientations or slants or whatever you want to call it….you want to be able to make sure that there is a safe and healthy environment in your school.

ELLEN: I guess the biggest population we have is Aboriginal, so there's lots of …we have an Aboriginal worker, who is also responsible for integrating Aboriginal culture into the school...there is always Aboriginal foods. Sometimes we'll do

Aboriginal dancing as part of the lunch-hour festivities. We'll just focus on certain ethnic, cultural activities.

ANNE: I think we model it in everything that we do--in staff meetings, in the staffroom, in conversations with parents. And I think we have to model that respect and the sensitivity that we expect our teachers to model, and our parents and our students, with the understanding that everybody is somewhere on the spectrum.

IRENE: Because of homophobia comes sometimes, bullying, we try to build a school community and then in building a school community, we respect people's differences, accept people for who they are and help them along in their journey, whatever their journey may be.

INTERVIEWER: What social injustices outrage you as a district/school-based leader?

ALLAN: I want to see everybody have equal opportunity to succeed.

OLIVER: Cruelty towards folks that are …I guess they don't deserve it or cruelty to folks because of certain orientations or diversities. Whether you're a kid who likes to study and you're the "nerd" or if you're ….say you have a certain sexual orientation, one of the things that outrages me is when people are cruel to other folks like that.

ELLEN: Bullying or harassment for any reason.

ANNE: Lately, it's been poverty and lack of equity among schools.

IRENE: Social injustice, I think…I know I have become quite sensitive to the Abori.....meeting the needs of Aboriginal people everyday in my job.

INTERVIEWER: How are you, as a district and school-based leader, willing to "act" and make your district a more inclusive place?

ALLAN: I think we all work towards that. And we have a lot of meetings, we're

    concerned. We've been in meetings in the evenings looking at, as a community,

    how do we address this issue, make it more inclusive, make everyone feel like

    they belong, welcomed?

INTERVIEWER: The community meetings you're referring to are the school culture

    meetings (*public meetings meant to bring the community together to address*

    issues concerning safe, caring and orderly schools in the district) that have been

    going on?

ALLAN: Yes.

STUDENT: I guess you could say that this town is very conservative in some aspects.

    We seem a little behind the times as far as LGBTQ openness goes. Our high

    school has about 400 students, and I only know one person who is open, although

    I think the rest of the school doesn't really know. Many people don't realize that

    the things that they say have such a powerful impact on people. One of my

    friends doesn't really fit into society's standards of what a teenage boy should be.

    He often gets picked on for this. Most of the comments are never said to his face,

    but with such a small school word gets around. People joke around, calling him a

    "fag," not realizing how much they're really hurting him. I guess the main point

    of this is that most people wouldn't feel safe to come out at our school. Even at

    home, I don't really know how my parents would react to that. I just wish that

    people could just accept the fact that the whole world isn't straight.[6]

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[6] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 96

ANNE: I think by trying to be a voice for people who don't seem to have one. For the

inarticulate, for the illiterate, for people who are intimidated by the school system

I can't always put myself in their shoes and understand where they're coming

from, but somebody has to imagine their situation and plan for it and so again, I

guess, going back to modelling and being that voice of those who aren't at the

table.

IRENE: Well, that's one of our school goals is solving problems in peaceful ways. And

that fits really nice in there about how so, you know, if there is any conflict, we

need to, we use restorative justice or restitution, where we talk about what the

problem is, who's been affected by our choices or actions, and then how to make

it better. And, you know, try to help people understand that, respect all

differences and all people, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: How do you perceive the word *homophobia*?

ELLEN: I perceive it as fear of anything that is it out of the norm in terms of sexual

orientation. Fear of publicizing gay-lesbian rights or gay-lesbian opinions. Just

any fear of dragging any of that stuff out into the open or fear that somehow it

might be catching. Fear of any sort of discussion.

INTERVIEWER: How do you perceive the term *norm*?

ELLEN: I think the *norm* is what individuals have set down as what is the way to do

things, what they perceive is normal.

INTERVIEWER: And so now what would the *norm* be in this context?

ELLEN: I think *norm* would be, basically, males marry females or males have

relationships with females. You don't have females having relationships with

females or males having relationships with males. I think that is what a homophobic person would consider to be the norm.

TOM: I perceive it as a misused phrase. I think it's a phrase used by the homosexual community, I'm hesitant in my phrasing because I'm probably not going to say it politically correctly. So let's just go with this anyway. A phrase used by the homosexual community to target anybody who doesn't like them or doesn't agree with homosexuality. So I believe that there is a very healthy position to not agree with homosexuality, but not be afraid of homosexuality at the same time. These things are entirely possible. One can be entirely inclusive and tolerant and accepting of a person and not take their sexual orientation and embrace that too. So I find the word tends to be used as a means of attack, which is really the opposite of the intentions of most people I know in that [they] want tolerance and understanding.

ALLAN: Okay. How do you perceive it? I guess I perceive it simply as just the fear of someone different than you and the fear of... It's not a common expression used in an elementary school you know. And I would hazard a guess 90% of the kids wouldn't understand it anyway, wouldn't understand what they're doing. So when we talk I guess it goes into the second question that says, "How do you respond to issues of homophobia in your school?" You discuss what it is and why it's unfounded and why it's so hurtful. You know so... yeah.

ANNE: I perceive it to be the fear of people who are homosexual.

INTERVIEWER: How do you respond to issues of homophobia in your school?

ALLAN: And I guess, that all centres on all the work we're doing in bullying. You're

trying to address the homophobia fears, you're trying to address the real

putdowns, the exclusions. And so we are doing a lot in that area. As a district, as

schools, we are. I don't think homophobia needs to be a separate little category. I

think it, to me, is a form of bullying and that we need to address it and everyone

needs to feel comfortable in the school. You know we have 380 kids and they all

have the right to feel safe here, to feel included.

ANNE: Yeah. We have, on occasion, particularly boys calling each other fag or similar

terms. And I deal with it in the same way I would deal with a racist comment,

which is to take it very seriously, to first of all talk to the boys about do they

actually know what they're saying, because sometimes they have no idea. And

once that's clear, to make sure that their parents know that this is taking place.

INTERVIEWER: So you would call the parents?

ANNE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of responses have you received when you've done that?

ANNE: Well, disappointment in their children. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about current anti-homophobia practices/leadership

that you are involved with, either in your school or at the district level?

ALLAN: I guess that all centres on all the work we're doing in bullying.

ANNE: No, there's nothing currently in my school that I know of at the elementary

level.

IRENE: I haven't had a lot of experience with it. So, luckily I guess. It might not be

luckily because it might be happening, but we're just not aware of it. That's the

scary part, eh?

OLIVER: Yeah, none, none. I'm not even aware of any same-sex couples in our school.

I certainly have in my old school. But again, I haven't been involved in any

groups or anything like that.

TOM: No.

ELLEN: Oh, what I've done in my own classes or out in the bus loop or whatever.

STUDENT: I've never seen the issue discussed in any class or assembly (despite our

school having at least two anti-racism assemblies a year) and the school

apparently doesn't have any policies on queer issues. If it does have policies, it

obviously doesn't enforce them as students make anti-queer slurs all the time in

front of teachers and nothing is said to the students.[7]

Director's Notes: Act 1, Sc. 2: Attitude

Questions in Act 1, Sc. 2 were aimed at determining principal and vice-principal

attitudes toward homophobia in their schools. The first area took account of how

administrators felt they value visible and invisible differences. One felt they respected

and valued diversity, one mentioned their business is to educate, another claimed they

treated people the same, one felt they were open-minded, Tom responded, "there are

some things that are challenging for me personally" (Tom, p. 114), and yet another

confidently proclaimed that she felt a need to respond with a sense of righteous

indignation and stand up for the underdog or disenfranchised. One interviewee

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[7] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p.114

specifically mentioned a "virtue of the week" coming out of the character education programs. Character education comes from three ideological areas: behaviourism, conservatism, and religion. "Character education curricula also stress the importance of things like 'respect,' 'responsibility,' and 'citizenship'" (Kohn, 1997, p. 435). Basically, it's about adults getting students to conform and do what the adults want them to do. It seems to counter the teaching of acceptance of diversity in schools. Acceptance is a virtue demonstrating willingness to accept people, situations, or ideas you cannot control. Denial does not work.

In saying how they were able to transmit that respect for diversity, a range of actions were mentioned including: talking; constantly communicating; demonstrating; promoting healthy environments; promoting healthy attitudes; exuding your own values and beliefs; modeling for staff, parents, students; and to help folks on their journey. One participant felt responsible for Aboriginal culture. None of the participants mentioned the Ministry of Education's *Diversity Framework (BCED, 2008a)*. However, this may not be their fault. They were not directly asked about it. Awareness of resources and professional development around the topics of diversity and homophobia may have eluded these educational leaders for a variety of reasons; however, the participants are unconsciously aware of the inclusive nature and belonging components of the framework. Specific references to race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, and socio-economic background were absent, excepting for the principal feeling responsible for Aboriginal culture. Some mentioned sexual orientation. Again, I would infer that avoidance, fear, limited awareness of opportunities, resources, programs, professional opportunities, or some combination thereof, and, worse yet, the absence of

explicit district-level policies make it difficult for principals to articulate answers on this topic.

When asked what social injustices outrage them as school leaders, responses ranged from lack of equal opportunity, cruelty toward others, bullying or harassment, poverty or lack of equity, and not meeting the needs of Aboriginal people. While principals and vice-principals recognized what bothered them, the actions they were willing to take were limited. Restitution (providing an opportunity for a child to fix their mistake and return to the group) and restorative justice practices (an approach where students are asked to take responsibility for their actions and repair the harm done) were mentioned once, along with being a voice for the inarticulate, illiterate, and intimidated. Principals acknowledged taking part in "lots of meetings," particularly those around school culture. These meetings are aimed at providing clear expectations and support for the continuing development of safe, inclusive, caring, respectful, and collaborative school and classroom learning environments; principals in one community claim not one person attended these meetings. There were good intentions established for this program, as it was set up in response to some serious allegations about bullying in the district; however, the meetings could also be seen as a public relations campaign in reaction to public and media criticism that the district was not doing enough in response to bullying in our schools. Some well-intentioned actions do not get a positive response. Neither do they get a positive response when they are not authentic reactions. Calling a meeting on "school culture" may not signify *bullying* to the general population. The message is unclear.

Principals stated that homophobia was anything out of the "norm" from a "misused phrase," to "a phrase used by the homosexual community to target anybody who doesn't like them or doesn't agree with homosexuality." Tom also stated, "One can be entirely inclusive and tolerant and accepting of a person and not take their sexual orientation and embrace that" (p. 118). Allan stated, "fear of anything that is out of the norm in terms of sexual orientation. Fear of publicizing gay-lesbian rights or gay-lesbian opinions. Just any fear of dragging any of that stuff out into the open or fear that somehow it might be catching. Fear of any sort of discussion. …It's not a common expression used in an elementary school, you know" (Allan, p. 118). Unfortunately, Allan may be right that the word "homophobia" may not be used, but there is plenty of homophobia on elementary school playgrounds. In England, a writer in *The Telegraph* stated, "Teachers logged more than 10,000 confrontations involving primary school students making racist insults or derogatory comments about homosexuals in 12 months" (Hough, 2011). Thinking the same did not occur in playgrounds in Canada would be naïve.

> Sexual identity is understandably on the minds of adolescents as they go through the process of sexual development, and the key terms … like "gay" and "lesbian" – are often found in their daily vocabulary. However, the terms are not necessarily clearly understood even by students who are themselves questioning their sexual or gender identity. (Egale, 2009, p. 12)

Fear, denial, ignoring, dismissing, negating, or pretending homophobia's not there will continue to make schools unsafe for students. Principals and vice-principals can only be in one place at a time and even though some interviewees acknowledged that it is

probably happening in their school, their reality is they are not seeing it. More needs to be done. We need to address silences and the absence of evidence and witnessing. Do you have to see to homophobia to know it exists? It is the positive, supportive, explicit actions principals, vice-principals, and other educational leaders take that will make a significant difference, in addition to that of family, friends, religious organizations, media, and other positive influences.

The actions currently taken by the principals and vice-principals involved in this study are varied. For some, action focuses on the work they are doing on bullying and trying to address homophobic fears, putdowns, and exclusions. Allan said, "…and we are doing a lot in that area. As a district, as schools, we are" (Allan, p. 119). No specifics were stated, though. "I don't think homophobia needs to be a separate little category…to me it's a form of bullying" (Allan, p. 119). Anne tried to "deal with it the same way I deal with a racist comment which is to take it very seriously" (Anne, p. 119). Homophobia should be taken seriously because schools are unsafe places for some students, and victimization is rampant. In the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust Study (2009), six out of ten LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation, others had been verbally harassed due to expression of their gender, some through homophobic graffiti at school, others through rumours and lies spread about their sexual orientation at school, and still others through text-messaging and the internet (p. 4). School leaders need to address this violence.

Young states that many suffer from systemic violence.

Many groups suffer the oppression of systemic violence. Members of some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks

on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or

destroy the person…Physical violence against these groups is shockingly

frequent. (Young, 1990, p. 61)

School districts should not wait until such violence reaches the courts before putting clear

anti-homophobia policies in place. In British Columbia, Azmi Jubran was harassed at

school over a five-year period because of his perceived sexual orientation. He was

verbally abused by suffering anti-gay slurs, as well as physically abused (e.g., spat on,

kicked in hallways, and slammed into lockers). He even spoke out and told school

administrators, but the violence continued. The Court found that a school has a duty to

provide an environment that is free from harassment for all students (Meyer, 2006, p. 1).

Young (1990) claims violence is a social practice, and often several persons

inflict violence together, especially in all-male groupings. "Even when they are caught,

those who perpetrate acts of group-directed violence or harassment often receive light or

no punishment. To that extent society renders their acts acceptable" (p. 63).

The 2007 U.S. Climate Survey found that

LGBTQ students in schools with comprehensive safe school policies that

explicitly address homophobia report lower levels of harassment, fewer

homophobic comments, more staff intervention when such comments are made,

and more willingness to report harassment and assault to school staff. (Egale,

2009, p. 61)

Young (1990) ties violence and cultural imperialism together through a psychoanalytic

account where fear and hatred of some groups are bound up in the loss of identity and the

"unconscious fears account at least partly" for the oppression she calls systemic violence.

"It may also account for cultural imperialism" (p. 63). Systemic violence should not be called bullying.

Addressing bullying does not get to the crux of the matter. The word *bullying* is like the carpet issues are thrown under. Calling someone names, pushing, shoving, kicking, threatening, hostile gesturing, staring--almost anything can get called bullying. The stakes are higher when educational leaders are explicit and specify whether an incident of intolerance involves racism, sexism, privilege or classism, sexual orientation, or homophobia. Unfortunately, even some of the B.C. Ministry of Education's resources, *Helping Our Kids Live Violence Free*, take steps to marginalize those experiencing homophobic bullying.

In a telling example, intolerance (in which racism and homophobia are included) is found in the same category [on the bullying behaviours chart] as hate groups and positioned between gang involvement and drug and alcohol use. (Moy, 2008, p. 82)

These are considered extreme "off the chart" behaviours, which allows schools to ignore them and not participate in social change (Moy, 2008, p. 82). The effect of ignoring homophobia at schools is enormous. In the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust Study, (2011), fully three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of transgender students felt unsafe at school (p. 47). Many reported skipping school because they felt unsafe. Many reported not being comfortable talking to teachers, principals, coaches or parents. Over half of LGBTQ students did not feel accepted at school and about 36% of transgender students felt they did not belong (p. 47).

Principals and other educational leaders need to intervene, but they cannot do it alone. In fact, entire communities should be "wrapping around" their LGBTQ students via policies, programs, curricula, and collective cooperation of all stakeholders. Communities need to make it safe for same-sex couples to speak at Board of Education meetings about their and their children's experiences in schools: LGBTQ parents should be able to sit openly on Parent Advisory Councils. Celebrations of pride and anti-homophobia days such as, "Pink Day" (usually in February) should be explicitly linked to anti-homophobia and not "couched" in bullying. An example is the website of international "Day of Pink" (usually in April) which claims they are "against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in schools and communities" (Day of Pink, p. 1). Only through a team effort of effective, caring school leadership will school practices be changed.

Young (1990) writes, "To the degree that institutions and social practices encourage, tolerate, or enable the perpetration of violence against members of specific groups, those institutions and practices are unjust and must be reformed" (p. 63). As one principal states, "I think you have to have a sense of righteous indignation in this job to stand up for the underdog or disenfranchised" (Anne, p. 114). The process starts with one person deciding they will be a catalyst for change.

Act 1, Scene 3: Obstacles or Catalysts

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever been in conflict as to how the district/school leaders handled an issue of homophobia?

ALLAN: No.

ELLEN: No.

TOM: I did feel some internal challenge with the "That's so Gay" campaign and to me, I found that it was a good thing for me because it did challenge me personally. Where am I at with this, on this issue and am I willing to do the right things, even on these issues that, at that time, were things I needed to work through.   Does that make sense?

INTERVIEWER: That you needed to work through personally, not as an administrator.

TOM: Personally, yeah.   And so, but it was good for me because having bringing that issue to my attention, was the thing I needed to work my head around, how do I live in this environment, and I found that, yeah, it works.

INTERVIEWER: If you had been [in conflict], how would you have liked the issue to be approached?

ANNE: Well, I think in the same way that any discriminatory behaviour is dealt with, so either with union representation or investigation.   But certainly, advocacy for the person who claims discrimination, and it being taken seriously by the district.

INTERVIEWER: The Ministry of Education's *Social Justice 12* course is not offered in the district.   Why not?   What factors are influencing this decision?

ANNE: I don't know why not.   The factors I can think of that might influence the decision are financial and possibly having someone trained to teach the course.

TOM: I have not yet seen [it] offered at a school I've been in.   I don't, I've not been part of the discussions about why that's not been included as an offering.   I know that in our school, the practice has been to allow any teacher who has an interest in the subject, to bring that forward, promote it, try to get student interest in it, and if enough student subscribe and it's a BA [Board Authorized] course or a

provincially prescribed course, then that's fine, that would run. So I'm, at this point, making the assumption that no one has yet championed that course.

ELLEN: I didn't realize it wasn't offered anywhere in the district. We looked at that course. I have a teacher on staff who really wanted to teach it, but it's just a question of we are limited as to the number of classes we can offer because we're a small school. If the Board funded it, it would be something that we would really like to offer.

INTERVIEWER: Does the Board know that?

ELLEN: I have not brought it up specifically.

OLIVER: Oh, to tell you the truth, I'm not certain even what the course is about. And why it wouldn't be offered, I'm gathering from this interview that maybe it's because it has content in it that may not be necessarily supported by parents or staff. But no, I haven't heard any reason why it wouldn't.

INTERVIEWER: Would you describe yourself as an obstacle or a catalyst when it comes to anti-homophobia in your school and why?

ALLAN: I kind of had to walk that one through because it's a catalyst... so I'm not... you know, anti-homophobia, so what you're looking at then is the positive end of it, so it would be the catalyst.

INTERVIEWER: Right. [I think].

ANNE: With a catalyst being someone willing to change?

STUDENT: The lack of education on LGBTQ issues creates a type of fear of it, which in itself is a type of homophobia in my mind. People are too scared to stand up for people because they don't know enough about it or they do not want to be

pinpointed themselves. I have found that students don't know it means to be homophobic. They think it means you actually have to be "afraid," which is untrue. They may consider themselves "anti-homophobic" when really they are far from it. I think maybe if they knew they were considered homophobic, they would look at their current beliefs, actions, use of language, etc., and change them to be less homophobic. Basically, most of the homophobia in our school is due to a lack of education and lack of effort taken by the administration to fight homophobia.[8]

ANNE: To make change? If I were in the position to have the opportunity to make some kind of change or a stand, I certainly would. I think that it's an area that we're still working on as a society, obviously. It's not as well understood as other areas for discrimination so you know, sexism, ageism, racism… that kind of thing. But I think it's timely and essential that we do respond in a way that would help move people forward, not in an antagonist way, but providing more education.

ELLEN: I don't really view myself as an "obstacle" or a "catalyst." Certainly when things come up, I deal with them head on, but in my mind a catalyst is something that promotes programs, etc. and brings something into the school like school-wide programs that address these issues. If something comes up, deal with it head on and I would say in a public way. It comes up in class, we deal with it in class. It comes up in the bus loop, I deal with it in the bus loop. I wouldn't say that I go out of my way to be a catalyst and promote programs.

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[8] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 123.

IRENE: [I'm] a catalyst. I'd like to think that I'm an open-minded person and accepting

and, you know, to help everybody through their journey, whatever their journey

may be.

OLIVER: Well, certainly a catalyst. I mean, a catalyst in that, an inert catalyst, let's say

in that certainly, when something… I'm not actively going out and doing

anything. Do you know what I'm saying? It's not there, I guess is what I'm

saying, but certainly, if it does come up, again, I'm acting on behalf of the safety

and the education of the students around that.

TOM: Sorry, obstacles or?

INTERVIEWER/STUDENT: Obstacles or catalysts.

TOM: Am I an obstacle to anti-homophobia issue?

INTERVIEWER/STUDENT: Yes.

TOM: I think I am… can I be neutral? That is, it wasn't an option you gave me, but I

mean, I don't see myself antagonistic and I don't see myself going out to

champion the cause either.

INTERVIEWER: Is there fear there in that decision?

TOM: Fear of what?

INTERVIEWER: What's your hold back on being neutral?

TOM: What's my hold back in being neutral?

INTERVIEWER: Um, hum, instead of taking a leadership position one way or the other.

TOM: I don't know if this is an answer at all, but since the issues weren't coming to the

surface in the school, it really did not come out to …

INTERVIEWER: Any school you've been at?

TOM: In my most recent school, I'll have to [do some] more thinking and come back. It's been a long time since the district before this, but no, my attention's always been on what's been pressing, what do I have to deal with right now? I know that's not the right way administrators are supposed to do things, alas, it is true. So because it hasn't been front and centre, it hasn't been something I've been working on.

INTERVIEWER: Would you change your resolution of a homophobic issue due to pressure from your board of education and/or community groups?

ANNE: I can't imagine doing that. I don't think that I mean, it's like saying, would you back down from your belief or your moral compass? No. It might be difficult, but uncomfortable, but you know, if you believe strongly in something, you don't change your mind just because of pressure.

ELLEN: Absolutely. If something came up that needed to be addressed then, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And why would you do that? Why would you change your resolution?

ELLEN: Well, I'm assuming that something has come up, either somebody has been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or something like that. If it's something that comes up school-wide, then you need to deal with it school-wide.

TOM: When I've been presented with challenges on decisions in the past, I will listen to the group that wants to change my mind, because I do think that listening is important. But as of yet, I have not yet done so, I haven't changed my mind.

OLIVER: You know what? I don't think so. I think that it's a broad topic. It is

something that is becoming more and more pronounced in our schools and in our

educational system. Certainly, there are people that have the interest and the

energy and the inclination to go out and expand on this in the schools and to me,

it's just one more of those things that we deal with in everyday education.. And

again, my take on it…

ALLAN: I don't like the word *pressure*. Would you change your resolution? No, if I

really, truly believed that this was what needed to happen then I would stick with

it.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes that's difficult.

ALLAN: Yes it is, yup, yup. And I guess I'm comfortable enough, I've been an

administrator long enough in this district that, you know, yup.

INTERVIEWER: Right, so experience counts there?

ALLAN: Yes.

IRENE: No, I would not change my opinion, but I would have to follow the guidelines

of my school district.

INTERVIEWER: And why is that?

IRENE: Because I do what my employer tells me to do.

OLIVER: You know I just found out this summer that my nephew's gay. And again, I

think my sister was more upset about the fact that he was gay and whatnot, and I

don't know what kind of reaction she was looking at from me, but it was nothing.

He's a great kid and I still love him and no, I mean, that's his lifestyle choice.

STUDENT: I know that many of my friends that are LGBT or Q are extremely afraid of

telling their parents. Although in our community many people pretend to be

rather liberal in their ideals, they think in the "as long as it's not my kid" type

way, which is hurtful and intimidating to their children.[9] Being openly LGBTQ at

my school makes getting in the "in crowd" VERY difficult if not impossible.[10]

OLIVER: One thing I do find interesting though, is the research that is coming out now

around the nature vs. nurture argument. And certainly, one of the things that

comes out when talking to my nephew is what a relief it was to finally come out

of the closet, I guess you could say. And it's very interesting because I really

think, and again, this is just from the little bit of information that I have on the

subject, is that in terms of being hard-wired, I guess you could say, around, say,

being homosexual. You know something, I can't relate to the fact that somebody

says, 'It felt just so good to be able to come out and say that they were

homosexual'. I can't identify with that. So, I just have to take somebody's word

for it and say, Well, okay then. I guess that was… That's great. I mean, that's

excellent. You shouldn't be feeling like that, you know, repressed and that sort of

thing. So, if that's what it takes to make you feel good. Do you know what I'm

saying? And, you know, then great. Life is short enough as it is. So I'm happy

for him. That's great. And again, I don't think anything different of him, so, it's

just, you know.

STUDENT: There were obstacles from the administration for fear of backlash from

parents or "creating a problem where there wasn't one." Though generally

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[9] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 101

[10] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 101

supportive, they were afraid of explicitly queer events for fear of "giving bullies ideas."[11]

Director's Notes: Act 1, Sc. 3: Obstacles or Catalysts

Principals and vice-principals were asked whether or not they consider themselves obstacles (blockers) or catalysts (leaders or agents of change). This was a disappointing part of the research for me, as I was hoping for passion, enthusiasm, excitement, and, to be truthful, stories about just and noble causes. While four of the principals claimed they were catalysts, two stated they were neither. One of the two, Tom, clearly wanted to be considered "neutral" and the other, Oliver, wanted to be "inert"! Oliver says, "I'm not actively going out and doing anything" (p. 131) and Tom says, "my attention's always been on what's been pressing, what do I have to deal with right now?" (p. 132). Somehow, we need to find ways to assist educational leaders to move from a reactive position to a proactive one. We need to acknowledge that schools are heterosexual places and that heterosexuality is taught every single day. If we know that, we must then counter those teachings by talking about and being willing to discuss homophobia in our schools. Moving from "inert" to proactive doesn't take much. Simply putting an anti-homophobia poster up in a prominent place indicates values, beliefs, and the willingness to discuss the topic.

> Not only are many schools not safe for LGBTQ students and students whose
> parents are LGBTQ, I will go so far as to say that teachers and administrators who
> do not teach about and discuss issues related to homosexuality create unsafe
> environments for these students. (Hall, 2010, p. 105)

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[11] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 129.

Doing nothing is clearly not acceptable to me, but why are some principals afraid to act? What is stopping them from taking a stand?

> Taking a stand is not just about an analysis or words; however, the phrase provides a useful reminder that we are embodied and called upon, by the strength of our convictions, to put our bodies on the line, to take action. (Kelly, Brandes, & Orlowski, 2003-4, p. 2)

Physically putting yourself out there, especially in smaller communities such as those where these principals work means discovering a number of other obstacles put in your way like: colleagues, parents, students, the local religious organizations, specific cultural groups, the school board, and superintendent. Certainly other obstacles principals face include what one Vancouver teacher described as, "the 'systemic inertia' of school bureaucracies, prescribed learning outcomes, government exams, and published school rankings based on easily measured outcomes such as test scores, all [of which] serve to 'reinforce conformity' and prevent innovation" (Kelly et al., 2003-4, p. 8). Perhaps, by taking a stand, the ultimate risk and obstacle is the threat of losing your job.

Claiming there are many obstacles is no excuse for those in school leadership. It is the responsibility of critically engaged school leaders to educate, and make themselves aware of what possibilities exist in order to "understand and challenge the workings of power and how dominant discourses often privilege elites" (Kelly et al., 2003-4, p. 11). Staying up to date on District and Ministry policies, initiatives, and innovations is one way to keep a critical eye open for areas in need of action. Principals need to ask questions like: Do we have an anti-homophobia policy in our district? Do our Codes of Conduct explicitly reflect the Human Rights Code? Are there any courses or resources

that would help our students learn about the intersectionality of gender, sexual identity, race, and social economic status? For example, none of the principals knew why the district did not offer *Social Justice 12*. None had taken up the cause either by asking a teacher or by suggesting it directly to the Board of Education or superintendent. Some were even unaware of its existence. Had they ever asked? Were they not keeping up to date on Ministry initiatives? Did the senior educational leaders not try to initiate the program? Why not? Where is the Board on the issue? Have they seriously not heard of the reaction other districts are getting? Do the educational leaders in the district not believe in social justice? In this particular district, character education is alive and well.

Character education is, generally, a program or programs meant to teach children to be moral, peaceful, conforming, and good citizens. While there are many programs used in B.C. schools such *Focus on Bullying* and *Safe Caring and Orderly Schools*, British Columbia politicians have remained neutral on mandating particular types of virtue or character education programs. The widely used *B.C. Performance Standards: Social Responsibility: A Framework Policy,* remains flexible by explicitly stating it is voluntary.

> The BC performance standards for Social Responsibility have been developed for voluntary use in BC schools. They describe the professional judgments of a significant number of BC educators about standards and expectations for social responsibility, and they provide a context within which teachers, students, and families can examine aspects of social responsibility in their schools. (B.C. Performance Standards, 2011b, p. 1)

One principal specifically mentioned promoting a "virtue of the week". While character education is not mandatory in British Columbia, it certainly reflects a more conservative

educational choice by the principal. Three possible approaches to character education

are: traditional, developmental, and caring. The traditional approach focuses on the

concept that "universal values exist and that they must be explicitly taught to students"

(Winton, 2010, p. 353). The developmental approach emphasizes "critical thinking and

experience, developmental processes, and the changing meanings of values over time and

across contexts" (p. 354). The caring approach believes "context is very important and

rejects the traditional approach's focus on the individual" and states schools should be

organized to promote caring relationships (p. 354). While character education is not

mandatory in British Columbia, it is in Alberta and Ontario. Critics of all three

approaches claim they largely serve to reinforce the status quo. In Ontario, the critique is

even more severe in that character education is claimed to promote "the values of the

province's most privileged citizens and constructs them as deserving their positions of

power and material success while proclaiming that character education is 'education at its

best'" (p. 364). Education is messy; it is about taking risks, sticking your neck out, being

inquisitive, and asking lots of questions. None of these traits or characteristics are

promoted in character education policies. When it comes to homophobia, as well as

hiding behind bullying, another way the principals interviewed addressed the topic was in

relation to safety.

Most principals mentioned the British Columbia Ministry of Education's *Safe

Caring and Orderly Schools* document in relation to addressing homophobia if it became

a "safety issue" in their school. This policy document is primarily symbolic, as limited

funding goes toward implementing its recommendations. It does, however, proclaim to

provide "provincial standards for codes of conduct, and identifies attributes of safe,

caring and orderly schools. It also outlines strategies for informing appropriate members

of the school community of safety concerns in a timely manner" (BCED, 2008b, p. 2).

A mandatory requirement of B.C. Schools' Codes of Conduct is they explicitly

state and incorporate the B.C. Human Rights Code, which identifies thirteen protected

grounds. In my own district, this is not done.

> People are protected by virtue of their race, colour, ancestry, place of origin,
>
> political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental
>
> disability, sex, sexual orientation, age (applies to persons 19 to 64 years of age),
>
> and unrelated criminal or summary convictions. (Safe, Caring, and Orderly
>
> Schools, 2008b, p. 9)

The explicit mention of "sexual orientation" is resisted, especially by elementary schools.

Character education is expected to have many results including, "improved personal

relationships, greater respect for diversity, fewer discipline problems, and a better match

between students' skills and values and the needs of the economy" (Winton, 2010, p.

360). Often unstated, character education expects that "students must internalize a

particular set of values (i.e. those identified and held by individuals with power in the

community) to be successful" (Winton, p. 360). However, well-intentioned these policies

might appear to be, they are further devalued by the incessant focus on increasing test

scores and fear of ending up on the bottom of the Fraser Institute's public ranking of

schools. Sometimes, however, individual principals do not cave to outside pressures.

Most principals stated they would not change their resolution of a homophobic

issue due to pressure from their Board of Education, community groups, or both. The

most confident reaction came from the person who had been a principal the longest.

Only one admitted feeling personally challenged by the BCTF's *Homophobia Free Zone* poster campaign, where small and large size posters were distributed among BCTF members to post in classrooms, hallways, and counseling offices to disrupt the proliferation of "That's so gay" comments in schools. Whether fear of who might read this dissertation was holding them back or not, I am not sure. None were championing LGBTQ students in our district. Many obstacles could be in the way. Perhaps they were simply overwhelmed with the day-to-day facility operations and management, coupled with the instructional leadership that comes with supporting the intellectual and career development of students. School principals and vice-principals face pressure to monitor learning environments: the constant stream of data collection and analysis for the Ministry of Education, the Board of Education, the Superintendent, and other parties; accountability systems; and provision of guidance around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Finding the time and energy to take a deeper look at what is really going on and needs to be done is hard. Reflection is rare, but needed. All the obstacles mentioned can and should be overcome. Transformational leadership takes courage, passion, and commitment. Critical leadership calls for all parties to be awake. Exposure, education, understanding, patience, and baby steps are needed. But there was a moment of reflection that resulted in a break through for one educational leader. Sometimes change takes time. Sometimes change means taking a critical look at one's own family and their beliefs.

Tom was clear about his personal conflict around the BCTF's "Homophobia Free Zone" poster campaign. I had sensed during my interview with Tom that he wanted to tell me more about his own personal situation, and I came back to that feeling at the end

of his interview. It turns out his "uncomfortableness" with the "Homophobia Free Zone" campaign stemmed from a strict religious upbringing. His own words say it best:

> TOM: That challenge for me stems from, like, I'm growing up where it was thought to be wrong. Homosexuality, either in practice or not in practice, was wrong.

According to the Egale study (2009),

> there were many assertions of religious and natural grounds for homophobia ("the Bible clearly says homosexuality is a sin and will be punished," "I was taught it is Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve"), ("most people don't like gay people," "people don't like queers"), often accompanied by denials of homophobia. (pp. 28-29)

> TOM: And so yes, there's at first, there's that personal I have to get over where I've been in this area, to a place that's healthier because where I had been, wasn't healthy, it was a means of oppression and a tool to oppress people. And that was wrong…

Tom's personal struggle is evident to this day. He clearly knows oppression is wrong and as a school leader has certainly seen the negative effects oppression can have on young students.

> TOM: Interestingly, it went up in the school, it was there, it didn't make a wave, it didn't make a ripple, in terms of creating panic. There was no big issue, there were no crying parents, nobody came screaming to the office complaining, "Why are you doing this?" It didn't happen.

The realization that all the things Tom had been told growing up never came to fruition when he was faced with supporting an anti-homophobia campaign in his school was a bit of a shock.

> TOM: It just went up and that's what it was and really, I suppose the only tempest being experienced was within myself. And so I got in essence, got over that, and I guess the process helped me have a more balanced sense of the issue myself, and yeah, I think it really, by having to deal with it, it forced me then to come to some real ground in, where am I on the issue.

Tom was one of the first people to offer to participate in this study. As an educational leader, it is important to challenge yourself and reflect on your own beliefs and values. While some personal movement took place for Tom during the *Homophobia Free Zone* campaign, unfortunately, he was the participant wishing to remain neutral on change. I did not use this quote within the ethnodrama because religion and homophobia were not questions specifically addressed by this study. I felt it was, however, critical to include in the analysis as it shows some leadership growth, if grossly limited. It also demonstrates the power visual images and media have over our understandings of how things are in the world and how we should or could be. The BCTF poster campaign (supported by the Committee for Action for Social Justice) legitimized the support of gay students and even though Tom was personally divided in his values and beliefs, the campaign helped to unify him because, in his leadership role, he knew he needed to be inclusive of all people. However, no matter how personally challenging an issue can be, in some schools, calling someone a "fag" can be legitimized by inattentive educational leaders.

Discussing and addressing the issue of homophobia in our schools can seem overwhelming and daunting. However, ignoring the issue could be tragic. I would like to encourage educational leaders to become what Blackburn (2010) calls an activist community.

> I encourage you to put your commitments and passions out in the world for others to see. Some will be repelled, but others will be drawn to your values, not because they mirror their own, but because between you there is promise of learning, teaching, and getting into some difficult work that matters. …Together, research possible ways of responding to heterosexism and homophobia. Challenge yourselves to listen to and understand alternative perspectives. Actively seek such perspectives. Allow yourselves to experience and transcend threat. Assert strong stances, but continue to listen and learn, and respect your right, as well as the rights of others to change where you stand. Do not allow your inevitable frustrations to thwart you. All the while, work for change in your classroom, school, and broader community. Such is the work of an activist community. (p. 158)

Communities and educational leaders need to think about how they behave and how that behaviour may or may not be changed. The next chapter (Act Two) addresses how and what educational leaders do and their knowledge regarding resources, policies and programs available to them.

Chapter Five: Act Two

Presentation and analysis of data: Scenario #2, Behaviour, and Resources, Policies

and Programs

Act 2, Scene 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #2 (Appendix A).

STUDENT(S): (*Random slurs being hurled as students makes way across stage*). Well,

you're a 'fag'. Get outta here lezbo. Dyke. Homo. You're so gay.

INTERVIEWER: How do you address this in your school? What are your main

concerns?

OLIVER: We want them [the students] to understand that there's a social responsibility

that goes along with understanding homosexuality, as well as, respecting the fact,

that when they say something like that, there's people that are standing around,

perhaps, that could hear that.

STUDENT: I have not once seen a teacher or principal do anything to discipline

someone for a homophobic remark – never a suspension, which is what it is

supposed to be according to the harassment and safety policy.[12]

ALLAN: Well, several things. We have kids from four years old right through to 13. If

it's a four year-old making a comment, I will sit down and chat with him. The one

thing I don't want to do is just walk away and ignore it and let the comment go.

So you're going to get my attention, you're going to get our TA's attention, the

teacher's attention and we'll stop and we'll deal with it. In some cases the child is

not really even aware what they are saying. Now if this is a Grade 7, and this is a

Grade 7 we've spoken to four or five times about this, I'm going to treat it a heck

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[12] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 108.

of a lot differently than I am a younger child. Okay. So it's kind of a wishy-washy answer. It's a full array, you know all the way from suspension if this kid has been harassing another kid, and this is just one more incident of it versus a child that doesn't understand the word.

ANNE: Okay, so first of all, if we're talking elementary-school-aged children, then I need to make sure that the child who called the other child a fag knows what he is saying and what it means and why it is derogatory, then talk about it with that child and his parents and probably with the classroom, especially if that kind of talk is ongoing, and have an open conversation with the students and the teacher. In fact, I was thinking this morning, I wanted to go into the grade-seven class and talk to them about the recent conviction of the man in Vancouver who sucker punched the other man in the pub. And I wanted to talk to the grade sevens and say, 'This is why we teach you tolerance. This is why we discuss things like homosexuality and so on and help educate you, so that you don't end up in a position of being put in jail for six years because you're so afraid of a person who's gay.'

STUDENT: This year, one of the teachers decided that the amount of homophobic slurs that she was hearing around the halls and in the classrooms was just too much. She's since put up posters that say "that's so gay is not okay," and she has been working to discourage the use of homophobic slurs. Other teachers have also joined in working to stop the homophobia at our school.[13]

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[13] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 109.

OLIVER: To call your friend a fag jokingly is one thing, but it's another to understand

the context in which you're using it and the environment you're using it. Again,

it chips away from what it is that we're trying to create in a school and that is a

positive environment. It has a negative connotation to it. So yeah, I just try to

educate the kids on that.

STUDENT: I have never been a victim of homophobia, but I hear comments like

"That's so gay" every single day at my school. Who wants to come out to that

negativity?[14]

ELLEN: Well, any time a student hits another student, it doesn't matter what the reason

is. I mean, that's unacceptable. It's abusive. It's violent. Then if somebody calls

another student a "fag", again that's unacceptable. In combination, it's doubly

unacceptable. Calling somebody "gay", I mean, you're bullying them. It's like

years and years ago, women used to be bullied and picked on, and consigned to

some lower rank because they were female as opposed to male. It's

discriminatory whatever it is.

IRENE: Well, it's interesting, when I saw the question, I kind of laughed a little bit

because I did have that happen before.

STUDENT: I am very discouraged when everyday I sit in class and hear mean

homophobic remarks, and the teachers just ignore it or perhaps even have a laugh

along with the students who said it!! I have lost faith in the supposed "teacher

role model" crap. Yeah right. These people only conform to their own beliefs of

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[14] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 47.

religion and such, and rarely do I see a teacher stick up against homophobic remarks.[15]

IRENE: We had a situation in one of the elementary schools that I worked in, we had a situation of bullying and in the one case, the guardian of the one child, who we were addressing, there was a Facebook issue of online bullying as well. And in the video that was posted on Facebook or on YouTube, they were making fun using the word fag, and, like, quite regularly. And so when I met with the parents, I brought it up and you know, they would also use the word *retard*. And so those are two words that, if you actually think about what the meaning is, there's they're quite meaningful words. And then the guardian had dismissed it, just saying, you know what, everybody uses that word, nobody really uses it for what's the true meaning of it, which I find very interesting because if you use a word enough, then you risk the chance of having it losing its meaning. When the true meaning is, that we all know, it's not a good one. And then one year, I worked on a staff, actually two years, I worked on a staff that we had a gay employee who was a teacher on staff, and in the one school, this person was really involved in Pink Day, anti-bullying and, you know, for her own reasons. So I thought that was really good, and part of the video, I believe, talked about using the word 'fag' and if I did, or when I have dealt with students who have used that word, I don't address it right there in front of all of their friends. I make a point to pull them aside at a time where they're not in front of their peers and talk to them

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[15] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 108.

one on one about the situation and talk about the meaning and try to get them to

reflect on what they're saying and what it means and the use of the word.

STUDENT: Fun Fact: I've counted myself hearing "That's So Gay" and other

homophobic terms up to around 15 times per class. That's up to 60 times a day

and usually (depending on the teacher and other students around of course) the

language never gets dealt with unless I say something to try and stop it.[16]

TOM: The first one going through my head right now is, that's an absolutely

inappropriate use of any word. You just don't do that. Second thing is that, all

right, where is the anger coming from? Why is this kid angry, upset, annoyed at

the other one? What's the issue that he's using that name?

Director's Notes: Act 2, Sc. 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #2 (Appendix A)

All principals said they would talk with the students involved who said the word

fag. Two principals said they would certainly have a chat only with students if it were a

younger child. Only one suggested that there would be a range of "punishment" if it was

an older child and they had spoken to the student five or six times before. One principal

mentioned a discussion with the parent and the classroom. Fifty percent said they

perceived the word *fag* to be a bad word. Only one principal mentioned the word

homosexuality. Discourse covered the use of language, violence, anger, discrimination,

abuse, bullying, cyber-bullying using Facebook and YouTube, the use of slang,

putdowns, epithets, empathy, social responsibility, Pink Day, and the intersection of

women's rights and the rights of the gay community.

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[16] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 47.

One principal (Irene) mentioned that she addressed the use of the word "fag" in private. Why? Was this not a perfect opportunity to have a great discussion with a group of students? Why does Oliver say "To call your friend a fag jokingly is one thing, but it's another to understand the context in which you're using it and the environment you're using it" (p. 146). How? Is it different? Educational leaders need to pay particular attention to verbal harassment.

> The most common form of [sexual orientation] harassment is verbal in nature and includes the use of anti-gay language as insults (e.g., "that's so gay," "don't be such a fag"), anti-gay jokes, and behaviours that ridicule gays and lesbians (such as affecting the speech and walk of a stereotypically effeminate gay man to get a laugh). The prevalence of this discourse in schools allows homophobic attitudes to develop and grow as students learn that this language is tacitly condoned by educators who fail to intervene when it is used. (Meyer, 2009, p. 5)

Socially just schools would be further ahead if they considered "normalizing" language around LGBTTIQQ issues. For example, there is probably nothing more powerful than hearing your principal announce at a school assembly, that "it is okay to be gay at our school". Imagine the power of that public statement, how it might make some students feel. A classroom teacher who openly discusses homosexuality in literature will eventually "normalize" the appropriate language in the classroom. Paula Alida Roy writes that she finds "opportunities to say the words homosexual, lesbian, gay, homophobia in a normal tone of voice, with no particular context" (1997, pp. 212-213).

When Roy (1997, pp. 212-213) mentions tone of voice she concurs with Thompson (1990) who says,

Even a simple phrase, uttered by one person to another in the course of everyday

interaction, is embedded in a structured social context, and may bear the traces –

in terms of accent, intonation, mode of address, choice of words, style of

expression, etc. – of the social relations characteristic of this context (p. 145).

The tone of voice used to denigrate another human being is extremely powerful and

institutions where violent language is permitted to occur only promote the further

construction of hierarchies of negative interaction. The person the slur targets is not the

only person feeling poorly in that environment. "Social institutions [schools] can be seen

as constellations of rules, resources, and relations which are situated within, and at the

same time create, fields of interaction" (Thompson, 1990, p. 149). Would you want your

school to be a social institution of positive interactions? What kind of discourses should

principals and vice-principals permit and promote?

Paula Alida Roy develops a sense of justice in her students not by talking *at them*

but by teaching them to *listen*. To listen to pain some words generate and to listen to the

diversity and appreciation language can bring to the curriculum. For example, in

discussing poetry, Roy will ask students to think of love as not necessarily between a man

and a woman (1997, p. 212). By posing that thought in a casual manner, students learn to

listen, and in a gentle way, begin to realize that some of the words they may have been

using, both in the classroom and in the hallway, may have been damaging to others. Roy

says "by the third week of school I have begun to normalize the discourse by getting the

words into the classroom air and making clear that just as no one would think of saying

'nigger' out loud, so 'fag' or 'dyke' are hurtful and unacceptable" (1997, p. 213).

Educational leaders see students misbehave in the hallways. They need to listen

attentively as well. Young says, "The sense of justice arises not from looking, but from listening" (1990, p. 4). Most of us learned to listen before we learned to talk. Educational leaders and researchers for social justice need to relearn and practice this skill. The language allowed in your hallways, staffrooms, and classrooms should be nonviolent.

The fictional student, interspersed among the principals' comments, indicates slurs are so powerful that a part of him dies when he hears derogatory language. He wants to hide. According to Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz (2009), "over 50% of lesbian and bisexual youth reported verbal harassment at school" and that boys "target girls and nonconforming boys through humorous insults that produce and sustain heterosexist hierarchies in peer cultures as well as homophobia and racist discourses of power" (p. 218). Hiding, however, has never been an effective solution.

> Through the middle of the twentieth century, gays were routinely asked to convert
> to heterosexuality; whether through lobotomies, electroshock therapy, or
> psychoanalysis. As the gay rights movement gained strength, the demand to
> convert gradually ceded to the demand to pass. This shift can be seen in the
> military's adoption in 1993 of the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, under which gays
> are permitted to serve as long as we agree to pass. Finally, at millennium's turn,
> the demand to pass is giving way to the demand to cover – gays are increasingly
> permitted to be gay and out so long as we do not "flaunt" our identities. The
> contemporary resistance to gay marriage can be understood as a covering
> demand: Fine, be gay, but don't shove it in our faces. (Yoshino, 2006, p. 19)

Children in our schools are forced to "cover" when they don't feel safe. This goes against the mindset of any socially just person. Gay persons "ought to be free to express their desires and to cultivate institutions without hiding, and without fear of harassment, violence, loss of employment, or housing" (Young, 2000, p. 107). Rather than push children into "covering," our goal should be for students to discover their authentic selves, their "uncovered" selves. Wouldn't our schools look a little different if all children were informed and encouraged to just "be" in this world? We could have schools with no unsafe places, no homophobic or transphobic comments, no victimization, no fearing verbal, physical, psychological, or digital harassment. What is stopping us from doing this? How do you break the cycle of power, violence, and cultural imperialism? Could part of the solution be as simple as putting up a poster?

Act 2, Scene 2: Behaviour

INTERVIEWER: How do you make your school safe from the effects of homophobia?

ALLAN: I think we do that through programs like Second Step, through Focus on
Bullying. We make kids realize how hurtful it is and how it can really hurt people badly for a lot of years. Our TAs look for it now, they look for signs of kids that are being excluded or suddenly they get very quiet and they just sit. You'll find them in one spot. And so, we're much more aware of bullying than we ever were, and looking for signs of it. We have parents now that if they're spotting anything that's the least bit questionable on Facebook we're being informed of it. And so even though it takes place out of school, we still deal with it. We've brought a lot of parents in and sort of discussed with them the dangers of it. We've done cyber-bullying with our PAC, in our newsletter. And so, it addresses homophobia.

STUDENT: My school has absolutely no support (awareness) of the LGBTQ community

within and around it. The biggest fear for me is the unknown, not knowing how

people will accept someone who is LGBTQ.[17]

ELLEN: In terms of making our school safe, everybody has a right to come here to our

school and get an education and participate in all the activities that school has to

offer, regardless of their race or sexual orientation, whether they are handicapped

or not. That is the philosophy. It's inclusive. That's the basis from which all

decisions are made.

STUDENT: People can be cruel. I remember my first day at the new school in grade 11

these guys decided it would be fun to taunt me because someone from a previous

school had also transferred and let them in on the fact that I was gay. The class

was hell, and really very little was done about it.[18]

IRENE: Well, I guess, it comes back to respect, right, and so whether it's homophobia,

or whether it's racism, or whether it's whatever you consider being a social

injustice, it's all about respecting people and accepting who they are and what

they are about.

OLIVER: You know what? In terms of, again, something that I mean, when you're

talking, say, homosexuality and you're talking bullying and you're talking and

any other issues that happen in a lot of schools, I think, for our school, it just is

all-encompassing. I'm convinced that 100% of my staff would be empathetic and

tolerant and supportive and would want to educate kids on sexual orientation, that

sort of thing, if it was an issue. I had one teacher say to me that she thought a

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[17] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 107.

[18] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 108.

student might be gay. And again, our response to that, well, you know, in terms

of being supportive, just make sure the kid's not bugged about it and that sort of

thing.

STUDENT: For the most part I think it would really help if the teachers stood up a bit

more when slurs were being said. Of course we understand that they might want

to stay neutral, or don't know what to say, but then learn what to say![19]

TOM: Homosexuality was one of the many issues of a potential means by which kids

can be, can feel unsafe or be discriminated against or attacked. So the first step is

to make sure we're clear with the students. It needs to be put into your school

agenda book, code of conduct. It needs to be in print, so that the world, if

interested, can see that yes indeed, we value everybody and that targeting kids

because they're homosexual is not going to be tolerated at the school. Also, I

believe that the first PAC [Parent Advisory Council] meeting or if you're going to

have a separate meeting of parents to your school, you address the same thing that

you addressed with the kids and you let them know where you stand and what the

school's willing to do about breaches of that part of the code of conduct, because

it should be in the code of conduct.

INTERVIEWER: How do you create a space where students are free to talk about

sexuality – all kinds of sexuality--without fear of repercussions?

TOM: I know that the issue is dealt with in planning as well as CAPP [Career and

Personal Planning] classes, and I would fully expect that any teacher would make

that a safe discussion, and I would be shocked if that weren't the case, and I

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[19] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 108.

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would absolutely weigh in with a teacher who had a discussion that wasn't safe for any kid to be able to say what they think.

STUDENT: I feel it would be very dangerous for me. I would be threatened and harassed, more than I already am for other (religions, poverty) reasons. I think I would be beat up. Also, people might tell my dad and he would hurt me.[20]

ALLAN: We do a lot of Family Life classes and we've brought in Public Health, we've brought in sex ed. educators because we do want the kids to feel comfortable with it.

STUDENT: Everyone bullies the gay kid. You don't have to know him or her personally to know who she or he is. I don't get to know the good side of the gays because they are rarely around - they're off hiding so they don't have to hear about being gay.[21]

ANNE: Well, when I'm dealing with students, I'm very open to talk about what we call body science. I've had a lot of experience teaching the subject with a fair degree of openness, honesty, but also with good boundaries about what kinds of information students need to have or don't need to have. And invariably, the older students have far more information than we think that they do or should, and it's a matter of putting their knowledge into a context of safety or values. So whatever they're hearing at home, they can place it in a, I guess, again, in that moral context, and decide for themselves what's appropriate behaviour or what's discriminatory, or what's fair, so I hope that doesn't sound too vague.

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[20] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 76.

[21] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 76. Corrected him/her and s/he to make more sense orally.

ALLAN: I guess most of it is done in class. We encourage kids to ask the questions

because once it's out on the playing field, we have no control over what's going

on, we're not sure what information they're getting is factual, true.

OLIVER: I think that particularly in our community up there and the surrounding

communities, it's not so much as homosexuality as it is, you know what's the

term I'm looking for, more abusive type of relationships and things like that, rape

and, do you know what I'm saying? Alcohol-related incidences that involve sex,

I mean, these kinds of things. So, certainly that is a focus in our community--

abusive relationships, things like this. Again, and even so, they wouldn't tell me

anyway, but I think that the child and youth care workers are the ones that kids

really open up to.

STUDENT: The vice-principal of my school used to be my Guidance Counsellor. I went

to her because I was extremely depressed and wanted to commit suicide. She

found it necessary to point out that she goes to church every Sunday.[22]

TOM: You say what you think on this issue, and then you back it up with your actions.

So when there are homophobic issues that arise, you stand by your word and what

you've said you believe about homosexuality, homophobia, and make it real for

those kids.

INTERVIEWER: How do you support members of your staff and their families who are

faced with homophobia?

ALLAN: It's a topic we don't hear much here, and the kids are very accepting. You

know we dealt last year with a child who... he had, I would refer to it more as

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[22] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 101.

gender identity issues. And the teacher was kind of concerned for this poor kid but I tell you, these classmates accepted him. He was just different. And we watched for it. Never got bugged, never got bothered. He was very well accepted. So we support our staff and their families that are being faced with bullying that are being faced with ... that are having difficulties with other kids bothering them, okay.

ANNE: I think in the same way that we support all staff who are faced with challenges. You know, the staffroom should be a safe place for anyone to be, to visit. Staff meetings should be safe. People should not feel vulnerable in their workplaces because of their sexual orientation, or their religion, or their colour.

ELLEN: Well, certainly, there's some quite interesting discussions in CAPP class and Planning about all sorts of issues. Students' journal. They journal in CAPP 9 and CAPP 8. They use journals and the teacher views those journals, but everything is kept confidential. The teacher does not share that stuff with parents or administration or counselors unless there is some self-harm intended.

INTERVIEWER: And if there is self-harm, what happens next?

ELLEN: Usually the teacher will come straight to me and then we will contact the Ministry of Children and Families counselor, who will contact the student and parents to do the questionnaire on whether the child is thinking of committing suicide.

IRENE: Well, that's a difficult situation, right, because you think about your teachers who actually do, like, the health ed., sex ed. stuff in the classroom. Maybe after asking this question, this is something that I need to think about a little bit more

when it comes to teacher professional development and how do we approach this as a staff. And, you know, is it the public nurse? And then you would make sure that you would set the kids up in the classroom, so that they can feel like they can say what they need to say, or maybe even just write it down, instead of saying it in front of the group, so that they feel like they have a voice, but not get ridiculed.

INTERVIEWER: How do you or would you help student advocates, such as those wishing to form a Pride committee create safe schools and communities?

ANNE: Well, I think I'd respond the same way that I would with kids who want to show any kind of leadership, in that if the context is appropriate, if they are responsible and respectful students, then I'll support them. It reminds me of the Pink Day campaign, where I wondered how would that go over. How would the grade seven boys respond to being asked to wear pink? In fact, it was phenomenal. It's been a phenomenal success at every age level. So I think sometimes we underestimate what children are able to do in terms of social justice. And they themselves are generally far more tolerant and accepting than their parents' generation. So, it's pretty powerful when kids step up to the plate.

ALLAN: Yeah, and interesting, because again, never had that happen. The kids really aren't at that stage yet.

INTERVIEWER: So in all the years that you've been admin, you've never had anybody come forward as a student even and say, "My parents are gay," or "I'm gay," or none of that experience at all?

ALLAN: Do you know what? I've never had that. I've never had that. And that's why, when I first looked at this, I thought, "Okay this is a junior high or a senior high

issue, it's not an elementary issue."   But as I go through it, you say, no, we've got

to do the groundwork for it ahead of time. We've got to be teaching people to be

accepting of other people with other beliefs and other backgrounds.

IRENE: I think you would see that more in a high school, than you would in an

elementary school. It doesn't mean that it wouldn't happen in grade 6, 7 grades.

However, it would take somebody quite mature, I think, to head that up and very

courageous. [laughs]

TOM: Perhaps give them space, room, time, make those things available so that they

can get their stuff together.

OLIVER: Oh, I mean, certainly if they came to me and wanted to do something like

that, it would be something that I don't have a problem with, as long as I

understood what the guidelines were, and I understood what they wanted to do,

and the purpose for doing it. So, you know, certainly.

INTERVIEWER: How do you assist in allowing issues to be brought safely into the

public, when many feel it is best to not be explicit and keep some issues, such as

homophobia, private?

ALLAN: I spend a lot of time listening to parents. And our PAC [Parent Advisory

Council], we deal with issues there that sometimes aren't the most comfortable to

deal with but do need to be addressed. Okay. Through restitution and restorative

justice we've dealt with a lot of these issues.

ANNE: Well, I guess in just being open to have conversations. Again, people are on

various places in the spectrum of their own sexual maturity. A lot of the fear and

discomfort people have stems from not having had a lot of talk, a lot of education.

And so, you know, in other I guess there are so many other kind of parallel

examples, like residential schools or, you know, internment camps and things that

we would really feel like we'd like to just bury and forget about. But they are

there in our subconscious. They're in our history and they need to be talked

about. At some point, I think there will be more of a revolution around

homosexuality and homophobia than we have yet experienced. You know, I was

watching [the TV show] *Glee* with my daughter before coming here and there

were boys kissing. And I think, through popular culture, we're going to have that

revolution and we're going to stop worrying and fearing and persecuting people

that we don't understand.

IRENE: Oh, you always have to start with the parents, yeah. Start with the parents and

then and I think, it's got to be a team effort, right. You've got to start with the

parents, conversations, going through them, to have conversations with their

children at home. Then you'd also work with the teachers, maybe perhaps

through staff meeting or through ProD. You know, it's interesting, I've had a

couple of scenarios. The one most recent was that we have a student who is in

grade 6 or 7, who, I guess, how would you put it? …displays certain

characteristics of maybe being, you know, gay, right. So then the question

brought up at the school-based team was, should we suggest to the parents that

that child get counseling, right?

STUDENT: For being gay?

IRENE: Well, for getting support for being gay. And so it was very delicate, right,

because do the parents realize it, if that's the case? You know, if those

stereotypes are actually indeed what they are, true, and are the parents accepting

of it? And do they see it as needing support? And would that be in the form of

counseling?

OLIVER: In my old school, I found out that we had five kids in our school that were

HIV positive. So, the question is, now, is it necessary to disclose who those five

students are to protect the safety of students and staff, right? Why weren't we

told who those five students were, necessarily? Well, is there a danger of

contracting HIV through daily interactions with the students? And I would say

no, there wouldn't be. So, that being said, I guess the same thing falls with

homosexuality in the school and saying that, to what danger is somebody in over

this? And how does it relate to the environment? I have to look at the context

and why would you disclose things like this? Is it necessary to disclose it and

make, say, somebody feel somehow inadequate because of their sexual

orientation? Maybe I'm just not quite understanding the question, but I guess I'm

looking at it again and saying how does it affect the environment that we're

working in, right? Certainly if, for example, let's say, for example, you've got

some same-sex or staff members, let's say, that are in a homosexual relationship

and they are arguing all the time in the school and kids notice that and other staff

notice it. Okay, well, it's adversely affecting the working environment so

certainly, I would say something about it. But is it because they're homosexual?

No, it's not. I would do that if they were husband and wife and they were arguing

and creating that negative environment. So, you know what? People's

orientations, like that, I can say that I don't understand it, but it doesn't mean that I'm not empathetic and tolerant and understand where they're coming from.

TOM: I think when addressing the issue, I would phrase things in a way that people know it's expected that we're going to be tolerant of these things. That everyone has a place in our school and our community. It represents everybody who comes here and irregardless of where they're at in any way, shape or form, that you have a place at this school. So I would push that first, to get people thinking when they come here, when you engage in what happens in this school, we're not kicking people out…that we're not excluding people. That sometimes there are challenging issues for us, things that challenge us personally, or things that we think shouldn't be brought out and talked about. But that's not real. That's not what reality's all about and this school is a reflection of its community and we're going to work in that context.

Director's Notes: Act 2, Sc. 2: Behaviour

Almost all of the principals recognize bullying and believe homophobia is a sub-category to bullying; therefore, anti-bullying programs were most often cited as addressing or dealing with some homophobic concerns. No principals, however, mentioned having gay-related signifiers visible in their office like a poster, flag, brochure, book, or button. Students look for clues as to where adults are coming from. All principals should be aware that students could probably identify every piece of clothing a principal owns. They could probably also imitate your walk, your voice, parrot your key phrases, and even tell another student how you would respond in a particular situation. This attention to detail, unconscious or not, is one effect of school leadership

positions. Everything principals do sends a message. Anne specifically wonders how the boys would react to being asked to wear pink on Pink Day (p. 158). What a perfect opportunity for an educational leader to explain to the entire school the origins of Pink Day in advance of the event.

All principals mentioned a list of things they were doing, such as offering programs like Second Step, Focus on Bullying, and Codes of Conduct. Communications go out in school newsletters and occur at Parent Advisory Council meetings. While they were not explicitly asked, no principal indicated that students were made aware of school or community-based organizations such as Gay-Straight Alliances, Youth Pride, or the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network. Again, conscious awareness seems to be an issue. Principals mentioned student rallies and start-of-year events, but none openly said in their welcoming assemblies that gay and straight students, staff, and families are welcome in their schools. In this way, the entire school-community gets the message that it's okay to talk about and challenge homophobia. Principals could also challenge heterosexism in classrooms by encouraging teachers to provide gay and lesbian role models. One principal was "convinced that 100% of my staff would be empathetic and tolerant and supportive and would want to educate kids in sexual orientation, that sort of thing, if it was an issue" (Oliver, p. 153). The same principal, however, connected his past experience with five students who had HIV to the idea of letting staff in the school know if there was any danger having homosexual students in the school.

HIV can be transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse, sharing of needles, and blood transfusions, but is not transmitted through bodily fluids seen in schools like: saliva, tears, sweat, feces and/or urine (AIDS.ORG). The Egale study

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(2009) specifically shied away from using the phrase "homosexual" or "homosexuality," due to "their historical usage in law and medicine as extremely pejorative terms denoting immorality and mental illness" (p. 14). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning people do not identify with the terms and have stopped using them just as Asian people avoid the term "Oriental". A lot of education needs to take place if people are going to stop perpetuating the cultural stereotype from the 1980s and 1990s that if you're gay, you are going to get HIV, and die of AIDS. Or that if you are around gay students, you might get HIV.

Most of these principals unintentionally support an oppressive status quo, whether they are in elementary programs and don't think homophobia affects them, or they are in secondary schools and believe they are inclusive or have other issues to deal with such as drugs, alcohol, and rape. Most of the hesitation in behaviour toward challenging homophobia is in need of what Young (1990) calls "consciousness raising." Another principal mentioned a student who "displays certain characteristics of maybe being, you know, gay" and yet another principal said, "we dealt last year with a child who... he had, I would refer to it more as gender identity issues." Principals can lead the way in creating "safe spaces" by using gender-neutral language and assuming that LGBTQ students come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and cannot be picked out of the crowd based on displaying characteristics. Young (1990) says, "consciousness raising involves making the privileged aware of how their habitual actions, reactions, images, and stereotypes contribute to oppression" (p. 154).

One principal claimed, "…There will be more of a revolution around homosexuality and homophobia than we have yet experienced." Popular culture, not

formal education, was cited as leading the way and this may indeed be the case. Most of

us are informed by other means beyond classroom walls. Young people are influenced

by what they see in movies, television, videos, the news, and what they read in novels,

magazines, and blogs. Music influences a generation through the lyrics; there are

fashions, art, and all the values and beliefs promoted within them (all of this influence is

mediated by young people's identities). The principal forecasted a day when, "we're

going to stop worrying and fearing and persecuting people that we don't understand." It

has been over twenty years since Young (1990) wrote about "the politics of difference"

and some say not a lot has changed particularly in our schools.

> Consciousness raising about homophobia may be the most important and
>
> productive strategy for such a revolution of the subject…homophobia is deeply
>
> wrapped in issues of gender identity, for this society gender identity continues to
>
> be heterosexist: the genders are considered mutually exclusive opportunities that
>
> complement and complete the other one…homosexuality produces a special
>
> anxiety, then, because it seems to unsettle this gender order. (Young, 1990, pp.
>
> 154-155)

Principal Allan realized this when musing whether homophobia was an elementary or

secondary issue, "…we've got to do the groundwork for it ahead of time. We've got to be

teaching people to be accepting of other people with other beliefs and other backgrounds"

(Allan, p. 159). According to Young (1990), "a strategy of consciousness raising

presumes that those participating already understand something about how interactive

dynamics and cultural imagery perpetuate oppression, and are committed to social justice

enough to want to change them" (p. 155). This involves attending to group-specific needs

and making schools safe from homophobia by creating "safe spaces" for LGBTQ students, staff and families, and being explicit when it comes to sexual orientation resources, policies, and programs.

Act 2, Scene 3: Resources, Policies and Programs

STUDENT: Last week three kids pantsed me in the change room. They heard the teacher coming so they all turned away and pick up some clothes. Made it look like they were all just laughing and getting dressed. After the next block, two of them punched me in the gut on the stairwell. They know the parts of the school where there are no adults around. One of them yelled at me when I was riding my bike home yesterday. Know what he said, "My Dad hates gays".

INTERVIEWER: Describe the programs, systems, structures, resources you have in place so homophobic bullying does not occur at your school?

ALLAN: Right, so then how do we prevent bullying from occurring at the school?

STUDENT: It's isn't safe. I learned that the hard way at other schools. I had to transfer out of the public school system and my parents now pay tons of cash per year to keep me in a secluded school – and at this new place I don't risk my parents' investment by outing myself.[23]

ALLAN: I think a lot of it is prevention. We do a lot of work on our school code of conduct with parents, with kids, with teachers. We talked about the cyber-safety discussions out of the library. In the teacher's handbook we started the year with a couple of ProD days just before school started and we walked through what does it look like and let's talk about it.

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[23] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 77. Corrected spelling of tonnes.

STUDENT: Kam got a binder kicked down the hall into her back by a guy shouting, "Fucking dykes" as the two of us passed. I have heard remarks from girls saying "If I were a lesbian, I'd kill myself." When watching a video on the holocaust where they mentioned the killing of LGBT people, boys cheered at the idea. I have been forced into my own section of our gymnasium locker rooms by my classmates because I like girls. I was sexually harassed (verbally and physically) by a male classmate who said that he'd make me like boys again. Kam and I both have been told "Go die, dyke!" Myself and almost all of my GLBT friends have received emails, Facebook and/or Nexopia messages from other students with homophobia remarks.[24]

ALLAN: Parent presentations. We use a lot of ministry material, everything from Safe and Caring Schools to what is it? D.A.R.E. program. All of those have material and information in them that we use. The other thing that we do is we have a real strong, positive presence. So if you talk to kids, where does most of the bullying take place? It takes place at recess and lunch hour. So what happens is we have about 5, 6 adults out always and it's a lot easier to prevent it when there's more of us instead of trying to deal with it afterwards when you're just trying to investigate it.

ANNE: [We] just [have] the code of conduct, under which harassment, teasing, bullying, whether it's of a sexual nature or not, would have, would lead to consequences that are quite clear. Whether they begin with just a meeting or a

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[24] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 56. Capitalized Facebook and Nexopia.

conversation and result in a restorative justice circle or end up in suspension, it falls under that same category of harassment or bullying.

STUDENT: *most* of the gay community in my school are bullied, we all stick together, but that doesn't always help. Many gays are depressed because of this, and teachers and adults need to help and stand up for our community. We are not aliens, we're people, and we have rights.[25]

ELLEN: Well, we have our Anti-bullying Policy. It's part of our Code of Conduct. That's the basis from which all other decisions are made if something like this comes up. Whether there's a teacher making a note that something has happened in class or in the hall or in the bus loop, then each individual thing is addressed in a means that's appropriate to what's happened. Maybe it's addressed right there in class. Maybe the teacher reports that there's a rumour going around that somebody's going to be beaten up after school because they're gay, or whatever. They're all different, so everything's addressed differently depending on what it is, based on the Code of Conduct.

INTERVIEWER: Does your Code of Conduct include an opening clause with the human rights laid out specifically, sexual orientation and race and…?

ELLEN: Yes.

STUDENT: Is she sure? Not all school Code of Conducts follow provincial requirements. And, only fifteen school districts in B.C. have specific Board level policies in place. Wonder if she knows that?[26]

[25] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 56.

[26] Chamberlain, J. February 2012. Email from BCTF.

IRENE: Okay, so I guess our school goal of solving problems in peaceful ways, I would

   hope would be a sort of system or framework in place, to be accepting of all

   students and to help in that area.

STUDENT: I want to be in a school that is accepting of others whether they are

   homosexual or not, if they have a different religion or if they are of a different

   race. It is great to have variety, and we just need to learn to accept.[27]

OLIVER: Again, the only thing I can think of that would probably directly relate to that

   would be, say, something like our code of conduct. And looking at our code of

   conduct and saying that it encompasses that, so we're not, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And are you aware of Ministry of Education resources and policies

   and programs on anti-homophobia?

ALLAN: (*All actors fumble around looking through documents*) Not particularly on

   anti-homophobia. No.

ANNE: I know that there are some. I don't know exactly what they are, but I think that

   they are for secondary youth.

ELLEN: I know they're there. Haven't done a whole lot of research into it, other than

   specifics surrounding the Code of Conduct and what the Ministry's guidelines are

   regarding that.

OLIVER: I know they're out there, and I certainly can find them if I need to, but have I

   accessed them? No, I haven't.

TOM: Resources?

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[27] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 136.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, resources, policies and programs on anti-homophobia? Are you consciously aware of anything?

TOM: I know they exist, but I'm honestly, I'm not well versed in them.

INTERVIEWER: What resources do you make available in your school for students?

ALLAN: Now? I think we've listed some of the ones. I mean we've talked about it. We've recognized. We've shared amongst the schools all the different programs that we are using, DARE goes on in Grade 5 class, FRIENDS goes on in Grade 4. We do Second Step almost school-wide, most of the other grades use that one. If I've got a class that we've had some problems with I'll work with the teacher on a Focus on Bullying program or you can take some of the lessons directly out of there. We get parents involved with it more, faster than we had probably in the past. So we bring them in as part of the solution.

ANNE: At the moment, probably just human resources, i.e. people to talk to myself, counselors, teachers.

ELLEN: Novels, you know, a wide range. And then, of course, the Internet has a wealth of resources so students are able to access the Internet.

OLIVER: Again, in the counseling area, we've got information there if kids want it. Certainly, they have, as well, access to a number of folks if they want to talk to them, specifically, about it. Some of our courses, our Planning 10 and our CAPP courses would touch on the subject. We have I'm trying to think when the last time was we had a safe sex or a sex ed. educator come in to speak to the students on this.

INTERVIEWER: Any counseling services or programs at all?

ELLEN: No specific programs.

IRENE: Mostly, I guess, people resources. I think that's one thing that we're very lucky

to have. We have a lot of experts and supports staff and itinerant staff and we, I

think that we, I would like to think that we offer a pretty open environment where

we'd like kids to be able to approach adults when there's a problem. That's kind

of what we coach them to do. And so, you know, by just having positive

attitudes, positive relationships, that we would hope that kids, when they do have

any questions or [are] looking for support, that they feel like they can approach an

adult in the school.

TOM: What resources do I make… I don't think I do.

INTERVIEWER: And many educators espouse a certain program, you mentioned

restitution and RJ already, how do you find a program or method of addressing it

that suits your style?

ALLAN: Do you know, there isn't one that fits for everything and I think you have to

take each case, based upon its merit, how you're going to deal with it based upon

your past experience with it. And I've used a variety of approaches and some

cases I'll try this, that didn't work, I'll go on to the next one, try the next one until

we find something that works.

ANNE: Well, I've got a few in my tool belt now. We've got the restorative justice.

I've got the Tribes training and this RULER Approach training. And I think that

emotional literacy really gets to the core of a lot of behaviour in tapping into its

source, whether it's fear or anxiety or just ignorance. The other thing that we've

been using is a lot of literature -- picture books, storybooks around bullying,

teasing -- promoting pro-social behaviours. So we do a lot of that. We do a lot of

reading storybooks and talking about issues. We do Roots of Empathy here,

which doesn't explicitly address homophobia, but it does help build empathy and

tolerance and acceptance and understanding that there are all different types of

families.

ELLEN: Well, restitution has something that we've always used. We started using it at

[another school]. Our [District level Administrator] was my counsellor [there].

We used restitution there. About twelve years ago we started using it. Twelve?

Maybe eleven. Eleven, twelve, years ago. Then carried it over to [this school]

when I came up here and used restorative practices. We got a couple of teachers

trained in it now. We use them not just for instances regarding homophobia, but

any kinds of social conflict depending on how serious they are, far-reaching, that

kind of thing.

OLIVER: Certainly, the restorative piece is important. We implement that quite a bit.

Even one-on-one conversations with students about it. You know, again, it's

about educating the student. It's not necessarily a negative consequence as much

as it is educating the students on it.

TOM: I do, I find restorative justice is something I really do believe in and I think

because it is so variable, that it will address issues of homophobic bullying or any

other bullying that comes up. Yeah, very powerful stuff.

INTERVIEWER: And what supports do district and school-based leaders need in order

to effectively lead in the area of anti-homophobia and social justice education

practices?

ALLAN: I think we need training in restitution, restorative justice with and how to run

effective meetings in that area. I think we basically are doing a good job with it.

We also need the time to do it. Because for them to be done it's huge. For them

to be done properly we need time to investigate it, we need time to deal with it

and wrap it up and make sure we record it and by the time you start and finish, it's

a huge amount of time.

ANNE: Well, I think some kind of resource I don't know of any resource directly for

elementary children. I know that there are picture books like *Asha's Mums* and

others that could open up those conversations, but I would like to see some kind

of series of lessons that would help a teacher plan for instruction, especially when

we know we must have some gay and lesbian parents. And how does that child

navigate the tricky waters of school life knowing that his parents are gay? So I

did have one boy for the last two years at school. He came to us from another

district with a long, long list of behaviour reports. In fact, he was considered

intensive behaviour. When he came to our school, he had a fresh start, and while

he could be a bit cheeky, he was never the behaviour problem that he was in the

previous district. After the first couple months, it became clear that, yes, he had

two moms. He had a dad as well, but he lived with his two moms. And at the

very beginning when kids were getting to know him, they were really curious

about it. And I think, he had a little bit of stress around kids' not understanding,

maybe giving him a hard time. But you know, those were the most popular two

moms in our entire grade-seven class. Kids loved spending time with them, and

they would pull up and pick up half a dozen boys at the end of the day and take

them home and, you know, a really, really wonderful couple. And I think what a

gift it was for so many of those boys to see a mature, functioning relationship that

was, you know, far more loving and reliable than many other, you know,

heterosexual relationships.

ELLEN: Well, I would say leadership in terms of restorative practices which I think we

have. Setting very clear guidelines and policies regarding how these matters are

dealt with, both from a human resources standpoint and also from a code of

conduct standpoint.

IRENE: Yeah, we need experts like [you]. [laughs] And you know what? I think it also

needs to be a priority.

STUDENT: Our school was particularly supportive of our social justice committee

(who made a documentary on homophobia in high schools) and our "respected"

group, which is developing a presentation on homophobia.[28]

INTERVIEWER: What about in the Aboriginal community? Has it ever come up from

their perspective? Because you've dealt with quite a few Aboriginal families.

IRENE: Yeah, and when I was talking about the student that we talked about a couple of

weeks ago in our school-based team that was an Aboriginal student. And so…

INTERVIEWER: Have you heard the phrase *two spirited* before?

IRENE: Oh, no, I haven't, no. And I'm wondering if yeah, if that's something that's on

[the Aboriginal Education Principal's] radar.

STUDENT: What about your radar? I admit, you've come a long way in fifty years on

Aboriginal issues in schools, I mean, considering the amount of damage caused.

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[28] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 131.

Anyway, my school has lots of Aboriginal art work, we have an Aboriginal language course, we certainly have Aboriginal stories in our English classes, we have a festival every year, there are lots of guest speakers etc., so, yes, it's better than it used to be. But as a gay Aboriginal, a two-spirited Aboriginal…well, that's a place of honour, and I sure don't feel honoured. There is nothing in my school welcoming that other layer of my humanity. You see, being wonderfully two-spirited as I am, I received a gift from the Creator, the gift being the privilege to house both male and female spirits in my body. This gift means that I have the ability to see the world from two perspectives at the same time.

OLIVER: Well, certainly workshops around that is one. But you know what? I think going to schools or even contacting schools, school counselors that often will head up these initiatives to find out what a Diversity Club looks like, what is it about, what kind of students do you have in it, what are the impacts on the school by hosting a diversity club. You know, what does the diversity club do, what do they meet about, what do they talk about? So certainly, talking to people that actually have information about these types of things would be, I think, really beneficial as well.

TOM: Supports? I think there needs to be, in a sense, permission for schools to take these issues on and tackle them. I think it's there, I think it simply needs to be stated, that these are issues, they're out there and in your school, you can address them and go ahead and do it. So that I mean, that support, because you need to tailor things to your school, and to maybe communities within your school as well. So I don't think necessarily a district should take a cookie cutter approach

and say, this is the program that's going to work for everybody. But I think

ensuring that school leaders have any pertinent data, research studies, related to

these issues, make sure they have access to that, so they can make informed

program choices in their school.

Director's Notes: Act 2, Sc. 3: Resources, Policies, and Programs

Almost all principals acknowledged having and using Codes of Conduct in their

schools. In British Columbia, it is illegal to operate a school without a Code of Conduct.

A code of conduct is created in consultation with students, parents, and staff in the

development and review processes. Everyone states expectations regarding acceptable

conduct and the code must be distributed to all students, parents and school staff at the

beginning of the school year. The expectation is behavioural guidelines in codes of

conduct must be consistently taught and actively promoted with the code displayed in a

prominent area in the school. Responses and actions taken to correct unacceptable

behaviour must be based consistently on sound principles and appropriate to the context.

Student conduct must be continuously monitored to ensure codes reflect current and

emerging situations and are contributing to school safety. In addition, codes must be

reviewed and improved in light of evidence gathered and/or relevant research, and be

revisited as part of a regular cycle of policy review. Codes of conduct must be compatible

between schools in the community and across elementary, middle, and secondary levels

(BCED, 2008). The problem is that many schools have not been explicit in including the

Human Rights Clause, which specifically states there is to be no discrimination on the

grounds of sexual orientation.

None of the principals were explicitly aware of British Columbia Ministry of

Education programs on anti-homophobia. But a few claimed to know how to access

them. This particular district does not offer the *Social Justice 12* course, which contains a

unit on LGBT issues and asks students to consider the questions: Is there discrimination

against LGBT people in our school? Do LGBT people feel safe in our school? Are there

safe places in our school? Is there an anti-harassment policy in our school or District?

What evidence is there that all people, including individuals who are LGBT, are

welcomed in our school? And, what activities in our school reflect inclusiveness (BCED,

2008, p. 69)?

As far as the resources currently provided in their schools, principals mentioned

Safe, Caring, and Orderly Schools (BCED, 2008b), (a program focusing on prevention of

problems and the use of school-wide efforts to build "community," fostering respect,

inclusion, fairness and equity); *D.A.R.E.* (Drug Abuse Resistance Education); *FRIENDS*

for Life, (a school-based early intervention and prevention program, proven to be

effective in building resilience and reducing the risk of anxiety disorders in children),

Second Step, (a non-profit program designed to teach children to prevent violence,

bullying, and abuse); *Focus On Bullying* (a prevention program for Elementary school

communities); human resources like principals and vice-principals, counselors, and

teachers; *CAPP* (Career and Personal Planning) classes; and *Planning 10* (a mandatory

course for all graduates whereby they are to learn how to explore a wide range of post-

secondary education and career options, think critically about health issues and decisions,

develop financial literacy skills related to pursuing their education and career goals, and

begin planning for their transition beyond secondary school).

The answer to how principals find a program or method of addressing homophobia (or any other anti-bullying issue) that suited their style was non-existent; most simply mentioned other programs used throughout the district including restorative justice practices or restitution. One principal mentioned Tribes Learning Community (the purpose of which is to assure the healthy development of every child so that each has the knowledge, skills and resiliency to be successful in a rapidly changing world) and Roots of Empathy (a non-profit program whose mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults). Again none of these programs specifically focuses on LGBTQ issues.

Throughout the interviews, it became clear to many of the principals that more support was needed for leading anti-homophobia and social justice practices. Sapon-Shevin (2011) believes there are three barriers to social justice leadership:

1. There's too much to do: administrators are overloaded with managerial and documentation requirements to make social justice a focus.

2. Addressing issues of social justice including racism, homophobia, classism, poverty, violence, and immigration issues for example, will be controversial and will divert time and attention from other pressing concerns.

3. Many administrators have received neither training nor support for taking on these issues in their schools. (p. 150)

The educational leaders who participated in this research would likely agree with all of the above. Sapon-Shevin also says, "Failing to take a stand means there is no big vision anchor for smaller decisions. It is impossible to lead from a neutral position" (p. 152).

Moving schools forward from a social justice perspective means finding others to support you, investing in personal professional development, and taking a stand. Chapter Six discusses how the simple act of putting up a poster can be seen as taking a stand and the various professional development opportunities that may assist educational leaders make a positive difference in the lives of LGBTTIQQ students and their families.

Chapter Six: Act Three

Presentation and analysis of data: Scenario #3 and Professional Development

Act 3, Scene 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #3 (Appendix A)

Figure 1: Shocking? For Who?   Source: Used with permission from Fondation Émergence.

STUDENT: (*projection or poster put up on a wall by STUDENT*) All of my posters were

    torn down the second they were put up. When I made daily announcements

    during Pride week discussing famous people who came out, I was verbally

    harassed IN EVERY CLASS by the whole class for several days, I had Christian

    fundamentalist students saying gay marriage was taking away their rights. I was

    presumed to be a lesbian, name-called, etc. etc.[29]

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[29] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 57.

ANNE: I would probably not put the poster up in my elementary school, and I think for

the reason that we've got children from age four through 13, and the spread of the

what's the word...that age spread and level of varying maturity. I think a lot of

children would just become extremely confused and it would, I think, provoke

more… confusion, I guess, is the word, than what I think the purpose of the poster

is. I think the purpose of the poster is to shock adolescents and generate

conversation, but I don't think that while I don't think there's anything wrong

with four-year-olds knowing about homosexuality, I just think it's a little bit too

overt for an elementary school.

ELLEN: I would. It's edgy. I think it would generate a lot of discussion, but I would

consult with my parents first before doing so. I wouldn't just stick it up there. I

would consult with parents first and let them know that this is happening. Then it

would be very interesting to see if I had any objections and what direction they

came from. It would be kind of a good tester.

INTERVIEWER: Would you ask anybody else? Would you run it by the

Superintendent? Would you run it by the Student Council?

STUDENT: My principal didn't. One day she just put it up. Our Leadership class was

getting ready for an event and when she finished taping it onto the Counselling

Room window, she called us all over. See, it was visible to all of us but

untouchable because you had to go through the Counseling office to tear it down.

I think she did that on purpose. Most kids didn't react too much, but I screamed

with surprise. You see, I have two mums! I'm pretty out about it, so I thought it

was great. The poster was up for about three days without any kind of over-the-

top public reaction, then, three classmates, who were "out" about being Christian, went in and took it down. The nerve, they had to all go into the Counseling suite to do it. Crazy. My principal just taped it back up again. So, do you really have to ask your Superintendent?

ELLEN: I probably would. I would probably run it by the Superintendent, saying, I'm thinking about doing this. What do you think? Run it by Student Council? That would be a really smart decision. I probably would run it by Student Council, and Student leadership, and have them generate some discussion about it because you would need student leaders.

STUDENT: Why would you hesitate putting it up yourself if it was International Day Against Homophobia?

ELLEN: Oh, International Day Against Homophobia. I rarely do things without consulting with parents. I like to warn them that it is coming. I would do that with most edgy stuff. We put up an edgy poster about the Internet. When girls post their profiles on things like Nexopia and things like that. Our Librarian brought me this very cool little poster and she goes, "I'm thinking about putting this up in the library. What do you think about this?" It was very edgy. It was a picture of a girl in her underwear, or something, but it said, "Remember, when you're posting your profile on the internet who's viewing this." It had, "Your teacher, a 40-year-old guy who's into…" It was pretty graphic. It was edgy. I took it to my PAC meeting, and said, "Okay, we're going to put this up in the library and the computer lab." They were fine with it.

INTERVIEWER: Did it generate anything in the school?

ELLEN: Not much. [laughter] Not really. No. Certainly nothing that I heard. Our Librarian was keeping her ears open as well.

INTERVIEWER: But nothing major came of it?

ELLEN: Kids often, you know, they won't think about stuff like this until it's in their face. But I rarely just throw things up there without consulting with parents or letting them know, "This is coming". It could generate good discussion around the dinner table and that kind of thing.

STUDENT: In "consulting with parents", do you mean mostly just your PAC or do you send out an email?

ELLEN: Oh, no, no. I would consult with PAC and let them know it's coming.

IRENE: Usually when these kinds of posters come by our office, I would probably call [the Superintendent] and ask him for permission and then … based on his decision, I would, how would you say that, I would do what he says, yeah.

STUDENT: These kinds of posters?

INTERVIEWER: Would you put that poster up in your school and why or why not?

OLIVER: You know what? I'm not certain I guess I would not have a problem putting up that poster, but again, it's a small northern school and how would the kids respond to it? I suspect there would be a lot of joking about it, there may be--You know, again, small town, small school, not much exposure to the subject of homosexuality, particularly in school. But in my last school, these posters were up all the time. And of course, you're going to get kids writing on it and doing whatever, but again, it was something that were you know, I guess the term more worldly comes into mind. Whereas small town kids, they obviously know about

it, but I don't think it's something that is big in the school. So, putting something like that up may be, again, misunderstood.

STUDENT: You sure don't hold high expectations for us. I guess small town kids are disrespectful, joke about serious issues, have never heard of homosexuality, vandalize and write all over things. No wonder we move to urban centres – like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. We weren't safe in our own small town.

INTERVIEWER: You have a unique population…

OLIVER: Mm hmm.

STUDENT: What is your understanding of the term, Two-spirited?

OLIVER: Not a whole lot. I mean, I certainly understand the term walking in two worlds, but two-spirited, I haven't had much conversation around that. So, two-spirited, I would imagine, means having a sexual orientation to both sexes, maybe, or to have a sexual orientation to the same sex. Again, not a topic of conversation up in our school, so I'm really not that familiar with it.

STUDENT: LOL. We'll get back to the Two-spirited part later. Would you put this poster up?

TOM: It should say 'for whom'.

STUDENT: It's International Day Against Homophobia. Would you put this poster up in your school? And explain, yes or no, your, yes or no answer.

INTERVIEWER: (*Said at same time as students last two lines*). Would you put this poster up in your school? And explain, yes or no, your, yes or no answer.

TOM: My first response is no, most and because I don't agree with shock methods of

doing almost anything, I suppose. So is it shocking? I suppose it is, but is it

valuable and is the school the place to shock the kids?

ALLAN: No, I would not.

STUDENT: And explain why please.

INTERVIEWER: (*Said at same time a students last line*) And explain why please.

ALLAN: Okay. One of the phrases we're using now, or abbreviations, is PDA, Public

Displays of Affection, and we just don't have it. I mean we've got our Grade 7s

who are trying to hug each other and starting to do that, so we're sort of working

with it.   So I would not put a man and a woman, nor the picture there of the two

men up on the wall.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, nor a man or a woman kissing?

ALLAN: No.

STUDENT & INTERVIEWER: No?

ALLAN: Nope.

STUDENT & INTERVIEWER: Why not?

ALLAN: Good question. Not that there's anything wrong with the picture, and that's

why I'm sort of saying with a couple it doesn't matter either, I guess just because

there are places to be affectionate and with the school we're trying to say, "No we

get along really well, we enjoy each other's company but we don't have to be

hugging and kissing." We haven't reached the stage yet where we're putting up

little signs saying, "No hugging and kissing kids." And pictures of mothers and

children, no we haven't reached that yet.

Director's Notes: Act 3, Sc. 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #3 (Appendix A).

When asked if they would put the poster up, only two principals initially said, "Yes." Both were secondary school principals. Both principals thought there might be some misunderstanding and confusion as they come "from a small town." One had taught in a larger city and thought the kids there were more "worldy" and, therefore, more used to "it." "It" being the avoidance of using "homosexuality" directly. Only one principal suggested running the poster by, or consulting with, the larger circle of school leaders before putting it up – the Superintendent, the Parent Advisory Council and the Student Leadership Council. One certainly needs to be careful when stating that "consulting with parents," as Ellen did (pp. 144-145), means consulting with the Parent Advisory Council and, further, assuming the Parent Advisory Council represents the voice of all parents. In my experience most Parent Advisory Council's lack representation from the poor, single parent families, the ethnically diverse members of the community, and the Aboriginal community. It is likely the Parent Advisory Council also lacks the voice of the gay community.

Using Janks' discussion of deconstruction and reconstruction (2005), I studied the poster above more closely, which was part of a series to promote International Day Against Homophobia – May 17th. My concern in re-looking at the poster is the presumed question that the poster is shocking. The phrase, "Shocking? For who?" is obviously meant to ignite. But what? Thought, discussion, anger, rage, the far right? It is not clear. If language matters and in this case, it does, why use "Shocking?" According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1997), *shocking*, used as an adjective, means "extremely startling and offensive." Is the poster supposed to be extremely startling and offensive?

What would the response be if the creators of it chose another tactic? Perhaps with the questions, "Normal? For whom?" How would the poster be perceived differently? Would that reverse the implied meaning? Would more administrators put it up because it would claim that homosexual kissing is not normal? And further, the poster would then question whom it is normal for? This, however, would be counter to my own social justice framework. Would the poster raise as many concerns if the assumption is that it is "normal" for two male hockey players to be kissing. Then, I had a revelation. The poster should say, "Normal. For Us." Two statements: simple, open, honest. But I get ahead of myself.

First, using Thompson's modes of operation of ideology (as cited in Janks, 2005, p. 38), I will examine the discourse the principals presented around the poster. Thompson presents five modes of operation of ideology: reification, legitimation, dissimulation, unification, and fragmentation. Reification is where an "historical state of affairs" is presented as if it were "natural, outside of time (history), space, and social processes" (Janks, 2005, p. 38). For example, when the poster says "Shocking? For who?" it can be interpreted as being shocking because it presents an unnatural state that society finds shocking. Certainly two of the principals in my study (Anne and Tom) thought so as opposed to being natural and current. One principal even separated the natural and unnatural state between city versus small town. The poster was thought to be more natural in the city and unnatural in rural centres.

Legitimation is when something is presented as "legitimate" and "therefore worthy of support" (Janks, 2005, p. 38). One principal (Irene) wanted someone else, the Superintendent, to legitimize the poster for her before she put it up in her school. The

series of posters, of which this is only one, has many sponsor logos on them, including CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees), well-known financial companies and a host of other sponsors legitimizing the program. However, the sponsors do not appear on this particular poster. Who made that decision? Why? A visual representation of legitimation is the use of hockey. Hockey is often used as a unifying all-Canadian symbol. What good Canadian doesn't love hockey? A counter argument might say the poster is de-legitimizing hockey by saying people who play hockey, men in particular, are gay, and that the poster is bringing shame to the sport.

Dissimulation hides relationships of domination by concealing and denying. All differences are ignored. We are all the same. There is no issue. If the poster says "Shocking? For who?" we can ignore any difference by claiming the poster depicts the men as being just like "us", a world of male/female couples that is accepting, safe, and full of freedoms. This, however, is a myth. For most gay men, the world is still not accepting, quite unsafe, with the ultimate price paid by some of them in death.

Unification attempts to bring people together by establishing a collective identity uniting individuals irrespective of difficulties and divisions. One principal tried to unite people on the poster decision by collaborating and consulting with the Student Council, the Parent Advisory group, and the Superintendent. Would the principal do that with a Green Energy poster? An anti-racism poster? An International Women's Day poster? Allan responded by saying we are all the same: it wouldn't matter if it were a male and female couple, he still wouldn't put a poster up of two people kissing. The poster is visually trying to unite everyone over the national sport of hockey. They're hockey players, so it must be okay. Ironically, to this day, no professional male hockey player

has ever come out and said he was gay. A counter argument could be made for trying to

unite us by saying gays are presented as sport, not real life. Unfortunately, for some

populations, the harassment and victimization of gay men is considered sport and can

lead to death, as occurred to Mathew Shepard (a gay college student who was tortured

and murdered in Laramie, Wyoming in 1998). What if the poster depicted two women

hockey players? Is that easier to handle? In this case, it is the women professional

hockey players who are leading the way. Hockey Hall of Famer Angela James is the

only openly gay professional hockey player. She is also the only female and this did not

occur until the Federation changed its bylaws in 2009 and honoured James in 2010

(Legends of Hockey).

Fragmentation does the opposite of unification by trying to divide people into

different groups, even if there are similarities. The poster can be seen as straight vs. gay,

heterosexual vs. homosexual, out vs. in, celebrating vs. condemning, open vs. closeted,

and public vs. private. For example, sexuality and sexual orientation are considered by

some to be private and, therefore, should be kept behind closed doors. Schools are public

institutions and considered, by some, as arenas where any discussion of sexuality or

sexual orientation is inappropriate. Allan is clearly decisive when he says the school is

not the place for sexuality. You could also align one side of the divisions against the

other: straight, heterosexual, celebrating, and public vs. gay, homosexual, condemning,

and private. The former accepted as positive, the latter considered too much for the

masses and, therefore, should be kept hidden.

Some participants questioned, "Why kissing? Is that too intimate?" Allan

remarked, "we enjoy each other's company, but we don't have to be hugging and kissing."

The school is considered public, whereas the home would be considered private. Enjoying each other without being physical is okay in public, while hugging and kissing are assumed more intimate and, therefore, should be kept private. Kissing could generate other worries. One principal was concerned about the public knowing a student or staff member was gay. He questioned whether that information should be kept private. Would staff or other students be concerned about HIV? He had gone through that experience at another school and was clearly seeing a dilemma about having openly gay students in his school. He was questioning whether the information should be kept private or made public? Whom does the information protect if it is made public and whom does it harm?

Most of the principals were looking to offload their personal biases to institutional policies. Were they trying to conceal the relationship of domination by trying to pass the buck, ask permission, or defer to authority? The principal with the "edgy" Internet pornography poster ran it by, and received permission, from her Parent Advisory Council. It seems most parents would be unified in their concerns that pedophiles might be after their daughters. What would the same middle-class liberal parents say about the anti-homophobia poster featuring two men kissing? If they were homophobic, they would not want to expose their children to such an explicit poster and likely, there would be more divisions and, therefore, less agreement, on behalf of the parents. For the principal, however, not wanting to lead and make the decision is avoidance. "Othering" of students was also occurring. One principal felt it would be too confusing. What is the norm? Anne thought the purpose of the poster "is to shock adolescents and generate conversation" (p. 178). The principal in the "small town" is certainly serving as a proxy

for his community, making decisions, and deciding what they should know and not know, reaffirming assumptions of deviant behaviour. Leadership comes with a lot of power. Those holding positions of power in schools need to be conscious of their position and cognizant of their leadership behaviours.

Act 3, Scene 2 - Finale: Professional Development

(The letters LGBTTIQQ are projected on the screen)

INTERVIEWER: Would you be able to define the terms used to describe sexual orientation if you were asked?

ALLAN: No, I couldn't.

STUDENT & INTERVIEWER: Any of them?

ALLAN: Lesbian, Gay... hmm, no, don't know.

STUDENT & INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ALLAN: Are you going to tell me?

STUDENT: Not right now.

ALLAN: Okay.

ELLEN: Oh, no.

INTERVIEWER: Any of them?

ELLEN: Oh, well, I'm thinking "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transvestite", perhaps. I don't know the last three, no.

IRENE: Yes, lesbian, gay, bi, transsexual, queer, something, I'm missing a couple of letters there, but something along those lines. So basically, it's all encompassing of how would you say, I guess it's not just gay. I'm not really politically up on correct, on my, on that language.

IRENE: You know, one of the questions I read later on about the LGBTTIQQ, was

brought up to me and I can't remember where it was, but it was maybe at a

workshop or at a presentation of some sort. So, I know what the term means, and

I can't remember if it was in [another province] or BC, that that was presented to

me. And we did talk about what kind of supports are offered in schools and then

that was it. I kind of just thought about it at the time and then just left it, yeah. I

guess, you know what, if it's not a reality of my everyday, then I don't and that's

the sad part, is that maybe it should be a reality of my everyday and it's not.

STUDENT: If one in ten students is gay, then that's three in every classroom in your

school. In a small school of 300, that's 30 kids not feeling safe, 60 in a school of

600, and so on. It is part of your everyday.

ANNE: So lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. Q for queer. Is that what you mean?

TOM: Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transsexual and then I'm lost.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel secure, confident and supported in addressing

homophobic cyber-bullying? If no, what would you need to help you?

ALLAN: [laughs] Do I feel secure, confident and supported? No. I mean it's such a

huge area and it's changing daily. We're basically dealing with Facebook which

[is] now [an] old way of doing things. And we've got some really young, little

kids that shouldn't be on Facebook, but the parent has allowed them to. There are

pictures of them that are identifying where they live. So it's the risk that we're

putting our kids at that really makes me nervous.

ANNE: Well, so far we've addressed cyber-bullying with the same level of concern that

we address all areas of bullying, that meaning holding people accountable for

what they say online and following through with meetings, phone calls to parents, and so on. I am not as savvy around the whole social media as I could be.

ELLEN: I don't really feel that confident in addressing cyber-bullying, period. It's a very difficult area to investigate because a lot of it can I'm really not that technically savvy. We have had a couple of instances where we've had some social conflicts over the Internet where they're using Facebook and things like that. [We] bring the RCMP on board as well. They usually have their specialists as well that are technically able to deal with any kind of cyber bully but personally I don't feel that confident in any type of cyber-bullying, whether it be homophobic or not. But it happens a lot, and I think a lot more than comes to light at the school.

TOM: Do I feel secure, confident and supported … cyber-bullying, that's interesting. I have worked with other administrators on dealing with cyber-bullying and the support we had on that issue was absolutely appropriate, both from the police and from the district office. So I would expect that homophobic cyber-bullying would get the same support.

INTERVIEWER: And would you know where to go for help if you didn't know how to deal with it?

IRENE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where would you go?

IRENE: Well, I would go on the Internet and then I would also speak to counselors and try and find who the experts are in house, if not. And then if not, then we could maybe put a word out there to try and find out who they are, out of district.

INTERVIEWER: What types of professional development do you think you would need in order to assist you in addressing anti-homophobic issues?

ELLEN: I think maybe more information about, hum maybe even some lessons on helping students determine if they are discriminatory in some of their thought processes. Even some lesson plans that specifically address issues of homophobia and how to become more tolerant or kind of explode the myths students may have about all sorts of things. I remember when I was teaching at [another school] we [the kids and I] often talk … things [would] come up. I remember, I don't know how it came up, a kid asked a question about playing soccer. I played on a women's soccer team. The issue came up, "Do you have any gay people on your team?" And I said, "Well, yeah." It was quite interesting. They were quite open. They asked me, "So after the game, do you go and like shower after the game?" And I'm like, "Yeah." "So is it like an open shower or are there individual showers?" And I said, "No, it's an open shower." "Well, aren't you worried that one of your gay team mates is going to…?" And I said, "No, because they're not going to." It was very interesting to them. It's very important to them what their teachers are, they like to ask questions of their teachers because they take their lead from their teachers a lot. It's good that students feel that they can ask those questions in class, I think. I think any time you can promote that kind of open, honest discussion. It's very interesting. They're very curious.

ANNE: I would be very happy to listen to some speakers or have conversations about how to discuss homophobia with students and parents, I suppose from people who have had those conversations and have got a stack of 'yeah buts' and 'what ifs'

that they have learned to respond to. And just to have some language and some

strategies.

ANNE: I'm not exactly sure where in the career and personal planning curriculum the

learning outcomes are regarding talking about sexual orientation. I'm sure they're

buried in there somewhere, but it would be good if I had a better understanding of

where they were explicitly and if teachers had a better understanding of how it's

an important teaching piece and where and when to address it. And again, I think,

just to come back to the literature you know, and the whole Surrey case around

Asha's Mums was in the press [the story of an African Canadian girl with two

lesbian mums], I knew one of the teachers who was going forward with the court

action, because I taught with him in Richmond. And because it was literature, it

painted the whole issue for me in a little bit of a different light, you know? It

became about freedom of speech and about censorship. And I think that literature

is a powerful way of beginning conversations, because we all respond to story.

And so, I suppose I would like to see, I don't know, book lists or new books being

written that either address the issue or make it just a normal part of life, you

know? If there were characters in kids books that were gay and it wasn't the

central issue, that would be a good thing.

IRENE: I think it would be probably really good to read about certain cases that go on.

Kind of like, you know, reading a newspaper about what happened and how it

was dealt with. The media isn't always the best source.

INTERVIEWER: So do you mean, like, legal cases, legal results?

IRENE: Yes, yeah, I always find those the most interesting. I did attend, one time, a

Harris and Company workshop. And so I thought it would always be neat to, you

know, do it from that approach.

STUDENT: Personally, I feel we should have open discussions about gay relations at

our school to help the students who are questioning themselves to open up and not

be afraid – there is no reason to be judged.[30] Speaking up works. When we don't

let fear stop us, we win.[31]

INTERVIEWER: You're right.

All PRINCIPALS: (pause) We really need to discuss this.

(*House lights up and all actors bring chairs and gather downstage in front of the

audience. Discussion continues.*).

Director's Notes: Act 3, Sc. 2: Professional Development

Symbolism is important in any culture and even basic recognition of an acronym

is a good start, but most principals and educational leaders should make a point of

knowing what the letters LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, and Queer)

represent. In this dissertation, I have expanded it by asking if they also recognized Two-

spirited, Intersex, and Questioning. The two other symbols that should be part of any

educational leader's "kit" is the Pride flag (an internationally recognized symbol of a

welcoming LGBTQ space) and the pink triangle (left over from Hitler's persecution of

homosexuals during World War II). There are many others, but knowing these three

would go a long way toward making students, parents and co-workers comfortable.

Better yet, having one or more of them on display in schools would have more of an

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[30] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 138.

[31] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 141.

influence and assist in creating a "safe space" for our youth, in addition to sending a message that your school would not be an environment accepting of homophobic taunts or violence.

Principals and other educational leaders need to pay particular attention to homophobic cyber-bullying. The majority of the principals in this study felt ill-equipped to handle any sort of Internet bullying, stemming from their lack of comfort with technology. Several counted on their presumably younger, more connected, vice-principals to navigate the Web, particularly with regard to cell phones, Nexopia, Facebook, and other digital forms of communication. When cyber-bullying incidents occurred, they were also more likely to reach for outside support from the RCMP, the District, or other colleagues and experts around the province. The reality is, however, that being conscious of homophobic cyber-bullying is critical. In the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust Study (2009), 31% of LGBTQ versus 8% of non-LGBTQ students, reported homophobic bullying incidents on the Internet or via text messaging (p. 46). Many transgender participants reported one or more situations where "other students spread mean lies or rumours about them at school because of their sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation or for having a LGBTQ family member or friend" (Egale, 2009, p. 47). When incidents of cyber-bullying are reported, principals must ask about the nature of the taunt and deal with the situation from a place of knowledge and awareness. Not understanding the technology is no reason to be unaware that homophobic bullying exists and that it hurts.

This research shows that principals need more professional development, stories, and support from their Districts, and yet this does not absolve them of the responsibility

of leadership. Each of the principals involved could lead the way to make their schools free from homophobic bullying. How we react is critical in making our schools safe for our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, queer, and questioning students. It would be unconscionable of the principals and District to wait until legal action made them make their schools safe from further homophobic bullying. As a district, we really do need to discuss this.

Summary

Many people I have talked to about what I am researching, including some of the people interviewed, asked me, "Why this topic?" I tell them I was originally looking at human rights, codes of ethics, citizenship, and when I looked even closer at some of the topics and how they related to principals and vice-principals, there seemed to be significant research in areas such as poverty, Aboriginal issues, and race, but little on homophobia, principals, and public schools. This surprised me. When I was a vice-principal, I started to notice there was a significant amount of bullying issues around homophobia. In reality, I have discovered that all the issues mentioned above come into play in this study too. However, the particular area of homophobia in schools and specific research involving principals and vice-principals was limited. This was an area people were fearful of, did not think mattered, and, quite frankly, rarely discussed. I believe principals and vice-principals should act as moral leaders who look out for the oppressed in our schools, including parents, teachers, and students. I thought I would find more transformational leadership in relation to homophobia in this district. I know these principals well. They have big hearts and are filled with good intentions. However, cultural imperialism is, unfortunately, alive and well. Principals are a privileged group in

society and if we do nothing… our silences … our behaviour will be unacceptable. Unfortunately, sometimes, we are painfully unaware of the messages we send. We need to understand and react more appropriately to homophobia in our schools.

Six principals participated in this study about how they would understand and respond to homophobia in their public schools. They were interviewed individually, but their ideas are expressed in this research through ethnodrama. All six principals appear together in a fictionalized setting "on stage" where a variety of interviewer questions and student comments are used to critique and shed light on contradictions, judgments, on assumptions they made. For example, the concept of homophobia was frequently addressed as "bullying." This is a good starting point, but we need to go much deeper. We need to be more explicit about sexual orientation issues, the hidden violence in our schools, and rectify the fact that many of these schools are not safe for LGBTQ students, their families, or staff members.

In discussing attitudes, principals were asked what social injustices outrage them as school leaders. Responses ranged from lack of equal opportunity, cruelty toward others, bullying or harassment, poverty or lack of equity, and not meeting the needs of Aboriginal people. While principals and vice-principals recognized what bothered them, the actions they were willing to take were limited. This certainly was the case around homophobia, which most claimed to need more professional development to be able to tackle the topic effectively in their schools.

Specific steps at the secondary level, such as offering the Social Justice 12 course, advocating for a Gay-Straight Alliance, or even having Pride stickers visible can go a long way toward indicating a school is friendly and welcoming to LGBTQ students. One

principal stated he was "convinced that 100% of my staff would be empathetic and tolerant and supportive, and would want to educate kids in sexual orientation, that sort of thing, if it were an issue." Homophobia in schools is an issue! Principals and other educational leaders should consider offering workshops to staff, students, parents, and their community. Fear prevents school leaders from actually leading the way. Most claimed that while they knew how to find resources, few were actively accessing them.

Three scenarios were presented to the principals. In scenario #1, a parent phoned to ask the principal to deal with a teacher displaying a picture of her partner and discussing same-sex marriage in a Math classroom. It is easy to be misled by the red-herring of a math classroom. However, principals need to keep in mind what Young (1990) refers to as the dominant group trying to reinforce its position by bringing the Other under the measure of dominant norms (p. 59). In this case, a mother is trying to impose her middle-class conservative values on a more inclusive school. In the second scenario, most of the principals said they would talk to students they overheard calling another student a homosexual epithet such as "fag" or "lesbo", but none discussed the psychological and hidden damage being done. Without explicitly addressing this issue with all students from K – 12, principals and other educational leaders unknowingly push children into "covering" (Yoshino, 2006) when what we really want is for students to discover their authentic selves, their "uncovered" selves.

When, in scenario #3, principals were asked if they would put a particular poster up for "International Day Against Homophobia," most said no. Most of the principals were looking to deflect responsibility and defer to institutional policies.

None of the principals were explicitly aware of British Columbia Ministry of Education programs on anti-homophobia, but a few claimed to know how to access them. Most assumed homophobia was a sub-category of bullying that could be dealt with in generic ways, rather than recognizing the importance of explicitly naming homophobia and heterosexism as particular forms of oppression. *Social Justice 12* does not currently exist on any of the three senior high school timetables. It has been offered, but not enough students selected it.

The principals interviewed are trying to promote social justice and deal with homophobia, but their efforts are limited. By and large, the principals interviewed, and myself, continue to be complicit in the oppression of students in the LGBTQ communities. Whether we are leaders in elementary programs and do not think homophobia influences them, or we are leaders in secondary schools and believe they are already being inclusive, or have other issues to deal with such as drugs, alcohol, and rape, continued homophobia is unacceptable. The data show the principals saying they want to make a positive difference in the lives of their students and their families. But in reality, we all need to put a more conscious effort into improving schooling so it is more just and equitable for all students, particularly lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender two-spirited, intersex, queer and questioning students. In chapter 7, I will offer some recommendations to make our schools safer places of learning for LGBTQ students.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Figure 2: Photo of the Pride Flag hanging in the middle of the world flags in the Multi-purpose room of my school.

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to focus on how B.C. public school principals

and vice-principals understand and respond to homophobia in one school district. I

examined six administrators' understandings of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-

spirited, intersex, queer, and questioning (LGBTTIQQ) issues following a critical

approach and used ethnodrama to present and analyze the data. As the researcher, I am an

insider who is also a principal in the district being examined. This chapter reviews my

summary of findings, limitations of the study, advice for current and future principals and

vice-principals, reflections on my own personal and professional journey, potential

applications of my findings or recommendations for policy and practice, and

recommendations for future research.

The study makes connections from the general to the particular, from the personal

to the institutional, and from the page to the stage all while examining perceptions,

thoughts, values, beliefs, and opinions around LGBTTIQQ issues in our public schools. I

believe all the educational leaders interviewed are well intentioned and acting in good

faith. They are professionals who struggle daily to navigate the turbulent waters of

education in our K-12 public schools. Not all needs can be met at all times; however,

homophobia is the focus of this study and, I believe they would agree, work needs to be

done in this area. The research has uncovered a need for principals to be more proactive

toward the topic of homophobia in our schools. Educational leaders need to be less fear-

driven in their actions. All of the interviewees would consider themselves leaders in

support of social justice, but I speculate they would also agree there is an unfortunate lack

of awareness with regard to resources, policies, and programs dealing specifically with

homophobia in our schools. All of the interviewees would say they recognize and share a

desire and need for professional development experience around LGBTTIQQ issues. In

spotlighting these facts, ethnodrama proves an imaginative and powerful tool not only in

highlighting the "truth" in the data collected, but in revealing peoples' inner

understandings and, sadly, lack of response to the needs of the LGBTTIQQ community

in one public school district in the province of British Columbia. Not only is socially just

leadership faltering, but principals are not supported at the district and provincial-level by

explicit policies, adequate post-secondary education, or professional development around

LGBTTIQQ issues. This research aims at opening minds and leading the way toward more socially just schools.

Summary of Findings

Fear – an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by expectation or awareness of danger. (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 1997)

No human being should have to live in fear. Schools and communities that aspire to be safe need to work to create alternatives to fear for our students, their families, friends, and teachers. This work needs to be led by educational leaders at all levels. The purpose of this case study was to explore how educational leaders understand and respond to homophobia in one school district. Ultimately, I would like to share my findings with other educators who are in need of or may not be aware they are in need of strategies and ideas to improve the safety and care of their LGBTTIQQ students, staff, and families.

I anticipated finding: positive attitudes toward anti-homophobia and social justice education; an awareness of current networks and supports available to improve anti-homophobia and social justice education in our schools; a diverse range of best practices for the implementation of anti-homophobia and social justice education in our schools and school districts; strategies in practice concerning the impact of homophobic bullying on the Internet; complete knowledge of current Ministry resources, policies and programs surrounding anti-homophobia; and excellent suggestions for future professional development in the areas of anti-homophobia and social justice education for district and school educational leaders.

Instead, I found principals claiming to have never had to deal with homophobia or LGBTTIQQ issues over the course of their career; one claimed he hadn't dealt with homophobia in over thirty years; principals claiming homophobia was a high school issue, not an elementary one; and principals afraid to post anti-homophobic posters without asking their PACs, student councils, and, in a couple cases, the superintendent, for permission. Principals lacked access to resources and programs dealing specifically with homophobia in our schools. A few claimed to be so overwhelmed with the issues in front of them that complicating the homophobia with the Internet, Facebook, or texting, was beyond their capabilities. Principals stated if they had a homophobic Internet incident, they would have to contact the RCMP, outside technology experts, or even students for assistance. None of the principals actively sought out professional development around LGBTTIQQ issues. The district does not currently have a specific sexual orientation policy. In this district, educational leaders are not properly supported, nor prepared, to deal with the challenges that arise when faced with homophobia or most LGBTTIQQ issues that arise in schools.

These realities are not necessarily the fault of the educators interviewed. In addition, the selection process I used may have exacerbated my findings. In searching for best practices, I could have actively recruited and then selected participants whose practice was seen as exemplary in the area of social justice work, generally, and anti-homophobic work specifically. Instead, I picked the first six participants to come forward. I could have challenged my colleagues more, especially the one who said he had never dealt with homophobia in thirty years. One of the educational leaders was clearly ahead of the others in her awareness of sexuality and youth. Her intriguing

comment reflected how good stories connect us, "And I think that literature is a powerful way of beginning conversations, because we all respond to story" (p. 192). Ethnodrama is one way of telling the story of these principals and the young people from the Egale study so we can all share our understandings, responses, and experiences with homophobia. I will certainly ask for her collaborative leadership as we move forward with this topic in the district.

The case study design provided the framework to critique how educational leaders understand and respond to homophobia. The study detailed my work as a scholar-practitioner educational leader addressing the implications of what happens when principals and vice-principals do not understand and respond to the effects of homophobia in their schools. The ignorance is not theirs alone. District educational leaders should have the knowledge, structural supports, and policies to back them up. This mandate rests on the senior educational leaders and policy makers in any school district, as well as the Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education, and Ministry of Education. The district examined needs to be more proactive and "come out" with proactive sexual orientation and anti-homophobia policies.

As a scholar-practitioner educational leader, I was able to explore my own position of privilege, and take a step back to critically assess how I understand and respond to homophobia in my own school. Through a social justice lens, I investigated my own learning which revealed a lot of what I was and was not seeing and hearing. I have now refocused my attention on a creating a clearer, more socially-just environment for LGBTTIQQ students, their families, and staff at my own school. As a doctoral student of educational leadership and policy, I have moved from practice to theory and

back to practice, and feel I am now ready to lead and implement both structural and discursive strategies within my own district and beyond.

As I articulated in Chapters One and Three, my theoretical framework draws from Young's (1990) anti-oppression approach, and more specifically, her concepts of systemic violence and cultural imperialism. I highlighted her belief that oppression and domination should guide discussions about justice, in particular, how groups experience oppression differently. LGBTTIQQ students may experience cultural imperialism in their schools due to how they are "Othered", how they are made to feel about themselves, and how they are recognized, or not. "Since only the dominant group's cultural expressions receive wide dissemination, their cultural expressions become the normal, or the universal…the dominant group constructs the difference which some groups exhibit as lack or negation. These groups become marked as Other" (p. 59). The "Othered" becomes defined by the outside. For example, I discussed in Chapter Four how those who are straight might perceive LGBT persons as deviant or inferior.

"What makes violence a phenomenon of social injustice, and not merely an individual moral wrong, is its systemic character, its existence as social practice" (Young, 1990, p. 62). We have much evidence that systemic violence exists from the minute a LGBTTIQQ child registers at our schools and sees only the heteronormative male or female boxes available for them to check off on the admission form. Most schools ignore this reality regarding the gender order. Young says that nothing short of a "cultural revolution" needs to take place in order to rid society of oppression. "Homosexuality produces a special anxiety, then, because it seems to unsettle this gender order. Because

gender identity is a core of everyone's identity, homophobia seems to go to the core of identity" (p. 155).

What we tend to identify as violence in schools often falls under the umbrella term "bullying". Moy (2008) found that some of the progressive educators in her study "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" (p. 175). Community groups also play with this term as a means of gaining access into schools. Moy discussed a member of a community organization who has been stonewalled by certain districts because of their explicit discussions about sexual orientation and homophobia, who told her, "We call it bullying because that's how it gets bought" (p. 175). This "dance with the dominant" (p. 176) stirs up panic, but once inside and talking to students the unpacking of "myths" begins. There is a problem, however; youth may not call it bullying. "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" (p. 178). Most students will call it like it is, whether it is sexism, racism, or homophobia. Ironically, many youth have no problem tackling social justice issues head on.

Ethnodrama was used to further investigate social justice in our schools. The power of ethnodrama as methodology is it draws attention to the specific findings and makes them more accessible, pedagogical, and relevant to both audiences and performer. Sometimes, our words and inaction are not clear until we hear them return to us or view them as an insider from the outside looking in. Ethnodrama offers that opportunity. Ethnodrama can take on many dramatic forms such as "revue, rant, radio drama, poetry,

performance art, story theatre, reader's theatre, chamber theatre, poetry, expressionism, debate, digital storytelling, participation theatre, simulated lecture, and ritual" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 207). It is often through these methods that humanity and truth unite. "Like all rigorous researchers, we have an obligation to our participants and audiences to balance creativity with credibility and trustworthiness" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 207). To that end, the use of ethnodrama as a method to analyze, critique, and present data proves most appropriate in this study. Real life is messy. Education is messy. Principals and vice-principals work in ambiguous and contested environments. Their truth changes from day to day. Their reality is malleable. Each time someone reads, sees, or performs, all or a portion of the ethnodrama within this study, new perceptions, new ideas and new realities will emerge. That is the joy and exhilaration experienced by participating in a collaborative way in the research. "Theatre is a democratic forum for multiple and diverse voices and spectators to assemble and experience particular renderings about the human condition" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 213). By using ethnodrama, I hope others will share in the experiences I have had, shedding new light on the research as I continue in educational leadership.

This social justice case study concerns how principals and vice-principals in B.C. K-12 public schools understand and respond to homophobia. By using ethnodrama as a method to present, critique, and analyze data, the case study illustrates the necessity of educating and informing our educational leaders so they positively understand and proactively respond to homophobia in their schools. This is the overall significance and contribution of the study. A lot of work around LGBTTIQQ issues still needs to be done in our schools. The hope is that this dissertation and research will serve as a catalyst for

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this particular district's educational leaders to make explicit positive change in their

district by making their schools safer for all LGBTTIQQ students, staff, and their

families. Ideally, other districts will follow suit.

Limitations of the Study

As previously mentioned, this case study documents the understandings and

responses of six principals to homophobia in their schools. This case study, and its face-

to-face interviewing design, might make it difficult for participants to be completely

honest. I anticipated this weakness, but as things unfolded, it did not appear to actually

be one. I certainly feel the six participants were honest, forthcoming, and, in a couple

cases, genuinely reflective on their practice as educational leaders. Based on my

experiences with the participants from previous work-related encounters, I felt that all six

spoke from a genuine place. Further proof of this lies in the fact all six were given

verbatim transcripts of their interview and, to date, none of the people involved has asked

me to change a word they said. I also anticipate some to state that only six participants is

a limitation. I had close to twenty people to choose from, as the majority of principals

and vice-principals were supportive and more than willing to participate. I selected these

six because they were the first to come forward. I had anticipated a less than enthusiastic

response, given the sensitive nature of the topic. I also went with the six because they

represented both elementary and secondary schools, included new and veteran

administrators, and I believed all six would describe themselves as socially just

educators. I know the six were excellent representatives of our district, and each is well

thought of, respected, and able to rise above the challenges they face in their schools and

communities.

A second limitation stems from the fact that this was an interview-based study that explored administrators' perceptions and beliefs. There may be a significant gap between what the principals say in an interview versus what they actually do in their day-to-day practice. With my data, I can comment on their perceptions of how they respond to homophobia, but I cannot know how they have actually responded or how they will respond. Yet an observational study was not possible because of the demands of my own work as a secondary school principal.

A third limitation could be my own position as an "insider" educational leader, a principal, and author of this dissertation. As in all qualitative studies, my findings could be subject to other interpretations. I came to the district six years ago and did not see it as progressive as I would have liked it to be. I want to see proactive change come from my research, and I am the aunt of an openly gay nephew. I also have to admit I was extremely naïve. I thought I would find socially-just critical leadership among my privileged colleagues. And while each, like me, is trying their very best, we would likely all agree that more needs to be done. In the final analysis a lot more work in the area of social justice and anti-homophobia education needs to take place, and I need to be one of the educational leaders guiding that transformation. It is in my nature to think of the glass as always being half full, and that is certainly what keeps me laughing and enjoying my role as a principal on a daily basis. However, as Young (1990) says, we need to work on consciousness raising and make "the privileged aware of how their habitual actions, reactions, images, and stereotypes, contribute to oppression" (p. 154). I know I must carry on, as I truly believe in safe, inclusive, socially-just schools for all.

Some may even say the study is limited because I come from an extremely biased perspective. I would say both yes and no. Having family members who are gay, however, does not mean one is biased in their favour. In this case, yes, I unconditionally love my nephew. As a researcher, however, I followed Wolcott's (1994) recommendations closely to "talk little, listen a lot" (p. 348). By digitally recording the interviews and transcribing them verbatim, I have tried to minimize my bias. In other words, the interviewees have spoken for themselves, albeit within the parameters set by my study design. By using ethnodrama to present the rich description and part of the analysis, readers, performers, audience members, and other researchers can add to the on-going conversations. As Wolcott says, "In striking the delicate balance in providing too much detail and too little, I would rather err on the side of too much; conversely, between overanalyzing and under-analyzing data, I would rather say too little" (p. 350). Of course, I am solely responsible for the selection of lines and creation of the ethnodrama and how my interview questions may or may not have shaped the study. Do I believe we have some work to do in our district? Absolutely. But I also believe the participants would say the same thing. Individually, I believe each participant was doing the absolute best they could at the time of the interview.

Finally, my chosen social justice framework may also be perceived as a limitation by those with a more traditional set of assumptions about research and the meaning of objectivity. Social equality of groups may not be something others believe in. Some may not wish to recognize and affirm differences or seek to transform dominating structures like those present within our schools. Still others may not recognize or acknowledge that our LGBTTIQQ staff members, students, and their families have faced

social struggles. However, over the last six years, I have immersed myself in learning more about educational leadership and policy and believe strongly that these studies have only served to enrich and reinforce my dedication to making matters of education socially just for all students, particularly those from the LGBTTIQQ community. Traditional "positivist" researchers claim to be value neutral. I do not believe that stance is humanly possible. Educational leaders must, from their privileged positions, advocate for those who lack a voice, are absent from our school curricula, and face myriad abuses brought on by our silence. Being in support of human rights means you must take a stand.

<div align="center">**Recommendations for Practice and Policy**</div>

To that end, I offer some recommendations for practice and policy that may serve as a guide to assist those charting unfamiliar territory. The recommendations are not difficult, but they are particular. This particular attention to detail will enable our educational leaders and policy makers to turn the tide in creating clearer understanding and proactive responses to homophobia in a positive transformational way. No child should have to worry about prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, or violence at school. No child should fear going into the locker room after gym, heading to the bathroom during break, or being caught alone in the school stairwell. More education needs to be done, especially in districts where sexual orientation has not been formally recognized as a human characteristic worthy of protecting in an explicit policy statement. In British Columbia currently, that means forty-five out of sixty districts still need an explicit policy on sexual orientation.

In our schools, it is important that all principals consider offering in-service professional development for staff on issues of homophobia. Principals and other

educational leaders already know the benefits of providing in-service and professional

development courses on topics such as Aboriginal history and culture to teaching in

diverse classrooms, and from how to close the poverty gap to teaching immigrant

students. Educational leaders rarely headline a conference or professional development

topic on education against homophobia in our schools. Even informing staff about Gay-

Straight Alliances and trying to encourage a staff member to take up the cause would be

helpful. Fear of "not knowing about the topic" prevents a lot of school leaders from

actually "leading the way", but like many educational issues, there are plenty of resources

available. Gay-Straight Alliances are created with a set of guidelines that include all

interested students regardless of their sexual orientation. Principals can and should act in

their schools. For example, saying you support women in educational leadership roles

and then not actually having any women principals would indicate inaction. Promoting

and creating a safe space in your school for a Gay-Straight Alliance, or similar group, is

another way. Principals who talk about having inclusive schools must actually take

action and make it happen.

Principals at both elementary and secondary schools need to attend to group-

specific needs around issues of homophobia by accessing resources, creating supportive

sexual orientation policies, embracing anti-homophobia programs, and participating in

and widely promoting professional development opportunities which challenge

homophobia. In my own journey, prior to the birth of my nephew, and during my

experiences in the arts, I lost friends due to complications brought on by HIV and AIDS.

I have many family members and friends who are LGBTTIQQ allies. Later, as I entered

education, I wanted to be a leader who understood and was there for kids no matter how

they were coming to me or what they needed from me. With homophobia in particular, I noticed how incredibly mean some people can be, and I needed to take a stand. This became even more obvious to me as I took on a vice-principalship. Where were my lines? What did I hold sacred? As a teacher, I had accessed resources developed from grassroots organizations and from the BCTF. I was aware that the BCTF had a strong social justice focus. From there, I began my doctoral studies at UBC. Homophobia was not my initial area of study, but further studies in social justice led me more specifically to this work. During this time, my nephew living in Saskatoon grew up, came "out," and invited me to attend the Human Rights Conference that went along with the 2011 Out Games held in Vancouver. This event offered some of the best professional development I have ever experienced. Topics covered social struggles, youth sexuality, homophobia in schools, hate crimes, discrimination in sport, and the need for more professional athletes to come "out". Of course, while there I discovered many more resources and organizations available to educators. I am now the principal of my second school, my nephew served as the Pride Centre coordinator at the University of Saskatchewan for one year, and has just moved to Vancouver to attend art school. The fact is, no matter what your journey, whether it is personal or not, there is good information out there and it needs to be available in all our school library or resource centres.

Many excellent resources exist and "best practices" are readily accessible for anyone in the Ministry of Education, Board of Education Trustees, Superintendents, principals or vice-principals, teachers, parents, or students. Our attitudes and behaviours must reflect best practices. Our schools must be adequately supplied with the resources and programs needed. And all of this must be backed up by district and school-based

policies and professional development that support anti-homophobic practices. The

following is gathered, compiled, and adapted from a variety of sources including, but not

limited to: PFLAG (Parents & Families of Gays and Lesbians) Canada; EGALE

(Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere) Canada; GLSEN (Gay Lesbian and

Straight Education Network); and the BCTF guide *Challenging Homophobia in Schools*.

Best Practices – Attitude – A Prescription for How to Walk the Walk and Talk the

Talk

- Diversity means promoting and implementing an inclusive curriculum in your
  school. Equity and human rights should lead the way in all decisions made in
  your school.

- Transmit respect for diversity throughout your communities by affirming the lived
  experiences of their students, by ensuring the curriculum encourages critical
  thinking and a close examination about stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

- In everything you believe and value as an educational leader, you should work
  toward a more just society.

- Be outraged by obstacles put in the way against all marginalized community
  members and help make members of the LGBTTIQQ community visible in your
  school and school district by including them in the curriculum, in what you say
  verbally, in writing, or in district policy.

- Principals and vice-principals must be consciously aware that homophobia exists
  in all schools and work diligently to ensure that queer students and their families,
  and your employees, feel safe.

- Ask for, and demand professional development around LGBTTIQQ issues.

- Always be honest with students; if you cannot guarantee their confidentiality for legal reasons tell them up front. Send students to adults who are informed and can help them.

- Make no assumption about sexuality.   There is a range of sexuality, not extremes.

- Understand and perceive the word "homophobia" as bullying, harassment, and discrimination that should be challenged in our schools.

- Take complaints about homophobia seriously.   Remember, students do not have to be identified as gay to be bullied and feel the effects of homophobia.

- Your attitude should reflect that sexual orientation is not a choice *or* a problem.

- Since every step you take and every word you speak is carefully watched, be clear that it is okay for all children to wear nail polish, for all children to participate in sports, and for all children to participate in the arts.

- Try to use inclusive language. This is more difficult, but subtle changes can make a huge difference. For example, when talking to a student about Graduation ask, "Are you bringing a date to Grad?" instead of, "Which guy are you going to Grad with?" and abolish the phrase, "man up".

Best Practices - of Catalysts – Those Who Actively Promote Socially Just Change in Our Schools by Removing Invisible and Visible Barriers

- Make sure there are visible indicators that your school is a LGBTTIQQ welcoming and safe place.   There are many buttons, posters, stickers, flags, and symbols available.

- Make school admittance forms less heterosexually biased. They should say female, male, transgender, two-spirited, or other.

- Ensure diversity stickers, anti-homophobia posters (such as the ones used in my study), and flyers that promote inclusiveness are available in your school.

- Encourage teachers to post anti-homophobia materials to make their classroom welcome and safe for LGBTTIQQ students, parents, and staff.

- Encourage the formation of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) in your school and district. Access the following resource: MacGillivray, I. K. (2007). *Gay-straight alliances: A handbook for students, educators and parents*. Binghamton, New York: Harrington Park Press.

- Encourage teachers and community experts to openly discuss anti-homophobia topics in their schools.

- Act as a catalyst by role-modelling positive interventions whenever and wherever homophobia occurs.

- Speak up, actively supporting LGBTTIQQ and straight families in your words and actions.

- At assemblies, at least once a year, provide a role model who is openly gay or transgender. This will assist in making LGBTTIQQ students feel more comfortable. They would also benefit from knowing an openly gay teacher, coach, or principal.

- Try to avoid creating classes for strictly girls or boys. This includes physical education classes. All classes should be welcoming for all students.

- Make sure you have at least one gender-neutral bathroom.

- By asking your school community to be tolerant and accepting of gender diversity, you will create a safe atmosphere for other students who are or may feel different.

- If you are in a senior secondary school, insist that the B.C. Ministry of Education's *Social Justice 12* be offered and promoted widely and in writing in the course selection manual during course selection.

Best Practices – Behaviours – What Educational Leaders Can Do

- Do not accept employment with a district nor sign a contract asking you to not discuss LGBTTIQQ issues.

- Acknowledge your own biases by reading and talking to people comfortable with LGBTTIQQ issues.

- Consult with experts in the LGBTTIQQ communities as you educate yourself about anti-homophobia.

- Invite informed guest speakers to your school assemblies.

- Create reader friendly brochures about district policies around human rights…all human rights, and have them available in your school.

- Be explicit in your "welcoming" statements that *all* students in all shapes, sizes, race, religions, family makeup, and sexual orientation are welcome in your school. Yes, you can say the words, lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc. out loud.

- Inform students, staff, and parents who are the "safe contact" people at your school.   These would be trusted people educated in and sensitive to LGBTTIQQ concerns.

- Be conscious of the need for enhanced adult awareness and security for LGBTTIQQ students around bathrooms, locker rooms, and stairwells.

- Research and make all possible resources available to those wishing to form a Pride committee or club.

- Announce meetings and constantly say, "Everyone is welcome".

- Pro-actively support all members of your school community who complain of homophobia. Offer support, advice, information, counseling, time, or whatever is needed and requested.

Best Practices - Resources, Policies, and Programs

- Work with the Board of Education, parents, teachers, and students to develop and implement explicit Sexual Orientation policies. Doing so will assist school-based leaders to implement positive LGBTTIQQ initiatives at the school level.

- Make sure sexual orientation policies are known to all students, parents, vice-principals, principals, school-based staff, district-based staff, and Board of Education members. LGBTTIQQ students, staff, and same gendered parented families deserve to be included, represented, and affirmed in a positive and respectful manner.

- Work consistently to ensure your school district and schools are welcoming places by stopping all verbal, physical, psychological, and emotional harassment as it comes to your attention.

- Educate all your counselors and support workers by providing in-service professional development around the knowledge and skills required to deal with LGBTTIQQ issues with students and their families.

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- Make yourself aware of Ministry of Education resources, policies, and programs on diversity, safe schools, and anti-homophobia.

- Create "quick access" resources on your school website.

- Purchase resources for your school library offering a complete range of materials from academic resources to novels with LGBTTIQQ representation. These should include, but not be limited to resources about LGBTTIQQ celebrities, sport, political, historical and media figures, and should include news resources, CDs, and DVDs.

- Support teachers in finding and providing LGBTTIQQ role models in your school and in their classes. The Internet is an excellent resource for having role models from all walks of life like Melissa Etheridge, Anderson Cooper, Martina Navratilova, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Elton John, Tennessee Williams, as well as Canadians like k .d. Lang, Michel Tremblay, Sven Robinson, Rick Mercer, and others.

Best Practices - Professional Development

- Learn to identify the letters in LGBTTIQQ. Being able to articulate the words behind the letters and understand what the terms mean will go a long way toward families, students, and staff knowing you actually do "get it".

- Learn about social networking. Homophobic cyber-bullying is just as harmful as that which occurs in person.

- Attend workshops on human rights, social justice, and educational leadership on challenging homophobia and heterosexism in our schools.

- Understand that it is the role of principals and vice-principals to make sure you understand and respond positively to homophobia by addressing the underlying causes of all homophobic and heterosexist bullying, harassment, and gender-based violence in your school.

- Learn about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Human Rights Code; the Ministry of Education's Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools, and local district Human Rights Policies and how they impact and support LGBTTIQQ members of your community.

- Support organizations such as GSAs; PFLAG, GLSEN, The Trevor Project, worldwide Pride Celebrations, and Egale Canada.

By implementing the above, your students will feel safer in their schools. Remember, "it is extremely unlikely that there is a high school anywhere in Canada, public or private, religious or secular, that does not have students who are LGBTTIQQ; the figure is probably somewhere between 2.5% and 11% of the student body" (Egale, 2009, p. 87). In addition, LGBTTIQQ students will feel recognized, accepted and more than likely find school a more enjoyable experience. Students will feel more comfortable talking to their teachers and principals about their concerns. Students will feel protected when they see and hear their teachers and principals address homophobic discourse in the hallways. There will be less bullying and less silence. Right now, the silence is deafening. Learn to understand and respond by speaking up, taking action and ensuring through explicit proactive policies and practice that our LGBTTIQQ students never have to live in fear. Making our schools safer will help facilitate increased learning and achievement and that is what we all want.

From Practice to Practice

As a reflective practitioner, I can honestly say I have learned a lot. Just because relatives "come out", it does not mean you automatically know what to do or how to make the environment safe for others. Throughout this study I have become much more aware of the array of issues and concerns faced by the LGBTTIQQ community. I believe this process has made me an even stronger advocate than I was before. My new knowledge has informed my educational leadership in many ways. One of the first things I did in my current role as principal of the senior high school was to add a Pride flag amongst the many International flags that grace the multipurpose room at my school. As luck would have it, all the flags had been taken down due to renovations in the multi-purpose room. This gave my vice-principal and me a great opportunity to order some missing flags, have the older ones cleaned and ironed, and hang things in a different pattern. I knew my vice-principal would be positive, as I already knew she was a strong social and global advocate based on her work with "We Day" and Teachers Without Borders. One day, when the flags were all sitting in a nearby office waiting to be re-hung, the maintenance person who was going to be putting the 50 odd flags up said, "I see you have a gay pride flag in that pile." As we looked at them, I replied, "Yes, what do you think about putting that up with the others?" He paused only for a few seconds and said, "I think that's a good idea." When I returned from the professional development day, all the flags were up with the Pride flag situated smack in the middle of them. I asked how that had come about and was told one of our teachers suggested it. Simply putting the flag up did not create controversy as might be expected. However, it did open some excellent learning and conversations between teachers, students, and me.

Since that time a gay student alumnus returned to visit and on seeing the flag, simply said, "It's about time".

In addition, once I had settled into my new school, I asked an "out" teacher, an "out" drug and alcohol counselor, and an "out" parent to join forces and create a gay-straight alliance at our school. To my delight, they all jumped on board willingly. Due to the fact that the BCTF has been involved in strike action since the beginning of my tenure at this school, I have not been present at a full meeting to date. However, on one quick visit, I was delighted to see over thirty students present. They now call themselves the Diversity Club, chosen because it was considered to be more inclusive than GSA. One of the first speakers was a student from another district who had undergone gender transformation surgery. He was a huge hit with the kids and it has been reported by both the adults and students in the room that he was received with tenderness and compassion. The group continues to this day and has received financial support from an alumni teacher who heard we had started it up as well as a grant from the BCTFs' social justice department. Topics brought up by the students for future Diversity Club sessions include: legitimacy of bisexuality vs. "just confused gay people"; coming out for attention; people wanting to call bisexuals faggots or gays or dykes but not knowing if the word is applicable; pride/pride parades; hosting rainbow bake sales; meeting other diversity clubs; learning more about LGBT, roles of women, race, immigrants in the world; teen confusion - Bi?; life of LGBT people before marriage was legal opposed to the present; and what Canada would be like without legal gay marriage, and how things would be different. The Diversity Club is now the largest club at our school.

None of these steps required large amounts of money, nor massive resources. They did, however, require me as a socially-just leader to be, as Anderson (2009) says, "intolerant of homophobic language and actions" at my school (p. 14) and active about challenging homophobia by being "inclusive of all members of the school community" (Ryan, 2006, p. 101). This meant strategically involving a parent, a teacher, a community-based counselor, and students whom I knew would be enthusiastic to form the Diversity Club. By creating a safe environment as the leader of the school, homophobia can be challenged. From there, it was word of mouth and creating a space where others can be on an "emancipatory" leadership journey with me (Bruccoleri, Lund, & Anderson, 2009, p. 20). In addition, Social Justice 12 has been offered in next year's course booklet. It will be up to the students to choose the class as it is offered in B.C. as an elective. For now, the Diversity club is doing great work.

When I began this journey, the Superintendent of Schools bravely supported my study. In hindsight, I think he was less naïve than I was and knew exactly what I would find. Since that time there is a new senior educational leadership team in place. The new Superintendent leads from a social justice perspective, so I am expecting great things in the future. In addition, the Director of Human Resources is also new. I am hoping these policy leaders, along with the support of others like me will effect positive change for our LGBTTIQQ students and staff. Again, actions speak louder than words. In the next year, I also hope to host a Social Justice Conference in our district.

Potential Applications of Research Findings

The wonderful result of using ethnodrama is that this research can be used to educate, inform, investigate, motivate further research, and, most importantly, create

open dialogue. The ethnodrama can be used in whole, or in part, for workshops with principals and vice-principals, educators, parents, students, Boards of Education, university social justice courses, and others. Even one small section of this research could spark enough questions to educate many more people on the issues facing our LGBTTIQQ community. Certainly, in my district, I will be leading the drive for the development of an explicit sexual orientation policy. In addition, this study can certainly be used as a base for future research involving principals and vice-principals and LGBTTIQQ issues.

Recommendations for Future Research Directions

Further study needs to take place as districts come on board with explicit sexual orientation policies. It would be interesting to know where and how districts, and this one in particular, proceed towards socially just practices regarding LGBTTIQQ communities in the future. In addition, I hope this microscopic look at only six principals' and vice-principals' understandings and responses to homophobia in B.C. public schools might set the ground-work and motivation for more expansive research in larger districts, rural areas, province-wide, or nation-wide regarding public school principals and vice-principals. It could be on the scale of the Egale Climate Survey on LGBTQ student perceptions.

Second, I do not believe our principals and vice-principals want to ignore LGBTTIQQ issues. I believe they are unsure of what, specifically, to do.   They are not alone. A southern U.S. study found that "there is no formal procedure in place to educate administrators, teacher, students and the learning community on LGBT issues" (Vowels, 2005, p. 91). There is an obvious need in faculties of Education in the area of curriculum

development, or course development, at the post-secondary level. Most current administrators in British Columbia did not take a course in their training on LGBTTIQQ issues. There is absolutely no way students of education should graduate without knowledge in special education, aboriginal education, and other social justice issues such as the needs of LGBTTIQQ students.

Lastly, there is an obvious need for continued advocacy around LGBTTIQQ issues. One only needs to pick up the recent issue of the *Georgia Straight* to read that members of the Burnaby Parent Voice, a municipal political party, are objecting to 1,500 elementary and senior students from across the Lower Mainland and New York doing a collaborative choreographed video to the Lady Gaga tune "Born This Way" (Burrows, 2012, p, 11). So, even in our own backyard, a backlash continues. Religious, political, hate groups, individuals and organizations at the local, national and global stage will continue to be extremely vocal against LGBTTIQQ issues. We must be cognizant of the beliefs and values of whom we elect and appoint to policy-making roles. Policies can harm, but they can also do a lot of good. The Burnaby school district is a leader in LGBTTIQQ issues and is one of the fifteen districts that have an explicit sexual orientation policy. It takes strong articulate leadership to stand up to frequently vocal minorities. In dealing with this situation Burnaby School Board chair, Larry Hayes, said it's "sometimes very embarrassing to have the Burnaby name tagged to that group" (Burrows, 2012, p. 11). It makes us all ask, what group is our school district's name tied to? What issues will your Board of Education chair defend? A study on the micro-politics of educational leadership would be of further value to this research. Do our boards of education, district-based leaders, principals or parents "behave as passivists,"

"act as symbol managers," or "act as 'nice neutrals'" and operate in such a manner so as

discontent is not aroused? (Melan, 1994, p. 153). It is time for some socially-just

leadership from all parties.

A Few Final Thoughts

The findings, recommendations and experiences shared in this dissertation came

from my practice as an "insider" educational leader in one particular district. They began

with the realization that proactive supports for LGBTTIQQ students and their families

were missing. A district-wide policy of sexual orientation was missing. So what were

educational leaders doing about it? How were they understanding and responding to

issues of homophobia in their schools? My research and journey was prompted by the

number of incidents reported to my office when I was vice-principal and finding that

most things were glossed over as "bullying". And bullying became silenced under the

topic of "school culture". All of this was a type of "hiding" or being "made invisible" by

well-intentioned individuals. The fact is: standalone explicit anti-homophobia and sexual

orientation policies remain non-existent. Throughout the years, I have become more of a

critical thinker, delving into a range of research literature exploring topics around

educational leadership, social justice, homophobia, LGBTTIQQ issues, and policy

development. I have learned to connect practice to theory and theory to practice, be more

confident in educational discourse, be able to accept challenges from my peers and

colleagues while responding in informed ways, and lastly, look for what is not there and

see what is not visible and to hear what is being said and to listen to the silences.

Lastly, I am not asking that the district suddenly become plastered in rainbow

flags as a public display. Rather, my dream is that the principals and vice-principals and

other educational leaders look critically at their understanding and responses to homophobia and work collaboratively toward creating policies and supports for LGBTTIQQ members in their school community. I hope they work toward the creation of a more explicit, inclusive, school and work environment where no one ignores a homophobic remark, where "Pink Day" or the International "Day of Pink" is promoted explicitly as anti-homophobic bullying, and all members of the district's LGBTTIQQ community attend school and come to work, free of fear of physical, verbal, or psychological violence. To that end, I still have hope.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Scenarios and Interview Questions

Scenario #1:

A parent calls to say she needs to speak to you (the Principal). She wants to address some "rumours" that have been in the community for years about her daughter's teacher. She is concerned that the female teacher has a photograph on the wall of her classroom of her female 'partner' and is talking about her opinions on marriage and not teaching Math. What are you going to do about it?

Your response…

Scenario #2:

A student calls another student "fag" in the hallway.

Your response….

Scenario #3:

Look at the poster Figure 1 …would you post it in your school? Explain.

Interview Protocol Project: How one B.C. Public School District's leaders, both school and district-based, respond to homophobia in our schools.

Time of interview:

Date of interview:

Location of Interview:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

(Briefly describe the project)

Questions:
Introductory/Warm up question:

Can you tell me a little about yourself and your educational background.

Discussion of real-life scenario #1 (Appendix A).

Can you tell me how you would handle the scenario presented in Appendix A. How would you go about addressing the parents concerns?

(Further probing questions might include: Would you call a meeting? Telephone the parent? Ignore it? Pass it on to the Superintendent? Who would be present? Why? How would expect the situation to be resolved?)

Theme questions:

Attitude

In what ways, do you feel you respect and value diversity (visible and less visible differences)?

How are district and school-based leaders able to transmit respect for diversity throughout their districts?

What social injustices outrage you as a district/school-based leader?

How are you, as a district and school-based leader, willing to 'act" and make your district a more inclusive place?

How do you perceive the phrase homophobia?

How do you respond to issues of homophobia in your school?

Can you tell me about current anti-homophobia practices/leadership that you are involved with, either in your school or at the district level?

Obstacles or Catalysts

Have you ever been in conflict as to how the district/school leaders handled an issue of homophobia?

How would you have liked the issue to be approached?

The Ministry of Education's *Social Justice 12* course is not offered in this district? Why not? What factors are influencing this decision?

Would you describe yourself as an obstacle or a catalyst when it comes to anti-homophobia in your school? Why?

Would you change your resolution of a homophobic issue due to pressure from your Board of Education and/or community groups?

Behavior

Discussion of real-life scenario #2 (Appendix A).
If a student hits another student, or a child calls another a "fag", how do you address this in your school? What are your main concerns?

Discussion of real-life scenario #3 (Appendix A).
Would you put that poster up in your school? Explain.

How do you make your school safe from the effects of homophobia?

How do you create a space where students are free to talk about sexuality – all kinds of sexuality without fear of repercussions?

How do you support members of your staff and their families who are faced with homophobia?

How do you or would you help student advocates, such as those wishing to form a Pride committee, create safe schools and communities?

How do you assist in allowing issues to be brought safely in to the public when many feel it is best to not be explicit and to keep some issues, such as homophobia, private?

Resources, Policies and Programs

Describe the programs, systems, structures, resources you have in place so homophobic-bullying does not occur at your school?

Are you aware of Ministry of education resources, policies, and programs on anti-homophobia?

What resources do you make available in your school for students?

Many educators espouse a certain program- i.e.: restitution, restorative justice etc. How do you find a program, system, or method of addressing homophobia (or any other anti-bullying issue) that suits you style?

What supports do district and school-based leaders need in order to effectively lead in the areas of anti-homophobia and social justice education practices?

Professional Development

Would you be able to define the terms used to describe the terms used to describe sexual orientation if you were asked? (LGBTTIQQ)

Do you feel secure, confident, and supported in addressing homophobic cyberbullying? If no, what would you need to help you?

What types of professional development would you need in order to assist you in addressing anti-homophobic issues?

Concluding questions:

Can you tell me if there is something we have not covered about homophobia and social justice practices in your school, or this district, that you would like to discuss?

Is there anything that you would like to say that I haven't asked you?

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

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

September 13, 2010

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN B.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
A study of how school-based educational leaders understand and respond to homophobia in one school district.

Dear _____:

You have been identified as an educational leader involved in the creation and implementation of policies and programs aimed at improving school culture and challenging bullying in your district and I hope to learn from your views and experiences. I am really interested in collaborating on social justice issues in our district and I want to learn how B.C. K-12 public school leaders understand and respond to homophobia in their school and school district. This research will be conducted to fulfill, in part, the requirement for an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy from the University of British Columbia.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in an exploration of how progressive district and school-based leaders think about and work against homophobia in schools using social justice practices.

As a participant in this research project, you would be asked to participate in one individual interview of approximately one to two hours in length. Individual interviews will be scheduled for the Fall of 2010.

If you are interested in participating in the study, I would ask that you contact me by Monday, September 20, 2010. I can be reached by email at _____, or by phone at _____. My research supervisor is Dr. Deidre Kelly of the Department of Educational Studies and she can be reached at

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

Sincerely,

Christine Perkins
Ed.D. Candidate, University of British Columbia

Version: 19/06/2010

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

Appendix C: Individual Interview Consent Form

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN B.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
A study of how school-based educational leaders understand and respond to homophobia in one school district.

September 20, 2010

Dear _____,

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your position as an educational leader within your district. This research is for a graduate degree in Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of British Columbia and the information will be used as part of a dissertation that will be a public document as well as for future scholarly publications.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research is to study how school-based educational leaders understand and respond to homophobia in their school and school district. Given the increased attention that 'bullying' has received in this district, this study is particularly concerned with how you understand and respond to homophobia in B.C. public schools.

Study Procedures:
If you agree to participate in this research, you will be one of up to six educators whom I will be interviewing. The individual interview will take place between September 27, 2010 and October 25, 2010. As a research participant, you will be involved in one individual interview lasting approximately one to two hours in length. The interview will be audio-taped and you will be given a copy of the transcript for your review.

A consent form for the individual interview will be given to you for your signature at the time of the interview. The interview will be held at a time and place of your choosing. The total amount of your time required for this project should not exceed one to two 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. Your identity will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym (i.e. Principal 1,2,3 etc.). Excerpts from transcripts will be used in a manner that protects the identity of the

participant. The only people who will have access to the interview data are the Principal Investigator (Dr. Deirdre Kelly) and the Student Researcher (Christine Perkins).

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 _____ (email _____), or the Student Researcher, Christine Perkins, at _____.

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 UBC Office of Research Services at _____.

Consent:
<u>This is a consent form for your individual interview</u>. 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 individual interview by signing the original of this letter and keeping a copy for your own records.

Christine M. M. Perkins, Ed.D. Candidate	Dr. Deirdre Kelly
Co-Investigator	Principal Investigator
Dept. of Educational Studies	Dept. of Educational Studies
TEL: _____	TEL: _____
EMAIL: _____	EMAIL: _____

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 retained a copy of this consent form for your own records.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of Participant

Appendix D: Scenario Charts

Scenario #1: Parent complaint about "partner photo"

	Parent directed to speak with Teacher	Parent Returns to Principal	Included daughter in conversation	Principal met with Parent	Principal talks to Teacher	Principal visits classroom	Refer to Human Resources	Refer to Superintendent	Collective Agreement	Human Rights Legislation	Unofficial Investigation
Allan	✓	✓									
Oliver					✓						
Ellen	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anne	✓	✓		✓	✓						
Irene			✓	✓							
Tom	✓					✓					

Scenario #2: Student calls someone a "fag" in the hallway

	Age of child matters	Range of Punishment	Principal talks to Child	Principal talks to Parent	Principal talks to Class	"Fag" is a good word	"Fag" is a derogatory word	Social Responsibility	Empathy	Mention of homosexuality	If a Joke, that's one thing
Allan	✓	✓	✓								
Oliver			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ellen	✓		✓				✓				
Anne			✓	✓	✓		✓				
Irene			✓								
Tom			✓								

Scenario #3: Would you put this poster up in your school?

	Yes	No	No PDA in school	No men or women kissing either	Joking	Might be misunderstood or confused	Small town	Consult with Parents first	Consult with Superintendent	Consult with Student Council	Shock Value
Allan		✓	✓	✓							
Oliver	✓				✓	✓	✓				
Ellen	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	
Anne		✓	✓	✓	✓						
Irene									✓ Depends on what he says		
Tom		✓									✓

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Those expecting a fictionalized play complete with sets, props, costumes, make-up, rising action and plot will be disappointed. The intent of the research-based ethnodrama presented here is to disseminate the research findings. To further define the parameters of *Do we Really Need to Discuss This?*, the work itself is a type of ethnographic performance known as "natural performance" and is the "re-performance of ordinary interaction" such as a recorded interview. It is intended for a "professional audience," such as other Principals at a conference, or a "participatory audience," such as education stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, teachers, Board of Education members, Superintendents), who "may be involved as co-performers or post performance critics" (Beck, Belliveau, Lea, & Wager, 2011, p. 689). Professional audiences, therefore, "are not likely looking for fully realized artistry but for things such as transparency of analysis or ethical representation of research participants" (p. 691). This type of ethnodrama, "theatre created to disseminate [research] findings[,] may … be more objective than compelling" (p. 688).

Do We Really Need to Discuss This?

An Ethnodrama by Christine Perkins

Deirdre Kelly, Shauna Butterwick, Taylor Webb   Producers
Christine Perkins   Director
Cast:
Voice   (dramatic effect, use of P.A. system or phone calls) Various
Allan   Educational Leader/Late Career/Elementary School
Anne   Educational Leader/Mid-Career/Elementary School
Ellen   Educational Leader/Late Career/Secondary School
Irene   Educational Leader/Early Career/Elementary School
Oliver   Educational Leader/Early Career/Secondary School
Tom   Educational Leader/Mid-Career/Secondary School
Interviewer* (Researcher)   Media
Student**   Various
(* *The Interviewer can be in the Principal's offices and/or move around the stage. The positioning of this person does not have to be literal and/or could also be multi-cast. **I would also suggest that the student lines get divided up or presented by one student as a continuous thread separate from the on-going principal discussions. The fictionalized student(s) represent(s) "real" thoughts from many LGBTTIQQ students across Canada and some thoughts from the playwright*). The play unfolds in three Acts, for a total of eight Scenes.

Act 1, Scene 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #1 (Appendix A).
STUDENT: (*lights up on student talking on cell phone*) Yeah, I thought that was pretty cool. I've never had a teacher come out to the class before…all that stuff about same-sex marriage and her "partner". I always wondered who was in that photo. My parents wouldn't be too pleased but it doesn't bother me. What? You're crazy! She's not going

to hit on you. She has a girlfriend. Oh, listen, I gotta go. Think my mum was listening. Text me.

VOICE: [*the phone rings, Principals answer, all hear same message over sound system*] A parent called to say she needs to speak to you. She wants to address some "rumours" that have been in the community for years about her daughter's teacher. She is concerned that the female teacher has a photograph on the wall of her classroom of her female 'partner' and is talking about her opinions on marriage and not teaching Math. What are you going to do about it?

INTERVIEWER: (*Says last line at same time*) What are you going to do about it?

ALLAN: I guess the first thing I would do is ask if she's spoken to the teacher, had a chance to talk to her about these rumours. That would be the first step.

INTERVIEWER: If she came back to you and wanted a more extensive meeting, what steps would you take?

ALLAN: I would meet with her. I want to deal with something firsthand, not second, not third hand. So that would be my first step with it.

STUDENT: In grade 6, there was a very open gay teacher who spoke to everyone, including parents, about his sexuality and his openness in discussing homosexuality. I never talked to him or ever had a class with him. Without him and at the time, I didn't have any other gay role models or ideas of what an adult gay male could be.[32]

ANNE: Okay. I guess there are two concerns, one being the teacher's sexual orientation, secondly the fact that she's talking about marriage instead of math. So regarding the first of the parent's concerns, I would be quite adamant that her orientation has nothing to do with her professional qualifications, nothing to do with her ability to teach the subject, and it's no different than any teacher having a picture of their family on the wall.

        Regarding the second concern about the comments about teachers talking about marriage and not math, I think that I would tell the parent initially that I would discuss that with the teacher, but that the code of ethics would say that she should, prior to that, if she has concerns about the teaching, that she should discuss those first with the teacher, but that I would be willing to support a conversation as well. I think in our teaching, a lot of times we talk about subjects other than those that we're directly instructing as a way to help build rapport with students and a way to help us get to know kids and them to get to know us. But obviously if it's gone too far afield from math, then there needs to be some sort of redirection back to the subject.

INTERVIEWER: So would you do all this over the telephone with a parent, or would you call a meeting?

ANNE: Well, it depends how adamant and how upset the parent is, you know? I think initially just the phone call. I would wait and see, then, if they were following up with their duty to speak to the teacher. And if there were further concerns, then sure, call a meeting.

INTERVIEWER: Would you forward this to the superintendent?

ANNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Who would be present at the meeting and why?

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[32] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 97.

ANNE: Well, again, you know, depending on the level of concern by the parent, I would have the parent and the teacher and discuss what is the real problem here. And is the child being taught math satisfactorily, and if so, then that's all that is of concern. If the parent continues to press the issue of her sexuality, I would be dismissive of that. It has absolutely nothing to do with the teacher as a professional.

STUDENT: Our school has gone from having a toxic to tolerating environment in the past few years. I think the reason our school had such a toxic environment was that NO ONE had ever come out here before. Ever.[33]

ELLEN: Well, the first thing I would do about it is ask the parent if they have addressed their concerns with the teacher. If that's not the case, then I would talk to the parent a little bit about it, just to see what their actual problem is. Many times teachers will have their pictures of family or friends on their wall. I would offer to meet with the parent and the teacher. Most likely, I would give the teacher a head's up first.

    Generally, if a parent has a problem with what a teacher is doing in the classroom, they really need to address it with the teacher. I'm happy to be there. I think after I talk to the parent, I would determine if we were stepping into discriminatory ground, or what's going on. I would need to know where the parent's coming from.

INTERVIEWER: If the parent wants to push it further and doesn't feel they can talk to the teacher, what would you do?

ELLEN: Well, then I would consult with the teacher. What their feeling on everything was or what their perception of what's going on in class. Then I would talk to Human Resources and get District point of view on that. I would look at the Collective Agreement. I would make darn sure I knew what Human Rights legislation and Human Resources legislation says about what's going on and get an idea from the teacher exactly what the teacher is saying.

INTERVIEWER: At what point would you involve the Superintendent, if at all?

ELLEN: Oh, I would, right away. I think that's important because again, I would like to make sure I don't put a foot wrong. That's why I would consult with the Superintendent and Human Resources right away. I want to make sure the rights of the teacher are protected.

IRENE: All right, so I'd begin by inviting the parent in for an interview with me, and there's a couple of things that I would begin by clarifying. I might also include the daughter, maybe at a later interview, depending on what the outcome of that first interview was. First thing is having the photo of her partner in the school in the classroom is something that is acceptable, if it's an appropriate picture. And that it's not up to us to say if the partner you know, what sex it should be or if you can post the picture or not.

OLIVER: Well, I'd certainly talk to the teacher about the concerns of the parent. I think this would generate some discussion around specifically, her views on same-sex marriage. I guess I would also share with the teacher what's appropriate and what's not appropriate for, say, a math class. And how does speaking of marriage and opinions on marriage relate to the math curriculum? I think that would be something that would be flushed out after. Throughout the conversation, I don't think I would necessarily dive right in and accuse that teacher of speaking about marriage or same-sex marriage or anything like that. But I think it would be something, certainly, that we could flush out

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[33] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 97.

and I could get some more information from her about what she is discussing in class and certainly express the concerns of the parent to the teacher.

STUDENT: In grade 10, one day my geography teacher gave a 40 min. lecture on homosexuality and gay youth in my high school. He was not gay himself, but he talked about homophobia and the potentiality of gay students and the actual number of gay students within a given high school. This was sort of an unexpected talk, but it helped me more than anything to continue through school.[34]

OLIVER: You know, whether it's same-sex marriage or her opinion on marriage or anything like that, I guess I would just question the intent and the purpose of talking about it in a math class and why would it be mentioned and why would it be brought up? Specifically looking at, as well …You know, we as teachers, we teach in certain subject areas, but we also teach students as a whole. So, I mean, there may be other teachings there that may be appropriate, may not be appropriate and that would be something that I guess I would have to discuss and find out. Certainly, if there were questions from individual students about that individual's orientation towards marriage of same-sex or anything like that, that they may answer in an appropriate manner to satisfy those questions. But again, it's one of those things that I think that you'd have to talk to the teacher and find out the context of what it's being you know, how it's being presented. Is there learning there for the students? And I would also caution the teacher, too, and say that this may not be appropriate for a classroom discussion just because there may be students in there whose parents have strong views, maybe, against it or have strong views about anything like that being discussed in the classroom. So, it may be something that the teacher's either not aware of or needs to be educated on in terms of the appropriateness of that discussion at a certain time. So, for example, if a parent is thinking that their child is in a math class and finds out that they're learning about same-sex marriage or elements of same-sex marriage, then I would say that the parent's being misinformed about what's happening in that classroom. But, in, say, a career and health planning class or a career and personal planning class where parent's would be notified that there would be some type of education around sensitive issues like same-sex marriage, then the parents are somewhat aware that their child is in a class like that and can make a decision as to whether they want them to participate or not.

STUDENT: In my family studies class, we were talking about different kinds of families. When a gay family was mentioned, our teacher said that this was not an appropriate conversation to have since there might have been gay people in the school.[35]

TOM: So it's a female teacher, she's talking about her female partner, there's a picture of the partner on the wall of the classroom. It's supposed to be a math classroom and the teacher has made comments about marriage. Am I correct?

INTERVIEWER: Right, and we're talking about a female's female partner.

TOM: Yes, I understood that, okay. And so your question to me is, what do I do about that, as the administrator?

INTERVIEWER: As the administrator, when the parent calls in.

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[34] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 97.

[35] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 123

TOM: I think almost all the time, I would enquire whether the parent has yet brought this up with the teacher in question. Have you talked to the teacher about it, and what kind of response did you get from that teacher about that? I would do that with almost any issue, I think. Make sure the parent has indeed got the facts from the teacher first, before venturing into the issue.

INTERVIEWER: And then, so say she's talked to the teacher and she's still concerned about this teacher and her photograph on the wall and her discussions, what would you do?

TOM: I think it doesn't sound as if there is any kind of misconduct in the scenario given to me. I would expect that discussions of a variety of natures would happen in almost every class and that sometimes that can be very healthy. Nothing was given in the scenario to say that the discussion, or the opinions about marriage, were positive or negative, homophobic, heterophobic or any of those things. So it sounds as if here's a parent who is maybe looking to stir things up, perhaps. And so it doesn't look to me as if the teacher has necessarily done anything wrong. What's the nature of the picture of the partner? Is it provocative? Is it neutral? That wouldn't be difficult to find out. I suppose if I really did want to find that out, I would pay a visit to the classroom on any pretext, just notice what's going on and draw my own conclusion about that as I saw fit.

INTERVIEWER: Would you call a meeting with the parent or suggest that you have a meeting with the parent and the teacher with you there?

TOM: Given what's been said so far, again, there's been nothing that's been indicated that the teacher's done anything necessarily wrong. And if I were convinced that something had been done that needed administrative attention, absolutely yeah. I mean, with the parent to hear their concerns, invite the teacher and respecting all of the…

INTERVIEWER: So say the parent had homophobic concerns, would you pass that on to the superintendent? Or how might you handle that?

TOM: If the parent had homophobic concerns?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, say she was worried that this teacher was promoting something she wasn't agreeing with, like, a female teacher having a female partner?

TOM: No, that's not the superintendent's business.

INTERVIEWER: So what would you do then?

TOM: Tell the parent it's the superintendent's business. [laughs]

STUDENT: If my school had broached the topic of homosexuality in the classroom and had teachers who were not afraid to discuss it, my school would have been a much better place. I feel that the students in my school had the ability to accept gay people, but were never given a reason to question their stance that gay people were bad and immoral.[36]

Act 1, Scene 2, *Attitude*

INTERVIEWER: In what ways, do you feel you respect and value diversity, visible and less visible differences?

ALLEN: We do a virtue of the week. And so we talk about it in the morning, it goes over the PA, classes talk about it and it really tries to address that issue.

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[36] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 123

OLIVER: It's tolerance that I think of. We had a Diversity Club… We are all diverse in some way and I think we shouldn't be ostracized or made to feel any different about it.

ELLEN: We generally don't single out any diverse group I guess we don't single out any particularly diverse group. I mean, everyone comes here. Our business is educating whomever comes in here. We have a staff and that is their mandate as well. People are treated the same regardless of their race, or religion, you know…sexual diversity.

ANNE: I come from a very liberal family who talked a lot about issues of sexuality and social justice and equality as we were growing up, so it's something that's on my mind frequently. And you know, I think you have to have a sense of righteous indignation in this job to stand up for the underdog or disenfranchised.

IRENE: I like to consider myself …an open-minded person. I've traveled a lot and I've met…come across….multiple cultures and different kind of people and I like to think that I'm accepting of all kinds of people and respect their differences.

TOM: I embrace diversity as completely as I can…but there are some things that are challenging for me personally…I don't think there are things in terms of homosexual issues that have pushed my buttons that way. I have my opinions but they really…they haven't been challenged in a school yet.

INTERVIEWER: How are district and school-based leaders able to transmit respect for diversity throughout their districts?

ALLAN: We are in constant communication about what works and what isn't working. …open communication and talking to each other.

OLIVER: I demonstrate it. Somebody who understands diversity is obviously open-minded….promotes healthy environments around it…promotes healthy attitudes toward it. You exude that …just in the way you converse with people….when people feel comfortable with different diversities, or different, say, orientations or slants or whatever you want to call it….you want to be able to make sure that there is a safe and healthy environment in your school.

ELLEN: I guess the biggest population we have is Aboriginal, so there's lots of …we have an Aboriginal worker, who is also responsible for integrating Aboriginal culture into the school...there is always Aboriginal foods. Sometimes we'll do Aboriginal dancing as part of the lunch-hour festivities. We'll just focus on certain ethnic, cultural activities.

ANNE: I think we model it in everything that we do--in staff meetings, in the staffroom, in conversations with parents. And I think we have to model that respect and the sensitivity that we expect our teachers to model, and our parents and our students, with the understanding that everybody is somewhere on the spectrum.

IRENE: Because of homophobia comes sometimes, bullying, we try to build a school community and then in building a school community, we respect people's differences, accept people for who they are and help them along in their journey, whatever their journey may be.

INTERVIEWER: What social injustices outrage you as a district/school-based leader?

ALLAN: I want to see everybody have equal opportunity to succeed.

OLIVER: Cruelty towards folks that are …I guess they don't deserve it or cruelty to folks because of certain orientations or diversities. Whether you're a kid who likes to

study and you're the "nerd" or if you're ….say you have a certain sexual orientation, one of the things that outrages me is when people are cruel to other folks like that.

ELLEN: Bullying or harassment for any reason.

ANNE: Lately, it's been poverty and lack of equity among schools.

IRENE: Social injustice, I think…I know I have become quite sensitive to the Abori.....meeting the needs of Aboriginal people everyday in my job.

INTERVIEWER: How are you, as a district and school-based leader, willing to "act" and make your district a more inclusive place?

ALLAN: I think we all work towards that. And we have a lot of meetings, we're concerned. We've been in meetings in the evenings looking at, as a community, how do we address this issue, make it more inclusive, make everyone feel like they belong, welcomed?

INTERVIEWER: The community meetings you're referring to are the school culture meetings (*public meetings meant to bring the community together to address issues concerning safe, caring and orderly schools in the district*) that have been going on?

ALLAN: Yes.

STUDENT: I guess you could say that this town is very conservative in some aspects. We seem a little behind the times as far as LGBTQ openness goes. Our high school has about 400 students, and I only know one person who is open, although I think the rest of the school doesn't really know. Many people don't realize that the things that they say have such a powerful impact on people. One of my friends doesn't really fit into society's standards of what a teenage boy should be. He often gets picked on for this. Most of the comments are never said to his face, but with such a small school word gets around. People joke around, calling him a "fag", not realizing how much they're really hurting him. I guess the main point of this is that most people wouldn't feel safe to come out at our school. Even at home, I don't really know how my parents would react to that. I just wish that people could just accept the fact that the whole world isn't straight.[37]

ANNE: I think by trying to be a voice for people who don't seem to have one. For the inarticulate, for the illiterate, for people who are intimidated by the school system I can't always put myself in their shoes and understand where they're coming from, but somebody has to imagine their situation and plan for it and so again, I guess, going back to modelling and being that voice of those who aren't at the table.

IRENE: Well, that's one of our school goals is solving problems in peaceful ways. And that fits really nice in there about how so, you know, if there is any conflict, we need to, we use restorative justice or restitution, where we talk about what the problem is, who's been affected by our choices or actions, and then how to make it better. And, you know, try to help people understand that, respect all differences and all people, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: How do you perceive the word *homophobia*?

ELLEN: I perceive it as fear of anything that is it out of the norm in terms of sexual orientation. Fear of publicizing gay-lesbian rights or gay-lesbian opinions. Just any fear of dragging any of that stuff out into the open or fear that somehow it might be catching. Fear of any sort of discussion.

INTERVIEWER: How do you perceive the term *norm*?

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[37] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 96

ELLEN: I think the *norm* is what individuals have set down as what is the way to do things, what they perceive is normal.

INTERVIEWER: And so now what would the *norm* be in this context?

ELLEN: I think *norm* would be, basically, males marry females or males have relationships with females. You don't have females having relationships with females or males having relationships with males. I think that is what a homophobic person would consider to be the norm.

TOM: I perceive it as a misused phrase. I think it's a phrase used by the homosexual community, I'm hesitant in my phrasing because I'm probably not going to say it politically correctly. So let's just go with this anyway. A phrase used by the homosexual community to target anybody who doesn't like them or doesn't agree with homosexuality. So I believe that there is a very healthy position to not agree with homosexuality, but not be afraid of homosexuality at the same time. These things are entirely possible. One can be entirely inclusive and tolerant and accepting of a person and not take their sexual orientation and embrace that too. So I find the word tends to be used as a means of attack, which is really the opposite of the intentions of most people I know in that [they] want tolerance and understanding.

ALLAN: Okay. How do you perceive it? I guess I perceive it simply as just the fear of someone different than you and the fear of... It's not a common expression used in an elementary school you know. And I would hazard a guess 90% of the kids wouldn't understand it anyway, wouldn't understand what they're doing. So when we talk I guess it goes into the second question that says, "How do you respond to issues of homophobia in your school?" You discuss what it is and why it's unfounded and why it's so hurtful. You know so... yeah.

ANNE: I perceive it to be the fear of people who are homosexual.

INTERVIEWER: How do you respond to issues of homophobia in your school?

ALLAN: And I guess, that all centres on all the work we're doing in bullying. You're trying to address the homophobia fears, you're trying to address the real putdowns, the exclusions. And so we are doing a lot in that area. As a district, as schools, we are. I don't think homophobia needs to be a separate little category. I think it, to me, is a form of bullying and that we need to address it and everyone needs to feel comfortable in the school. You know we have 380 kids and they all have the right to feel safe here, to feel included.

ANNE: Yeah. We have, on occasion, particularly boys calling each other fag or similar terms. And I deal with it in the same way I would deal with a racist comment, which is to take it very seriously, to first of all talk to the boys about do they actually know what they're saying, because sometimes they have no idea. And once that's clear, to make sure that their parents know that this is taking place.

INTERVIEWER: So you would call the parents?

ANNE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of responses have you received when you've done that?

ANNE: Well, disappointment in their children. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about current anti-homophobia practices/leadership that you are involved with, either in your school or at the district level?

ALLAN: I guess that all centres on all the work we're doing in bullying.

ANNE: No, there's nothing currently in my school that I know of at the elementary level.

IRENE: I haven't had a lot of experience with it. So, luckily I guess. It might not be luckily because it might be happening, but we're just not aware of it. That's the scary part, eh?

OLIVER: Yeah, none, none. I'm not even aware of any same-sex couples in our school. I certainly have in my old school. But again, I haven't been involved in any groups or anything like that.

TOM: No.

ELLEN: Oh, what I've done in my own classes or out in the bus loop or whatever.

STUDENT: I've never seen the issue discussed in any class or assembly (despite our school having at least two anti-racism assemblies a year) and the school apparently doesn't have any policies on queer issues. If it does have policies, it obviously doesn't enforce them as students make anti-queer slurs all the time in front of teachers and nothing is said to the students.[38]

Act 1, Scene 3: Obstacles or Catalysts

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever been in conflict as to how the district/school leaders handled an issue of homophobia?

ALLAN: No.

ELLEN: No.

TOM: I did feel some internal challenge with the "That's so Gay" campaign and to me, I found that it was a good thing for me because it did challenge me personally. Where am I at with this, on this issue and am I willing to do the right things, even on these issues that, at that time, were things I needed to work through. Does that make sense?

INTERVIEWER: That you needed to work through personally, not as an administrator.

TOM: Personally, yeah. And so, but it was good for me because having bringing that issue to my attention, was the thing I needed to work my head around, how do I live in this environment, and I found that, yeah, it works.

INTERVIEWER: If you had been [in conflict], how would you have liked the issue to be approached?

ANNE: Well, I think in the same way that any discriminatory behaviour is dealt with, so either with union representation or investigation. But certainly, advocacy for the person who claims discrimination, and it being taken seriously by the district.

INTERVIEWER: The Ministry of Education's *Social Justice 12* course is not offered in the district. Why not? What factors are influencing this decision?

ANNE: I don't know why not. The factors I can think of that might influence the decision are financial and possibly having someone trained to teach the course.

TOM: I have not yet seen [it] offered at a school I've been in. I don't, I've not been part of the discussions about why that's not been included as an offering. I know that in our school, the practice has been to allow any teacher who has an interest in the subject, to bring that forward, promote it, try to get student interest in it, and if enough student subscribe and it's a BA [Board Authorized] course or a provincially prescribed

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[38] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p.114

course, then that's fine, that would run. So I'm, at this point, making the assumption that no one has yet championed that course.

ELLEN: I didn't realize it wasn't offered anywhere in the district. We looked at that course. I have a teacher on staff who really wanted to teach it, but it's just a question of we are limited as to the number of classes we can offer because we're a small school. If the Board funded it, it would be something that we would really like to offer.

INTERVIEWER: Does the Board know that?

ELLEN: I have not brought it up specifically.

OLIVER: Oh, to tell you the truth, I'm not certain even what the course is about. And why it wouldn't be offered, I'm gathering from this interview that maybe it's because it has content in it that may not be necessarily supported by parents or staff. But no, I haven't heard any reason why it wouldn't.

INTERVIEWER: Would you describe yourself as an obstacle or a catalyst when it comes to anti-homophobia in your school and why?

ALLAN: I kind of had to walk that one through because it's a catalyst... so I'm not... you know, anti-homophobia, so what you're looking at then is the positive end of it, so it would be the catalyst.

INTERVIEWER: Right. [I think].

ANNE: With a catalyst being someone willing to change?

STUDENT: The lack of education on LGBTQ issues creates a type of fear of it, which in itself is a type of homophobia in my mind. People are too scared to stand up for people because they don't know enough about it or they do not want to be pinpointed themselves. I have found that students don't know it means to be homophobic. They think it means you actually have to be "afraid," which is untrue. They may consider themselves "anti-homophobic" when really they are far from it. I think maybe if they knew they were considered homophobic, they would look at their current beliefs, actions, use of language, etc., and change them to be less homophobic. Basically, most of the homophobia in our school is due to a lack of education and lack of effort taken by the administration to fight homophobia.[39]

ANNE: To make change? If I were in the position to have the opportunity to make some kind of change or a stand, I certainly would. I think that it's an area that we're still working on as a society, obviously. It's not as well understood as other areas for discrimination so you know, sexism, ageism, racism… that kind of thing. But I think it's timely and essential that we do respond in a way that would help move people forward, not in an antagonist way, but providing more education.

ELLEN: I don't really view myself as an "obstacle" or a "catalyst". Certainly when things come up, I deal with them head on, but in my mind a catalyst is something that promotes programs, etc. and brings something into the school like school-wide programs that address these issues. If something comes up, deal with it head on and I would say in a public way. It comes up in class, we deal with it in class. It comes up in the bus loop, I deal with it in the bus loop. I wouldn't say that I go out of my way to be a catalyst and promote programs.

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[39] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 123.

IRENE: [I'm] a catalyst. I'd like to think that I'm an open-minded person and accepting and, you know, to help everybody through their journey, whatever their journey may be.

OLIVER: Well, certainly a catalyst. I mean, a catalyst in that, an inert catalyst, let's say in that certainly, when something… I'm not actively going out and doing anything. Do you know what I'm saying? It's not there, I guess is what I'm saying, but certainly, if it does come up, again, I'm acting on behalf of the safety and the education of the students around that.

TOM: Sorry, obstacles or?

INTERVIEWER/STUDENT: Obstacles or catalysts.

TOM: Am I an obstacle to anti-homophobia issue?

INTERVIEWER/STUDENT: Yes.

TOM: I think I am… can I be neutral? That is, it wasn't an option you gave me, but I mean, I don't see myself antagonistic and I don't see myself going out to champion the cause either.

INTERVIEWER: Is there fear there in that decision?

TOM: Fear of what?

INTERVIEWER: What's your hold back on being neutral?

TOM: What's my hold back in being neutral?

INTERVIEWER: Um, hum, instead of taking a leadership position one way or the other.

TOM: I don't know if this is an answer at all, but since the issues weren't coming to the surface in the school, it really did not come out to …

INTERVIEWER: Any school you've been at?

TOM: In my most recent school, I'll have to [do some] more thinking and come back. It's been a long time since the district before this, but no, my attention's always been on what's been pressing, what do I have to deal with right now? I know that's not the right way administrators are supposed to do things, alas, it is true. So because it hasn't been front and centre, it hasn't been something I've been working on.

INTERVIEWER: Would you change your resolution of a homophobic issue due to pressure from your board of education and/or community groups?

ANNE: I can't imagine doing that. I don't think that I mean, it's like saying, would you back down from your belief or your moral compass? No. It might be difficult, but uncomfortable, but you know, if you believe strongly in something, you don't change your mind just because of pressure.

ELLEN: Absolutely. If something came up that needed to be addressed then, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And why would you do that? Why would you change your resolution?

ELLEN: Well, I'm assuming that something has come up, either somebody has been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or something like that. If it's something that comes up school-wide, then you need to deal with it school-wide.

TOM: When I've been presented with challenges on decisions in the past, I will listen to the group that wants to change my mind, because I do think that listening is important. But as of yet, I have not yet done so, I haven't changed my mind.

OLIVER: You know what? I don't think so. I think that it's a broad topic. It is something that is becoming more and more pronounced in our schools and in our educational system. Certainly, there are people that have the interest and the energy and

the inclination to go out and expand on this in the schools and to me, it's just one more of those things that we deal with in everyday education.. And again, my take on it…

ALLAN: I don't like the word *pressure*. Would you change your resolution? No, if I really, truly believed that this was what needed to happen then I would stick with it.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes that's difficult.

ALLAN: Yes it is, yup, yup. And I guess I'm comfortable enough, I've been an administrator long enough in this district that, you know, yup.

INTERVIEWER: Right, so experience counts there?

ALLAN: Yes.

IRENE: No, I would not change my opinion, but I would have to follow the guidelines of my school district.

INTERVIEWER: And why is that?

IRENE: Because I do what my employer tells me to do.

OLIVER: You know I just found out this summer that my nephew's gay. And again, I think my sister was more upset about the fact that he was gay and whatnot, and I don't know what kind of reaction she was looking at from me, but it was nothing. He's a great kid and I still love him and no, I mean, that's his lifestyle choice.

STUDENT: I know that many of my friends that are LGBT or Q are extremely afraid of telling their parents. Although in our community many people pretend to be rather liberal in their ideals, they think in the "as long as it's not my kid" type way, which is hurtful and intimidating to their children.[40] Being openly LGBTQ at my school makes getting in the "in crowd" VERY difficult if not impossible.[41]

OLIVER: One thing I do find interesting though, is the research that is coming out now around the nature vs. nurture argument. And certainly, one of the things that comes out when talking to my nephew is what a relief it was to finally come out of the closet, I guess you could say. And it's very interesting because I really think, and again, this is just from the little bit of information that I have on the subject, is that in terms of being hard-wired, I guess you could say, around, say, being homosexual. You know something, I can't relate to the fact that somebody says, 'It felt just so good to be able to come out and say that they were homosexual'. I can't identify with that. So, I just have to take somebody's word for it and say, Well, okay then. I guess that was… That's great. I mean, that's excellent. You shouldn't be feeling like that, you know, repressed and that sort of thing. So, if that's what it takes to make you feel good. Do you know what I'm saying? And, you know, then great. Life is short enough as it is. So I'm happy for him. That's great. And again, I don't think anything different of him, so, it's just, you know.

STUDENT: There were obstacles from the administration for fear of backlash from parents or "creating a problem where there wasn't one." Though generally supportive, they were afraid of explicitly queer events for fear of "giving bullies ideas.[42]

Act 2, Scene 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #2 (Appendix A).
STUDENT(S): (*Random slurs being hurled as students makes way across stage*). Well, you're a 'fag'. Get outta here lezbo. Dyke. Homo. You're so gay.

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[40] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 101

[41] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 101

[42] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 129.

INTERVIEWER: How do you address this in your school? What are your main concerns?

OLIVER: We want them [the students] to understand that there's a social responsibility that goes along with understanding homosexuality, as well as, respecting the fact, that when they say something like that, there's people that are standing around, perhaps, that could hear that.

STUDENT: I have not once seen a teacher or principal do anything to discipline someone for a homophobic remark – never a suspension, which is what it is supposed to be according to the harassment and safety policy.[43]

ALLAN: Well, several things. We have kids from four years old right through to 13. If it's a four year-old making a comment, I will sit down and chat with him. The one thing I don't want to do is just walk away and ignore it and let the comment go. So you're going to get my attention, you're going to get our TA's attention, the teacher's attention and we'll stop and we'll deal with it. In some cases the child is not really even aware what they are saying. Now if this is a Grade 7, and this is a Grade 7 we've spoken to four or five times about this, I'm going to treat it a heck of a lot differently than I am a younger child. Okay. So it's kind of a wishy-washy answer. It's a full array, you know all the way from suspension if this kid has been harassing another kid, and this is just one more incident of it versus a child that doesn't understand the word.

ANNE: Okay, so first of all, if we're talking elementary-school-aged children, then I need to make sure that the child who called the other child a fag knows what he is saying and what it means and why it is derogatory, then talk about it with that child and his parents and probably with the classroom, especially if that kind of talk is ongoing, and have an open conversation with the students and the teacher. In fact, I was thinking this morning, I wanted to go into the grade-seven class and talk to them about the recent conviction of the man in Vancouver who sucker punched the other man in the pub. And I wanted to talk to the grade sevens and say, 'This is why we teach you tolerance. This is why we discuss things like homosexuality and so on and help educate you, so that you don't end up in a position of being put in jail for six years because you're so afraid of a person who's gay.'

STUDENT: This year, one of the teachers decided that the amount of homophobic slurs that she was hearing around the halls and in the classrooms was just too much. She's since put up posters that say "that's so gay is not okay," and she has been working to discourage the use of homophobic slurs. Other teachers have also joined in working to stop the homophobia at our school.[44]

OLIVER: We want kids to be safe, we want them to be healthy, we want them to understand that there's a social responsibility that goes along with understanding homosexuality as well as respecting the fact that when they say something like that, there's people that are standing around, perhaps, that could hear that. To call your friend a fag jokingly is one thing, but it's another to understand the context in which you're using it and the environment you're using it. Again, it chips away from what it is that we're trying to create in a school and that is a positive environment. It has a negative connotation to it. So yeah, I just try to educate the kids on that.

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[43] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 108.

[44] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 109.

STUDENT: I have never been a victim of homophobia, but I hear comments like "That's so gay" every single day at my school. Who wants to come out to that negativity?[45]

ELLEN: Well, any time a student hits another student, it doesn't matter what the reason is. I mean, that's unacceptable. It's abusive. It's violent. Then if somebody calls another student a "fag", again that's unacceptable. In combination, it's doubly unacceptable. Calling somebody "gay", I mean, you're bullying them. It's like years and years ago, women used to be bullied and picked on, and consigned to some lower rank because they were female as opposed to male. It's discriminatory whatever it is.

IRENE: Well, it's interesting, when I saw the question, I kind of laughed a little bit because I did have that happen before.

STUDENT: I am very discouraged when everyday I sit in class and her mean homophobic remarks, and the teachers just ignore it or perhaps even have a laugh along with the students who said it!! I have lost faith in the supposed "teacher role model" crap. Yeah right. These people only conform to their own beliefs of religion and such, and rarely do I see a teacher stick up against homophobic remarks.[46]

IRENE: We had a situation in one of the elementary schools that I worked in, we had a situation of bullying and in the one case, the guardian of the one child, who we were addressing, there was a Facebook issue of online bullying as well. And in the video that was posted on Facebook or on YouTube, they were making fun using the word fag, and, like, quite regularly. And so when I met with the parents, I brought it up and you know, they would also use the word *retard*. And so those are two words that, if you actually think about what the meaning is, there's they're quite meaningful words. And then the guardian had dismissed it, just saying, you know what, everybody uses that word, nobody really uses it for what's the true meaning of it, which I find very interesting because if you use a word enough, then you risk the chance of having it losing its meaning. When the true meaning is, that we all know, it's not a good one. And then one year, I worked on a staff, actually two years, I worked on a staff that we had a gay employee who was a teacher on staff, and in the one school, this person was really involved in Pink Day, anti-bullying and, you know, for her own reasons. So I thought that was really good, and part of the video, I believe, talked about using the word 'fag' and if I did, or when I have dealt with students who have used that word, I don't address it right there in front of all of their friends. I make a point to pull them aside at a time where they're not in front of their peers and talk to them one on one about the situation and talk about the meaning and try to get them to reflect on what they're saying and what it means and the use of the word.

STUDENT: Fun Fact: I've counted myself hearing "That's So Gay" and other homophobic terms up to around 15 times per class. That's up to 60 times a day and usually (depending on the teacher and other students around of course) the language never gets dealt with unless I say something to try and stop it.[47]

TOM: The first one going through my head right now is, that's an absolutely inappropriate use of any word. You just don't do that. Second thing is that, all right,

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[45] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 47.

[46] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 108.

[47] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 47.

where is the anger coming from? Why is this kid angry, upset, annoyed at the other one? What's the issue that he's using that name?

Act 2, Scene 2: Behaviour
INTERVIEWER: How do you make your school safe from the effects of homophobia?
ALLAN: I think we do that through programs like Second Step, through Focus on Bullying. We make kids realize how hurtful it is and how it can really hurt people badly for a lot of years. Our TAs look for it now, they look for signs of kids that are being excluded or suddenly they get very quiet and they just sit. You'll find them in one spot. And so, we're much more aware of bullying than we ever were, and looking for signs of it. We have parents now that if they're spotting anything that's the least bit questionable on Facebook we're being informed of it. And so even though it takes place out of school, we still deal with it. We've brought a lot of parents in and sort of discussed with them the dangers of it. We've done cyber-bullying with our PAC, in our newsletter. And so, it addresses homophobia.
STUDENT: My school has absolutely no support (awareness) of the LGBTQ community within and around it. The biggest fear for me is the unknown, not knowing how people will accept someone who is LGBTQ.[48]
ELLEN: In terms of making our school safe, everybody has a right to come here to our school and get an education and participate in all the activities that school has to offer, regardless of their race or sexual orientation, whether they are handicapped or not. That is the philosophy. It's inclusive. That's the basis from which all decisions are made.
STUDENT: People can be cruel. I remember my first day at the new school in grade 11 these guys decided it would be fun to taunt me because someone from a previous school had also transferred and let them in on the fact that I was gay. The class was hell, and really very little was done about it.[49]
IRENE: Well, I guess, it comes back to respect, right, and so whether it's homophobia, or whether it's racism, or whether it's whatever you consider being a social injustice, it's all about respecting people and accepting who they are and what they are about.
OLIVER: You know what? In terms of, again, something that I mean, when you're talking, say, homosexuality and you're talking bullying and you're talking and any other issues that happen in a lot of schools, I think, for our school, it just is all-encompassing. I'm convinced that 100% of my staff would be empathetic and tolerant and supportive and would want to educate kids on sexual orientation, that sort of thing, if it were an issue. I had one teacher say to me that she thought a student might be gay. And again, our response to that, well, you know, in terms of being supportive, just make sure the kid's not bugged about it and that sort of thing.
STUDENT: For the most part I think it would really help if the teachers stood up a bit more when slurs were being said. Of course we understand that they might want to stay neutral, or don't know what to say, but then learn what to say![50]

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[48] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 107.

[49] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 108.

[50] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 108.

TOM: Homosexuality was one of the many issues of a potential means by which kids can be, can feel unsafe or be discriminated against or attacked. So the first step is to make sure we're clear with the students. It needs to be put into your school agenda book, code of conduct. It needs to be in print, so that the world, if interested, can see that yes indeed, we value everybody and that targeting kids because they're homosexual is not going to be tolerated at the school. Also, I believe that the first PAC [Parent Advisory Council] meeting or if you're going to have a separate meeting of parents to your school, you address the same thing that you addressed with the kids and you let them know where you stand and what the school's willing to do about breaches of that part of the code of conduct, because it should be in the code of conduct.

INTERVIEWER: How do you create a space where students are free to talk about sexuality – all kinds of sexuality--without fear of repercussions?

TOM: I know that the issue is dealt with in planning as well as CAPP [Career and Personal Planning] classes, and I would fully expect that any teacher would make that a safe discussion, and I would be shocked if that weren't the case, and I would absolutely weigh in with a teacher who had a discussion that wasn't safe for any kid to be able to say what they think.

STUDENT: I feel it would be very dangerous for me. I would be threatened and harassed, more than I already am for other (religions, poverty) reasons. I think I would be beat up. Also, people might tell my dad and he would hurt me.[51]

ALLAN: We do a lot of Family Life classes and we've brought in Public Health, we've brought in sex ed. educators because we do want the kids to feel comfortable with it.

STUDENT: Everyone bullies the gay kid. You don't have to know him or her personally to know who she or he is. I don't get to know the good side of the gays because they are rarely around - they're off hiding so they don't have to hear about being gay.[52]

ANNE: Well, when I'm dealing with students, I'm very open to talk about what we call body science. I've had a lot of experience teaching the subject with a fair degree of openness, honesty, but also with good boundaries about what kinds of information students need to have or don't need to have. And invariably, the older students have far more information than we think that they do or should, and it's a matter of putting their knowledge into a context of safety or values. So whatever they're hearing at home, they can place it in a, I guess, again, in that moral context, and decide for themselves what's appropriate behaviour or what's discriminatory, or what's fair, so I hope that doesn't sound too vague.

ALLAN: I guess most of it is done in class. We encourage kids to ask the questions because once it's out on the playing field, we have no control over what's going on, we're not sure what information they're getting is factual, true.

OLIVER: I think that particularly in our community up there and the surrounding communities, it's not so much as homosexuality as it is, you know what's the term I'm looking for, more abusive type of relationships and things like that, rape and, do you know what I'm saying? Alcohol-related incidences that involve sex, I mean, these kinds

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[51] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 76.

[52] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 76. Corrected him/her and s/he to make more sense orally.

of things. So, certainly that is a focus in our community--abusive relationships, things like this. Again, and even so, they wouldn't tell me anyway, but I think that the child and youth care workers are the ones that kids really open up to.

STUDENT: The Vice-Principal of my school used to be my Guidance Counsellor. I went to her because I was extremely depressed and wanted to commit suicide. She found it necessary to point out that she goes to church every Sunday.[53]

TOM: You say what you think on this issue, and then you back it up with your actions. So when there are homophobic issues that arise, you stand by your word and what you've said you believe about homosexuality, homophobia, and make it real for those kids.

INTERVIEWER: How do you support members of your staff and their families who are faced with homophobia?

ALLAN: It's a topic we don't hear much here, and the kids are very accepting. You know we dealt last year with a child who... he had, I would refer to it more as gender identity issues. And the teacher was kind of concerned for this poor kid but I tell you, these classmates accepted him. He was just different. And we watched for it. Never got bugged, never got bothered. He was very well accepted. So we support our staff and their families that are being faced with bullying that are being faced with ... that are having difficulties with other kids bothering them, okay.

ANNE: I think in the same way that we support all staff who are faced with challenges. You know, the staffroom should be a safe place for anyone to be, to visit. Staff meetings should be safe. People should not feel vulnerable in their workplaces because of their sexual orientation, or their religion, or their colour.

ELLEN: Well, certainly, there's some quite interesting discussions in CAPP class and Planning about all sorts of issues. Students' journal. They journal in CAPP 9 and CAPP 8. They use journals and the teacher views those journals, but everything is kept confidential. The teacher does not share that stuff with parents or administration or counselors unless there is some self-harm intended.

INTERVIEWER: And if there is self-harm, what happens next?

ELLEN: Usually the teacher will come straight to me and then we will contact the Ministry of Children and Families counselor, who will contact the student and parents to do the questionnaire on whether the child is thinking of committing suicide.

IRENE: Well, that's a difficult situation, right, because you think about your teachers who actually do, like, the health ed., sex ed. stuff in the classroom. Maybe after asking this question, this is something that I need to think about a little bit more when it comes to teacher professional development and how do we approach this as a staff. And, you know, is it the public nurse? And then you would make sure that you would set the kids up in the classroom, so that they can feel like they can say what they need to say, or maybe even just write it down, instead of saying it in front of the group, so that they feel like they have a voice, but not get ridiculed.

INTERVIEWER: How do you or would you help student advocates, such as those wishing to form a Pride committee create safe schools and communities?

ANNE: Well, I think I'd respond the same way that I would with kids who want to show any kind of leadership, in that if the context is appropriate, if they are responsible

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[53] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 101.

and respectful students, then I'll support them. It reminds me of the Pink Day campaign, where I wondered how would that go over. How would the grade seven boys respond to being asked to wear pink? In fact, it was phenomenal. It's been a phenomenal success at every age level. So I think sometimes we underestimate what children are able to do in terms of social justice. And they themselves are generally far more tolerant and accepting than their parents' generation. So, it's pretty powerful when kids step up to the plate.

ALLAN: Yeah, and interesting, because again, never had that happen. The kids really aren't at that stage yet.

INTERVIEWER: So in all the years that you've been admin, you've never had anybody come forward as a student even and say, "My parents are gay," or "I'm gay," or none of that experience at all?

ALLAN: Do you know what? I've never had that. I've never had that. And that's why, when I first looked at this, I thought, "Okay this is a junior high or a senior high issue, it's not an elementary issue."   But as I go through it, you say, no, we've got to do the groundwork for it ahead of time. We've got to be teaching people to be accepting of other people with other beliefs and other backgrounds.

IRENE: I think you would see that more in a high school, than you would in an elementary school. It doesn't mean that it wouldn't happen in grade 6, 7 grades. However, it would take somebody quite mature, I think, to head that up and very courageous. [laughs]

TOM: Perhaps give them space, room, time, make those things available so that they can get their stuff together.

OLIVER: Oh, I mean, certainly if they came to me and wanted to do something like that, it would be something that I don't have a problem with, as long as I understood what the guidelines were, and I understood what they wanted to do, and the purpose for doing it. So, you know, certainly.

INTERVIEWER: How do you assist in allowing issues to be brought safely into the public, when many feel it is best to not be explicit and keep some issues, such as homophobia, private?

ALLAN: I spend a lot of time listening to parents. And our PAC [Parent Advisory Council], we deal with issues there that sometimes aren't the most comfortable to deal with but do need to be addressed. Okay. Through restitution and restorative justice we've dealt with a lot of these issues.

ANNE: Well, I guess in just being open to have conversations. Again, people are on various places in the spectrum of their own sexual maturity. A lot of the fear and discomfort people have stems from not having had a lot of talk, a lot of education. And so, you know, in other I guess there are so many other kind of parallel examples, like residential schools or, you know, internment camps and things that we would really feel like we'd like to just bury and forget about. But they are there in our subconscious. They're in our history and they need to be talked about. At some point, I think there will be more of a revolution around homosexuality and homophobia than we have yet experienced. You know, I was watching [the TV show] *Glee* with my daughter before coming here and there were boys kissing. And I think, through popular culture, we're going to have that revolution and we're going to stop worrying and fearing and persecuting people that we don't understand.

IRENE: Oh, you always have to start with the parents, yeah. Start with the parents and then and I think, it's got to be a team effort, right. You've got to start with the parents, conversations, going through them, to have conversations with their children at home. Then you'd also work with the teachers, maybe perhaps through staff meeting or through ProD. You know, it's interesting, I've had a couple of scenarios. The one most recent was that we have a student who is in grade 6 or 7, who, I guess, how would you put it? …displays certain characteristics of maybe being, you know, gay, right. So then the question brought up at the school-based team was, should we suggest to the parents that that child get counseling, right?

STUDENT: For being gay?

IRENE: Well, for getting support for being gay. And so it was very delicate, right, because do the parents realize it, if that's the case? You know, if those stereotypes are actually indeed what they are, true, and are the parents accepting of it? And do they see it as needing support? And would that be in the form of counseling?

OLIVER: In my old school, I found out that we had five kids in our school that were HIV positive. So, the question is, now, is it necessary to disclose who those five students are to protect the safety of students and staff, right? Why weren't we told who those five students were, necessarily? Well, is there a danger of contracting HIV through daily interactions with the students? And I would say no, there wouldn't be. So, that being said, I guess the same thing falls with homosexuality in the school and saying that, to what danger is somebody in over this? And how does it relate to the environment? I have to look at the context and why would you disclose things like this? Is it necessary to disclose it and make, say, somebody feel somehow inadequate because of their sexual orientation? Maybe I'm just not quite understanding the question, but I guess I'm looking at it again and saying how does it affect the environment that we're working in, right? Certainly if, for example, let's say, for example, you've got some same-sex or staff members, let's say, that are in a homosexual relationship and they are arguing all the time in the school and kids notice that and other staff notice it. Okay, well, it's adversely affecting the working environment so certainly, I would say something about it. But is it because they're homosexual? No, it's not. I would do that if they were husband and wife and they were arguing and creating that negative environment. So, you know what? People's orientations, like that, I can say that I don't understand it, but it doesn't mean that I'm not empathetic and tolerant and understand where they're coming from.

TOM: I think when addressing the issue, I would phrase things in a way that people know it's expected that we're going to be tolerant of these things. That everyone has a place in our school and our community. It represents everybody who comes here and irregardless of where they're at in any way, shape or form, that you have a place at this school. So I would push that first, to get people thinking when they come here, when you engage in what happens in this school, we're not kicking people out…that we're not excluding people. That sometimes there are challenging issues for us, things that challenge us personally, or things that we think shouldn't be brought out and talked about. But that's not real. That's not what reality's all about and this school is a reflection of its community and we're going to work in that context.

Act 2, Scene 3: Resources, Policies and Programs

STUDENT: Last week three kids pants[ed] me in the change room. They heard the teacher coming so they all turned away and pick[ed] up some clothes. Made it look like they were all just laughing and getting dressed. After the next block, two of them punched me in the gut on the stairwell. They know the parts of the school where there are no adults around. One of them yelled at me when I was riding my bike home yesterday. Know what he said, "My Dad hates gays".

INTERVIEWER: Describe the programs, systems, structures, resources you have in place so homophobic bullying does not occur at your school?

ALLAN: Right, so then how do we prevent bullying from occurring at the school.

STUDENT: It's isn't safe. I learned that the hard way at other schools. I had to transfer out of the public school system and my parents now pay tons of cash per year to keep me in a secluded school – and at this new place I don't risk my parents' investment by outing myself.[54]

ALLAN: I think a lot of it is prevention. We do a lot of work on our school code of conduct with parents, with kids, with teachers. We talked about the cyber-safety discussions out of the library. In the teacher's handbook we started the year with a couple of ProD days just before school started and we walked through what does it look like and let's talk about it.

STUDENT: Kam got a binder kicked down the hall into her back by a guy shouting, "Fucking dykes" as the two of us passed. I have heard remarks from girls saying "If I were a lesbian, I'd kill myself." When watching a video on the holocaust where they mentioned the killing of LGBT people, boys cheered at the idea. I have been forced into my own section of our gymnasium locker rooms by my classmates because I like girls. I was sexually harassed (verbally and physically) by a male classmate who said that he'd make me like boys again. Kam and I both have been told "Go die, dyke!" Myself and almost all of my GLBT friends have received emails, Facebook and/or Nexopia messages from other students with homophobia remarks.[55]

ALLAN: Parent presentations. We use a lot of ministry material, everything from Safe and Caring Schools to what is it? D.A.R.E. program. All of those have material and information in them that we use. The other thing that we do is we have a real strong, positive presence. So if you talk to kids, where does most of the bullying take place? It takes place at recess and lunch hour. So what happens is we have about 5, 6 adults out always and it's a lot easier to prevent it when there's more of us instead of trying to deal with it afterwards when you're just trying to investigate it.

ANNE: [We] just [have] the code of conduct, under which harassment, teasing, bullying, whether it's of a sexual nature or not, would have, would lead to consequences that are quite clear. Whether they begin with just a meeting or a conversation and result in a restorative justice circle or end up in suspension, it falls under that same category of harassment or bullying.

STUDENT: *most* of the gay community in my school are bullied, we all stick together, but that doesn't always help. Many gays are depressed because of this, and

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[54] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 77. Corrected spelling of tonnes.

[55] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 56. Capitalized Facebook and Nexopia.

teachers and adults need to help and stand up for our community. We are not aliens, we're people, and we have rights.[56]

ELLEN: Well, we have our Anti-bullying Policy. It's part of our Code of Conduct. That's the basis from which all other decisions are made if something like this comes up. Whether there's a teacher making a note that something has happened in class or in the hall or in the bus loop, then each individual thing is addressed in a means that's appropriate to what's happened. Maybe it's addressed right there in class. Maybe the teacher reports that there's a rumour going around that somebody's going to be beaten up after school because they're gay, or whatever. They're all different, so everything's addressed differently depending on what it is, based on the Code of Conduct.

INTERVIEWER: Does your Code of Conduct include an opening clause with the human rights laid out specifically, sexual orientation and race and…?

ELLEN: Yes.

STUDENT: Is she sure? Not all school Code of Conducts follow provincial requirements. And, only fifteen school districts in B.C. have specific Board level policies in place. Wonder if she knows that?[57]

IRENE: Okay, so I guess our school goal of solving problems in peaceful ways, I would hope would be a sort of system or framework in place, to be accepting of all students and to help in that area.

STUDENT: I want to be in a school that is accepting of others whether they are homosexual or not, if they have a different religion or if they are of a different race. It is great to have variety, and we just need to learn to accept.[58]

OLIVER: Again, the only thing I can think of that would probably directly relate to that would be, say, something like our code of conduct. And looking at our code of conduct and saying that it encompasses that, so we're not, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And are you aware of Ministry of Education resources and policies and programs on anti-homophobia?

ALLAN: (*All actors fumble around looking through documents*) Not particularly on anti-homophobia. No.

ANNE: I know that there are some. I don't know exactly what they are, but I think that they are for secondary youth.

ELLEN: I know they're there. Haven't done a whole lot of research into it, other than specifics surrounding the Code of Conduct and what the Ministry's guidelines are regarding that.

OLIVER: I know they're out there, and I certainly can find them if I need to, but have I accessed them? No, I haven't.

TOM: Resources?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, resources, policies and programs on anti-homophobia? Are you consciously aware of anything?

TOM: I know they exist, but I'm honestly, I'm not well versed in them.

INTERVIEWER: What resources do you make available in your school for students?

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[56] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 56.

[57] Chamberlain, James. February 2012. Email from BCTF.

[58] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 136.

ALLAN: Now? I think we've listed some of the ones. I mean we've talked about it.
We've recognized. We've shared amongst the schools all the different programs that we
are using, DARE goes on in Grade 5 class, FRIENDS goes on in Grade 4. We do Second
Step almost school-wide, most of the other grades use that one. If I've got a class that
we've had some problems with I'll work with the teacher on a Focus on Bullying program
or you can take some of the lessons directly out of there. We get parents involved with it
more, faster than we had probably in the past. So we bring them in as part of the
solution.
ANNE: At the moment, probably just human resources, i.e. people to talk to
myself, counselors, teachers.
ELLEN: Novels, you know, a wide range. And then, of course, the Internet has a
wealth of resources so students are able to access the Internet.
OLIVER: Again, in the counseling area, we've got information there if kids want it.
Certainly, they have, as well, access to a number of folks if they want to talk to them,
specifically, about it. Some of our courses, our Planning 10 and our CAPP courses would
touch on the subject. We have I'm trying to think when the last time was we had a safe
sex or a sex ed. educator come in to speak to the students on this.
INTERVIEWER: Any counseling services or programs at all?
ELLEN: No specific programs.
IRENE: Mostly, I guess, people resources. I think that's one thing that we're very
lucky to have. We have a lot of experts and supports staff and itinerant staff and we, I
think that we, I would like to think that we offer a pretty open environment where we'd
like kids to be able to approach adults when there's a problem. That's kind of what we
coach them to do. And so, you know, by just having positive attitudes, positive
relationships, that we would hope that kids, when they do have any questions or [are]
looking for support, that they feel like they can approach an adult in the school.
TOM: What resources do I make… I don't think I do.
INTERVIEWER: And many educators espouse a certain program, you mentioned
restitution and RJ already, how do you find a program or method of addressing it that
suits your style?
ALLAN: Do you know, there isn't one that fits for everything and I think you have
to take each case, based upon its merit, how you're going to deal with it based upon your
past experience with it. And I've used a variety of approaches and some cases I'll try this,
that didn't work, I'll go on to the next one, try the next one until we find something that
works.
ANNE: Well, I've got a few in my tool belt now. We've got the restorative
justice. I've got the Tribes training and this RULER Approach training. And I think that
emotional literacy really gets to the core of a lot of behaviour in tapping into its source,
whether it's fear or anxiety or just ignorance. The other thing that we've been using is a
lot of literature -- picture books, storybooks around bullying, teasing -- promoting pro-
social behaviours. So we do a lot of that. We do a lot of reading storybooks and talking
about issues. We do Roots of Empathy here, which doesn't explicitly address
homophobia, but it does help build empathy and tolerance and acceptance and
understanding that there are all different types of families.
ELLEN: Well, restitution has something that we've always used. We started using
it at [another school]. Our [District level Administrator] was my counsellor [there]. We

used restitution there. About twelve years ago we started using it. Twelve? Maybe eleven. Eleven, twelve, years ago. Then carried it over to [this school] when I came up here and used restorative practices. We got a couple of teachers trained in it now. We use them not just for instances regarding homophobia, but any kinds of social conflict depending on how serious they are, far-reaching, that kind of thing.

OLIVER: Certainly, the restorative piece is important. We implement that quite a bit. Even one-on-one conversations with students about it. You know, again, it's about educating the student. It's not necessarily a negative consequence as much as it is educating the students on it.

TOM: I do, I find restorative justice is something I really do believe in and I think because it is so variable, that it will address issues of homophobic bullying or any other bullying that comes up. Yeah, very powerful stuff.

INTERVIEWER: And what supports do district and school-based leaders need in order to effectively lead in the area of anti-homophobia and social justice education practices?

ALLAN: I think we need training in restitution, restorative justice with and how to run effective meetings in that area. I think we basically are doing a good job with it. We also need the time to do it. Because for them to be done it's huge. For them to be done properly we need time to investigate it, we need time to deal with it and wrap it up and make sure we record it and by the time you start and finish, it's a huge amount of time.

ANNE: Well, I think some kind of resource I don't know of any resource directly for elementary children. I know that there are picture books like *Asha's Mums* and others that could open up those conversations, but I would like to see some kind of series of lessons that would help a teacher plan for instruction, especially when we know we must have some gay and lesbian parents. And how does that child navigate the tricky waters of school life knowing that his parents are gay? So I did have one boy for the last two years at school. He came to us from another district with a long, long list of behaviour reports. In fact, he was considered intensive behaviour. When he came to our school, he had a fresh start, and while he could be a bit cheeky, he was never the behaviour problem that he was in the previous district. After the first couple months, it became clear that, yes, he had two moms. He had a dad as well, but he lived with his two moms. And at the very beginning when kids were getting to know him, they were really curious about it. And I think, he had a little bit of stress around kids' not understanding, maybe giving him a hard time. But you know, those were the most popular two moms in our entire grade-seven class. Kids loved spending time with them, and they would pull up and pick up half a dozen boys at the end of the day and take them home and, you know, a really, really wonderful couple. And I think what a gift it was for so many of those boys to see a mature, functioning relationship that was, you know, far more loving and reliable than many other, you know, heterosexual relationships.

ELLEN: Well, I would say leadership in terms of restorative practices which I think we have. Setting very clear guidelines and policies regarding how these matters are dealt with, both from a human resources standpoint and also from a code of conduct standpoint.

IRENE: Yeah, we need experts like [you]. [laughs] And you know what? I think it also needs to be a priority.

STUDENT: Our school was particularly supportive of our social justice committee (who made a documentary on homophobia in high schools) and our "respected" group, which is developing a presentation on homophobia.[59]

INTERVIEWER: What about in the Aboriginal community? Has it ever come up from their perspective? Because you've dealt with quite a few Aboriginal families.

IRENE: Yeah, and when I was talking about the student that we talked about a couple of weeks ago in our school-based team that was an Aboriginal student. And so…

INTERVIEWER: Have you heard the phrase *two spirited* before?

IRENE: Oh, no, I haven't, no. And I'm wondering if yeah, if that's something that's on [the Aboriginal Education Principal's] radar.

STUDENT: What about your radar? I admit, you've come a long way in fifty years on Aboriginal issues in schools, I mean, considering the amount of damage caused. Anyway, my school has lots of Aboriginal art work, we have an Aboriginal language course, we certainly have Aboriginal stories in our English classes, we have a festival every year, there are lots of guest speakers etc., so, yes, it's better than it used to be. But as a gay Aboriginal, a two-spirited Aboriginal…well, that's a place of honour, and I sure don't feel honoured. There is nothing in my school welcoming that other layer of my humanity. You see, being wonderfully two-spirited as I am, I received a gift from the Creator, the gift being the privilege to house both male and female spirits in my body. This gift means that I have the ability to see the world from two perspectives at the same time.

OLIVER: Well, certainly workshops around that is one. But you know what? I think going to schools or even contacting schools, school counselors that often will head up these initiatives to find out what a Diversity Club looks like, what is it about, what kind of students do you have in it, what are the impacts on the school by hosting a diversity club. You know, what does the diversity club do, what do they meet about, what do they talk about? So certainly, talking to people that actually have information about these types of things would be, I think, really beneficial as well.

TOM: Supports? I think there needs to be, in a sense, permission for schools to take these issues on and tackle them. I think it's there, I think it simply needs to be stated, that these are issues, they're out there and in your school, you can address them and go ahead and do it. So that I mean, that support, because you need to tailor things to your school, and to maybe communities within your school as well. So I don't think necessarily a district should take a cookie cutter approach and say, this is the program that's going to work for everybody. But I think ensuring that school leaders have any pertinent data, research studies, related to these issues, make sure they have access to that, so they can make informed program choices in their school.

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[59] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 131.

Act 3, Scene 1: Discussion of real-life scenario #3 (Appendix A).

STUDENT: (*projection or poster Figure 1 put up on a wall by STUDENT*) All of my posters were torn down the second they were put up. When I made daily announcements during Pride week discussing famous people who came out, I was verbally harassed IN EVERY CLASS the whole class by the whole class for several days, I had Christian fundamentalist students saying gay marriage was taking away their rights. I was presumed to be a lesbian, name-called, etc. etc.[60]
ANNE: I would probably not put the poster up in my elementary school, and I think for the reason that we've got children from age four through 13, and the spread of the what's the word...that age spread and level of varying maturity. I think a lot of children would just become extremely confused and it would, I think, provoke more… confusion, I guess, is the word, than what I think the purpose of the poster is. I think the purpose of the poster is to shock adolescents and generate conversation, but I don't think that while I don't think there's anything wrong with four-year-olds knowing about homosexuality, I just think it's a little bit too overt for an elementary school.
ELLEN: I would. It's edgy. I think it would generate a lot of discussion, but I would consult with my parents first before doing so. I wouldn't just stick it up there. I would consult with parents first and let them know that this is happening. Then it would be very interesting to see if I had any objections and what direction they came from. It would be kind of a good tester.
INTERVIEWER: Would you ask anybody else? Would you run it by the Superintendent? Would you run it by the Student Council?
STUDENT: My Principal didn't. One day she just put it up. Our Leadership class was getting ready for an event and when she finished taping it onto the Counselling Room window, she called us all over. See, it was visible to all of us but untouchable because you had to go through the Counseling office to tear it down. I think she did that on purpose. Most kids didn't react too much, but I screamed with surprise. You see, I have two mums! I'm pretty out about it, so I thought it was great. The poster was up for about three days without any kind of over-the-top public reaction, then, three classmates, who were "out" about being Christian, went in and took it down. The nerve, they had to all go into the Counseling suite to do it. Crazy. My Principal just taped it back up again. So, do you really have to ask your Superintendent?
ELLEN: I probably would. I would probably run it by the Superintendent, saying, I'm thinking about doing this. What do you think? Run it by Student Council? That would be a really smart decision. I probably would run it by Student Council, and

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[60] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 57.

Student leadership, and have them generate some discussion about it because you would need student leaders.

STUDENT: Why would you hesitate putting it up yourself if it was International Day Against Homophobia?

ELLEN: Oh, International Day Against Homophobia. I rarely do things without consulting with parents. I like to warn them that it is coming. I would do that with most edgy stuff. We put up an edgy poster about the Internet. When girls post their profiles on things like Nexopia and things like that. Our Librarian brought me this very cool little poster and she goes, "I'm thinking about putting this up in the library. What do you think about this?" It was very edgy. It was a picture of a girl in her underwear, or something, but it said, "Remember, when you're posting your profile on the internet who's viewing this." It had, "Your teacher, a 40-year-old guy who's into…" It was pretty graphic. It was edgy. I took it to my PAC meeting, and said, "Okay, we're going to put this up in the library and the computer lab." They were fine with it.

INTERVIEWER: Did it generate anything in the school?

ELLEN: Not much. [laughter] Not really. No. Certainly nothing that I heard. Our Librarian was keeping her ears open as well.

INTERVIEWER: But nothing major came of it?

ELLEN: Kids often, you know, they won't think about stuff like this until it's in their face. But I rarely just throw things up there without consulting with parents or letting them know, "This is coming". It could generate good discussion around the dinner table and that kind of thing.

STUDENT: In "consulting with parents", do you mean mostly just your PAC or do you send out an email?

ELLEN: Oh, no, no. I would consult with PAC and let them know it's coming.

IRENE: Usually when these kinds of posters come by our office, I would probably call [the Superintendent] and ask him for permission and then … based on his decision, I would, how would you say that, I would do what he says, yeah.

STUDENT: These kinds of posters?

INTERVIEWER: Would you put that poster up in your school and why or why not?

OLIVER: You know what? I'm not certain I guess I would not have a problem putting up that poster, but again, it's a small northern school and how would the kids respond to it? I suspect there would be a lot of joking about it, there may be--You know, again, small town, small school, not much exposure to the subject of homosexuality, particularly in school. But in my last school, these posters were up all the time. And of course, you're going to get kids writing on it and doing whatever, but again, it was something that were you know, I guess the term more worldly comes into mind. Whereas small town kids, they obviously know about it, but I don't think it's something that is big in the school. So, putting something like that up may be, again, misunderstood.

STUDENT: You sure don't hold high expectations for us. I guess small town kids are disrespectful, joke about serious issues, have never heard of homosexuality, vandalize and write all over things. No wonder we move to urban centres – like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. We weren't safe in our own small town.

INTERVIEWER: You have a unique population…

OLIVER: Mm hmm.

STUDENT: What is your understanding of the term, Two-spirited?
OLIVER: Not a whole lot. I mean, I certainly understand the term walking in two worlds, but two-spirited, I haven't had much conversation around that. So, two-spirited, I would imagine, means having a sexual orientation to both sexes, maybe, or to have a sexual orientation to the same sex. Again, not a topic of conversation up in our school, so I'm really not that familiar with it.
STUDENT: LOL. We'll get back to the Two-spirited part later. Would you put this poster up?
TOM: It should say 'for whom'.
STUDENT: It's International Day Against Homophobia. Would you put this poster up in your school? And explain, yes or no, your, yes or no answer.
INTERVIEWER: (*Said at same time as students last two lines*). Would you put this poster up in your school? And explain, yes or no, your, yes or no answer.
TOM: My first response is no, most and because I don't agree with shock methods of doing almost anything, I suppose. So is it shocking? I suppose it is, but is it valuable and is the school the place to shock the kids?
ALLAN: No, I would not.
STUDENT: And explain why please.
INTERVIEWER: (*Said at same time a students last line*) And explain why please.
ALLAN: Okay. One of the phrases we're using now, or abbreviations, is PDA, Public Displays of Affection, and we just don't have it. I mean we've got our Grade 7s who are trying to hug each other and starting to do that, so we're sort of working with it. So I would not put a man and a woman, nor the picture there of the two men up on the wall.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, nor a man or a woman kissing?
ALLAN: No.
STUDENT & INTERVIEWER: No?
ALLAN: Nope.
STUDENT & INTERVIEWER: Why not?
ALLAN: Good question. Not that there's anything wrong with the picture, and that's why I'm sort of saying with a couple it doesn't matter either, I guess just because there are places to be affectionate and with the school we're trying to say, "No we get along really well, we enjoy each other's company but we don't have to be hugging and kissing." We haven't reached the stage yet where we're putting up little signs saying, "No hugging and kissing kids." And pictures of mothers and children, no we haven't reached that yet.

Act 3, Scene 2 - Finale: Professional Development

(The letters LGBTTIQQ are projected on the screen)
INTERVIEWER: Would you be able to define the terms used to describe sexual orientation if you were asked?
ALLAN: No, I couldn't.
STUDENT & INTERVIEWER: Any of them?
ALLAN: Lesbian, Gay... hmm, no, don't know.
STUDENT & INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ALLAN: Are you going to tell me?
STUDENT: Not right now.
ALLAN: Okay.
ELLEN: Oh, no.
INTERVIEWER: Any of them?
ELLEN: Oh, well, I'm thinking "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transvestite", perhaps. I don't know the last three, no.
IRENE: Yes, lesbian, gay, bi, transsexual, queer, something, I'm missing a couple of letters there, but something along those lines. So basically, it's all encompassing of how would you say, I guess it's not just gay. I'm not really politically up on correct, on my, on that language.
IRENE: You know, one of the questions I read later on about the LGBTTIQQ, was brought up to me and I can't remember where it was, but it was maybe at a workshop or at a presentation of some sort. So, I know what the term means, and I can't remember if it was in [another province] or BC, that that was presented to me. And we did talk about what kind of supports are offered in schools and then that was it. I kind of just thought about it at the time and then just left it, yeah. I guess, you know what, if it's not a reality of my everyday, then I don't and that's the sad part, is that maybe it should be a reality of my everyday and it's not.
STUDENT: If one in ten students is gay, then that's three in every classroom in your school. In a small school of 300, that's 30 kids not feeling safe, 60 in a school of 600, and so on. It is part of your everyday.
ANNE: So lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. Q for queer. Is that what you mean?
TOM: Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transsexual and then I'm lost.
INTERVIEWER: Do you feel secure, confident and supported in addressing homophobic cyber-bullying? If no, what would you need to help you?
ALLAN: [laughs] Do I feel secure, confident and supported? No. I mean it's such a huge area and it's changing daily. We're basically dealing with Facebook which [is] now [an] old way of doing things. And we've got some really young, little kids that shouldn't be on Facebook, but the parent has allowed them to. There are pictures of them that are identifying where they live. So it's the risk that we're putting our kids at that really makes me nervous.
ANNE: Well, so far we've addressed cyber-bullying with the same level of concern that we address all areas of bullying, that meaning holding people accountable for what they say online and following through with meetings, phone calls to parents, and so on. I am not as savvy around the whole social media as I could be.
ELLEN: I don't really feel that confident in addressing cyber-bullying, period. It's a very difficult area to investigate because a lot of it can I'm really not that technically savvy. We have had a couple of instances where we've had some social conflicts over the Internet where they're using Facebook and things like that. [We] bring the RCMP on board as well. They usually have their specialists as well that are technically able to deal with any kind of cyber bully but personally I don't feel that confident in any type of cyber-bullying, whether it be homophobic or not. But it happens a lot, and I think a lot more than comes to light at the school.
TOM: Do I feel secure, confident and supported … cyber-bullying, that's interesting. I have worked with other administrators on dealing with cyber-bullying and

the support we had on that issue was absolutely appropriate, both from the police and from the district office. So I would expect that homophobic cyber-bullying would get the same support.

INTERVIEWER:	And would you know where to go for help if you didn't know how to deal with it?

IRENE:	Yes.

INTERVIEWER:	Where would you go?

IRENE:	Well, I would go on the Internet and then I would also speak to counselors and try and find who the experts are in house, if not. And then if not, then we could maybe put a word out there to try and find out who they are, out of district.

INTERVIEWER:	What types of professional development do you think you would need in order to assist you in addressing anti-homophobic issues?

ELLEN:	I think maybe more information about, hum maybe even some lessons on helping students determine if they are discriminatory in some of their thought processes. Even some lesson plans that specifically address issues of homophobia and how to become more tolerant or kind of explode the myths students may have about all sorts of things. I remember when I was teaching at [another school] we [the kids and I] often talk … things [would] come up. I remember, I don't know how it came up, a kid asked a question about playing soccer. I played on a women's soccer team. The issue came up, "Do you have any gay people on your team?" And I said, "Well, yeah." It was quite interesting. They were quite open. They asked me, "So after the game, do you go and like shower after the game?" And I'm like, "Yeah." "So is it like an open shower or are there individual showers?" And I said, "No, it's an open shower." "Well, aren't you worried that one of your gay team mates is going to…?" And I said, "No, because they're not going to." It was very interesting to them. It's very important to them what their teachers are, they like to ask questions of their teachers because they take their lead from their teachers a lot. It's good that students feel that they can ask those questions in class, I think. I think any time you can promote that kind of open, honest discussion. It's very interesting. They're very curious.

ANNE:	I would be very happy to listen to some speakers or have conversations about how to discuss homophobia with students and parents, I suppose from people who have had those conversations and have got a stack of 'yeah buts' and 'what ifs' that they have learned to respond to. And just to have some language and some strategies. I'm not exactly sure where in the career and personal planning curriculum the learning outcomes are regarding talking about sexual orientation. I'm sure they're buried in there somewhere, but it would be good if I had a better understanding of where they were explicitly and if teachers had a better understanding of how it's an important teaching piece and where and when to address it. And again, I think, just to come back to the literature You know, and the whole Surrey case around *Asha's Mums* was in the press [the story of an African Canadian girl with two lesbian mums], I knew one of the teachers who was going forward with the court action, because I taught with him in Richmond. And because it was literature, it painted the whole issue for me in a little bit of a different light, you know? It became about freedom of speech and about censorship. And I think that literature is a powerful way of beginning conversations, because we all respond to story. And so, I suppose I would like to see, I don't know, book lists or new books being written that either address the issue or make it just a normal part of life, you know? If

there were characters in kids books that were gay and it wasn't the central issue, that would be a good thing.

IRENE: I think it would be probably really good to read about certain cases that go on. Kind of like, you know, reading a newspaper about what happened and how it was dealt with. The media isn't always the best source.

INTERVIEWER: So do you mean, like, legal cases, legal results?

IRENE: Yes, yeah, I always find those the most interesting. I did attend, one time, a Harris and Company workshop. And so I thought it would always be neat to, you know, do it from that approach.

STUDENT: Personally, I feel we should have open discussions about gay relations at our school to help the students who are questioning themselves to open up and not be afraid – there is no reason to be judged.[61] Speaking up works. When we don't let fear stop us, we win.[62]

INTERVIEWER: You're right.

All PRINCIPALS: (pause) We really need to discuss this.

(*House lights up and all actors bring chairs and gather downstage in front of the audience. Discussion continues.*).

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[61] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 138.

[62] Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 141.