

**Place of Promise? Queer Students' Negotiation of Risk, Danger, and Safety at the
University of British Columbia**

by

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on sociological, geographical, and educational research, this dissertation explores how self-identified queer students understand and engage with the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus as a 'queer space.' In this case study, I interview 26 queer-identified UBC students and utilize a mapping exercise in order to capture their understanding and engagement with what university administrators argue in the visioning document *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan* (2010) is a safe learning, living, and working environment. I utilize Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad of conceived, perceived, and lived elements of space, along with feminist post-structural and queer theories of discourse, subjectivity, and power to expose the spatial dynamics of queer sexualities on the UBC campus. As queer students transition from high school to the university setting, they demonstrate that the task of identifying and exploring their queer desires involves a complex and ongoing process, one that challenges the standard 'coming out' narrative. I have termed this process 'becoming queer' to indicate how it recognizes the contextual, spatial, and continual identification of queer desires, even within the university setting. Further analyses reveal how queer students actively identify homophobic, transphobic, and heteronormative discourses and practices through what I call 'queer spatial awareness' in an effort to create and maintain their own sense of safety and comfort on campus through their deployment of 'queer spatial practices'. Students discuss how specific social spaces, including on-campus residences, fraternities and sororities are perceived as risky, compared to student resources, administrative, and academic spaces on campus. However, this sense of safety for queer students, especially within the neoliberal context of the post-secondary education, has the potential to constrain the possibility of enacting queer politics on campus. The dissertation concludes by considering some of the implications of this research in providing new insights into queer students' engagement with the campus, while also offering practical recommendations for improving campus culture at UBC and beyond.

PREFACE

The research conducted in support of this dissertation was approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (UBC BREB Number H08-01204).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A&D – Access & Diversity

AMS – Alma Mater Society

BoG – Board of Governors

CSIS – Critical Studies in Sexuality

FoGS – Faculty of Graduate Studies

GLBUBC – Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals of the University of British Columbia

GLUBC – Gays and Lesbians of the University of British Columbia

GPUBC – Gay People of the University of British Columbia

GSA – Gay Straight Alliance

GSC – Graduate Student Centre

GSS – Graduate Student Society

LGBITTTQQAA – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirit, Queer, Questioning, Asexual and/or Allies

PSC – Positive Space Campaign

PSW – Positive Space Workshop

QSA – Queer Spatial Awareness

QSP – Queer Spatial Practices

RGA – Resource Groups Area

SASC – Sexual Assault Support Centre

UBC – University of British Columbia

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE: MAKING PROMISES: SAFETY AND RISK FOR QUEER STUDENTS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Gay teen suicides have been increasingly reported in both Canadian and American media, which has shed light on the dire effects of homophobic and transphobic hostility in and outside of schools (see Boesveld, 2011; Duggan, 2012; Zerbisias, 2011 for examples of media coverage). In response, cultural and political projects have been launched to provide support for youth in need (Cruickshank, 2011; Gsanetwork, 2011; Houston, 2012; Jer's Vision, n.d.; Savage Love, 2012). However, many incidences of name calling, cyber bullying, and physical violence that youth, assumed to be gay or lesbian, encounter on a daily basis remain unreported. In an effort to address this systemic issue, school boards (Cruickshank, 2011) and the Ontario government (Houston, 2012; Keung, 2012) have worked diligently to create and institute policies and laws with the aim of protecting vulnerable youth from being bullied. The recent tumult over the naming of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) within publicly funded Ontario Catholic schools reveals how naming the perceived risk of bullying and the desire to protect queer youth within state governed institutions are difficult issues to tackle ("Club-name Denial," 2012; Radwanski, 2012). Yet, it is unclear if these new measures will decrease the homophobia, transphobia, or heteronormativity youth face within elementary and secondary school settings (Saewyc et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2011a; Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012).

Even when Canadian universities have included sexual orientation within their employment equity and anti-discrimination policies, incidences of homophobia still occur on campus. For instance, on February 2, 2012, Kristian Fidrych, a student, was assaulted for dancing with another male student at an event on the Macdonald campus of McGill university (Williams, 2012). Other recent examples of violence and vandalism on Canadian university

campuses occurred in the spring of 2008 at both the Scarborough campus of the University of Toronto, LGBTQ@UTSC, and Ryerson University, RyePRIDE, where vandals set fire to the LGBTQ@UTSC office's bulletin board destroying posters; and, alternative stickers were used to cover-up positive space decals and anti-discriminatory messages posted outside of the RyePRIDE office, respectively (Proudfoot, 2008; RyePride, 2008). While these events received media attention, it is difficult to know how often homophobic, transphobic, and heteronormative incidents occur when they are not reported. These incidents also highlight the fact that universities are not impervious to the homophobic and heteronormative attitudes that shape Canadian society at large, despite the policies and resources implemented in many higher education institutions (Saewyc et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2011b).

Part of what brings me to this research is my own experience as a questioning high school student in Sudbury, Ontario. Forged through the mining, resource extraction, and rail industries in the early 1880s, Sudbury has become a regional capital with a diverse population (Wallace, 1993). Despite its current cosmopolitan construction as the "Greater City of Sudbury", my experience growing up there left me feeling isolated, with a lack of opportunities to explore alternative expressions of gender and sexuality (see Tobin & Anonymous, 1996, for example). I saw the local university as a small site of possibility within the larger context of racist, sexist, homophobic, and heterosexist discourses that shaped my home town. And so I chose to wait to explore my queer¹ desires in university. This exploration was a slow process, but once I found the queer student group at Laurentian University, I began to flourish. About half way through my undergraduate degree I transferred to Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I

¹ Here I use the term 'queer' to describe my own attraction to women and men, which fits with the multiple and diverse interpretations of non-heterosexuality that I explore throughout the dissertation. The aim of using the term queer is to recognize the fluidity, inconsistencies, variations, and alternate naming practices that 'non-heterosexuals' might employ within a specific time and/or context. See Rankin (2004 p.23, n.1), Bell and Valentine (1995), and Kramer (1995) for more specific explanations, discussed in detail below.

immediately became involved with the queer student group, Pride Central (Sullivan, 2009a, 2009b). Once I was well-established within this group I decided to paint a mural to celebrate the welcoming and vibrant queer community I found on campus (see Figure 1.1). The mural was unveiled in February 2002 to celebrate the student group's five year anniversary. It also acted as a sign-post to help locate the queer resource centre, which was tucked away in the maze-like underground tunnels of the main university building. However, my sense of safety on campus



Figure 1.1: Pride Central Mural at Lakehead University. This mural marks the entrance to the office of the queer student group Pride Central.(Photo and mural by author).

was shattered when, less than a year after the mural had been unveiled, it was vandalized with blobs of yellow and green paint which covered most of the middle and each of the three words: pride, diversity, and community. Luckily, the student government, the faculty association, and staff union rallied and raised money for new paint supplies; but as the creator and painter of the mural, I still had to face the ugly task of painting over the vandalism and restoring the mural to

its former unspoiled state. While my experience with the vandalism was mild compared to the many violent and appalling incidents I have read about in the media and in academic literature, this experience led me to engage with issues of safety, danger, and risk in an institutional space that university administrators claim is dedicated to equity, tolerance, and acceptance of diversity. Consequently, my research engages with these issues in an effort to consider the unique relationship between queer students and the campus environment.

In this dissertation, I explore how queer students understand and engage with the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus as a ‘queer space,’ that is, as a space which is thought to endorse or welcome alternative expressions of sexuality. UBC² provides an ideal location to study this phenomenon given its long history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) activism, and development of resources and services that address issues of sexual and gender diversity. From the outset of the research project, my aim was to examine the dialectical relationship between students’ queer sexual subjectivities and the spaces they inhabit on campus by focusing on three specific dimensions of their experiences. First, I wanted to explore how students locate themselves within various discourses, including gender, race, class, age and any others that inform their sexual subjectivity. This would inform me about how students understand their relationship to the university campus. Second, I was interested in how relations of fear, risk, and safety shaped LGBTQ students’ experiences of the campus as an unsafe or safe space, and which places might be more or less welcoming to them. Lastly, I wanted to investigate the strategies LGBTQ students employ to negotiate their presence and sense of safety as they navigate residential, pedagogical, social, recreational, and political spaces that make up the university campus. This study forefronts the idea that *space is an integral part*

² Since I am discussing space and place throughout this dissertation, I am compelled to note at the outset that The University of British Columbia’s main campus is located on unceded Musqueam territory. This will be discussed in greater detail below and in Chapter 2.

of queer experience, where queerness becomes a specific aspect that is experienced in part as a spatial relation (Ahmed, 2006; Browne, 2006; McDowell, 1999; Rose, 1993). I also want to acknowledge that space plays a role in the experiences of many marginalized groups, especially people of colour, women, people with disabilities, and Aboriginal people, queer or not. As a result, many marginalized people become aware of their location and who is around them in order to safeguard themselves against racism, sexism, homophobia, and all forms of discrimination and harassment.

This qualitative study draws on interviews with 26 queer-identified students at UBC over the 2009/2010 academic year. In Chapter Two, I provide an overview of the methods used in this project including the questions asked, the approach I took to interpreting them, and my use of a ‘mapping exercise’ to explore how students actually locate their ‘queer spatial awareness’ by colour-coding a campus map (see Appendix D for an example). Chapters Three, Four, and Five contain my substantive engagement with the interviews and mapping exercise, while Chapter Six offers concluding thoughts in addition to some practical and policy recommendations.

In this introductory chapter, I outline the areas of scholarship I have drawn on throughout the dissertation, highlighting the complex relationship between sexuality and gender. I also explore how sexuality has been studied within the context of space generally, and specifically within educational settings. To this end, I demonstrate how spaces of the university campus have been overlooked by geographers and sociologists, as well as by educators who have largely focused on policy. Additionally, I provide a summary of the theoretical influences that provide the analytical framework for my investigation. I combine Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) conceptual triad for analyzing space in terms of its ‘conceived,’ ‘perceived,’ and ‘lived’ dimensions, with feminist post-structural conceptions of subjectivity, discourse, and power. I also employ queer theory’s disruption of (hetero)normativity to analyze queer students’ experiences of the UBC

campus. Lastly, this chapter provides a brief overview of the research site, UBC. Overall, this chapter offers a review of the literature, theoretical frames, and the spatial context for this research project.

SITUATING THE RESEARCH PROJECT WITHIN THE LITERATURE

This study is located at the intersection of three broad areas of study: sexuality, space, and education. While the main motivation of this project has remained on the study of sex, gender, and sexuality, the insights generated by sociologists, feminists, geographers, and educational researchers provide the overall context for this project. Thus, the review of the literature which I present below explores research focused on sexualities; social space; and the construction of safety, risk, and danger, with an emphasis on the institutional contexts of educational sites that specifically affect queer students, staff, and faculty members. Each of the three fields provides a slightly different perspective with points of commonality and differences that are explored elsewhere in the dissertation.

The Study of Sexuality, Sex, and Gender

I begin this research project with the perspective that sexual desire, sexual orientation, and sexual identities are not exclusively the result of biology or socialization. I found Sara Ahmed's (2006) approach to sexuality important in moving beyond the old debate between the effects of nature and nurture. For instance, Ahmed (2006) suggests that sexual orientations (or desires) "can operate simultaneously as effects and be lived or experienced as if they are originary or a matter of how one's body inhabits the world, by being oriented toward one side, like being right or left handed" (p. 80). In reconceptualising sexual orientation as embodied, but not necessarily the result of hormones, brain chemistry (Fausto-Sterling, 2000), or unresolved family and parental issues (Kinsman, 2003), Ahmed does not offer any definitive answer to the question of why some people have queer desires and others do not. Instead, she offers another

notion of sexual orientation, one that considers the dialectical relationship between how people inhabit the world spatially and how that extension is shaped through both discursive and material possibilities for queerness. In many ways envisioning sexual desires as directional, embodied, and relational suggests the potential for other identifications, ones which are not exclusively sexual.

Nonetheless, social scientists and feminists have provided an important foundation for studying sexualities. For instance, the emergence of Gay and Lesbian studies in the West as a field in the 1970s occurred as a result of the new lesbian and gay political and social movements, which encouraged gay and lesbian scholars to be 'out' about their sexual identities and research activities. While there has been no centralized theoretical, methodological, or political core to this field, Weeks (2000) has noted that "[t]he object of study has to a large extent often been the lives of lesbian and gay people themselves: identities, experiences of oppression, struggles for recognition, through history and in literature and so on" (p. 2). By focusing on issues of experience and identity, Gay and Lesbian studies has connected identity to community formation and a 'rooted' sense of belonging. As a result, scholars in this field have successfully strategized for the legitimization and legal recognition of lesbian and gay men's lives (Lahey, 1999; Smith, 2005).

In many ways, the fight for legal recognition of gay and lesbian lives was achieved through rights-oriented movements and groups, which relied on a fixed and stable understanding of (homo)sexual orientation and identities (Seidman, 2004). The price for inclusion was respectability, which is often coded in white, middle class, and normative terms (Sullivan, 2003). Steven Seidman (2004) explains that, "as the 'normal gay' is integrated as a good citizen, other sexual outsiders may stand in for the homosexual as representing the 'bad' or dangerous sexual citizen" (p. 17). The result is a construction of a gay and lesbian lifestyle that does not challenge

heteronormative expectations regarding sexual practices and the organization of primary erotic relationships through monogamy in order to be accepted by mainstream society. As gains were made for legal recognition of gays and lesbians by activists, tensions grew as other marginal sexual citizens (bisexuals, transgender and transsexuals, drag queens, and the polyamorous, among others) began to agitate for inclusion as well (Seidman, 2004; Sullivan, 2003). These rumblings have ignited a new political response that is both transgressive and intent on critiquing the normative structures of mainstream romantic relationships.

In the early 1990s, queer theorists and researchers, stymied by the limited and confining nature of gay and lesbian sexual identities, began to question these categories in order to explore how sexual practices and identifications shape sexuality (Sullivan, 2003). For instance, the explosion of identity labels from gay and lesbian to lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB), and then to lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, queer, questioning, asexual and/or allies (LGBITTTQQA), has in part been a response to the multiple ways in which people identify (or refuse to identify) their sexualities and genders. The theoretical contributions of queer theorists, which will be discussed below, arose out of a combination of queer activism and politics often characterized as confrontational and provocative and championed by such groups as ACT UP, Queer Nation, and Transsexual Menace. Activist academics used post-structural and post-modern theories to critique universal theories and humanist constructions of subjectivity (Sullivan, 2003). Together, the political and theoretical use of 'queer' led to new understandings of how gender and sexuality are enacted and normalized (Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1993, 2004; Namaste, 1994; Sullivan, 2003). By extension, research on sexualities has revealed how sexuality is resistant to normalizing processes and discourses of regulation, if not to the project of identification itself.

In this project, I explore how LGBTQ students understand and experience sexual regulation as they traverse the UBC campus. I found that their use of the word ‘queer’ was ubiquitous as an umbrella term; for example, when they referred to the queer community, as well as a more specifically political formulation, suggesting that the same word can be used in multiple ways. Over the last three decades, it has also come to describe the fluidity, flexibility, and elasticity of sexual and gender naming and identifications. The term queer is therefore historically and politically contentious; as Lisa Duggan (2006), writing in 1991 argues, queer “is constituted through its dissent from the hegemonic, structured relations and meanings of sexuality and gender, but its actual historical forms and positions are open, constantly subject to negotiation and renegotiation” (p. 159). The constant negotiation and renegotiation of what exactly the term queer is supposed to mean is precisely the utility it offers. Judith Butler (1993) captures the contradictory nature of the term when she describes how the term queer has emerged “as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability *within* performativity” (p. 226). Here, Butler explains that the multiple meanings and contexts contained in the reiteration of the term queer which rework, reactivate, and resignify it through usage. She claims the term contains both stability and variability, depending on how it is deployed. Following this, I have found it useful to think about queer as both a noun and a verb. In noun form, queer describes the multiplicity and inclusivity of an umbrella term (Gray, 2009; Mayo, 2007; Renn, 2007; Rhoads, 1994), while queer can also be used to interrogate the boundaries of (hetero)normativity in verb form (Ahmed, 2006; Browne, 2006; Giffney, 2004; Halberstam, 2005; Namaste, 1996a).

In an effort to understand how UBC students were using the term queer, I asked at the beginning of the interviews what the term queer meant to them:

*Charlotte*³: I guess, when I think of the term. I think of like alternative sexualities. Like kind of, you know, beyond the binaries of gay or straight, kind of includes Trans and I don't know, whenever people want to classify themselves [or] label themselves.

Jude: The term queer, it... I think it's sort of like an umbrella term for []. It's so hard to explain, it's just like it's such a, be part of who I am. It's really hard to define, you know. Like I want to use the word queer to define queer. [...] You know, like any 'alternative sexuality', but not just sexuality, like queerness is also about, I don't know, politics. You know, you can have a queer food lifestyle. You can, you know, like so many things are queer. So it's just about umbrella-ing all of that.

Cody: To me queer has come to mean, kind of, a catch all, umbrella term for basically non-heterosexual. So, kind of like, the non-heterosexual community as a collective, I guess. And then like obviously, individual people within that community can identify as queer, in terms of like, it's like almost like 'label free,' as opposed to saying gay or lesbian or something more specific. So that's what it means to me, I guess.

Jack: I don't know, it's kind of, it's kind of, a bit of a derogatory term. In some cases, but in other cases it's more like a description word for all the different ways of identifying one's orientation, I guess. Like it just kind of like encompasses everything, I guess I'd say.

Rhonda: I think for me, it's kind of about choice. I like that queer gives me room to move, like I don't have to define myself as something specific, that like locks me in to anything. I like queer because it can mean so much and I also, I really like the radical connotations of queer. I mean, especially in the academy, but also just kind of like out in the world. I like that queer means a certain kind of radicalism, a way of thinking and looking at the world, differently. Like a rejection of heteronormativity, and all of that. [...] It's just a mindset of kind of rejecting heteronormativity, and rejecting that model. Yeah.

Elizabeth: To me, it is an umbrella term used to unite the entire community of people who feel that they are not heterosexual. You know, not the vanilla kind of sexually identified persons. It's more for people looking to explore a lesser-known sexual orientation or preference.

Roughly two thirds of the 26 students who were interviewed explained that queer, for them, was a way of describing sexual fluidity and all possible non-heterosexual sexual and gender identifications. As noted from the comments included above, throughout the interviews the term queer was often used as an inclusive label or identification, one that recognized the limits of gay and lesbian categories while also leaving open the possibility of sexually desiring differently gendered people. The responses above suggest that these students are more aware and accepting of gender and sexual fluidity than perhaps a generation ago, as discussed in Chapter Two and

³ All names of participants have been changed to pseudonyms which students selected to protect their anonymity.

Chapter Three. Given the circulation of the term queer with many of the students interviewed for this study, I have decided to follow them in using it as an umbrella term. Although, as will be shown in Chapter Two, while students used a number of labels to describe their sexuality, they would often use gay or queer to describe other peoples' sexualities. Students who had complex understandings of their sexuality would often resort to using queer as a shorthand label to express both belonging to the broader queer community and their defiance against the heterosexual norm. I return to my double use of queer as both a proxy term for gay and lesbian and as an umbrella term for gender and sexual fluidity in Chapter Five in the discussion of queer spaces which students identified on the UBC campus.

The Study of Space/Place/Location and Sexuality

Although sexuality has been studied in relation to space, place, and location for some time by geographers and feminists (Adler & Brenner, 1992; Bouthillette, 1997; Castells, 1983; Nash, 2001; Nestle, 1997; Podmore, 2001; Rothenberg, 1995; Thorpe, 1996; Weston, 1998), sociologists have only recently begun to contribute to the spatial turn (Green, Follert, Osterlund, & Paquin, 2010). Here, the spatial turn refers to the ways in which space, place, and location have been viewed through an interdisciplinary lens as social phenomena in their own right. For instance, Green et al. (2010) argue that “with regard to the study of sexuality, [the] spatial turn has been highly productive, providing a more nuanced contextual understanding of sexual conduct, identification and struggle” (p. 8). As a result, sociologists have employed a spatial analysis to great effect in the study of urbanization and social collectively (Blum, 2003), the spatial effects of colonization, the impact of colonial mapping (Mawani, 2003; Razack, 2002), and the spatial production of the erotic (Green et al., 2010; Ross, 2009; Ross & Greenwell, 2005; (Ross & Sullivan, 2012). Moreover, the spatial examination of the erotic serves as an important contribution to the study of sexuality and space because it moves the analysis beyond identity

politics to a broader understanding of the intersection of space, sexual practices, and social regulation. The socio-spatial analysis of sexualized spaces, such as bathhouses in the work of Green et al. (2010), and Ross and Greenwell's (2005) analysis of the spatial and racial organization of erotic dancers in postwar Vancouver, are excellent examples of how sociologists are contributing to the spatial turn in this growing field.

Despite this growing use of a spatial analytic, only a few researchers have taken up the spatial dynamics of homophobic harassment and violence used to close down 'gay' ruptures in the heteronormative assumption of 'everyday' life within the literature of sexuality and space (Valentine, 1993). For instance, Wayne Myslik (1996) considers homophobic violence committed in gay neighbourhoods; Ki (Viviane) Namaste (1996) examines the intersection of gender, sexuality, and violence within specific public places; and more recently Douglas Janoff (2005) has explored homophobic violence across Canada. Leslie Moran and Beverley Skeggs (2004) study the sexual politics of safety and violence in the United Kingdom. While much of the research focused on sexual and gender minorities has at some level addressed issues of safety and violence, it is unclear how researchers have used the terms 'safe' or 'safety', and what these notions mean for the queer community. According to Corteen (2002), researchers have relied on the subjective and interpretive frameworks that queer residents applied to their perceptions of safety and danger. Moreover, Moran and Skeggs (2004) found that 'comfort' rather than 'safety' was more widely used by the gay men and lesbians in their research, especially when their participants referred to experiences of 'home.' The connection between a subjective sense of safety and its connection to place means that safety does not always mean the same thing for everyone, especially when individual experiences tend to shape this understanding. As a result, the terms 'safe' and 'safety' are used in complex, multiple, and ambiguous ways which rely on the assessment and perception of how individuals feel in a specific place. I address the tension

between safety and danger in Chapter Four where I explore the identification of avoided spaces and risks by queer students on the UBC campus. Chapter Five examines more explicitly the discursive and material creation of queer friendly spaces which were identified by the students in my study.

The spatialization of sexuality, specifically queer sexualities, has often been articulated and regulated through hostility, violence, and repudiation (Comstock, 1991; Janoff, 2005; Shelley, 2008; Stanko & Curry, 1997). Space and spatial practices are implicated through innumerable regulatory and normalizing forces that privilege heterosexuality. In an effort to create a sense of community and social support, post-WWII lesbians and gay men in the West began to migrate to specific neighbourhoods in large cities where they developed their own social institutions and social/sexual practices (Comstock, 1991). According to Myslick (1996) the desire to create these spaces works to both provide a common meeting place for these men and women to deter and delimit encounters with homophobic harassment and violence, even if this cannot be guaranteed. For instance, Mason (2001) utilizes the concept of visibility for understanding how lesbians and gay men become targets of homophobic violence, and how the “‘effects of violence’...mould lesbian and gay perceptions of personal safety” (p. 29). These perceptions are both visual and spatial, where queer people, and specifically women, assess their personal sense of safety and danger. Drawing on von Schulthess’s (1992) conception of ‘safety maps’, Mason (2001) explains how these notional maps allow “individuals [to] draw upon their knowledge of the ways in which specific variables render them vulnerable to personal danger” (p. 29). A number of these ‘maps’ denote visual, spatial, and temporal realities that gays and lesbians use to assess their surroundings and their sense of personal safety, which renders their experience as both time and place specific. In order to extend these insights, I consider the spatial

effects of how safety and danger are actually gauged and responded to by queer students on the UBC campus.

The ‘effects of violence’ do not necessarily require actual violence, be it verbal, physical, and/or sexual, to have an effect (Mason, 2001). Here, the term ‘risk’ becomes useful for understanding the looming and ever-present potential of homophobic hostility that could endanger the lives of queer people. Risk is a complex term, one that has been defined by many scholars in relation to behavioural and cultural expectations (Beck, 1992; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Scott, 2000); the environment (Adams, 1995; Irwin, Allan, & Welsh, 2000); technology (Van Loon, 2000); and scientific probability for decision making (Luhmann, 1993; Rose, 2000). While this research has yielded many crucial insights, it rarely reflects the ways in which the students engaged in risk perception and its connection to homophobic hostility on a *personal* level. For instance, in my research one student explained how he understands risk:

Rachael: Okay, and how would you define a sense of safety for yourself?

Frank: The exact same way. Being in a state of low risk.

Rachael: Okay, and what do you mean by ‘risk’?

Frank: Risk is the probability that something subjectively bad will happen.

In order to more fully engage with how students were discussing risk, I found the following definition by Adams (1995) to be helpful, since it implicitly speaks to the way in which risk works in relation to the probability that queer students will encounter homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism. Adams (1995) defines risk as:

the product of the probability and utility of some *future* event. The future is uncertain and inescapably subjective; it does not exist except in the minds of people attempting to anticipate it. Our anticipations are formed by projecting past experiences into the future. Our behaviour is guided by our anticipations. If we anticipate harm, we take avoiding action. (p. 30, emphasis in original)

While this definition is not designed to define risk associated specifically with homophobic and transphobic hostility and violence, it works to describe the relationship between a) how past

experiences shape subjective future expectations, and b) how these future expectations shape behaviour, and specifically avoidance actions. For queer people in heteronormative societies, such as Canada and the United States, there is always the potential—real or perceived—to experience homophobic hostility that could result in physical and/or sexual violence. Drawing on Adams (1995), I consider how risk in the context of homophobic hostility becomes an anticipatory event that guides queer students’ decision making and behaviours, as they weigh the potential for experiencing hostility directly. This process, I argue in Chapter Three, moves beyond an actual or physical threat to a more subjective experience of becoming queer and the risk involved in becoming intelligible and recognizable as a queer subject. As Mason (2001) notes, “the decision to come out [as gay, lesbian, and/or queer] to others frequently involves a careful (although sometimes spontaneous) weighing of the likely rewards and possible repercussions” (p. 27). The rewards and repercussions extend beyond the material exposure to acceptance or hostility, but also include how students made sense of their queer desires and their willingness to grapple with the potential of not knowing where their desires might lead them (Ahmed, 2006). Nonetheless, queer people become responsible for minimizing their risk of encountering homophobia and heterosexism through this decision making process—assessing their risk. While this type of self regulation has not been widely explored (see Richardson & May, 1999 for exception), my aim is to explore how queer students weigh their anticipation of homophobic and transphobic hostility, rather than to assume from the start that queer students are ‘at-risk’. Indeed, utilizing the ‘at-risk’ discourse tends to reframe queer identities as the problem (see Quinlavin, 2002), which shifts the focus from the heteronormative context where, I argue, students are negotiating their queer desires. Thus, my focus in this research project is on how students are managing their understandings of risk and their queer desires.

The Study of Sexuality in Educational Spaces

Like other public spaces, university campuses have been the site of violence and danger for students, staff, and faculty. Violence on campus is not a new phenomenon (Currie & MacLean, 1993a; Stoddart, 2001). From the 1970s on, women, people of colour, Aboriginal peoples and other marginalized groups have steadily gained greater access to university and college campuses where students, staff, and faculty have begun to speak out about the harassment, discrimination, and inequities they experienced. Phrases such as ‘chilly climate’ have been used to describe the sexism, harassment, and limited leadership opportunities among those who did not fit in ‘the old boys club’ that was characteristic of post-secondary institutions (Armatage, 1999; Chilly Collective, 1995; Currie & MacLean, 1993a; Westerman, 2008).

The murder of 14 female engineering students at Montreal’s École Polytechnique in 1989 galvanized public concerns raised by the feminist movement about the prevalence of violence against women in society. The Montreal Massacre⁴ represents the most devastating episodes of violence against women on a university campus in Canada. It resulted in a call for increased research into the safety of women within Canadian post-secondary institutions, often through the use of large-scale surveys, known as ‘safety audits’ or ‘campus climate surveys,’ to identify the patterns and frequency of violence against women (Currie & MacLean, 1993). The results have contested the long-held assumption that “for decades, universities have been viewed as sanctuaries from crime and other social problems” (Currie & MacLean, 1993, p. 1). They also recognize that violence occurs on a continuum where “violent acts can range from covert, disruptive activities...to overt acts that can result in bodily harm to people” and offer examples

⁴ The Montreal Massacre, also known as the École Polytechnique massacre, took place on December 6th 1989 in Montreal, Quebec. In total, 14 women were killed and another 14 were injured. They were killed by a single gunman, who then took his own life. During the attack and in his suicide note, he claimed that he was fighting feminism, and that women had taken his place in the engineering program. See the CBC news report here - <http://www.cbc.ca/player/News/CBC+75th+vignettes/ID/2157748156/> [last retrieved June 29, 2012]

that begin with intimidation and sometimes escalate to homicide (Hoffman, Summers, Randal, & Schoenwald, 1998, p. 90).

Indeed, the image of post-secondary educational spaces as a safe haven has been shaken, while various policies, programs, and physical changes to the campus have contributed to a growing awareness of public safety issues for women (Day, 1994; Allan M. Hoffman et al., 1998; Allan Michael Hoffman, Schuh, & Fenske, 1998; Kasper, 2004; Quinn, 2003). More recent studies consider the elements of safety rather than just focusing on violence and danger; for example, Starkweather (2007) re-centres her project on the safety strategies women employ when moving across campus. While many of these studies have focused primarily on the experiences of women in heterosexual relationships (friendships or dating relationships), there has been little research that considers the experiences of queer students, except in the context of interpersonal violence in relationships (see for example Tuel, 2001 and Ristock, 1991). This approach fails to recognize the social, historical, and spatial contexts that shape how queer students experience the university campus as a 'chilly climate'. To address this oversight, I explore in Chapter Four how queer students identify and navigate risky and dangerous spaces on the UBC campus.

Climate surveys have also become increasingly popular for gauging how queer students, staff, and faculty feel on campus (Helferty & Clarke, 2009; Rankin, 2003, 2004, 2005; Waldo, 1998), and more recently in secondary schools (Taylor & Peter, et al., 2011b). While climate surveys highlight the challenges that queer members face on campus, they are unable to measure how queer people engage with specific spaces, or to capture the strategies students employ to navigate a specific space. By focusing on one campus and utilizing interviews with a mapping exercise (see Chapter Two), my aim has been to explore how queer students navigate and negotiate their presence on campus. Moreover, drawing on research that explores safety, danger,

and risk in relation to sexuality and educational sites (Bourassa & Shipton, 1991; Epstein, O'Flynn, & Telford, 2003; Evans & Broido, 1999; Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007; Saewyc et al., 2009; Taylor & Peter, et al., 2011b; Toomey et al., 2012), I have found that much of this research is focused on the barriers queer students and faculty have faced and policies that have helped or hindered access to secondary and post-secondary education (Blumenfeld, 2006; Epstein et al., 2003; Sanlo, 1998; Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002; Wall & Evans, 2000). In many instances, these studies construct queer students as youth at-risk for homophobic, transphobic, and heteronormative hostility which disrupts queer students' learning experiences (Hackford-Peer, 2010; Quinlivan, 2002). My research complicates this understanding by examining how queer students are active participants in their negotiation of their sense of safety, danger, and risk on the UBC campus.

Educational scholars have continued to provide insights on how issues of sexuality and gender, alone or as part of intersecting social categories, transform our experiences and understandings of these issues within an educational context (Goldstein et al., 2007; Kumashiro, 2001a; Loutzenheiser & Moore, 2009; Loutzenheiser, 2007; Mayo, 2007; Toomey et al., 2012). In multifaceted ways, researchers have revealed how discrimination based on sexuality and gender works to either isolate (Blumenfeld, 2006; Dilley, 2002; Haskell & Burtch, 2010; Taylor & Peter et al., 2011a; Toomey et al., 2012) or provide refuge (Hackford-Peer, 2010; Rhoads, 1994) for queer people in a post-secondary setting. For example, Susan Talbert (2000), William G. Tierney, (1997) and Gill Valentine (2000), have shared their own experiences exposing the challenges and possibilities that have shaped their understanding of sexuality within an educational context. Similarly, researchers in this area have also begun to address homophobic violence in educational settings by exploring the growing number of resources, educational strategies, and spaces created to support queer students, staff, and faculty (Alvarez & Schneider,

2008; Frohard-Dourlent, 2012; Goldstein et al., 2007; Hackford-Peer, 2010; Szalacha, 2003; Macintosh, 2007). My project draws on this research to substantiate how queer students at UBC are understanding and engaging with the campus as a queer space, sometimes in spite of and often because of the accountability of such resources.

Despite the gains made through the research outlined above, the focus has remained either on women's safety on campus (see Currie & MacLean, 1993b; Osborne, 1995; Starkweather, 2007 for example) or on the barriers that queer students face in educational settings (Blumenfeld, 2006; Epstein et al., 2003; Sanlo, 1998; Sanlo et al., 2002; Wall & Evans, 2000). As a result, these areas of literature have been unable to account for both the parallel history of gay and lesbian activism and the safety concerns that women continue to face (Jenness & Broad, 1994; Osborne, 1995). Distinct safety issues that lesbians face are under-researched, there is still a need to learn more about how the intersection of sexism and homophobia upholds male privilege at multiple levels (see Jenness & Broad, 1994; Osborne, 1995). In her analysis of the creation and continuation of the chilly climate at a Canadian university, Osborne (1995) identifies the way in which sexist, heterosexist, and racist discourses are used by men, both students and faculty members, to discredit Women's Studies departments, feminist rallies, and other actions that "challenge and resist male domination and women's degradation and subordination in universities" (p. 641). Osborne's research further emphasizes the importance of understanding safety, risk, and danger as a result of intersecting hierarchies of power and privilege that are distributed unevenly across the campus and its community members. In an effort to address these concerns, I explore the intersection of gendered and sexualized perceptions of danger and risk that queer students articulated in stories about their experiences on the UBC campus.

As demonstrated in this overview of the literature, my research project lies at the intersection of sociological, geographical, educational, and feminist approaches to understanding

sexuality, gender, space, and education. The intersection of these literatures has provided a rich background through which to forefront my original research question: how do queer students understand and engage with the UBC campus as a queer space? By exploring how sexuality, and specifically queerness, is spatialized, I highlight how dimensions of safety and danger, which have become the basis for creating alternative bars, neighbourhoods, and other queer focused spaces, are utilized by queer students as they navigate and negotiate their presence on the UBC campus. The explicit focus on the safety and danger of queer youth at risk within the literature has led me to explore how the term ‘risk’ might be utilized by the students who were interviewed for this project. Finally, by bringing together these three areas of research, I have noted the complex and hierarchical ways in which homophobia and heteronormativity are upheld through various discourses that make it difficult for students to recognize how intersecting social positions are marginalized in different and competing ways. Thus, this dissertation is situated at an important juncture for the fields of social, spatial, and educational studies, addressing the disconnection between the study of women’s experiences of safety and danger on campus and the ways in which safety and danger are experienced by queer and trans students, staff, and faculty. To take on such a complex project, I have drawn from a variety of theoretical tools that inform the analysis of this dissertation.

THEORIES AND ANALYTICAL TOOLS FOR EXAMINING SOCIAL AND SEXUAL SPACE

My research builds on feminist, spatial, and queer examinations of power relations, sexuality, and social space. I have assembled a comprehensive analytic framework that attends to the spatial construction of sexual subjectivities and the spatial negotiation of risk, danger, and safety, which as noted above have not previously been studied in this unique combination within an educational context. As Rose (1993) and Massey (1994) have argued, space is constructed out of social relations (and vice versa), which are already imbued with a multiplicity of power

dynamics that act on and through the subjects contained and constrained by specific spaces. The social agents who occupy spaces are always negotiating gender, race, class, sexuality, ability and a number of other social relations. More pointedly, I am interested in how social space is produced by and constrained for queer subjects within an educational setting and how certain spaces become imbued with meaning for queer students. The UBC campus is a unique site for exploring these tensions in providing a single case to explore students' orientation, navigation, and negotiation of sexual subjectivity. To this end, I draw on Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization of the production of social space, and feminist poststructuralist concepts of discourse, subjectivity, and power in order to ground my use of queer theory.

Anticipating late currents of post structuralism, Henri Lefebvre, a Marxist sociologist and philosopher, designed a trialectical model to deconstruct the production of social space, as an attempt to move beyond dyadic conceptions prevalent at the time. Lefebvre's (1991) *The Production of Space* has been central to his theory of 'spatialization' (see Shields, 1991) by providing a nuanced understanding of space that requires the inclusion of 'the social' along with physical and mental aspects of space. Lefebvre's conceptual triad of 'conceived,' 'perceived,' and 'lived' space indicates three separate lenses through which to examine the production of social space which I have found especially useful for researching sexuality. In Figure 1.2 (see below) I illustrate how Lefebvre composed a trialectic relationship among three spatializations —'spatial practice,' 'representations of space,' and 'representational space' (Lefebvre, 1991; Shields, 1991). These modes of spatialization correspond to the three dimensions of social space: *conceived*, *perceived*, and *lived*. In particular, 'representations of space' characterize *conceived space*; 'spatial practices' define *perceived space*; and 'representational space' helps to distinguish moments of *lived space*. For example, one might *conceive* of the library as a quiet study space, due to the physical layout and the abundance of books; the *perception* of the library

as a quiet study space is maintained through spatial practices, such as sideways glances and ‘shhhh,’ which work to deter noisy or disruptive actions; finally, the library is *lived* as a quiet space when one intentionally seeks it out as a place to study or sleep.

Lefebvire’s Spatial Triad

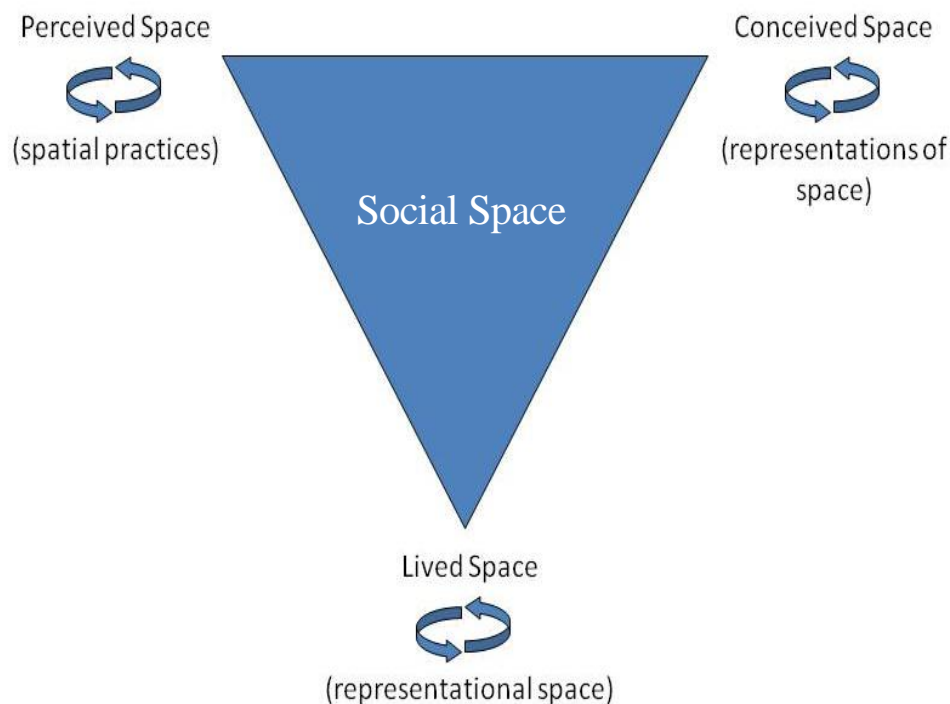


Figure 1.2: Lefebvire’s Spatial Triad. An illustration of the trialectic relationships used in the production of social space. (Created by author).

Although these elements of space appear to be distinct, they are in fact simultaneously overlapping, momentary, and shifting in the production of social space in everyday and institutional life. As Lefebvre (1991) explains, “even technocratic planners and programmers cannot produce a space with a perfectly clear understanding of cause and effect, motive and implication” (p. 37). The different elements found in Lefebvre’s spatial triad work together to create a ‘social fabric,’ and like threads that make up a tapestry, these aspects are sometimes

difficult to differentiate even though they are fundamentally different. The result is a trialectic understanding of social space that moves away from binary oppositions—especially between ‘spatiality’ and ‘sociality’—and that provides a set of analytic tools with which to tease out various aspects of social space. These elements work together like the lenses of a microscope, each providing a slightly different depth, perception, or angled view into the production of social space. Each analytic—perceived space, conceived space, and lived space—will be briefly described and expanded below.

Representations of space indicate how space is *conceived* through the built environment. Forms of knowledge and hidden ideologies are expressed through various codes and theories, which inform how space is then represented physically (Shields, 1991). This element identifies the abstract, imaginary and/or planned aspect of buildings, structures, and the physical organization of space (Razack, 2002). Thus, exploring a material and physical understanding of space can provide insight into the knowledge, theories, and ideals used to 'conceive' and then construct a space. Conceived space is often marked by physical cues to the discourses embedded within in it, which may include identifying heteronormative ideologies which organize much of the built environment (for example see Valentine's (1993) discussion of housing). On the university campus, some of these codes might be expressed in the size or the location of offices and departments, which are often linked to resources or funding allocated for specific student groups, programs and/or departments. For example, at the beginning of this project, the Women's and Gender Studies program at UBC was located in a temporary, yet centrally located building, indicating that there were fewer resources devoted to this program when compared to larger, more resource-rich departments in the natural sciences, despite its visibility and symbolic importance to the university. The Women's and Gender Studies program has now been moved to the basement of a permanent building, the Jack Bell Social Work building, and the temporary

building has been demolished. The basement, while a vast improvement over the temporary building, is still indicative of the relatively marginal status of this program compared to other programs or departments that have their own buildings on campus.

Spatial practices, the second mode of Lefebvre's spatial triad, include the behaviours and customs which come to be associated with and expected of a particular location (Razack, 2002; Shields, 1991). The *perception* of these spaces informs how these spaces are constructed through specific routines, characteristics, and behaviours which distinguish and differentiate one site from another. The dialectical relationship between people's perceptions and the spatial practices they employ illustrates the interconnected ideas that shape how a specific place becomes known through what happens (or is perceived to happen) in that space, that is, through specific practices, and vice versa. For example, classrooms are places where students are expected to be attentive towards the instructor and their classmates. When these expectations are not met, a sense of disruption can occur and at times is corrected by other students or the instructor insofar as they call attention to it. Thus spatial practices "involve a *continual appropriation and re-affirmation* of the world structured according to existing socio-spatial arrangements" (Shields, 1991, pp. 52, emphasis added). These arrangements then serve to let users know what is expected of them in those spaces and the dialectical relationship is continued through the ongoing execution or alterations of specific practices. Consequently, spatial practices and perceived space come to signify different aspects of the same phenomenon in a dialectical relationship.

Finally, the third mode of Lefebvre's spatial triad, representational space, is best characterized as *lived* space where function and effect shape actual discursive possibilities (Shields, 1991). Here, there is movement and unexpected consequences emerge as users and inhabitants combine and modify their perceptions and conceptions of space to produce a symbolic understanding of that space (Lefebvre, 1991). Lived space is often under-theorized, but

heavily described in the literature on social space (Razack, 2002; Shields, 1991; van Ingen, 2002). Users can change, utilize, or manoeuvre through lived space based on the information they gain through their perceptions and conceptions of a place and the people who inhabit it. One way to understand how lived space works is by considering how spaces are used and repurposed. For example, three years ago, a queer-themed discussion group organized through Pride UBC took place regularly on Monday nights in the doctoral thesis defence room in the Faculty of Graduate Studies, which is part of the Graduate Students Society building on the UBC campus. The discussion group members, who mostly identified as queer, transformed the room through the arrangement of chairs and tables. They also transformed the meaning of this space from the location of many tense PhD student defences to a jovial atmosphere open for all types of discussions. This transformative aspect of space illustrates how social agents become active in the production of space as they maneuver through conceived space, appropriate spatial practices, and respond by deploying a variety of symbolic codes and behaviours which in turn affect both the conceived and perceived aspects of the social space. The thesis defence room was reshaped by students to explore all aspects of queer life, ‘resignifying’ its primary purpose by redefining its use as ‘lived space.’

Although Lefebvre (1991) occasionally wrote about sexuality in his work on the production of social space (see for example pp. 32-3 and p. 40), he was only marginally interested in the study of sexuality—and implicitly only within a heterosexual framework. As Michael Brown (2000) explains, “...Lefebvre’s insistence that not only does sexuality produce space, but it does so publicly through capitalist social relations that commodify the product,” illustrates the tacit heteronormativity embedded in his work (p. 61). Nevertheless, Lefebvre’s conception of the production of social space provides researchers with the opportunity to consider how queer subjects might live and transform their queer lives spatially. While Lefebvre

is not known for theorizing non-normative sexualities, his conception of social space provides an opportunity to consider how sexuality is configured through the production of social space. To explore this possibility, I turn to a discussion of feminist poststructuralist theory.

A theory of space alone cannot explain how queer students come to understand their sexual subjectivities on campus. Here, I draw on a number of scholars to explore how the discursive production of power, experience, and subjectivity organize various subject positions like gender, race, class, sexuality, age, and ability. Just as people come to know a space through social practice, conceptualizing sexual subjectivities requires an understanding of how diverse, shifting, and contradictory discourses shape how social agents practically relate to the world. In considering “how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class and race might be transformed” (p. 20), Chris Weedon (1987) argues that social researchers

should be able to recognize the importance of the *subjective* in constituting the meaning of women’s lived reality. [They] should not deny subjective experience, since the ways in which people make sense of their lives is a necessary starting point for understanding how power relations structure society (p. 8, emphasis in original).

Central to my research project are the complex intersections between the everyday experiences of queer students and various power relations and institutional spaces. This starting point emphasizes the connection between experience and meaning-making, which renders visible a social location or subject position that informs how social agents might be constrained by a certain point in time and space. Weedon (1987) suggests that feminist poststructuralist theory utilizes a definition of subjectivity that acknowledges a discursively produced subject, which is “produced historically and changes with shifts in the wide range of discursive fields which constitute them” (p. 33). I have found the conceptualization of discursive fields to capture the multiple and sometimes contradictory set of meanings which produce and organize specific subjectivities often in particular places. In my study, the discursive fields found on the university campus create certain queer subjectivities and close down other possibilities.

Other theorists, such as Bronwyn Davies (2000), draw on the ideas of Louis Althusser and Hélène Cixoux to explain the processes of subjectification using a psychoanalytic framework. These processes capture the specificity of experiences, but they do not presume a bounded subject of identification. Instead, as Davies (2000) explains, the process of subjectification is constituted by “the moments at which an experiencing being comes to know the possibilities being made available by virtue of their presence within a collectivity” (p. 31). Such a collectivity, Davies argues, “constitutes itself through discourses in which the individual experiencing subject is made the primary focus” (Davies 2000, p. 31). Since discourses are organized into fields or collectivities, they provide multiple and competing ways of conferring meaning to the world around us (Davies, 2000; Weedon, 1987). As a result meaning is produced through speech, text, and other forms of language which work to communicate and situate subject position(s) within the discursive field. Subjectivity is then mobilized and reflects an incomplete, shifting, and often contradictory sense of self as the language we use to locate ourselves momentarily, only to be shifted in the next speech act, or utterance. Thus, through an examination of language used by queer students to describe their experiences, I attend to their shifting and multiple understanding(s) of the UBC campus, and their presence within that space.

Rather than rely on a unified identity category that does not adequately account for subjective differences, I consider how queer students, reflecting on their experiences, identify their queer desires through a process of ‘becoming queer.’ Here, I draw on Michel Foucault’s (1978, pp. 28-29) conception of how multiple power relations transform discursive fields and a sense of self. This approach outlines how discourses in many forms are historically, socially, and spatially constituted where “they inhere in the very physical layout of our institutions such as schools, churches, law courts and houses” (Weedon 1987, p. 111-112). The spatial characteristics of both Weedon’s description of discourse (noted above) and Foucault’s (1978, p.

28-29) discussion of the architectural layout of eighteenth-century secondary schools in the *History of Sexuality Vol. 1* offer useful examples for understanding how sexuality has a spatial as well as a social dimension. In his work theorizing space and sexuality, Howell (2007) locates much of Foucault's work in his use of discourse, noting that "the state apparatus of disciplinary institutions—schools, workhouses, prisons... became saturated with the discourse of sexuality" (p. 295). While these locations might constitute sites of reform, they are also sites of paradoxical discourses of sexuality where perversion may exist alongside or in resistance to normalized sexual subjects. Here, Foucault's (1978) definition of power is instructive, as he explains that "power must be understood...as a multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which they constitute their own organization" (p. 92). This is not a 'power-over' definition where power oppresses; rather, power is understood to be ubiquitous and, as a result, resistance is assumed to be integral to and inseparable from power/knowledge systems. As, Foucault (1978) argues "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (p. 92). Thus, sexual subjectivities are limited by the institutional and discursive fields which produce them historically, socially, and spatially.

Foucault's conceptualization of power is important to how one understands the production of subjectivities, including sexual. More specifically, the power of the norm of heterosexuality is grounded through the apparatus of the binary gender system (Butler 2004). This 'matrix', according to Butler (1993, 2004), is where the binary system of biological sex (male or female) confers the appropriate gendered expression (masculinity and femininity) authenticated through (hetero)sexual desire. The discursive production of heterosexuality relies on the normative expressions of gender and at the same time works to discourage alternative behaviours and identifications. This is a form of social regulation whereby power is expressed by techniques and methods of normalization that operate through control rather than through

external punishment (Foucault 1978, p. 89). As Foucault argues, “a policing of sex: that is, not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses,” provides the normalizing discourses that spread throughout social institutions like education, medicine, psychiatry (1978, p. 25). Hence, the normalization of heterosexuality shapes power relations regarding sex and sexuality by casting anything that does not fit within heteronormativity as ‘abnormal.’ In Chapters Four and Five, I explore the normalizing power of heteronormativity identified by queer students in their experiences on the UBC campus.

These normalizing discourses are the target of queer theorists. Developed through a specific set of political tenets that trouble normative assumptions, queer theory works to locate and undo the seemingly smooth façade of what constitutes ‘the normal.’ In this case, sexuality and gender remain the central objects of analysis, but queer theory can and does take up related fields like space (Browne, 2006; Eves, 2004), race (Namaste, 1996b; Yue, 2000), and nationalism (Puar, 2007). The shift in focus on nationalism and citizenship by some queer theorists has produced insights about homonormativity (Duggan, 2002, 2003) and homonationalism (Puar, 2007) in relation to assimilation and neoliberal⁵ politics, primarily in the West. The significance of queer politics and homonormativity for the participants in this study, in the analysis of campuses as queer spaces, will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five.

Reflecting back on Lefebvre’s spatial triad, I argue that perceived space and conceived space are organized through similar discursive positioning(s). On one hand, perceived space captures the reiterative process, the constant confirmation of the intended use of a space through

⁵ Here I draw on Lisa Duggan’s (2003) discussion of neoliberalism in her book *Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy*, where she outlines the development of a polemic that privileged individual economic prosperity over communal distribution of resources. She describes neoliberalism as “a vision [that values] competition, inequality, market ‘discipline’, public austerity, and ‘law and order’” (2003, p.x).

spatial practices (Shields, 1991). This process is similar to the reiterative practices needed to maintain a consistent and coherent gender and sexual identity (Butler 1993, 2004). An example of this process is captured in the development of gender-segregated washrooms in many educational institutions. The single gender washroom is maintained as a gendered space, collaboratively policed through norms by those who feel entitled to be in that space, that is, through *spatial practices* (Cavanagh, 2010). The need to police this space is informed through conceived space through the physical organization of the space, for example, by the presence or absence of urinals that indicate the ‘gender’ of the washroom. The making and installing of urinals reveals who the intended users of a particular washroom should be and captures the conceived element of this space. Although this is an obvious example, Foucault has demonstrated in the *History of Sexuality* that these discourses need not be explicit. His discussion of the architectural layout of eighteenth-century secondary schools is a good example of how discourses of sexuality were imbued in the social/physical spaces of ‘single-sex’ classrooms and dormitories (Foucault 1978, pp. 28-29). Thus, the theoretical tools provided by feminist poststructuralism and Foucauldian discussions of discourse, power, and subjectivity help us to open up and extend Lefebvre’s theorization of perceived and conceived space in new ways that address sexuality in particular.

In locating the theoretical tools I need for this dissertation project, I have found queer theory to be useful as it ‘fits’ within a poststructural framework. As Namaste (1996a) explains, “queer theory is interested in exploring [and exposing] the borders of sexual identities, communities, and politics” (p. 198). Moreover, Nikki Sullivan (2003) explains that “this sort of focus on the constructed, contingent, unstable and heterogeneous character of subjectivity, social relations, power and knowledge...has paved the way for Queer Theory” (p. 42-43). Cited by some as a foundational text that supported the development of queer theory, Eve Sedgwick’s

(1990) *The Epistemology of the Closet* offered a critique of the heteronormative logic that frames same-sex desire and institutions and limits the expression of sexual desires, often in terms of the distinctively spatial dynamics of the logic. Heteronormative logic, or heteronormativity, refers to the hegemonic deployment of normative discourses based on the presumed congruence between sex (male or female) and gender (masculinity or femininity), which inevitably leads to sexual desire for the opposite sex/gender and heterosexual identification (Butler, 1997, 2004). While queer theory grew out of literary criticism and cultural studies, it has potential use for a sociological study of sexuality because “queer theory analyzes putatively *marginal experience*... in order to expose the deeper contours of the whole society and the mechanisms of its functioning” (Epstein, 1994, p.197, emphasis added). A focus on marginal experience situates queer theory within the sociological study of multiple forms of sexuality and corresponds to Foucault’s conception of power and of how various discourses of sexuality permeate social life. Since queer theory both identifies and renders visible the borders and boundaries of identities, politics, and experience by placing that which is marginal at the centre of its concern (Epstein, 1994), it is essential in exposing the social-spatial features of sexuality. The relationships between queer theory and queer politics are especially important here because a theory is useful when it can be understood to inform social practice.

To this end, some theorists operationalize the term queer as a verb (Sullivan, 2003), or as an adjective, as in Judith Halberstam’s (2005) ‘queer time’ and ‘queer space.’ The act of ‘queering’ something may involve deconstructing or altering the meaning or relation it describes in order to reveal normative discourses. For instance, Halberstam (2005) defines queer in terms of “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment in space and time” (p. 6). Queer time would then indicate a nonnormative break from “the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, inheritance” (Halberstam

2005, p. 6). Moreover, for Halberstam (2005) queer space refers to nonnormative “place-making practices” articulated by queer peoples through “new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics” (p. 6). Taken together, queer time and space offer a radical shift away from a desire of/for sexual dissidents to fit more congruently within the heteronormative imagination. This perspective highlights how time and space work differently for queer subjects as they tend to “live outside of the reproductive and familial times as well as on the edges of logistics of labour and production... outside the logic of capital accumulation ...during the hours when others sleep and in the spaces (physical, metaphysical and economic) that others have abandoned” (Halberstam 2005, p. 10). Thus, by employing a queer theory and practice, we can begin to see how lives are organized differently based on the relation to specific space/time constructions that are open to reinterpretation and rearticulation.

This understanding of queering and queer time/space provides an interesting ‘reworking’ of Lefebvre’s concept of representational space (lived space) “where function and effect shape discursive possibilities.” More specifically, Lefebvre (1991) describes representational space as space that is “directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ ... This is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (p.39). As Halberstam notes, those who do not strive to fit in to the hegemonic, heteronormative spaces and cycles are rendered outside of this system. Thus, lived space becomes the spatial element that can be queered.

Combined together, the theoretical frameworks sketched here provide a foundation for my conceptualization of how queer students orient, navigate, and negotiate their presence on the UBC campus. Lefebvre’s theoretical triad provides me with a unique set of conceptual lenses through which to identify the conceived, perceived, and lived aspects of the production of social space by queer students at UBC. Moreover, the feminist post-structural concepts of power,

discourse, and subjectivity offer insights into how queer students understand and engage with the UBC campus as a queer space. Lastly, queer theory provides an analytical tool for identifying where students identify and queer space on campus. Turning now to the empirical side of these issues, in the next section I provide some background information and context on UBC where the project took place. The historical background provides context regarding the emergence of lesbian and gay activism UBC, which is the foundation for the current queer resources made available for queer students, staff, and faculty on campus.

THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH SITE

One of the main motivations for conducting this research project has come from my emerging sense of the paradox of the university campus. On the one hand, post-secondary institutions are heralded as sites for the open exchange of ideas where intellectual freedom supports ideals of social justice. On the other hand, shrinking public funding combined with growing neoliberal pressures to compete on a global stage have shifted the nature of and meanings attached to attending university and obtaining a post-secondary degree (Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Lewis, 2005, 2008; Natale, Libertella, & Hayward, 2000; Rhoads & Torres, 2006). In this final section, I provide a concise overview of the shifts in post-secondary education primarily in Canada and the United States in order to contextualize my project within a broader political framework. This discussion will be followed by a detailed description of the project site, the UBC campus, and the development of queer resources on this campus.

In Canada, post-secondary education refers to a constellation of colleges, technological institutes, and universities where advanced learning takes place and is often accredited or credentialized. In order to attain admission into an institution of higher education, it is expected that students have successfully completed their secondary (high school) education or equivalent (e.g. General Education Diploma). The university is a specific type of post-secondary institution,

one that Marchak (1996), Henry and Tator (2009), have argued is steeped in the tradition of seeking ‘truth’. In the Canadian context, the main differentiation between a university and a community college is that the latter is primarily developed to provide a direct link between skills training and career development whereas “the university was to remain as the place to gather knowledge” (Henry & Tator 2009, p.6). Hence, a university is most often connected to the idea of a liberal (meaning broad) education where knowledge is valued for its own sake and becomes an important venture. This broad quest provides multiple opportunities to develop “a free, independent, and thoughtful person” (Henry & Tator 2009, p.6). The result is a historical and idealized view of what it means to attend a university and complete a degree, one that creates ‘thoughtful’ and enlightened citizens. At UBC the emphasis is placed on fostering ‘global citizenship’ that will help contribute to ‘a civil and sustainable society’ as part of the strategic plan—*Place and Promise: The UBC Plan* (University of British Columbia, 2010a). In fact, this document’s title inspired the question posed in the title of this dissertation. As I note below, however, the meaning and significance of achieving a post-secondary degree in Canada has shifted over time.

As students flooded the ivory towers in the post-WWII era across Canada and the United States, the diversity of the student body shifted and issues of racism, sexism, classism and homophobia became important to address in the classroom and throughout the university campus. The counter-culture movement found fertile ground at university and college campuses where students engaged in radical politics and activism, especially in the 1960s and 1970s (Reid & Reid, 1969). In fact, the university campus has been described as a generative hot bed of post-Stonewall lesbian and gay activism. As Tom Warner (2002) argues in his book *Never Going Back*, “university campuses provided the organizing grounds...to create meeting places and social events, with other activities such as phone lines, newsletters, and occasional advocacy

being added on” (p. 87). For instance, on campus homophile associations date back to the late 1960s and early 1970s with the University of Toronto Homophile Association (UTHA) being one of the first, founded in October of 1969. York University Homophile Association (YUHA) followed a year later (McLeod, 1996; Warner, 2002). Gay and lesbian organizing began to spread across Canadian campuses to include groups at the University of Saskatchewan-Saskatoon campus (1971), University of British Columbia (1971 and again in 1972), University of Manitoba (1972), and Queen’s University (1973) (McLeod, 1996; Warner, 2002). Although, some of these groups did not last, they marked the beginning of gay and lesbian activism directly associated with university students, faculty, and/or staff.

In the 1980s, students, staff, and faculty began to speak out about their experiences of inequality at Canadian universities, which created a growing awareness of how sexism, harassment, and discrimination limited leadership opportunities among those who did not fit in the ‘old boys club’, including women, gay men and lesbians, as well as Aboriginal people, people of colour and people with disabilities (Chilly Collective, 1995; Currie & MacLean, 1993a; Westerman, 2008). Rallying together, students, staff, and faculty challenged the male-centred and racist history of the university and created programs and policies to address inequities and exclusions on campus.

The clash between radical democracy and neoliberal ideology had a profound impact on how post-secondary educational institutions addressed and dealt with issues of equity and access for students, staff, and faculty. As the corporatization of universities and colleges persisted, neoliberal capitalism performed “the dual task of using education to train workers for service sector jobs and produc[ing] lifelong consumers” (Giroux & Giroux, 2006 p.21). Today a university degree is often the minimum requirement for many employment opportunities and career paths (Bradshaw, 2011). Although the university was considered the domain for

instructing the children of the elite or the destiny of the gifted, it has now become the training ground for the middle class both in Canada (Henry & Tator, 2009; Marchak, 1996) and the United States (Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Natale et al., 2000; Rhoads & Torres, 2006). As colleges and universities have become corporatized (even those which remain public), these institutions of higher learning have become organized through business models which measure excellence and accountability over the opportunity for critical engagement and radical politics (Lewis, 2008; Walker, 2008). The unintended consequence of this approach to education has required more students to pay more, and to compete for less funding and resources, which has students more focused on grades and achievements, rather than the process of learning and engagement. Post-secondary education has now been transformed through a process of accreditation, leaving little time or space for social movements and political transformation. The result is a potentially depoliticized student body with comparatively little time or inclination to contribute to civic, regional, and national politics on university and college campuses. In this study, I examine how queer students negotiate their desire to complete their university degrees and programs while also negotiating their presence within the institutional context of UBC, whether or not these actions take on overtly political forms.

The Historical and Geographical Background of UBC

Located 11km from downtown Vancouver, UBC is nestled on the Point Grey peninsula, overlooking English Bay along the Pacific Coast. The campus is surrounded by the mountain ranges along the northern and western shores and deep patches of old growth rainforest to the south of campus. Although it was first incorporated on March 7, 1908, the location of the campus remained up for debate until 1913 when the current location was selected (Harris, 1977; Todd, 1910; University Site Commission, 1910). UBC is heralded as one of the top 40 universities in the world and is the largest post-secondary institution in the province of British

Columbia, Canada (University of British Columbia, 2012a). It boasts 18 faculties, 14 schools, three colleges, and 187 undergraduate programs (University of British Columbia, 2012b). Approximately 32,000 undergraduate students attend UBC Vancouver campus from over 140 countries worldwide, creating a culturally diverse learning environment (University of British Columbia, 2012b). The Vancouver campus is expansive covering nearly 402 hectares (4.02 km²) of land and contains a mix of classrooms, laboratories, other learning spaces, residential spaces (for students and non-students), student-organized food and retail businesses.

In addition to pursuing my doctoral studies at UBC, I selected it as the main site for this case study because of the rich history of gay and lesbian activism and vibrant queer community. Formal organizing efforts by gays and lesbians on campus began in 1971 with the creation of the Gay People's Alliance (McLeod, 1996). The student club had a floating membership of 20 to 30 students. In an article in UBC's student newspaper from 1971, *The Ubyyssey*, the group's formation was announced as was its intention to provide a place for gay and lesbians to gather and socialize (Gibbs, 1971). Although this group initially shied away from political activity, members created some visibility on campus and challenged the idea that UBC was void of any 'homosexuals.' Unfortunately, as with many student groups, they disbanded over the summer of 1972. A new group, Gay Peoples of UBC (GPUBC) was formed in the fall of 1972 with help from Maurice Flood, a member of GATE (Gay Alliance Towards Equality), a local Vancouver group (McLeod, 1996)⁶. This group has remained active since 1972 although its name changed to Gays and Lesbians of UBC (GLUBC) in 1982; again nearly a decade later it became Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals of UBC (GLBUBC); and then in 1997 the name was changed to its

⁶ In some cases, the university-based groups provided an opportunity for non-university based residents to meet and ultimately form associations that would move off campus and serve the city or town. At other times, activists from community-based organisations would set up meetings on campus and act as liaisons in support of the formation of student/university groups. For instance, University of Toronto Homophile Association (UTHA) was overwhelmed in its first year by non-university members, which resulted in the establishment of Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT) founded a year later UTHA (McLeod, 1996).

current name PrideUBC (University of British Columbia & Alma Matter Society, 1982, 1993, 1997). In the 1970s, this group served the gay and lesbian student population by providing coffee houses, social activities, and a collective voice on campus for gay and lesbian issues. In its early development, this group also provided information on gay clubs and socializing in the city as well as regular activities advertised in *The Ubyyssey*.

In addition to what is now known as PrideUBC, the Gay/Lesbian Law Association appears in a *Ubyyssey* article in 1979; however, there is little archival evidence documenting the establishment of this group as another site of gay and lesbian organizing on the UBC campus. GPUBC organized the inaugural ‘Gay Week’ in 1980 (now called ‘OutWeek’) which began as a week filled with events to celebrate the diversity of sexuality, specifically homosexuality. The first Gay Week included free movies, a debate with the UBC Debating club, and a Valentine’s Day dance in the Graduate Student Centre (GSC) ballroom (“Gay Week 1980,” 1980). While the first Gay Week was a success, the very next year a GPUBC member selling buttons in the SUB concourse was accosted by a varsity football player who thought it would be amusing to steal and then wear the GPUBC buttons. The incident ended when RCMP officers arrested the football player. The AMS student court was called to oversee the dispute and ruled in favour of the GPUBC member, convicting the football player of “abusive conduct toward another member of the Alma Mater Society” (Brooks, 1981). The following year, offensive counterfeit promotional materials were circulated that appeared to promote Gay Week, sending mixed messages to the student body about the nature and intent of Gay Week. These particular incidents indicate the aim of Gay Week to provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the barriers gays and lesbians faced in order to increase visibility on campus. The success of Gay Week among other events resulted in Gays and Lesbians of UBC (GLUBC) being appointed to a service

organization by the AMS in 1984, which increased its budget and enhanced its ability to reach out to students (“Gays Incorporated,” 1984).

Despite its new position within the structure of the AMS, the GLUBC’s office and posters were torn down in the Student Union Building (SUB) in 1986 (see Beveridge, 1986; Flather, 1986). *The Ubyssy* reported that GLUBC group members were “concerned and angry with a recent increase in vandalism and other actions aimed at their group” (Flather 1986, p.3). Additional incidences of vandalism were reported, including a bashing in downtown Vancouver at the beginning of the school year. Much of the homophobic violence was attributed to rising fears about the AIDS crisis, but as GLUBC members argued, “the behaviour towards open gays and lesbians at UBC is reflective of discrimination in society at large. You just have to keep fighting...” (Flather 1986, p.3). In addition to these incidences, a fraternity began to organize Heterosexual Week (H-Week) as a parody of Gay Week activities (MacDonald, 1986). In an effort to curb any further ridicule or violence, GLUBC worked with the organizers of H-Week to put forth a united message about the need for education where “heterosexuals are given a positive atmosphere to address any underlying feelings, frustrations, and sexual insecurities” (Kirkwood & Beveridge, 1986, p.4). Despite their best efforts, H-Week received a mixed reaction on campus and was not revived after its inauguration. These historical instances demonstrate the vibrant but contentious ways in which students on the UBC campus have engaged in issues of sexuality.

In 1990, the opportunity for UBC to host the Gay Games was a controversial issue for students, staff, and faculty across campus and community groups in Vancouver. In an effort to dissuade the organizers from using the UBC campus facilities, Dr. Strangway, the president of UBC from 1986 to 1997, announced his refusal to have “the community identifying [homosexuality] with the University of British Columbia” in October of 1987 (Strangway cited

in May, 1988, p.1). This declaration occurred despite the fact that the Metropolitan Vancouver Athletic and Arts Association (MVAAA), working as the organizing committee for the Gay Games, had “an enthusiastic and positive meeting with UBC Conference Services to book residence, gym and aquatics facilities for the 1990 event” in August 1986 (Davidson 2007, p.155). The organizing committee, armed with a number of UBC alumni, including Svend Robinson (now former Member of Parliament for Burnaby, B.C.), utilized their familiarity with UBC decision-making and took the issue to the Board of Governors (BoG). With extensive media attention that followed, the MVAAA were able to convince the BoG to overturn the President’s refusal to host the Gay Games at UBC (Davidson, 2007). In the end, Strangway’s decision was overturned but not until January 1989 (just six months before the start of the Games) when a favourable final decision was made (Davidson, 2007). Although the UBC President wanted to deter the public from thinking of the campus as a homosexual space, the need by other administrators to fashion the university as a place of tolerance overruled Strangway’s obstinacy. My project considers how UBC administration continues to play a role in shaping the campus as a queer space through sometimes ambiguous support for queer resources and institutional recognition.

As larger communities surrounding the campus began to grow, so too were resources developed to meet new and growing needs of queer university members. For example, a separate lesbian group known as ‘Dykes Unlimited’ was created in 1988 for lesbian-identified women who did not feel represented by the GLUBC (Bishop, 1990; “Dykes Unlimited: Chosen Family,” 1990). This group used the women’s centre as a home base, and other women-only social events were organized through the group. Similarly, some faculty members joined together in late 1989 to create the Ad-Hoc Committee on Lesbian/Gay Issues, which was endorsed by the Faculty Association in early 1990 (Saunders, 1990). Led by Dr. Mary Bryson and Dr. Doug Saunders,

the Ad-Hoc Committee fought for same-sex partner benefits and the inclusion of gay and lesbian content in university curricula (Ad-Hoc Committee on Lesbian and Gay Issues, 1991). Although provincial medical coverage was outside the jurisdiction of the university benefits, extended medical benefits were amended to include same-sex partners in early 1990 (Davis, 1990). The Ad-Hoc Committee on Gay and Lesbian Issues also worked to organize a lecture series sponsored by the President's Office, perhaps to atone for homophobic remarks made by Strangway during the Gay Games fiasco (Storr, 1994). The intent was to parlay the funds and interest in the lecture series into a gay and lesbian studies program (Hiebert, 1993), which was eventually established as Critical Studies in Sexuality (CSIS) in 2000 (Hoult, 2001).

In an effort to (re)create a sense of community on campus, Anne Marie Long, a recently hired equity officer at the time, brought together a number of LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty in 2000.⁷ In addition to monthly social lunches and information-sharing sessions, Long hosted organizational meetings which addressed homophobia at UBC directly. Together, the committee developed a modified education and awareness program that discussed terminology and identities based on some of the programs that were running at the University of Toronto (dubbed 'Positive Space' since 1995), Berkeley⁸, Stanford⁹, and other institutions. The resulting program, the Positive Space Campaign (PSC), which is currently housed in UBC's Equity Office, combines a number of events and projects, including a voluntary two-hour workshop for UBC students, staff, and faculty. The workshop has a dual purpose in providing both a place to educate members of the UBC community about human rights and the meaning of identities often associated with the queer community, in addition to offering participants a place to work through scenarios where they might encounter homophobia or heterosexism. At the end of the workshop,

⁷ Personal communication with Anne Marie Long, the founder and administrator of the Positive Space Campaign at the University of British Columbia.

⁸ See (http://geneq.berkeley.edu/lgbt_workshops#cal_ally)

⁹ See (<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/lgbtcr/sosas>)

volunteers/participants are encouraged to sign-up to be ‘resource people’ at UBC who might better provide assistance and referrals to resources at UBC or in the Vancouver queer community.

In the decade since the Positive Space Campaign was launched in 2001, there has been an increase in the awareness and visibility of queer sexualities and gender diversity on campus due in part to the use of recognizable symbols. The positive space logo (see Fig. 1.3) marks offices and common areas as ‘queer positive,’ indicating that administrators, professors, teaching assistants, or entire administrative units are familiar with some of the issues that queer and trans people face. The logo also utilizes the inclusive use of the term queer, as the outside borders name a variety of identities. It also contains the website connecting the physically ‘lived’ space to virtual space where information about the PSC is located. Yet, there is little monitoring of the



Figure 1.3: Positive Space Campaign Logo. This logo is used to signify campus members who have participated in the Positive Space Workshop and are Resource Persons for the program.

placement of these logos which could lead to the representation of ‘queer space,’ and there is no guarantee that someone in that space has actually taken the PSW and could provide the correct information or knowledge about queer issues and resources.

Additionally, the increased popularity of the program has propelled Long and several other Positive Space workshop leaders to offer more frequent workshops. At the very least, the UBC administration appears to have invested in an image of a safe, welcoming, and tolerant space for queer students, staff, and faculty. Moreover, through the office of the Vice President of Student Services, the university combined the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) and Women Students’ Office to create the office of Access & Diversity (A&D) in November of 2003 to help meet the needs of a growing and diverse student population (Thomas, 2003). To this day, Access & Diversity has printed posters, created buttons, and championed a more accepting and diverse student environment, providing both financial and administrative resources to student groups, including PrideUBC. Together, these resources, along with PrideUBC, the Faculty Ad-Hoc Committee on Gay and Lesbian Issues, and CSIS have helped to welcome queer students to the UBC campus. It is impossible to predict what the future will bring for UBC and its efforts to provide queer resources on campus, but the familiarity with these resources (or lack thereof) and their current effects (actual or perceived) are discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

My desire to examine the relationship between queer students and the university campus was born out of my own experience with homophobic hostility. The growing awareness in the media of suicides attributed to homophobic bullying, and the resulting policies and laws have intensified my need to know how to support queer students better across a number of educational sites. My hope is that this research will provide important insights into how the university campus figures in the educational paths of queer students and how to better meet the needs of

queer students today and in the future. Beginning with recent theoretical insights that sexuality and gender are already necessarily both social and spatial, I investigate queer students' experiences to understand how they understand and engage with the UBC campus as a queer space. Drawing on the intersection of scholarly work which addresses issues of sexuality, space, and education, I have determined that the university campus provides a unique site through which to explore the relationship between sexuality and space, while also considering what is and is not possible for queer students in a post-secondary institutional setting. From a theoretical perspective, I find Lefebvre's (1991) conceptual triad for understanding the 'conceived,' 'perceived,' and 'lived' dimensions of space a useful set of analytical lenses through which to examine the production of social space. Integral to my use of this model are also feminist post-structural conceptions of power, discourse, and subjectivity, which support the tenets of queer theory. Here, I utilize queer theory to discern fissures in normative discourses, particularly in an attempt to discern the preservation and troubling of heteronormativity in the everyday life of university students.

In the following chapters, I deploy the themes of orientation, navigation, and negotiation which have organized my research and structure the dissertation. In effect, I use these terms to extend Lefebvre's spatial triad of conceived (Chapter Three), perceived (Chapter Four), and lived (Chapter Five) elements that produce social space. In Chapter Two, I outline the methods used in recruitment and data collection; specifically, I explain my desire to develop a 'mapping exercise' which captures students' perception of the campus in both risky and queer terms. I also explore the erotics of conducting such intimate research within my own educational setting and the ethics of the research process. In Chapter Three, I utilize Lefebvre's notion of 'conceived space' to explore how students conceptualize the university campus as a place to explore their queer desires, here drawing on Ahmed's (2006) conception of 'orientation' to identify both

sexual orientation and the direction a straight or queer orientation might lead students.

‘Orientation,’ along with ‘conceived space,’ have been valuable in helping me think about the expectation queer students might have about the campus and their understanding of this space as different from and relative to other spaces in their lives. From this sense of orientation, queer students then rely on their impressions and experiences of specific spaces, be it residential, pedagogical, social, political, and/or recreational, to navigate the campus.

In Chapter Four, I draw on students’ experiences with homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism on the UBC campus. Here, I deploy Lefebvre’s perceived space to explore how and why students identified spaces they would avoid on campus. Drawing on the interviews and mapping data, I examine how their identification of avoided spaces indicated an effort to minimize their sense of risk for encountering homophobic hostility. In other words, queer students use perceptions (perceived space) to understand what is expected of them in specific spaces on campus. In Chapter Five, I examine the positive experiences of inclusion, awareness, and celebration of queer issues students discussed and located as queer spaces on the campus map. I found that queer students then navigate the campus by avoiding specific spaces while venturing towards other more welcoming spaces. At the same time, queer students were constantly negotiating their queerness within a predominantly heteronormative context of UBC campus. Queer spatial practices not only suggest specific strategies that queer students employ to negotiate their presence on campus, such as ‘passing’ as heterosexual to minimize homophobic reprisal or challenging homophobic, heterosexist, or transphobic remarks, but such practices also exemplify Lefebvre’s conception of lived space. Thus, it is important to consider the process of negotiation in relation to how queer spaces and resources are positioned and planned by the administration for queer students across the UBC campus. Also in Chapter Five, I reflect on the political potential of queer students in the neoliberal context of the university campus to more

fully understand what is at stake for queer students and what is possible in such a dynamic and complex space—one that is experienced as both a haven and a risky space. Finally in Chapter Six, I reflect on the findings and contributions of this research, and offer recommendations for making university campuses better for queer students in the future.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES: PRACTICES, ETHICS, AND EROTICS OF QUEER RESEARCH

The messiness of research, as a whole, is difficult to capture in a linear account via the written word, particularly an account presenting which methods were used, the reasons for these choices, and the outcomes generated. This lack of linearity is especially difficult when a researcher, such as myself, is interested in peoples' everyday/night lived experience. People are seldom orderly or predictable, and our interactions can rarely be systematically duplicated. Feminist researchers have worked diligently to create an awareness of power dynamics in research settings—between the researcher and the research participants (see DeVault, 1996; Oakley, 1981; Stacy, 1991). By incorporating insights gained from feminist activism and activists, feminist researchers have focused on the inequity experienced by women, which has been extended to other groups of oppressed peoples (DeVault 1996). These epistemological frameworks inform my approach to researching and research methods for this project. My interest in feminist methods extends from my own experience and interest in power relations and sexual politics, especially regarding the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer communities.

The research process is fraught with unplanned and unexpected outcomes, which may coalesce for a variety of reasons and which the researcher must unpack. In this chapter, I locate myself as a researcher on this project before moving on to a discussion of my recruitment strategies and outcomes. I also supply a detailed discussion of each method used and the implications of these choices, as well as my approach for analyzing the data. My intention here is to provide the necessary methodological context for how this research project was designed and conducted and provide a reflection on the outcomes before moving onto the substantive discussions found in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. This chapter aims to provide an important step in understanding the research process through the choices made during the design,

interview, and writing phases. As a feminist researcher, acknowledging these choices is one way of being held accountable to those choices (Pillow, 2003; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002).

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: MAKING RESEARCH MAKE SENSE

Locating the Researcher

In this project, I was engaged in a process of producing knowledge about sexual subjectivities and educational spaces by asking queer students about their experiences at UBC and the meanings that they attributed to the campus and themselves. Since I was the designer and main investigator of this project, who I am and how I am located at UBC matters in all aspects of the research process. For this reason, I want now to describe myself and to consider how others see me within the research setting. The 26 semi-structured in-depth interviews were (in some cases) my initial introduction to students, and as a result, the interview became the central moment of our interaction. Meeting face-to-face and the interactions that followed were informed by who I am, or at least how I was perceived by the student, and how I perceived the student. Rose (1997) argues that “all knowledge is produced in specific circumstances and that those circumstances shape it in some way” (p. 305). By understanding knowledge production as a unique and mutually constituted endeavor, I was mindful of the context in which this knowledge was produced. In some cases, the practice of reflexivity has become an important part of feminist approaches to research. Reflexivity has been advocated as a strategy for revealing the circumstances of the research process and avoiding assumptions of ‘neutrality’ and ‘universalism’ that underlies much of conventional academic knowledge (Harding, 1992; Rose, 1997).

An important part of reflexivity is locating one’s self within the research process. I am a white, queer woman, graduate student from a working class background, and I am a person with a learning disability. These features of who I am inform the social relations that often define how

I am perceived, but they only describe part of my location. As a teaching assistant (TA) during my first three years on campus, I interacted with and evaluated undergraduate students, a position marked with particular power relations both in and outside of the classroom. I have been an active member of the UBC campus community, including serving for two years as graduate representative for the queer student group PrideUBC, and involvement with other graduate student networks, reading groups, and other leadership roles within my department and across campus. Most recently and coinciding with this research project, I was employed as the Coordinator¹⁰ of UBC's first Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) held in January 2010. While I worked diligently with undergraduate students, faculty, and university administrators, I was also busy completing interviews with students for this project. All of these associations have contributed to a particular projection of who I am, and how I am known when I am on campus. Some of the students who participated in the project did so because they knew me from the work I have done at UBC and were eager to assist me, by spreading the word and encouraging their friends to participate. In some cases, I was meeting students for the very first time. All of this has had an impact on what kinds of questions I was willing to ask and what was ultimately said in the interviews.

Although locating oneself in the research context is an important feature of feminist research, the possibilities and pitfalls of reflexivity have led some feminist researchers to argue this it is nearly impossible to complete research (England, 1997; Kirsch, 1999; Pillow, 2003; Rose, 1997). Pillow (2003), for example, has shown how reflexivity has been used to justify and/or transcend the limits, power relations, and contexts in which research takes place. While acknowledging the different social positions of the researcher and research subject is vital to understanding the context within which research takes place, I also agree with Rose (1997) who

¹⁰ The position commenced at the end of November 2009 until February 2010.

argues that “transparent reflexivity is bound to fail” (p.311). This failure does not come from an unwillingness to find a solution, but rather because interaction is a dialectical process, which is unique to the time, place, and people involved. Since the uniqueness of an interaction is dependent on many factors, it cannot be accounted for completely. As a result, the reflexivity that aims to be transparent or transcendent falls short of a full account of the interaction. Rather, researchers need to acknowledge that parts of the process remain inaccessible to either the researcher or the reader. In moving forward, the reflexivity I have employed in this project comes from an understanding that research is a complex process where similarities and differences are negotiated and constituted between myself and those who have participated in the research project with me. In what follows, I consider how the choices I made in the research design phase shaped some of the outcomes in the data collection phase.

Locating the Research

The need to locate the research project is a reflection of my focus on the relation between the physical space of the UBC campus and the experiences of queer students. My primary research question— ‘How do queer students understand and engage with the UBC campus as a ‘queer space’?’ –entails these related questions: 1) How do queer students locate and *orientate* themselves in the process of ‘becoming queer,’ a process that includes the transition from high school to university and the multiple and shifting discourses that shape this transition? 2) How do queer students identify risky and/or dangerous spaces on campus and utilize their ‘queer spatial awareness’ and ‘queer spatial practice’ to *navigate* their movement through the UBC campus? and; 3) How do queer students identify and access ‘queer welcoming/friendly’ spaces, while also *negotiating* their presence through a process of weighing their sense of risk and safety on the university campus? The research not only takes place on the UBC campus, but the space itself is also a main feature of the research design and analysis. This focused examination of the

UBC campus and queer students' experiences is characteristic of a case study design, which provides the opportunity for in-depth study of a phenomenon within a bounded case (Berg, 1998; Bryman, 2004; Cohen & Court, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2011). Here, the bounded case is exemplified through the use of the campus map as one of the research materials (discussed in detail below), which ties the research questions and methods to the UBC campus and queer students' experiences within its boundaries.

Since the aim of this research is to more fully understand how queer students engage with and utilize the UBC campus as a 'queer space' it falls more in line with the case study model rather than an ethnographic approach. As Yin (2009) explains, a case study is "an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context...[but also] relies on multiple sources of evidence ...[and] benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p.18). Thus, I found that a case study approach would not only require multiple data sources (interviews, mapping, and textual sources discussed in detail below), but would also provide the opportunity to draw on the multiple theoretical tools that guide this research project, in addition to the theoretical insights which emerged from the analysis (Cohen & Court 2003). Although the primary intent of a case study is not generalizability, the goal is often to test theoretical insights about a phenomenon generated with the potential of applying this method to other cases or to use such insights more widely in future research studies (Berg 1998; Bryman 2006). Additionally, the case study approach has been successfully utilized in the exploration of sexuality in educational settings. For instance, Rhoads (1994), Blumenfeld (2006), and Evans and Broido, (1999) have explored the impact of queer sexuality within various post-secondary settings, including the ways in which coming out and campus climate affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) students' experiences of school and residence. Both Beemyn (2003a) and

Korinek (2003) examine the historical importance of sexuality through the development of gay/lesbian student groups at a US and Canadian university respectively.

RECRUITMENT: STRATEGIES AND SAMPLE OUTCOMES

Since I was interested in queer students' experiences at UBC, I decided to interview queer students from a variety of backgrounds and social positions. I was especially interested in speaking with international students, students of colour, aboriginal students, trans students and students with disabilities, as well as students who live on and off campus. I wanted to draw from a diverse group of students, one that to a certain extent would reflect the diversity of the queer student population attending UBC and in Vancouver more generally. However, I also needed to create boundaries or limits about who could participate in the study—I needed points of commonality as well as difference. To achieve this balance, I focused on recruiting full-time undergraduate students who were completing their third, fourth and possibly fifth year of study. This was to ensure that students had a minimum of two years at UBC or another post-secondary institution. My hope was that by drawing on a mix of upper-year students, they would have an increased awareness of their sexuality and potentially have reflected on their queer desires and identifications, perhaps with friends, family, or their social networks. I also expected that full-time undergraduate students, more than part-time students, would come to campus regularly to attend classes and participate in extracurricular academic or social activities. I also chose not to include graduate students since they often choose a school based on the opportunity to work with a specific faculty member or in a specific program. Graduate students are also more likely to occupy different roles on campus, such as teaching assistant, researcher, or instructor, which alters their interaction both with undergraduate students and the campus as a whole. I relied on

self-selection by undergraduate students at UBC who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two-Spirit¹¹, questioning, and queer (LGBTTQQ).

The main medium used for advertising the project was a poster that contained an inverted rainbow triangle as a marker for sexual and gender diversity (See Figure 2.1). The poster also contained text describing criteria for participation, as well as a series of labels used to identify the queer community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two-Spirit, and queer), and contact



Figure 2.1: Recruitment Poster for the research project. Created by author.

¹¹ All of the recruitment materials contained the label Two-Spirit as an invitation to any Aboriginal or Indigenous students who might also identify with this label. However, none of the students who participated used this category of identification, nor identified as Aboriginal, Indigenous or with First Nations ancestry.

information (my name, phone number and email). The poster was similar to and drew inspiration from the image of the mural I had painted in 2002 at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario (see Chapter 1). Both the rainbow¹² and the triangle¹³ have been used as symbols of gay and lesbian culture in Canada, the United States and parts of Europe. I chose to use both of these symbols to ‘catch the eye’ of students who might identify with either of the images and then self select to participate in the study. In fact, the first student who was interviewed for the project explained that they knew about the study from the posters I had circulated. JT a Chinese, androgynous, lesbian, explained:

JT: I was kind of seeing them [the posters] all around

Rachael: un-huh

TJ: ...just basically because you have that LGBT sign, you know the triangle with--

Rachael: --the rainbow?

JT: with the rainbow thing, so I'm kind of like am drawn to them.

While I recognize that this image might not be immediately recognizable to everyone, I included the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two-Spirit, and queer to correlate the image to the labels and identities often found in the queer community. As a result, the poster required that students be familiar with the meaning of the image and the labels used in the poster and was likely to have skewed the sample of queer-identified students. Perhaps other symbols or a purely text-based poster would have attracted a different cross-section of the student population. The use of symbols and images in the recruitment materials is worth further consideration, especially when research is focused on marginal populations like queer students. In addition to the poster, I designed a text-based version of the call for participants for use in email correspondence with students (See Figure 2.2). I also created a Facebook page using the poster to make my study accessible in the virtual realm and easily shared by students.

¹² The rainbow was created by Gilbert Baker in 1978 to represent a more hopeful and empowering symbol of ‘gayness’ according to the maker (Bach, 2008).

¹³ The inverted triangle is a reclaimed symbol from the Nazi concentration camps. For a detailed description see pp. 283-4 in Haeberle's (1981) article “Swastika, Pink Triangle, and Yellow Star – the destruction of sexology and the persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany.”

Devising recruitment strategies created some challenges as well as some opportunities. For instance, in addition to utilizing networks created through the queer student group, Pride UBC—their email lists, discussion groups and advertising the project in the Pride UBC office—I posted the call for participants through the Positive Space Program¹⁴ email list, which includes a number of students, staff, and faculty who have participated in the Positive Space Workshops.

EMAIL ADVERTISEMENT:

Do you self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit or queer (LGBTQT)?
Are you an upper level (3rd, 4th or 5th year), full-time undergraduate student at UBC?
Are you 19 years or older?

My name is Rachael Sullivan, a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology. For my dissertation project, I am interested in gaining a better understanding of the relationship between sexuality and educational space.

How does the UBC campus matter to you?

If you are interested in answering this question, please join me for an interview about your experiences at UBC. The expected time needed for an interview is about two hours. The information gathered will provide input on how campus spaces are used and how to make these spaces more welcoming for yourself and future LGBTQT students.

For more information or to participate in this study, please email queerspaces.ubc@gmail.com
All personal information will be kept strictly confidential.

Figure 2.2: Email advertisement sent to students in various undergraduate programs

While I was happy to advertise the study in these formal queer and trans positive settings, I also decided to communicate the call for participants more broadly across campus. To accomplish this, I contacted 38 academic units, asking for assistance in reaching out to queer students in their program, department, and/or faculty. This was done to ensure that students outside of my home department of Sociology would know about and participate in the project. For the most part, I received positive feedback and help distributing recruitment materials from many department

¹⁴ As noted in Chapter 1, the Positive Space Campaign is a workshop based program that works to raise awareness and visibility of sexual and gender diversity across the UBC campus. For more information see: <http://www.positivespace.ubc.ca/> (last accessed, June 11, 2010).

administrators and faculty members. Only in one case did a faculty member, in the Faculty of Science, ask me to confirm, via my supervisor, that this project was indeed ‘a bona fide exercise.’ While the undertone of the faculty member’s request suggested his desire was to protect the students of his program from improper research, the implication of this demand (at least for me) was to question the legitimacy for conducting research on issues of sexuality at UBC. Luckily, the issue was resolved quickly with a concise email from my supervisor, Dr. Becki Ross, who vouched for the legitimacy of this project. This incident verified for me that research about queer sexualities may still be suspect, and also offers hints about the hostility that I have heard other researchers interested in issues of queer sexuality face at UBC. It also underlined the ways in which my recruitment materials and practices were ‘queering’ different spaces on the campus.

In addition to utilizing academic networks, I taped and stapled roughly two hundred posters across campus, which included a combination of administrative, classroom, and student service spaces. I also sent posters to the residence administration for approval and placement in various residences¹⁵ across campus. I also asked that my call for participants be emailed specifically to students on the Disability Resource Centre’s (DRC)¹⁶ contact list to encourage queer students with disabilities to participate; I left flyers advertising the study at the DRC reception desk in the Access & Diversity office. As a student who uses the DRC for learning disability accommodation, I expected to receive an email for my own study, but never did, making it unclear if the email was actually sent out or not. Nevertheless, one student did refer to my flyer in the Access & Diversity office. In addition, I also drew on students’ social and

¹⁵ I submitted 25 posters and these needed to be approved by an administrator within the ‘Residence Life’ unit. Due to this approval procedure, I was unable to place these posters in any of the eight possible residence buildings or complexes (Totem Park, Place Vanier, Rits-UBC, Walter Gage, Fairview Crescent, Acadia, Marine Drive, and Thunder Bird). As a result, I do not know which of the residences received posters and which went without.

¹⁶ The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) contains the Disability Services as part of the Access & Diversity office, which works to provide all students equitable access to university resources (see <http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/disability-services/> [last accessed June 10, 2012])

political networks by sending out 308 emails advertising the research study to active student groups¹⁷ within the Alma Mater Society (AMS)—the student government for undergraduate students. After sending out emails, I dropped off smaller versions of the poster to club offices, hoping to entice students from varied backgrounds, or queer-identified students who were active in non-queer social, cultural and/or political associations on campus. Overall, I distributed the call for participants as widely as possible across the UBC campus. This required thinking about the different dimensions of the campus and how students access information at school. A number of students contacted me as a result of my efforts, suggesting that communicating the call for participants through these various modes was successful in generating interest in the project.

Sample Outcomes: Identifying Features of the Sample Population

A total of 26 UBC students were interviewed for the project. For the most part, the students who participated in the interview and mapping exercise represented a mix of the student population in terms of sexuality, age, and academic background. Participants in the study varied in age from eighteen to twenty-nine years old; the majority fell between twenty and twenty two years old (fourteen in total) when the interviews took place. Although a majority of students identified as male, a smaller proportion identified as female and three students identified themselves using labels outside of the gender binary (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Gender Identification				
Androgynous	Female	Male	Trans	Gay
1	9	14	1	1

I purposely asked ‘how do you identify your gender?’ to allow for more variation beyond the male/female binary and three students took the opportunity to identify as trans, androgynous, and gay. When I asked the student, Trekkie, why they chose ‘gay’ as a gender, they responded: “I try

¹⁷ A current list of student groups can be found at <http://www.ams.ubc.ca/campus-life/clubs/> (last accessed June 10, 2012).

and get away from using male and female because I think there are more than two genders. And that gender isn't a clearly definable thing. And so I just say gay [laughs].” Also, the trans student preferred the use of male pronouns in the analysis and discussion of his comments from the interviews.

When asked about sexuality, there was more variation in the labels generated by students. As presented in Table 2.2, a majority of students identified as queer, lesbian, or gay.

Table 2.2: Sexual Identification						
Queer	Lesbian	Gay	Homosexual or Gay	Gay or Queer	Bi-romantic Asexual	Bisexual
7	4	11	1	1	1	1

However, four students identified as homosexual or gay, gay or queer, bi-romantic asexual, and bisexual. This provided an opportunity for students to describe their sexuality in alternative ways and how they understood their sexual selves at the time of the interview. In some cases, students would use a number of categories (eg. queer/gay/lesbian), illustrating their understanding of the fluidity and complexity of sexual identity categories.

Similarly, class was a diverse category for the queer students who were interviewed. They relied mainly on their family’s social position when they selected from the list I provided: low-income, working class, middle class, or upper class. As shown in Table 2.3, students also combined the class categories provided to more adequately represent how their families’ socio-

Table 2.3: Class Identification						
Low-Income to Working Class	Working to Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle to Upper Class	Upper Class	Well-to-do	Not asked
3	2	12	5	2	1	1

economic position. Nearly half of the students interviewed identified their families as middle class (12); three students identified their families as upper class or well-to-do; and three students identified their families as low-income to working class. The modified categories of working to

middle class (two students) and middle to upper class (five students) suggest a sense of movement between class categories from the students' perspectives. The large number of middle, middle to upper, and upper class families (21 of 26 students interviewed) is not surprising for students attending UBC, which is an elite university in the province and in Canada more generally.

With regard to several categories, there was little diversity in how the students identified. For instance, only two students identified as having a disability, while two other students identified themselves as familiar with the Deaf community. Although they were not hearing impaired, they were either taking American Sign Language (ASL) classes or knew ASL. Moreover, the race and ethnicity category (see Table 2.4) saw a majority of students identify as Caucasian, white or a combination of each term, totaling nineteen out of the twenty-six students interviewed with one subtle variation of Eastern European in the categories provided by students.

Table 2.4: Race and Ethnic Identifications								
Caucasian	Chinese	Chinese-Canadian	Chinese (Singapore)	Eastern European	Indian (South Asian)	White	White/Caucasian	Other/mixed
13	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	2

Three students identified as Chinese (Canadian and Singaporean), while one student identified as Indian (South Asian) and two students identified as mixed-race¹⁸. A similar pattern emerged in terms of citizenship (see Table 2.5) whereby a number of students identified as Canadian (16); two students held dual Canadian and American citizenship; three students identified as American; two students held multiple citizenships including Canadian; one was a landed immigrant from (Singapore); and one international student participated in the study while at UBC on exchange from Germany.

¹⁸ 'Mixed' was the term used by two students to describe their race/ethnicity; for one student this described their mixed white and African American ancestry; the other student did not elaborate on this.

Table 2.5: Citizenship							
American	Australian	Canadian	Canadian/Brazilian	CAN/USA	CAN/USA/UK	German	Not asked
3	1	16	1	2	1	1	1

Although UBC does not specify the racial or ethnic diversity of the student population, it does publish statistics on the citizenship of international students attending UBC, noting that nearly 20% of the international student population is American. Other nationalities, especially Chinese, Japanese and Korean, are the next largest groups that make up the international student body at UBC (Ridge & Sudmant, 2010).

Lastly, over half of the students who participated were studying in the Faculty of Arts; the remaining students were from professional schools such as Business and Pharmacology, as well as the Faculties of Science and Applied Science. Aside from the over-representation of whiteness and students without a disability making up the sample population, there was a mix of students from across campus, which was one of the intended goals of my recruitment strategies. There was also a mixture of upper-level students with a majority of students classified as working through their third year (13 students), fourth year (four students), fifth year (six students), and one student in the second year of their second undergraduate program.¹⁹ Finally, two students disclosed mid-interview that they were not officially enrolled at UBC during the interview but had been enrolled as full-time students in the previous academic year. Despite their enrolment status at the time of the interview, these two students were active on campus and self-selected to be part of the project²⁰.

¹⁹ This first undergraduate degree was completed at another institution.

²⁰ Although I could have stopped the interview as the students did not meet the enrolment criteria, I wondered why they had stayed so involved on campus despite their enrolment status. In both cases, the students had expected to return to full-time student status at UBC in the next academic year and did not want to disrupt the social and political commitments they had made.

At the same time as most of my recruitment objectives were met, the criteria that students needed to meet to participate in the interviews (full-time, undergraduate student in at least their third year of post-secondary education) did prevent some students from a variety of backgrounds from participating. I had a number of graduate students express their disappointment in not being able to participate, as well as a couple of second-year undergraduate students—all of whom would have diversified the student population for the study. I have provided a list of participants, their age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, and sexual identifications in Appendix A.

Reflecting on the Outcomes: Strategies and Approaches

As noted above, there was a lack of racial diversity in my sample relative to the UBC student population, including a complete lack of students who identified as Aboriginal or Black. There are a number of possible explanations for this absence, including the fact that the poster and/or the call for participants did not ‘speak to’ or invite Aboriginal and/or Black students on campus to participate in the project. My own whiteness and connection to specific networks likely inhibited my ability to access Aboriginal and Black students who identified along the queer spectrum. In an effort to advertise the project to Black students, I sent the recruitment materials to the Africa Awareness²¹ student group, but I was otherwise unsure of how to reach out to Black students across campus—further illustrating how my own whiteness and networks limited how the project was advertised. In the same vein, I followed up with faculty members connected to the First Nations House of Learning and First Nations Studies Program to confirm that I had advertised the project widely to the Aboriginal student population. Indeed, the faculty and administrative people whom I talked to assured me that I had utilized all possible channels,

²¹ More information about Africa Awareness can be found here: <http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/race-ethnicity/get-involved/> (last accessed Jan. 22, 2011).

but this experience has highlighted for me the tenuous relationship between the university and Aboriginal students²², as well as my inability to access this network of students.

I suspect that the usage of the term ‘queer’ and the symbol of the rainbow triangle had unintended consequences for attracting a more diverse student population. As Kumashiro (2001) demonstrates, the use of queer can obscure the multiple differences between people in that it “fail[s] to contest ways that other identities are already privileged in society” (p.4). As a result, the symbols and language I used to invite students to speak with me could have replicated this dominant understanding of sexuality and discouraged non-white students from participating. This is not a unique problem; Collins (2005) argues that this reflects larger societal trends about race and sexuality where constructions of sexuality are linked to and shaped by racist ideology, and negative stereotypes such as black hyper-sexuality. Perhaps if I could have conveyed my commitment to anti-oppressive and antiracist feminist activism through these materials or my participation in different networks on campus, I might have attracted greater racial/ethnic diversity to the student sample. The lack of racial diversity amongst the students who participated could emphasize a link between queerness and whiteness: white students who also identified within the queer spectrum felt privileged enough to speak about their experiences, unlike ‘students of colour’ and Aboriginal students.

Lastly, the inclusion of one trans student and my use of the term queer to describe all of the students who participated in this project came about for two reasons. I acknowledge the issues and barriers that trans-people face in our dual gender system. As Shelley (2008) explains,

²² Although the university President and other administrators have stated publicly that “UBC is dedicated to making its vast resources more accessible to Aboriginal people, and to improving its ability to meet their educational needs” (University of British Columbia, 2012c), the university does not officially compile information on the Aboriginal student population. This was confirmed in the First Nations House of Learning Annual Report for 2002. At that time, the First Nations House of Learning administrators were able to determine that there were roughly 392 Aboriginal Students attending UBC in various facilities and programs. For more information, see (Vedan, 2002). As a result, it makes understanding and quantifying how large and involved Aboriginal students are on campus difficult.

people who identify as transgender, transsexual, cross-dressers, intersexed, Two-Spirit, and genderqueer, have gender identities and expressions that transgress or exceed the static male/female binary. Yet as Shelley (2008) clarifies, many trans-people, regardless of their gender identification, face repudiation from others based on gender identity and expression, thus he uses 'trans' as an umbrella term for this community. Moreover, the inclusion of trans-people within LGB and queer theories, communities, resources, and services has been marginal at best (Beemyn, 2003b; Shelley, 2008). Knowing that the needs and experiences of trans-people have been infrequently and inconsistently included in research on sexuality, especially on campus (see Beemyn, 2003b, 2005; Pusch, 2005 for exceptions), I was eager to include trans-people in this research project. While I was elated to have one student who identified as trans, his singular voice cannot account for the multiple and distinct experiences of all trans-people on campus. Without more trans-people in the study, I cannot ethically or empirically make claims about the experiences of trans-people at UBC.

Second, I have chosen to use the term queer to refer to all the students because, for me, the term captured the complexity of gender and sexuality. If one's sexual desire is dependent on the gender of the other person, then sexuality (or gender) can never be extricated from this dynamic relationship. Not only are gender and sexuality constitutive, they are constructed in ways that support inequality and hierarchical understandings of heterosexuality. I have adopted the umbrella term queer throughout the dissertation to refer to all the students who participated in the study, as well as students who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and/or questioning (LGBTQQ) in other contexts as their main identification categories.²³ In addition to this, I was buoyed by how Eddie, who identifies as trans, reflected on his understanding of queer:

I view my sexuality through the umbrella term queer, because I don't know when I started becoming more sexually active, I hadn't teased everything together about my gender yet

²³ No students explicitly rejected the term queer.

so I was like ‘oh, I’m bisexual, oh I’m gay...maybe. I’m not gay.’ So...um, yeah, I would define it as queer. I am mainly attracted to women but open to the idea, that is, I became more interested in men when I thought that a male on male relationship could take place. Rather than me being a female with a male.

From Eddie’s contemplation on the matter, I felt that using the term queer in this way would make a positive contribution. In this instance, queer seems to be the best term to use when describing Eddie’s sexuality and sexual desires since it does not rely on the binary gender system, but still provides resistance to the Western heteronormative. Thus, queer is a useful term for capturing the fluidity of sexuality, the desires, practices, and identifications that occur outside the normalizing force of heterosexuality (see Bell & Valentine, 1995; Kramer, 1995; Rankin, 2004, pg. n.1, similar uses of the term queer). In the end, the queer students who self-selected into the research project shared certain commonalities, but were diverse in other ways.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWING: FEMINIST INTERVENTIONS AND PRACTICES

The practice of interviewing is an important method for gathering qualitative data. My use of semi-structured in-depth interviews limited my ability to quantify the results of the interviews. However, it was my desire to work with a smaller population; as Hesse-Biber (2007) explains, “the goal is to look at a ‘process’ of the ‘meanings’ individuals attribute to their given social situation...” (p. 119). In-depth interviews provide an opportunity for accessing ‘meaning’ and ‘process’ in terms of how students understood and engaged with the campus as a queer space. Additionally, employing feminist insights in the interview process required my commitment to being reflexive of, and attuned to, my own position of power, and how this affected the shape and tone of the research project overall. As (Kirsch, 1999) argues,

we [as feminist researchers] need to examine how the personal shapes theory and research, our relations with those we study, our interpretation of data, our presentation of findings... and finally, our own complicities in the institutional power structures we wish to interrogate and change (p. 80).

In this case, I needed to consider not only my relation to the students who agreed to participate in an interview with me, but also the questions I asked. In designing the interview schedule (see Appendix B), I knew I needed to be sensitive when asking students about their identities, and sexualities, alongside experiences of safety, danger, and risk at UBC. While I was worried at first about students' reactions, I came to see that my willingness to engage in such explicit discussions enabled the participants to discuss their experiences with me without shame or fear. By viewing the interview as a collaborative process (Oakley, 1981; Gill Valentine, 2002), I knew my approach to these issues would influence how students engaged with them. At the same time, I also needed to be aware and prepared to follow students' lead in what they were willing or unwilling to talk about. In fact, certain issues and conversations were excluded by request of the student(s), and I honoured these requests.

Overall, the interviews took between two and four hours to complete, including the mapping exercise (discussed below). All interviews were recorded, by permission, on a digital audio recorder for transcription and analysis later on. Once interview times and locations were set and I had sent a consent form for the students' review via email, I met with students to begin the interview. Once the interview was completed, I provided a \$5.00 gift card to the student-run, student-funded food services located in the Student Union Building (SUB) as a token of appreciation for the time and effort students put into the interview process. Since I did not advertise this small token, the students were often willing to participate without the expectation of any financial or material gain, which affirms the salience of talking about sexuality, educational space, and safety at UBC.

Given the importance of space in this project, it was imperative that the interviews actually took place on the UBC campus. The location of the interviews also had an effect on the interview process and how students perceived me. Seventeen out of the 26 interviews were

conducted in a faculty member's office with the door closed, which I had access to for the duration of the 2009/2010 academic year. The authority that this space conferred on me was not lost on students, but was only ever addressed at the end of the interview. It was at this point when students asked about my relation to the office, often commenting about how nice the office was and inquiring how I had found the time to read nearly 500 books, which lined most of the office walls from floor to ceiling. Unfortunately, I rarely thought to challenge these associations or make students aware at the outset that this was not 'my office,' but one that was lent to me. Although this setting was ideal for interviews because it provided a certain amount of privacy, I also conducted several interviews in a quiet corner of the library, a restaurant, coffee shop, and meeting spaces in the SUB. These spaces were more public and the chances of interruption increased. In these more public spaces, I felt that students were more aware of our surroundings, as was I, and I believe that this changed how students shared their stories. Often students and I would lean in and create a more intimate environment for the sharing of important and private details. In some ways this created a kind of collaboration through body language, an act of sharing a secret which is usually kept for, what Kirsch (2005) has described as "close relationships with interviewees... [who are more likely] to reveal personal thoughts or feelings" in an interview setting (p. 2164). In the faculty office, there was no need to be physically close as sharing the confines of the room created the privacy needed to discuss romantic liaisons, family disputes, or revelations about one's sexuality.

As mentioned above, my interactions with undergraduate students were shaped by both the various roles I had occupied on campus as well as my own social location as a white, queer, female graduate student and researcher within the interview setting. These rules, in turn, fashioned my connection to important social networks, and granted me access to some, but not all, queer students on campus. The location of oneself as 'insider' or 'outsider' to a research

population has been debated within feminist research practices for some time (see DeVault, 1999; Marshall, 2002; Naples, 2003; Valentine, 2002). Indeed, as a researcher, capitalizing on one's similarities is a useful strategy in terms of gaining access to a specific population, especially if it is a marginal group. However, there are a number of issues to consider when employing this approach. For instance, relying on similarities between research and participant/community groups can obscure important differences, including power differentials and the multiple ways in which all members of the research process are located both within and outside of the project. Thus, understanding insider/outsiderness as shifting and fluid means that interactions between researcher and participant are always "constantly being negotiated and renegotiated in particular, everyday interactions; and these interactions are themselves enacted in shifting relationships..." (Naples 2003, p. 49). Moreover, a sense of sameness (insider) and difference (outsider) between the student and myself extended beyond gender, race, class, religion or ability. I found that throughout the interview with each student that there were moments where we had a shared understanding or similar experience, and at other times I needed to ask more questions for clarification. There were other times of disconnection either on my part or the student's that could not be reconciled within the interview. I often encountered this when students had travelled to places where I had not, when our age differences became especially apparent, or when their experiences were shaped by economic means which differed from my own family's opportunities. It was at these times that I felt completely different from the participant—unable to locate parallels or moments of commonality through which we could build rapport.

To further cultivate a sense of reciprocity beyond sameness and difference, I asked students if they had questions for me, and I assured them that they could ask anything. Many students took me up on this offer and asked about the details of the research project and how the

information might be used; some students asked about my partner or my experiences being out on campus. As Hesse-Biber (2007) explains “the idea of sharing identities and stories with one another is thought to increase reciprocity and rapport in the interview process, thus breaking down the notions of power and authority invested in the role of the researcher” (p.128). Indeed, I did my best to answer the questions openly and honestly as my intention was to make aspects of my life accessible to students, echoing the trust they had shared with me in the interview. However, I had difficulty shifting out of the ‘expert’ or mentor role, as in one interview when a student asked for my advice on a relationship issue that they were dealing with at the time. It was an unexpected question, but I offered a reading of the situation that I hoped would provide insight without actually providing advice or a plan of action for fear of overstepping my role as researcher. In future research, I hope to offer informants the opportunity to review transcripts or portions of the analysis which feature their voices, and to grapple with any disagreements about interpretation and representation (Borland, 1991; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Kennedy, E., & Davis, 1996; Mccorkel & Myers, 2003).

Making Connections: Participant/Researcher Intimate Interactions

A unique aspect of this project was its location on the UBC campus and my interaction with students outside of the project or interview setting. Over several months (September 2009 to April 2010) I interviewed students at the same time as I was involved in various activities on the campus. Hence, in the interviews, different students knew me in different ways and I needed to negotiate this power differential accordingly. Although Lal (1996) and Pillow (2003) suggest that these power differences can never be resolved or transgressed, I accounted for my authority and privileged position as a graduate student and researcher for this project. This was especially important as the students and I continued to share the campus and social networks long after the ‘one time only’ interviews had taken place. Reflecting on this unique dimension of the research

setting, I have realized that engaging in this type of research means developing intimate relationships with students, even those who were strangers when the interview took place.

From reading Newton's (1996) canonical text "My Best Informant's Dress," I had a cursory understanding of the 'erotics of research' where the researcher is 'supposed' to be upfront and clear about the intimate dynamics within the researcher-participant relationship. However, I was not prepared for the level of intimacy that quickly developed between each student and myself within the interview and how this carried into our everyday/night lives on the UBC campus and beyond. Certainly, the combination of asking about growing up, family, sex, sexuality, and romantic relationships, in addition to the lengthy and intense interview process, meant that I quickly got to know students better than I would have otherwise. Although this was the first time that I had met some students, others I had already known for a number of years. In either case, the intimacy that developed in these interviews had an impact on my relationships with these students both within the interview and well after. At times, I was surprised by what students were willing to share with me. I knew that I was asking risky and revealing questions; however, students bravely and eagerly shared their stories of unrequited love, family drama, mental health issues, and the emotions that come with telling one's story.

I did my best to be encouraging but also respectful of how much students were willing to tell me. On the one hand, I did not want to push for details when students appeared to be uncomfortable. Yet, on the other, I felt the pull of my role as researcher and the need to ask more questions for the sake of the project. This dilemma is what Stacey (1991) described as the "exploitative aspect of ethnographic research... [where the details] that fieldwork informants share with a researcher are ultimately data—grist for the ethnographic mill, a mill that has a truly grinding power" (p. 113). Indeed, at times I felt the grinding power of the interviews I conducted, especially when students disclosed previous instances of sexual assault or of verbal or

psychological abuse in love and/or familial relationships. Much of this was framed in the past and there was no need for me to intervene²⁴, but I still felt a responsibility to the students and a desire to share compassion and commiseration depending on the stories shared. In anticipation of such disclosures, I secured permission to distribute contact information for counselling resources both on and off campus. A list of these resources was included with each consent letter, which was both emailed and provided in hard copy for students' use.

Not surprisingly, the intimate information shared by me and by the students had an impact on how we interacted outside of the interview. At times, it meant that some students would want to 'catch-me-up' on how things had developed in their lives since the interview. In other cases, the interaction was much friendlier and took the form of hugging, flirting and/or teasing with these students because we had 'insider' knowledge about each others' lives. Sometimes, these interactions were difficult to explain away without revealing the student's participation in the project so it was up to us, in that moment, to make something up. While Newton (1996) boldly describes her attraction to and adoration for her 'best informant', I am struck by how some students vied for my attention and interaction after the interview. On the one hand, I needed to respect and respond to the attention directed toward me; on the other hand, I also needed to gently construct some boundaries. Reflecting on these experiences, I realize now I was ill-prepared to consider how my desire to be a 'proper' social researcher where "erotic interest between field worker and informant didn't exist, would be inappropriate, or couldn't be mentioned" (Newton 1996, p. 213) for these new and different interactions. There have been times since the interviews were completed where participants would show up, often unexpectedly, in my social life outside of the university. Even during these casual encounters, I

²⁴ The act of intervening is one that is laden with feminist ethical dilemmas (see Roman 1993); however, I was prepared to connect students with resources both within and outside of the university beyond what had been provided in the letter of consent.

became aware of the intimate knowledge I had about them and struggled with how best to respect this knowledge. For the most part, I have followed the student's lead in terms of how to interact, but I also took some extra time to catch up with them in order to honour our time together during the research process. As a result, I have become more aware of the intimate and erotic nature of the interview and research process. This is especially evident when I think through how interaction in interviews can (re)shape future interactions with informants in different contexts, and how it extends beyond the campus into everyday/night interactions with students.

Turning to the mapping exercise, I explore the effective use of maps within the interview setting. Typically the mapping exercise was deployed in the last third of the interview and marked the transition between students' experiences on campus and a specific discussion of their understanding of safety, danger and risk on the UBC campus.

QUEERING THE MAP: LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES IN TECHNICOLOR

My focus on the relationship between the physical and social spaces of the university campus and students' sexual subjectivities provided a specific methodological challenge: how could I invite students to think, concretely, about the space of the UBC campus in relation to their queer subjectivities and experiences? I had read about 'go-along' interviews (Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003) where the researcher and informant walk and talk through a specific setting. Another possibility included participatory photo mapping (PPM) (Back, 2007; Dennis, Gaulocher, Carpiano, & Brown, 2009) where informants are encouraged to take pictures of various places and spaces to capture their engagement with the space and place. Both of these methods required more resources and time than either I or the students could afford and were hence impractical. Therefore, I needed an approach that would allow me to bring the entire

campus into view, without having to spend time walking around a site that is almost 1000 acres (4.02 KM squared)²⁵, or having to ask students to meet with me more than once.

To solve my dilemma, I created a mapping exercise that would allow students to overlay their perceptions and experiences onto a standard issue 2008 version of the UBC campus map (See Appendix C). I chose this particular version because copies were readily available across the campus. These maps are made and distributed by the Campus and Community Planning²⁶ unit which oversees all changes to the physical spaces on the UBC campus. To complete the mapping exercise, I drew on Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad—perceived, conceived, and lived dimensions of social space—to connect students' understanding of the university campus with the actual map that describes the landscape they inhabit while on campus. To this end, I asked students to colour code the map using the following legend:

- Green: everyday or weekly spaces
- Yellow: once a month or 2-3 times a semester
- Purple: areas never visited
- Pink: queer, queer welcoming, queer friendly
- Red: places/spaces to be avoided

Here, students were encouraged to outline or colour in the areas on the map that corresponded to the colour code. I asked them to indicate which parts of campus they frequently or rarely used, as well as important spaces they identified as queer, queer welcoming or queer friendly and those spaces which they avoided.

While the results of the mapping exercise are discussed in greater detail in Chapters Four and Five, here it is important to discuss how and why I developed this method, together with its limitations and possibilities. Documenting the students' perceptions of the university campus has helped to preserve how they saw the campus at that point in their university career at UBC. This

²⁵ For more information see <http://www.ubc.ca/vancouver/about/> (last accessed June 10, 2012).

²⁶ For more information about this administrative department at UBC see <http://www.planning.ubc.ca/> (last accessed June 10, 2012)

method also provided an opportunity for students to make the categories of risk, safety, danger, and queerness salient, within their reading of the campus map, and it offered a way of translating and capturing queer students' understandings of and engagement with the UBC campus. Each of the 26 maps is unique in the configuration of colour and pattern but similar in the information provided (see Appendix D for an example). By asking queer students to include their personal experiences and understandings, I learned how the standard UBC campus map could be remade to make visible how certain queer students understand the UBC campus.

Oftentimes, places have multiple meanings and uses and this variability is always contextual. Social spaces can be both visceral and cerebral in their experience—it is a difficult process to capture through language alone. In fact, Rose (1993) and Massey (1994) have both argued that space is constructed out of social relations, which are already imbued with a multiplicity of power dynamics that act on and through individual subjects. Moreover, Harvey (2000) argues that,

mapping space is a fundamental prerequisite to the structuring of any kind of knowledge. All talk about 'situatedness', 'location' and 'positionality' is meaningless without a mapping of the space in which those situations, locations and positions occur. And this is equally true no matter whether the space being mapped is metaphorical or real (Harvey 2000, pp. 111-12, cited in Pickles 2004, pp.18-19).

When I asked students about their experiences on the UBC campus, it was helpful to have a visual aid to connect the physical aspects of the university campus—residential, social, and pedagogical—to the discussion at hand.

Although maps are useful as a visual aid, they also contain codes and knowledge that organize spaces in particular ways. In her discussion of the use of maps for land claims and the making of Stanley Park in Vancouver BC, Mawani (2003) states “mapping is a form of power...[where] maps did not only produce spaces but also facilitated the creation of corresponding colonial identities” (p. 102-103). Indeed, there is a great deal that a map can

obscure, including time-space relations as well as the complexity of every day/night lived life. For instance, there is no indication that UBC is located on *unceded* Musqueam First Nations territory²⁷. This is a fact that is rarely alluded to in official UBC policy or documentation and is not included on the current UBC campus map. The silence about UBC's colonial history is troubling as it has worked to erase how UBC came to be located on the Point Grey peninsula. This absence further illustrates how maps work to conceal these power relations. According to Pickles (2004):

Maps work by naturalizing themselves by reproducing a particular sign system and at the same time treating that sign system as natural and given. But, map knowledge is never naively given. It has to be learned and the mapping codes and skills have to be culturally reproduced so that the map is able to present us with a reality that we recognize and know... The map points us to a world that we might come to know provided we are willing to learn and accept—to 'buy into'—this system of symbols and icons, a coded world in which particular meaning and information is presented (p. 60-61).

This description is particularly salient for social researchers interested in questions about space and place. Not only does it account for the ways in which maps are social and symbolic productions, but also how they work to 'naturalize' the relations of power that are used to construct maps such as the one of UBC. Hence, the map as artifact is a representation of a physical landscape, but one that can never really, fully represent complex, diverse, and conflicting information and meaning. Thus, asking students to remake the map worked to reveal some of the complicated ways that queerness and educational space overlap as the queer students come to understand and engage in the UBC campus.

Although maps and mapping have limitations related to representation, I would like to return to Lefebvre's spatial triad (conceived, perceived and lived dimensions of social space) to explain how the remaking of the map is a queer process. For instance, the standard UBC campus

²⁷ According to Dara Kelly this means "...[the land] was never surrendered and, therefore, every member of the student, faculty, staff and departmental body should always be mindful not only of the contentious past of the university's relationship with First Nations, but also of the current state" (Kelly, 2007, p.9).

map is illustrative of the conceived dimension of social space because it contains the abstract logics, codes, and representations of physical space (buildings, roads, and parking lots) of the campus. In comparison, the ways in which students' remade maps demonstrate the perceived dimension of social space, because these maps include the experiences of queer students, and their understanding and engagement with the campus. Not only does this 'remaking' personalize the map, but it also highlights the social practices associated with certain spaces, especially in the way that some spaces across campus came to be associated with a queer welcome(ness)/friendliness, while other spaces were to be avoided. Lastly, the lived dimension of social space is captured in the *act* of remaking the map. For example, students revealed the complexity of their 'lived experience' and personalized this artifact to convey individual experiences, rather than a tautological understanding of the campus landscape. The resulting map is a re-coded version of the original, hegemonic map where queer possibilities are made visible. For instance, the Student Union Building (SUB) was identified by 25 of the 26 students who participated in the mapping exercise.

In the end, the mapping exercise is a queer act where queer students are asked to 'mess' with the boundaries outlined in the standard UBC campus map, and to include their own interpretations and queer realizations about what these spaces mean to them. This point is important because, while the use of a map does not necessarily fit within the post-structural feminist and queer theoretical traditions that inform this project, the exercise offers some ways for critiquing the (in)ability of the university, as an institution, to make room for the experiences of queer and other marginalized students. Despite the limitations noted above associated with using maps in social research, I argue that developing this 'mapping exercise' shifts the emphasis from the authority of the university represented in the standard UBC campus publications to the authority of the queer students who participated in the research process. The data generated from

this method has helped me to conceptualize the university campus in specific ways that related to how queer students experience the campus for themselves. At the same time, the act of remaking the map fits into Lefebvre's spatial triad, bringing theory and method together in a creative and innovative way. Thus, by asking students to add their perspectives to the campus map, I provided another medium for students to convey their subjective experience of the UBC campus. This alternative expression positions students as the authors of their own conceptual maps and invites them to reflect on their engagement with the campus as a site of danger, risk, and safety. Overall, this method facilitated an important link between discussions about queer students' experiences as sexual selves to thinking and talking about their location and use of campus space.

TEXTUAL MATERIALS AND ARCHIVAL SOURCES: CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Although this project is focused on the spatial relations between queer students and the campus, texts play an important part in how these relations are organized in the university setting. Texts provide information about policy, expectations, and clues for understanding how sexuality and gender work within this institution. In fact, as Smith (2006) explains, incorporating texts into this kind of research "enables [us] to reach beyond the locally observable and discoverable into the translocal social relations and organization that permeate and control the local" (p.65). In other words, texts become another source to understand how people's lives are discursively shaped and organized in specific ways at particular times. This is especially important in institutional settings where administrators from within the institution have prescribed expectations and normative behaviour through policies and codes of conduct. For this reason, I have focused on two institutional documents: *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan* (2010), which is the mission statement that guides institutional practices at all levels on the UBC campus; and *Valuing Difference: A Strategy for Advancing Equity and Diversity at UBC*, (2010), an extension of *Place and Promise*. Together these documents provide the institutional

framework for members of the university community to address and resolve issues of equity, access, and tolerance at UBC.

Archives and other textual materials found online can be important sites for data collection within a case study. These texts provide a foundation for what Weeks (1985) describes as the historical present where “the fundamental connections of history and politics [work] to grasp the ways in which the past has a hold on, organizes and defines the contemporary memory” (p.10). Here, Weeks’ understanding of the ‘historical present’ guides my exploration of both historical documents and present texts that address issues of sexuality at UBC. Where relevant, I draw from newspaper articles in *The Ubyyssey*, the main student newspaper; Vancouver’s LGBTQ newspaper *Xtra West*; and mainstream newspapers such as *The Globe and Mail*, *The Vancouver Sun*, and *The Toronto Sun* as important sources for understanding how issues of sexual diversity have been shaped by both the current and past contexts at UBC. Franzosi (1987) argues “newspapers as a source of historical data, [...] often constitute the only available source of information” (p.6). Thus, in developing a research strategy that would enable me to access the often marginal voices of queer students over time, and the specific context in which actions took place, I needed texts that were directly related to the institution I was studying. The student newspaper, *The Ubyyssey*, has since 1919 provided a forum for students, both as staff writers or members of the student population, and I have drawn on articles to provide the necessary background context for how sexual and gender diversity has been taken up on campus. Most importantly, the student newspaper provided only one of a few institutionalized forums for students to share opinions and criticisms of an institution in which they participate on a daily basis. Although much of this work was used to construct the historical context in which gay, lesbian, and queer issues were explored on campus in Chapter One, the student newspaper is an ideal resource for future research projects.

In researching sexuality and student lives at UBC, I have been unable to locate previous scholarly research either from published works, unpublished theses, or undergraduate papers to provide the necessary groundwork and context for this project. Not only does a lack of relevant historical work highlight the precarious nature of exploring the history of marginalized groups, but it also suggests that these issues may not be considered relevant to decision makers at the university. In order for there to be relevant documents and historical materials about gay and lesbian student life at UBC, queer issues need to be understood as important to research and explore within the university context. To remedy this erasure, I begin to provide a foundation for other researchers to utilize in their own exploration of sexual and gender diversity, and student activism on the UBC campus.

WRITING UP: ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS AND DATA ANALYSIS FOR THE FINAL PROJECT

Analyzing and writing up all empirical data has been a daunting task, fraught with issues of power and voice. Here, echoing what many feminists have argued, my role as a researcher requires that I follow through with my intellectual and academic responsibilities to analyze, interpret, and use the findings to contribute both to the academic field and to the betterment of queer students' lives at UBC and beyond (Lal, 1996; Roman, 1993; Stacey, 1991). While I retain the power and authority to interpret and explain participants' lived experiences, the weight of adequately representing the lives of queer students is heavy once the interview and data collection process has ended (Hesse-Biber 2007). The responsibility of representation through the final text, this dissertation, is an important part of how feminist practices continue into the analysis and writing up phases of research work.

Drawing on the work of Alcoff (1991), Borland (1991), and Lal (1996), I recognize the importance of my role as researcher in this complex process of analyzing and writing up the

project. Here, my intention is not to speak *for* the students who participated in this research project (Alcoff 1991). Rather, the goal is to de-centre myself as the *only* authority in the text by being open to and taking seriously how interview participants wanted to be represented. As Lal (1996) argues, “we need to acknowledge this agency, to treat the researched as subjects with whom we are engaged in a *mutual*, though unequal” relationship (p. 205). This is an important statement about the nature of the researcher and participant relationship that continues beyond the interview setting. The recorded discussions provide both the data that is analyzed, but also the context in which the interview took place. Since time has passed between the interviews and the process of analysis and writing up, I need to remember and understand that students’ lives or their understandings are likely to have changed since the interview (Borland 1991). Thus, by accounting for my position, power, and authority, as I have done throughout this chapter, I hope to make room for students’ voices and their representations of themselves within this research project.

In an effort to keep the students’ voices and their representation active in the data analysis and writing up stages, I have employed several techniques and strategies. The process of transcription, turning the recorded interviews into text, offered a unique moment to engage with the data and revisit the interviews. Here, I kept a small notebook with me in order to keep track of the transcription process (where and when I stopped or started), and as a place to list any insights or common themes that emerged as I moved through the interviews. This strategy was ideal for capturing reflections on a student’s comments, our interaction, as well as my reaction on tape and while transcribing. I have kept a similar notebook for my reflections while coding the interviews. I wanted to have a place to reflect on the themes and categories that were emerging as I worked through the text of the interviews. Although I did not use a coding software package, I used a systematic reading of the interviews, maps, and newspaper articles

which revealed specific themes that lead to specific concepts like ‘queer spatial awareness’ and ‘queer spatial practices.’ To help organize the mapping and textual data, I have employed charts, tables, and folders which provide visual access to the data. All of these strategies provide a method for working through the data while also creating an awareness of how the data are transformed through transcription, coding, and analysis. This (re)working of data is a risky part of the research process; not only do I transform the data to meet my needs as a researcher, but doing so is often accomplished through my own logic and the organizational methods that I use. Thus, creating an awareness of my own location in the data analysis and writing-up phase is important and exposes my role in the research project.

Feminist researchers like Kennedy and Davis (1996) have used other strategies to help de-centre themselves in an effort to better represent and incorporate their informants’ voices. Here, Kennedy and Davis decided to include longer quotes that reveal how their informants from a lesbian community in Buffalo made sense of their lives in the era prior to New York’s Stonewall riots.²⁸ While this is a promising strategy given their use of oral history, the technique is less suitable for the interviews I designed as they were semi-structured and focused on specific experiences. However, providing longer quotes would bolster the authority that the participants have over their own representations and partially reveal the power of the interaction that occurs in the interview setting (Rose 1997, Valentine 2002). To this end, I also edited the interview quotes to more clearly communicate the students’ remarks and make them easier to read. Additionally, Kennedy and Davis (1996) presented their findings to the Buffalo lesbian community once a year. Not only did this strategy work to discuss the analyses with the

²⁸ The Stonewall riots occurred on June 27, 1969 and are often cited at the turning point in gay and lesbian fight for equal right. As the Stonewall bar was being raided the gay bar, some patrons began to fight back against the police, marking a transition to a more defiant and unapologetic gay and lesbian movement (Wright, 1999). For more information see: <http://socialistalternative.org/literature/stonewall.html> (last accessed June 16, 2010).

informants for their project, it also created an opportunity for informants to provide information about representation and reflection on how the authors were depicting the community. I am also committed to presenting the findings of this research in different venues where I can open the discussions and conversations I had with students to a broader audience. By making this work accessible to informants and public audiences, I aim to provide a forum where criticisms and questions can be raised.

While the data analysis and writing-up phases can elicit anxiety, they can also be rewarding. Through the transcribing of interviews and analyzing the data, my reflection of how students understand the university campus and the role it plays in their lives has deepened. In revisiting these conversations, I am conscious of the power I hold in the final stages of writing up. Although I have, at times, been apprehensive about what to include in the final text, I am also reminded of the passion and seriousness with which students participated in the project. In the end, I have to trust that I have made the best possible decisions about how to represent students in the project, while accepting that they represented themselves in particular ways in the interviews.

CONCLUSION

Overall, my interaction with students throughout this research project has been guided by feminist principles of research practice. Not only is this reflected in the strategies I used to advertise and locate queer students who were willing to talk about their experiences with me, but also in the ways I have engaged with students outside of the research setting and process. Not all of the choices served me well—a lack of racial and ethnic diversity can be, in part, attributed to my recruitment strategies, timing within the ebb and flow of the semester, and my own whiteness and networks. However, my decision to create the mapping exercise was one of the most innovative and illuminating within the project. It has allowed me to link methodological practice

with theory in a unique manner, demonstrating the need to reflect on how certain methods can support the theoretical frameworks that structure this project. Moreover, the importance of reflexivity throughout the research process was brought home to me as I thought through issues of in/outsider status and the importance of recognizing power and voice in the analysis and writing up of this project. From design to execution, I have worked to consider the multiple ways queer students and I came together to discuss ‘how the campus matters’ to queer students and how to make it a better and safer place for all. In the next chapter, I turn to my analysis of queer students’ orientation and their conceptions of becoming queer as they make the transition between high school and university education.

CHAPTER THREE: QUEERS GO TO UNIVERSITY: ORIENTATIONS AND TRANSITIONS ON CAMPUS

Even when orientations seem to be about which way we are facing in the present, they also point us toward the future. The hope of changing directions is that we don't always know where some paths may take us: risking departure from the straight and narrow makes new futures possible, which might involve going astray, getting lost, or even becoming queer...(Ahmed 2006, p.21).

Since 1997, the first day of the fall semester at the University of British Columbia (UBC) has been called 'Imagine Day' and is dedicated to the orientation of all new and returning students. This event has become an important day in the academic calendar; since 2009, classes have even been cancelled with the expectation that all undergraduate students will participate in the orientation activities organized by all faculties and departments (Cirstea, 2008). Thinking back to my own undergraduate experience at Laurentian University, I barely remember what the first day was like, or what types of events were planned. To refresh my memory and acquaint myself with the specificities of UBC's Imagine Day, I accompanied a small group of first-year students as they completed their morning program and faculty-related activities in the fall of 2010. I chose to shadow a group enrolled in the Arts Faculty because I wanted to simulate what my first-year orientation might have been had I attended UBC as an undergraduate.

At UBC, Imagine Day begins with ice breakers for first-year students where they interact with potential classmates. These students are then introduced to faculty members, who discuss the details of specific programs, followed by a brief student-guided tour through buildings that will be important in their studies. Immediately thereafter, students are brought together in the largest auditorium on campus to learn how their UBC education could offer life-changing experiences. Students also learn what is expected of them as members of the UBC community. In addition, they learn the faculty anthem/cheer that is used at a campus-wide pep rally later in the day. The organization of Imagine Day's events and the messages conveyed provide both an

introduction to and a foundation for incoming students' understanding of what it means to be newly anointed UBC students.

This chapter examines the role that the university campus plays in the development of sexual subjectivity for queer students. It begins, as does the university experience at UBC, with the orientation process and the possibilities and limitations offered in this opening event. Here, orientation takes on different configurations, including orientation as location, induction, and the direction of sexual desire. I then explore how queer students endure the im/possibilities of high school and family sites as they find and pursue various paths through their transition to university studies at UBC. This will provide context for the expectations that queer students bring with them to their university experience. To further explore how queer students locate and (re)orientate themselves on campus, I have identified the process of *becoming queer* as an alternative understanding to reifying sexual identity models centred on moments of self-discovery and/or disclosure through this transition period. I conclude by considering how university offers a time and place to explore queer desires as students make the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and how post-secondary education has become an important part of this journey. This chapter provides the background and context for understanding how queer students navigate and negotiate their presence on campus in positive and negative ways, which are examined in Chapters Four and Five.

MAKING A UNIVERSITY STUDENT: ORIENTATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

In addition to getting a physical tour of the campus, the students also receive symbolic messages at various points throughout Imagine Day about what it means to attend UBC. Throughout the morning, for instance, faculty members, as well as the third and fourth year student leaders, provide insights and advice for new students which show UBC in a positive light. After initial ice breakers, the group I shadowed headed to our first meeting with faculty

members who introduced us to the Arts One program²⁹ and outlined what to expect in the first year of university. In this session, faculty provided an overview of the program; they also cautioned students that ‘this wasn’t high school’—a warning which was, I assumed, used to shift students’ expectations of university-level work. Repeatedly, the faculty members insisted students were to be treated like adults, they were responsible for their own success in the program, and that this was a time of transition. The Dean of Arts, Gage Averill, impressed upon the students attending that they had made the best choice in enrolling in the Arts Faculty at UBC because Arts only admits the best and brightest. Other students, who had been involved in various learning enrichment programs like Community Service Learning, Learning Abroad, and Co-op in Arts, also gave glowing reports about their participation in these programs and their time at UBC. Emboldened by the school spirit cultivated throughout these morning activities, the new students willingly learned the Faculty of Arts cheer in preparation for the campus wide pep rally that followed the pizza lunch.

Another sense of orientation was captured by Lefebvre’s (1991) conception of how conceived spaces “intervene in and modify spatial *textures* which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology” (p. 42). For Lefebvre, the notion of conceived space describes the ways in which ‘knowledge and ideology’ become embedded within a particular space. As students attend this one-day orientation, they are inculcated with an idealized version of the institution. Students are oriented to the model way of being a UBC student; they are told what they should expect from their time at UBC, and how to best inhabit the university campus by becoming involved with the various opportunities made available on campus. This expectation

²⁹ Arts One is a unique and intensive program designed to challenge high achieving students with a focus on the humanities and an emphasis on student-centred learning. For more information see: <http://www.arts.ubc.ca/students/academic-planning-advising/specializations-in-arts/arts-one.html> [last accessed: June 12, 2012]. There is no significance for choosing this group, except that the order of events fit my schedule best on the first day back for the 2010/2011 fall term.

was particularly evident when students were introduced to study abroad programs, service learning opportunities, and other programs designed to ‘enrich’ student involvement and develop ‘global citizens’ as part of the university’s vision statement: *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan* (2010). However, beyond that first day, students alone are responsible for their eventual lived experiences and the initiatives they take will shape their unique and complex understandings of UBC as they proceed through their university studies. In many ways Imagine Day provides an invitation to view UBC and university education from the perspective of the administration, which may not match students, especially queer students’ lived experience. Despite this, orientation provides a process of demarcation and realignment to the expectations of post-secondary education.

Orientation captures the unification of the symbolic and physical space of the campus through the day-long Imagine Day celebration of new students at UBC. According to Lynn Steward (1995), Lefebvre has conceptualized “orientation [as] refined through a process of demarcation both physical and symbolic: space is ‘mapped’ with reference to directions that not only guide the traveler but are also symbolic and meaningful” (p.612). As students begin to move through the campus they become oriented to specific buildings and paths that they use to navigate their way through campus. For queer students, this process of orientation works to demarcate which parts of campus hold queer possibilities and which parts of campus are devoid of this potential. To aid queer students new to campus, the queer student resource group, PrideUBC, offers its own campus tour and orientation at the beginning of the school year. Often included within the first major social event in September, the queer campus tour outlines for new queer students the resources available for them. Thus, this tour provides a relational sense of the UBC campus in terms of queer identified spaces, which then informs how queer students navigate and negotiate their way through campus.

Thus, following Sara Ahmed (2006), I play with the concept of orientation because it can describe either one's 'sexual orientation' in particular or a starting point more generally as in the 'orientation of new students.' In each case, orientation describes the alignment of oneself or an object to its current surroundings or circumstances. In the epigraph I chose for this chapter, Ahmed (2006) claims that orientations are about time *and* space; we become/are aligned in a particular direction in the present and then we move forward in that direction towards the future. According to Ahmed (2006), sexual orientation is part of this alignment, where "what one 'is' becomes defined in terms of the direction of one's desire, as an attraction that pulls one toward others" (p.70). Orientation thus provides a directional force to 'sexuality', where the resulting sexual orientation (as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, or straight) permits one to think about whom that sexuality might be directed to and the consequences of that orientation. However, there are moments when the direction of orientation is unclear, when it is multiple, undecided, or in the process of becoming. Indeed, Ahmed's use of the phrase 'queer orientation' allows for the multiplicity of desires and directions without losing the relational dynamic between heteronormative (as discussed in Chapter One) and queer lines of desire. It also allows for a change in direction onto paths unknown and towards untold possibilities along these new paths.

Within the Imagine Day orientation process, the guided tour provided only a partial view of some of the paths and engagement available to students through select reference points that were specific to students' faculty and program affiliation. Using the same map that students used for my mapping exercise (see Figure 3.1), I have located the students who I interviewed by program or department affiliation to provide a sense of how these students might understand the campus in relation to their selected studies. The Program Affiliation Map (Figure 3.1) shows that the students who participated in the study were generally concentrated more tightly in the upper

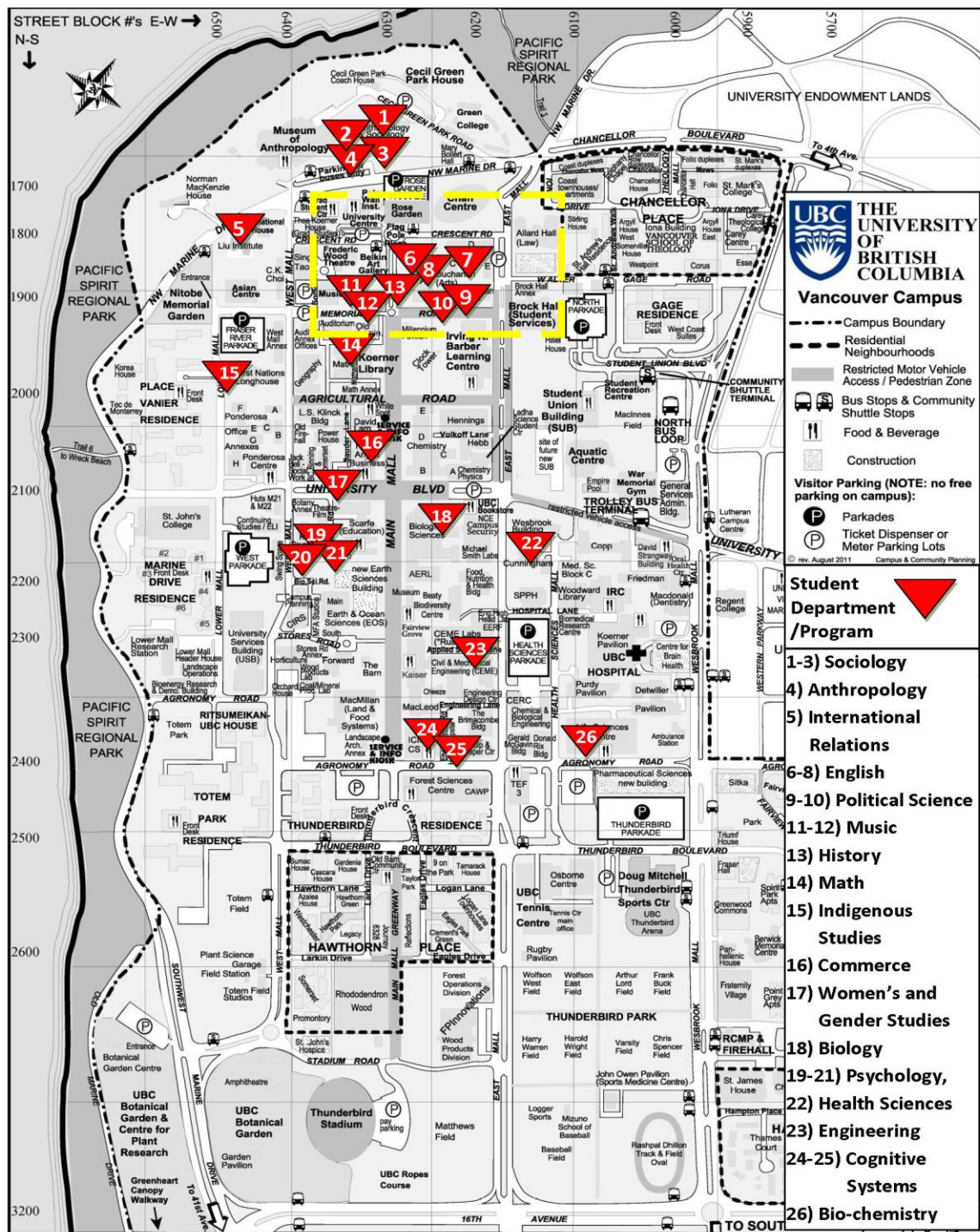


Figure 3.1: Location of Students' Departmental and/or Program Affiliation

third of the map, which has been the central location of the Faculty of Arts since the campus was founded (The Unveristy Extension Committee, 1925, p.30). The distribution of students in the lower two-thirds indicates where many of the science-based faculties are located on campus.

While this outcome might support the myth that there are more queer students in Arts-related programs (which is discussed further in Chapter Five), the map also provides insight into where queer students need to travel through the course of their studies at UBC. Since the orientation activities I attended lacked any discussion of specific services and resources located in Brock Hall³⁰ (such as Positive Space Campaign, Access & Diversity, Financial Aid, Counselling Services) available to students—and their location on campus—students are left on their own to discover where they are located and how this might matter. As illustrated by the yellow boundary in Figure 3.1, the group I shadowed for Imagine Day did not see much of UBC’s full expanse. In some cases, which will be discussed in Chapter Four, large areas of the campus remained unexplored. Gaps in the orientation programming meant that students were left on their own to find the other buildings, classrooms, and resources.

Sadly, little of the official UBC orientation program completed during the Imagine Day events contained specific references to student services or resources that would meet the needs of queer, trans, racialized, female, and/or dis/abled students. For instance, the Positive Space Campaign, an institutional initiative for all members of the UBC community, could have been introduced and explained in order to educate new students about this key aspect of UBC’s mission. This is a surprising omission given the lengths that the university administration has taken to demonstrate that they ‘value diversity’. For instance, in the report titled *Valuing Difference: A Strategy for Advancing Equity and Diversity at UBC* (2010), the authors argue that:

it is important that UBC acknowledge and address injustices and systematic barriers that may prevent disadvantaged groups from seeking higher education or employment at UBC...we must be active leaders in not only promoting equity and diversity within our own backyard but also in providing the tools and programs for our students, staff, faculty and graduates to bring these values back to the community at large (p. 7)

³⁰ In Figure 3.1, Brock Hall is located in the lower right corner of the yellow boundary. Thus, it is conceivable to have student take a tour though this important space during the Imagine Day activities.

In theory, the orientation session should provide an ideal opportunity to introduce new and transferring students to the programs and policies that contribute to an equitable climate on campus. However, there was no mention of the university's vision, titled *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan* (2010), throughout the orientation session, which represents a missed opportunity to engage students on these issues. This was especially disappointing because, according to the nine commitments that guide UBC's vision in *Place and Promise*: "The University values and respects all members of its communities, each of whom individually and collaboratively makes a contribution to create, strengthen, and enrich our learning environment" (2010, p.6). Thus, the lack of discussion about programs and resources for queer and trans students, staff, and faculty members highlights the ways in which a 'universal' student is constructed through the process of orientation, a process that cannot account for how different students would be oriented differently to buildings, services, or resources, as well as to each other.

The 'universal' student is in many ways a product of neoliberal forces (discussed in Chapter One) which have corrupted education (see Giroux, 2007) as the civil rights movement became replaced by single-issue organizations which "collapsed largely into the coopting embrace of New Deal corporatism in the post-World War II era" (Duggan, 2003, p.xix). As radical and social justice student movements disintegrated in Canada and the United States in the early 1980s, the corporatization of universities gave way to more business-oriented models of education devoted to accountability and 'excellence' over the pursuit of critical thinking. When the equity that 'minority groups' like gay and lesbian students fought for became firmly planted into institutional policy, administrators felt little need to acknowledge differences like race, class, gender, dis/ability, and sexuality in the everyday operation of the university. Instead, students are now encouraged to work efficiently and diligently to complete their studies, achieve high grades, and move on to more successful lives. This neoliberal ethic leaves little room or time for students

to stop and be critical of the institution of higher learning, or to reflect on their own complicity in the privilege gained by earning an undergraduate degree, or how they might be part of a movement that fights for equity and access for those who still face barriers to post-secondary education. Neoliberalism relies on individuation, competition, and consumption to make working together across differences, and in spite of them, nearly impossible (Duggan 2003). This neoliberal agenda has become the ‘hidden curriculum’ of the university and it has had a profound effect on queer students, staff and faculty (Apple, 2004; Snyder, 1973; Walton, 2005). Here, the orientation process upholds these neoliberal processes by creating a specific image of the ‘universal student’ and what is expected of that student as he or she becomes a ‘global citizen’ through his or her studies at UBC.

Queer Reflections: Student Expectations of University

In spite of official rhetoric, queer students are not the ‘universal’ ones anticipated by Imagine Day organizers. Although I did not ask the twenty-six students who I interviewed for this project to reflect on their experiences of Imagine Day, many commented on their expectations of what they thought was possible at university when they were in high school:

Spanky: I was like, ‘I’m going to wait until university to come out, I’m going to wait, I’m going to wait.’ It’s really hard to just tell an entire population, the people around you, that like everything is different about you. So I sort of saw university as a way of starting over.

Caleb: I was going to go away to university. I was going to meet new people, I might as well ‘start gay’ and if I wanted to change something, that’s fine. I guess, I figured that was the lowest that people would take [accept]. Come on, if I say I’m bi, they are like ‘you’re slightly normal now’. I can’t accept that, [...] I’m not okay with that, but I expect that.

Red: I always vowed to myself in high school that I would come out by the time I was 19 and it didn’t happen. Starting at university actually, I went to UBC, my two best friends went to different universities, so I felt really sort of vulnerable and alone but I made a promise to myself that, as alone as I feel, I have to reach out because I’m not going to get what I want by sitting and doing nothing.

In each instance, students reflected on differences between their high school experiences and their expectations about the possibility of being queer at university. Not only does university offer a new environment, a fresh start in which they could explore their queer desires, but students imagined opportunities to connect with other queer-identified students and specific resources that may not have been available or accessible to them in high school. Attending university, as Spanky (a white female) and Red (a South Asian male) emphasize, provides a chance to reinvent their selves outside the confines of their community—family and friends—to explore sexual subjectivities and to feel more secure with their queer desires. For Spanky, this required moving away from her small town and family to feel comfortable and to openly identify as lesbian and explore her desire for other women. As Red explains, his best friends went to different schools, which meant that he needed to ‘reach out’ and make new friendships that would support him as he explored his sexuality. As a white, Jewish male, Caleb wanted to “start gay” when he met new people at university because he did not want people to assume he was heterosexual; he did not want to have to amend this perception as his friendships developed. In each case, these students, as well as others I interviewed, discussed in detail their transition between high school and university and how their sexual identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or queer (LGBTQ) mattered once they arrived on campus to pursue their university studies.

Students like Spanky, Caleb, and Red recognized their queer desires while they were in high school, but were unwilling to explore this facet of their lives until they were at university; each needed to manage this transition in specific ways. For instance, Caleb’s assertion that “I might as well start gay...I figured that was the lowest that people would take [accept]” highlights the stigma attached to being/identifying as gay in that this label would place him ‘below normal’. Here, Caleb refers to the risk of being gay and whether others were willing to accept his non-

heterosexual identification and *still* get to know him. He expected that by being open about his sexuality the majority of people at university would *not* actually want to get to know him. Nevertheless, Caleb was still willing to be up front about being gay in order to figure out who was willing to get to know him ‘despite’ his sexual orientation. While he perceived this strategy as ‘risqué’, Caleb wanted to surround himself with people who accepted him and to build a community where he could feel comfortable. In a similar fashion, Spanky chose to wait until she was away from her family and community before exploring her sexuality. In choosing to wait, Spanky, as well as other students who chose this strategy, ensured that her new desires were worth the risk before telling all the people she knows from her home and community that “everything is different about [her].” For her, the university symbolized a place for exploring and understanding, a place to start over. For these students, the university signifies a site of renewal and different possibilities where those who are recognizing their queer desires are *becoming* (re)oriented toward new possibilities. They intended to use the university to explore new futures.

Thus, orientation is a productive term for understanding sexual desire, as well as for understanding how new futures are created when we follow our desires. While Ahmed provides important insights about the process of orientation in her effort to queer phenomenology, her use of and play with orientation also offer new ways to think about the links between space (social and physical) and sexuality (in its multiplicity). Lefebvre, on the other hand, provides a link between ideology and the physical space, and I extend this conceptualization to how queer students become oriented within the campus through both the official and PrideUBC campus tours. The spatialized and temporalized nature of orientation suggests an important process of exploring educational paths and new futures that shape how one ‘becomes queer’, and also how students may go astray or get lost in the process. The transitions between secondary and post-

secondary schooling hold many opportunities to explore new and different orientations, as will be discussed below.

GETTING THERE: PATHS FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY

The transition from high school to university is an important one for queer students. High school provides both a space and a time to learn about interpersonal relationships, including sexual and romantic desires, as it coincides with puberty and dating (Toomey et al., 2012). Yet, as both Haskell and Burtch (2010), and Taylor and Peter, with McMinn, Elliott, Beldom, Ferry, Gross, Paquin, & Schachter (2011a) reveal in their research on homophobia and transphobia in Canadian high schools, these sites remain contested spaces for queer, trans, questioning, as well as ‘assumed to be queer/trans’ students. Haskell and Burtch (2010) provide compelling accounts of both homophobic and transphobic (HTP) bullying in British Columbian high schools. Taylor et. al (2011a) explore the barriers that queer and trans high school students face in Canada through their large national survey on LGBT climate issues in secondary schools. For example, they found that homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia resulted in verbal (55%) and physical (21%) harassment of LGBTQ-identified students in addition to the torment students face when they are presumed to be queer, trans, and/or questioning (Taylor, et al. 2011a). Much of this functions through the use of ‘fag’ discourses in Canadian and American high schools (see Haskell & Burtch, 2010; Pascoe, 2007; Smith, 1998; Taylor, Peter, with McMinn, Elliott, Beldom, Ferry, Gross, Paquin, & Schachter, 2011b). While Haskell and Burtch (2010) argue that high school “seem[s] like a logical starting place to educate people about the natural occurrence of homosexuality and gender variance in our society” (p.21), many adults, including teachers and school administrators, assume that students are heterosexual with stable gender identities. In some cases, the assumption of heterosexual and gender norms is so strong within the high school setting that queer, trans, and questioning students—who are unable to conform—are at risk of

violence and harassment (Taylor & Peter, et al., 2011a, 2011b; Toomey et al., 2012). As I discuss in more detail below, I found that the queer students I interviewed who began to question their sexuality in high school managed this realization in different ways, including passing as heterosexual, transferring to different schools once they were open about their sexual identification, and/or creating space(s) for other queer students and themselves, such as Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) groups, and by being positive role models in their school.

About one third of the students I interviewed (9 of 26, 35%), were willing to explore their queer desires while attending high school. It is important to note that all of the students who indicated that they were ‘out’ during a portion of their high school experience identified as male and eight of them identified as white with the exception of one student who identified as Chinese Canadian. This suggests that the queer men I interviewed were much more likely to have begun exploring their queer desires while in high school. It also resonates with the findings reported by Taylor et al. (2011a) who explained that “youth of colour...reported the lowest rates of being comfortable discussing LGBTQ matters with anyone at all, including their coaches, their teachers, their classmates, their parents, and even with a close friend” (p. 12). Thus, not only do racialized queer youth find it difficult to discuss queer issues, but they are less likely to seek advice while attending high school, which may also limit their access to resources once enrolled in university.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that none of the female students who were interviewed openly identified as lesbian, gay, bi and/or queer while attending high school. In fact, four female-identified students out of eleven (36%) did not even entertain the idea that they might have queer desires until they became a university student. This suggests that university provides an important time and place to explore queer desires. Moreover, it is not surprising that female high school students would bypass homophobic and transphobic bullying by adhering to

norms of conventional femininity until they felt safer about exploring their queer desires. Additionally, friendships between female students are not as scrutinized as the friendships between male students (Pascoe, 2007), which can help to make romantic relationships between women invisible (Khayatt, 1994) and give these students more time to work out an understanding of their sexuality before openly identifying as lesbian, gay, or queer. By and large, sexual exploration and agency are still gendered phenomena (see Lehr, 2008; Wiebe, 2009 for example), which might explain why some female students were unaware of their queer desires until they attended university where sexual and gender diversity is part of the university culture.

As students learn about themselves, their bodies, and their attractions to others, there are instances where high schools present interesting sexual spaces. For instance, Jeremy explained how he began to understand his sexuality and his interest in other boys in the gymnasium locker room:

By Grade 8, that was the first year of high school, that was where you're starting to get really sexually aroused and stuff with puberty and at that point, I do remember...as kind of a milestone in Grade 8—it sounds a bit bad—but I'd always look forward to PE [Physical Education] because we'd go in the changing rooms. So at that point, I was consciously wanting to see guys without their clothes on and stuff. So it was obviously really apparent, but I was still like in the phase where I wasn't actually like admitting it. Like even to myself, it wasn't even like I was oh, you're gay and you can't admit it. It was almost like oh, that's normal, that's just like whatever, I don't even know, I can't remember what I said. But I kind of didn't even think about it, I guess.

For Jeremy, changing rooms in the high school gym were sexualized spaces where he found pleasure looking at other young men without their clothes. The connection of his arousal with the sight of his naked male classmates provided a 'milestone' moment for Jeremy. However, the locker room is contested space, understood differently by different queer youth. Taylor et al. (2011a) found, roughly 64% of LGBTQ-identified students felt unsafe at school, noting that the gym changing rooms and washrooms were the most frequently cited school spaces that students experienced as the least safe within the school setting. In addition, other researchers have posited

that such gender-segregated spaces work through the regulation of both gender normativity and heterosexual expression (Haskell & Burtch, 2010; Taylor & Peter, et al., 2011a; Toomey et al., 2012). In contradictory ways, both gender expression and sexual pleasure are enacted and prohibited within the school setting.

As Foucault (1978) points out, the sexuality of a young boy within the eighteenth-century secondary school in the West was organized through “a certain reasonable, limited, canonical, and truthful discourse on sex, [which] was prescribed for him—a kind of discursive orthopaedics” (p.29). The multiple ways in which normative sex-related discourses were administered in schools could be found in all aspects of the pedagogical institution, including “the architectural layout, the rules of discipline, and their whole internal organization: the question of sex was a constant preoccupation” (Foucault 1978, p.27-28). Though schools have been designed to manage aspects of power and knowledge about sex, Jeremy’s experience illustrates there are moments that exceed the prescribed use of school spaces and its ‘discursive orthopaedics’. While he was not actively exploring his sexual interest in other males or openly identifying as gay in the high school setting, the gender-segregated space of the locker room became a site for Jeremy to acknowledge and investigate his feelings.

Other students I interviewed chose to ‘pass’ or wait until they finished high school before they explored their queer desires. Jeffery was self conscious about identifying as gay and became concerned about how his classmates would perceive his sexuality. Consequently, he decided to attend a different high school, as he explains (emphasis added):

Jeffery: They were both pretty good high schools I think. I just felt uncomfortable at Southside High School³¹ once people started finding out so I figured I would just go[...]. It was just unannounced and I just didn’t feel comfortable.

³¹ All the names of high schools and specific locations have been changed to maintain the confidentiality of the students’ backgrounds.

Rachael: You said that people started to find out [about your sexuality]. Was it rumours, was it because...?

Jeffery: It was a bit of both. I mean my one friend Brian was the one who eventually dropped out of school. He was quite open about it [being gay] with a lot of people and I hung out with him a lot, so instantly it was that association thing, which is fine. I mean, yes, I was [gay] but I was just super insecure right? I didn't—I was just really insecure. Yeah, so it started off as rumours and then some of my friends started to confirm it without my permission and stuff. Like in class my one friend knew I liked this one guy in my class and I obviously knew he wasn't gay. So, she goes and says "do you like Jeffery?" and he instantly started to figure it out and I was like "oh crap," like "thanks a lot!" So, I just figured it was getting a little bit *dangerous* and I didn't need people to judge me based on that. So, I don't think I was thinking like that when I was there but I just felt like "I can't do this," so I left and went to Sir George Cleary [school] instead.

Since Jeffery was not yet ready to openly identify as gay, he decided to transfer schools, a choice made easier because his best friend, who also identified as gay, dropped out of school. But without the support of his friends and, in some cases, because of their inability to be discreet about his sexuality, Jeffery felt that he needed to transfer schools to minimize the potential risk of homophobic harassment. Jeffery's concern about his safety at school is not uncommon and can lead to a number of 'risk factors' including suicide (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002).

Additionally, Taylor et al. (2011a) report that many LGBTQ students choose to withhold "their own...sexual orientation and/or gender identity until they are safely out of school" (p.14) as a result of the pervasive assumption of heterosexuality and gender conformity expected of students. Although this strategy has helped students who were questioning their sexual and gender identity to endure their experiences of secondary school without having to disclose or commit to a specific sexual/gender identity before they are ready to do so, it keeps them silenced, isolated, and unable to reach out for support (Saewyc et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2011b).

Moreover, for Jeffery, transferring schools helped him to feel safer and provided a way for him to delay being known as gay before he was ready to claim a specific sexual identity. Thus for Jeremy, Jeffery, and other students, high school played an important role in the discovery and

recognition of their queer sexual selves and queer desires even if they were not ready to openly identify their sexuality outside of the heteronormative.

While students reflected on their own realizations and revelations in their journey to ‘becoming queer’, a concept that I explore in greater detail later in this chapter, they also indicated how open or closed their high school was to queer possibilities. Eddie shared with me how he understood the climate of his high school:

We had another high school in the same general area where queer kids decided they were queer. And if they were to come out, they wanted to transfer high schools, away from our school, because [...] I don't know why it was so, like we didn't have—we didn't have any problems with violence in our school. Because, you think that might be ‘oh I'm worried about getting beaten up’ [kind of] thing. But, the school that had a lot of queer kids in it, and had GSA [Gay Straight Alliance], was known to be one of the more violent schools in town. And our school, everything was very straight laced. It was you go to class, if you are aiming towards university education. And, I think it was 98% of my graduating class went to university and the other 2% went to college and yeah. [...] So yeah, it was very much a prep school, even though it was a public school. Um, it was not an environment where I felt like I could be out or even questioning, because I didn't know at the time that anything was going on until partway through, when I was like ‘why do I have a crush on a girl, this is weird?’. But it was kind of neat because there was a whole bunch of us, in my group of friends, a lot of us since graduating have come out as being queer.

While Eddie was not ‘out’ as queer or trans when he attended high school, he reflected on the impossibility of being out at his school, especially compared to the freedom that was assumed at the other school. He noticed that queer students who wanted to be open about their queer sexuality at school would transfer to the other school despite the perceived violence that was associated with that school. The “straight laced” nature of Eddie’s school did not provide the opportunity for variation in sexualities or exploration of different sexual expressions. In fact, earlier in the interview Eddie compared his high school environment to the world depicted by the film “The Stepford Wives”³² as a way of capturing the docile and compliant nature of the student

³² *Stepford Wives* is a fictional portrayal of unusually submissive wives found in an idyllic Connecticut neighbourhood, who turn out to be robots, programmed to serve their husbands. The original novel was written in 1972 by Ira Levin and made into a movie in 1975 and remade in 2004 (see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0327162/>)

body and the unwillingness or inability to accept difference. Students who might have explored non-heterosexual possibilities would have been discouraged from doing so because it could have been seen as a distraction from the main goals and aims of the school and the student body. Without the visible support of a GSA at Eddie's school, queer and questioning students lacked a supportive space in which to explore non-normative sexual desires (see Macintosh, 2007). In fact, the intense focus on arts, athletics, and academics might have allowed some students an opportunity to ignore these desires or 'pass' until they were ready to do so after graduation. In either case, students who wanted to be out at Eddie's high school often transferred to another high school where there were some supports in place like a GSA or they waited until they found a more supportive environment. Both Jeffery's and Eddie's experiences suggest that students have limited options to explore their queer desires while attending high school, depending on the school's culture and investment in heteronormative sexual and gender expressions. Jeffery chose to transfer schools in an effort to maintain a heterosexual identification, because he felt it was dangerous to be out at school. Eddie, on the other hand, chose to stay at his school and complete his requirements before exploring his sexuality and gender identity in university. In addition, some students were able to create spaces for themselves and other queer/questioning students in their high schools.

Now that GSAs have become established in many schools, and American sex columnist Dan Savage has launched the popular 'It Gets Better Project'³³ to raise awareness of barriers,

last accessed June 12, 2012). Here, the parallel that Eddie draws between the fictional novel/movie suggests that students at his school were not trendsetters, but rather followed the crowd in their effort to obtain admission to the best universities and colleges.

³³ Dan Savage launched the "It Gets Better Project" on September 1, 2010 in an effort to share with LGBTQ youth a positive future despite the barriers and violence (or perceived risk of violence) that many youth face in their daily lives. This project uses videos of love and support from celebrities, religious leaders, politicians, parents and just out of high school youth to encourage LGBTQ youth that it will get better: <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/> (last accessed April 1, 2011). However, other researchers including Wells (2010) and Frohard-Dourlent (2011) are critical of claims that queer students wait until it 'gets better'. In fact, these researchers argue that we need to make it better

bullying, and violence queer youth face, a greater sense of visibility has been cultivated for today's queer youth in Canada and the United States. However, some of the students I interviewed were able to open up spaces for queer youth in their schools before celebrity intervention. For instance, Kevin, one of the older white students I interviewed, explained his role in his high school in the late 1990s³⁴:

In Grade Eleven I started seeing guys. In Grade Eleven, I was kind of still sort of hush-hush about, about that, especially at school, being a Catholic school. And in Grade 12 I was, I didn't try and hide it anymore. And in fact I liked to pride myself thinking of myself as, I don't know the term, pioneer is like way too much, but I like to think that, I made a *space*, or cleared a way for students in younger years. Before me, I said, there certainly wasn't any role model for me in upper years. Even when I was in Grade 10, if I, being a small school we pretty much knew everybody. And I can't think of anyone that, that was outwardly gay, or lesbian, in fact, that I could have looked up to. So, I'd like to think that I was fairly open [about my sexuality]. I wasn't, I wasn't on a mission to change the school, but I was definitely—if someone asked me in Grade, probably in Grade 10 or 11, I would still probably deny it, or make some kind of excuse or something—but in Grade 12 I was standing my ground. And, I think that the Profs [teachers] had, some of them definitely had, a hard time with that. But they pretty much left me alone. So there was no issue. (Emphasis added)

Later in the interview, Kevin explained how students reacted to his openness:

Even with the perceived tough kids at the school, they, it was more, how can I explain that? They, I guess they [...] would crack some joke, but it didn't really bother me, or affect me. They never picked a fight or anything like that. They never, when the topic was brought up in class, or something like that, in Social Sciences class, or something like that, there was never, I didn't feel targeted by any of them, or anything like that. So, I think that I was very fortunate, actually, in my high school experience.

The possibility of creating space and becoming a 'pioneering' role model for younger students provided an important way for Kevin to justify his willingness to be open about his identification as gay in his high school. Indeed, the likelihood of having GSA groups in high schools in the late 1990s was slim, especially in a French Immersion Catholic school in a large urban city, like the one Kevin attended. Thus, by 'standing his ground' Kevin was able to make 'space' for

now by changing the way we understand homophobic and transphobic bullying in high schools, and provide other ways to combat these systems of oppression. I return to this theme in the conclusion.

³⁴ Kevin was 29 at the time of the interview. He was a mature student who had completed an undergraduate degree at another university before beginning his studies in a specialized undergraduate degree program at UBC.

alternative sexualities, something that he did not have in grades nine and ten. Although the teachers in his school may have challenged him from time to time, he did not encounter similar issues with his classmates. Kevin saw his high school experiences as fortunate, because he did not encounter homophobia or harassment based on his sexuality. Yet Kevin attributes the absence of anti-gay bullying to how he reacted to the ‘jokes’ that students might have cracked in his presence. Acting as a role model, Kevin provided both a means for expressing queerness and a way of diffusing challenges by standing his ground or by ignoring student ‘jokes’. While this may have been a testament to Kevin’s strong character, it may also illustrate a small shift that would eventually lead to GSAs and a growing awareness in high school now evident across Canada and the US, especially in large urban centres (Goldstein et al., 2007; Haskell & Burtch, 2010; Macintosh, 2007; Pascoe, 2007).

Even as GSAs offer students a space to be ‘out,’ they are also contested spaces. As noted earlier by Kevin, he was one of the creators and leaders of the GSA at his high school. Indeed, GSAs provide one of the only institutionally sanctioned spaces for queer, questioning and allied students within the school. Yet when GSAs become one of the only ways to support queer and questioning youth, systems of heteronormativity are left in place and unchallenged (MacIntosh 2007). In some cases, especially in religious schools, GSAs have had to operate under aliases such as the ‘Diversity Club,’ further obscuring the visibility of supportive spaces available for queer and questioning youth (“Closeted Clubs,” 2011). Such practices often make challenging heteronormative policy and practices nearly impossible within school settings. Although GSAs provide some support for queer and questioning students, as MacIntosh (2007) asserts, “GSAs, and similar organizationally institutionalized spaces, are often problematically positioned as the *only* means through which sexual minority youth can safely articulate his or her identity” (p.38, emphasis added). Thus, GSAs provide some queer possibilities in elementary and secondary

school settings, but these can be highly regulated spaces allowing for only specific types of queer identifications and knowledge to exist.

A final point concerns how the transition from high school to post-secondary education can take many different paths (Hallfors et al., 2002; Hango, 2011; Tomkowicz & Bushnik, 2003), especially when queer students need to overcome the barriers and harassment they often face in high school (Illingworth & Murphy, 2004). Since all of the students interviewed for this project were attending UBC at the time of the interview³⁵, their experiences indicate how this transition can be successfully navigated (see Figure 3.2). However, the different ways these

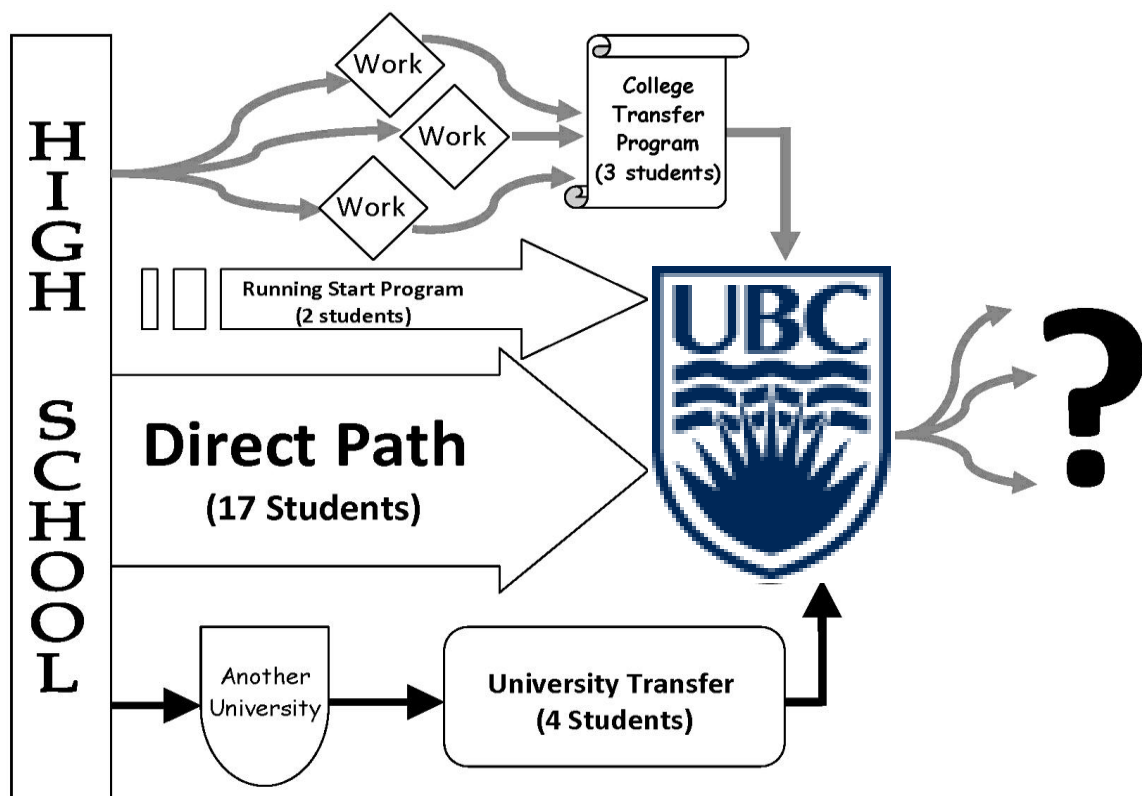


Figure 3.2: The Different Transitional Paths Students Made to UBC

³⁵ Although two students who were interviewed for this project were not actually registered at UBC, they had attended the year before and were intending to enroll the following academic year in order to complete their university programs. These students would have been registered in the year that I interviewed them had there not been financial constraints preventing them from paying tuition fees.

students made it to UBC are worth exploring. In most cases, students either entered university directly from high school (17 students), or utilized a Running Start³⁶ program (two students). In addition, four of the 26 students transferred to UBC from other universities or after completing another educational program, while three students completed college transfer programs that gave them a second chance for admission to a university program and nearly two years worth of credits towards meeting their requirements at UBC. It became clear from the interviews that access to these programs helped some students to negotiate their movement from high school into post-secondary education. For instance, Spanky explained her interest in the Running Start program at a local college.

Well, Running Start for me was only a way to take up time while I was in high school. There was never any notion for me that I was going to stay there [in her hometown] [...] If I have to stay in this town, I may as well not be in my school. Or it may as well be taking night classes, so I don't have to be at home as often. And I knew I wanted to come to UBC when I was a freshman in high school.

Part of Spanky's interest in the Running Start program was her ability to travel to the college and get out of her small town. She explained earlier in the interview that she wanted to get away from her family and her friends and this was one way she could do that. Not only was she increasing her ability to gain admission to UBC, her dream university, but the program was a worthwhile endeavour her parents would support rather than question. Admission to a university program was one way she could ensure passage to another way of life outside of the one she built with her family and friends while attending high school. For Spanky, this program helped to reconcile her desire to get out of high school and away from her community, while also allowing her to build her future path to university.

³⁶ Running Start is a program that allows academically inclined high school students to attend post-secondary classes and have it count towards the completion of their high school requirements and university degree.

Similarly, Eddie used the Running Start program to gain early access to university-level education. This program was important for Eddie when he entered the program at the beginning of Grade 12. He explains:

I was having a lot of personal issues that year, but I think it was really positive because, I think if I had done grade 12³⁷, I would've had to take a year or two [off], or never gone to university. Like I, I was done! I was in such of a place that I didn't want anything to do with school anymore, all this kind of stuff at the end of grade 11...but my sister was like “no, university is different!” and I was given this opportunity [to do Running Start...]. And I liked it. I like university, I liked school, and I liked the fact that there were queer kids who were open about being queer too. Even though I wasn't, like I knew I had a crush on a girl, but I didn't know, what that was going to lead to and my sex drive hadn't kicked in at that point. But I like the idea of community where two girls could hold hands and kiss each other. Not like make out or anything, but kiss each other like ‘I'm going to class now bye ‘smooch’’. You know, that kind of stuff that happened, and nobody would flinch. If that kind of stuff happened in my high school, people would have stood up and started yelling things and waving their fists in the air. Nothing harmful physically would've happened, but they just would've been bombarded with comments, which would have just had a negative psychological effect. So, university, going straight into it right from [Grade] 11, was awesome, because it kept me at school—essentially.

While Eddie was eager to be done with high school, his participation in the Running Start program kept him in school and even gave him a preview of what he could expect for queer students at university. Eddie laments the oppressive nature of his high school environment, but the university classroom and campus provided a great deal of freedom and liberty that was not possible in secondary school. As a result, the Running Start program provided an alternative path for both Spanky and Eddie, allowing them both to experience university as a more desirable place through which to explore their queer sexual desires. It also highlighted for them the queer possibilities available at the post-secondary level that they lacked in their high schools.

In some cases, students who had trouble finishing high school or did not excel academically sought out college programs that would prepare them for a direct transfer into a

³⁷ Instead of completing grade 12 courses at his high school, Eddie was able to obtain many of his grade 12 credits by taking university courses at the local university. These university courses counted both towards his high school requirements and first year university courses.

university. A specific program that linked UBC to local and nearby colleges made this process easier. All of the students who arrived at UBC through a college transfer program had worked full-time before entering post-secondary studies—a common reason for delaying entrance into college or university programs (Hango 2011, Tomkiewicz and Bushnik 2003). Thus, the transfer program provides another opportunity to (re)enter post-secondary education despite time spent in the work force, while also upgrading skills or credentials that might not have been developed while attending high school. For instance, Sam, a white female student, had to upgrade her skills through a college program in a nearby city before she could apply for a transfer to UBC. Early in the interview she explained that she did not do well in her Canadian high school as an international student. After moving to Canada, she lost interest in doing well at school and used sports and friends she made on her sports teams to get through high school. It was only after some time away from school, working in the hospitality industry, that she realized that she loved learning. She explains:

When I started university, I actually went to [a local] college first because I obviously had to get grades and get an education, like learn how to write. It's not that I couldn't write, I just didn't know where commas went or anything like that. So I had to learn like Grade 11 and Grade 12 Math and English. So I did [college] for two semesters and then my brother started straight out of high school and then we did two years there together and then we came here.

Once Sam began attending UBC, she describes meeting her first girlfriend:

We took a Women's Studies class together. It's so stereotypical but it's funny. Then we became really, really good friends, best friends. We knew each other for about a year and then, after that, I was attracted to her and tried to kiss her when I was drunk once but she had a boyfriend; but then she asked her boyfriend if it was OK if I kissed her, and then it just escalated from there and she broke up with her boyfriend and we were together for a year and a half.

Once Sam gained access to the university learning environment, she found the courage to explore her queer desires with a woman she met in her Women's Studies class. She explained in the interview that it was her Women's Studies classes which made her more self-reflective and open to the idea of queer sexuality. Having the time and space to explore and reflect on issues of

power and privilege provided an opportunity for Sam to explore and accept her queer sexuality and her queer desires. Once Sam was ready to go back to school, she gained access to university through an integrated college preparatory program. It is tough to imagine that she would have had the same kinds of opportunities without these types of programs, which help students get into university programs despite their initial lack of success during their high school studies.

Overall, getting to university for these students was part of an important transition from adolescence to adulthood. As noted above, high school is not a welcoming site for the exploration of queer desires. In fact, a majority (at least two-thirds) of the students interviewed chose to pass as heterosexual and wait until entering a post-secondary institution before openly identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or queer (LGBTQ). As students move away³⁸ to attend university, they are afforded greater freedoms and opportunities that are associated with adulthood. Through the experiences of Jeffery, Eddie, Spanky, and Sam, we see high school as a highly regulated space where heterosexuality is both an expectation and an assumption (Khayatt, 1994; Toomey et al., 2012). Yet Jeremy and Kevin demonstrate the sexual possibilities that can be explored in this space and time. In either case, the university campus is imagined as imbued with choice, possibility, and opportunity, echoing neoliberal constructions of what is possible with the right amount of effort and personal strength. Thus, it is not surprising that students were willing to take a number of paths to get there. In the next section, I explore more fully the transition to university and the (re)orientation from straight to queer.

BECOMING QUEER IN UNIVERSITY: SEXUALITIES AND SUBJECTIVITIES

Once they had arrived at UBC, the students I interviewed for this research project encountered a broader world. They could organize their time as they wished and explore a more

³⁸ As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, 54% (14/26) of the students spent at least one year in residence, while 23% (6/26) of students lived at home while attending UBC, 19% (5/26) of the students lived off campus and one student (3%) lived on campus in market housing, which is not part of the residence system.

expansive collection of activities, classes, and interests that were not necessarily available while they attended high school. Hence, the university offered them time and a place to explore queer desires and identifications. Here, queerness as explained by Halberstam (2005) “has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space” and provides a different conceptual tool to explore students’ experiences in post-secondary education (p.2). While many of the students used the terms ‘coming out’ and ‘out’ as shorthand descriptors when discussing their experiences, there is a contextual quality to these descriptions that moves beyond the linear ‘coming out story’ associated with the gay liberation movement.

Fashioned as a rallying cry in the post-Stonewall³⁹ era, ‘coming out’ became a defiant act of the gay liberation struggle, at least in North America, which helped to create visibility and to remedy the stigma associated with homosexuality (Brown, 2000). ‘Coming out of the closet’ implies the disclosure of a singular queer sexual and romantic identity that has been concealed due to fear, shame, and/or lack of awareness of these desires. The concept of the closet has been described as “the defining structure of gay oppression this [twentieth] century” (Sedgwick, 1990 p.71) whereby non-heteronormative social practices, experiences, and identities are hidden as a means of enduring the social stigma associated with them. While the closet has been explored as a metaphorical and material concept used to hide queer and trans identities and experiences (see Brown 2000, p.1-24 and Ahmed 2006, p. 175), the process of ‘coming out’ is characterized as an act of liberation that one must experience in order to have a ‘healthy’ sexuality and gender identity. The act of coming out of the closet consisted of the discovery and acceptance of a stable gay or lesbian sexual identity, which has allowed a new way of life to emerge (Comstock, 1991; Kinsman, 1996; Seidman, 2004). The telling of one’s coming out story was part of building a larger gay liberation movement, above all through the inscription of first-person narratives in many texts since the early 1970s (see D’Emilio, 1992; Jay & Young, 1972; Nestle, 1988). As

³⁹See note #28 Chapter 2

Kinsman (1996) argues, coming out relies on the engagement of same-gender sex acts as the basis of sexual identity. While the differences in sexual and gendered experiences and expressions began to surface in the 1990s, some began to experience the fixity of static identities as too rigid and confining. Moreover, Kinsman (1996) explains that coming out based on fixed identities “denies the historical and potentially fluid character of people’s sexualities... Instead, we have to begin to deconstruct, destabilize, and transform the social relations...of the closet” (p. 377). Thus, following Kinsman’s explanation, I have shifted my focus to the materiality of sexual spaces, which extends and expands how the closet is both metaphor and a material space for concealing and expressing personal desires and private identities, which as Brown (2000) puts it, is a small room where things can be stuffed away or hidden from view. Drawing on Kinsman (1996) and Brown (2000), while pushing their ideas in the direction of theories of social space (Lefebvre 1991), I am arguing for an understanding of sexuality and sexual identification in terms of how our relations with the world are shaped in ways that cannot be reduced to the (metaphorical or material) confines of a small interior room—the closet.

Unlike the identity development models used to understand sexual orientation in the 1970s and 1980s (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005), the rise of queer theory and queer politics has complicated the fixed conception of sexual identity. In their review of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) identity models, Bilodeau and Renn (2005) found that “as more scholars describe the development of non-heterosexual identity as a fluid and complex process [...] it becomes apparent that stage models are not adequate to describe all nonheterosexual identity processes” (p. 28). Thus, thinking about students in terms of ‘coming out’ whereby they work through several stages and end with the public celebration of their LGBTQ identity limits our grasp of the multiple and complex ways in which students manage their sexual desires within specific contexts of their lives. Moreover, it might be more useful to (re)think how the ‘coming out’

moment is actually part of the *becoming queer* process because it exposes the shifts in understanding one's sexual and romantic desires, as well as how these desires are made known to other people.

Building on these insights, queer and feminist theorists have revealed that the exploration of one's sexual desires is neither linear nor universal, but is ongoing and context-specific (for example, Rasmussen, 2004; Seidman, 1998, 2004; Valentine, Skelton, & Butler, 2003). In fact, I argue that the concept of *becoming queer* more adequately captures the complexity of how these students are (re)oriented between straight and queer desires and lives. Here, my use of 'becoming' describes a generative process, one that relies on (re)iteration and citation in an effort to signal oneself as recognizable and intelligible. Becoming queer resides as a site of both creation and imitation or identification (Butler, 1993, 2004; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). That is, the expression becoming queer captures a sense of process, a continual and risky practice, rather than a onetime announcement or proclamation, which is often associated with the descriptor 'coming out of the closet.' As Butler (1997) explains "'becoming' is no simple or continuous affair, but an uneasy practice of repetition and its risks, compelled yet incomplete, wavering on the horizon of social being" (p.30). This uneasy practice of repetition is captured in how some of the students understood their own transition away from the straight line. Also, becoming queer provides an alternative to the in/out construction of the closet and its reliance on a stable sexual identity. Becoming queer can be defined as a process of (dis)orientation—of living life askew, bent, out of sync—and as a space and a process where lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and questioning (LGBTQ) desires appear (Ahmed, 2006; Halberstam, 2005). This process is complex and risky not only because of how people come to know themselves, but also because that process intersects with the unevenness of how people are known by others. This sense of risk is first found in the identification and acknowledgement of queer desires. Thinking about recognition as

a precept in intelligibility, Butler (2004) argues that “recognition is at once the norm towards which we invariably strive, [...] however, [it] is also the name given to the process that constantly risks destruction” (p.133). The queer students I interviewed expressed a sense of fear of being or remaining unintelligible and unrecognizable to themselves, which would also make them unrecognizable and unintelligible to others. As Butler (2004) explains, recognition is “a process that is engaged when subject and Other understand themselves to be reflected in one another, but where this reflection does not result in a collapse of the one into the Other (through an incorporative identification, for instance)...” (p.131-132). The process of recognition involves therefore the desire to be seen as normative, recognizable, and understood by one’s self but also by others; yet, there is always the risk of being (mis)recognized. For instance, families may know their children in one context, but friends, teachers, and employers may know them in different ways. Other people’s expectations play a role in how, when, why, and where one discloses one’s identification of queer desires, a process that is sometimes out of a person’s control. In my interviews with students, I found that many factors shaped the moment of disclosure (the coming out moment), but the process remains ongoing because of the continuing need to (at times) assert a non-heterosexual identity.

This ongoing process of recognizability was evident in the stories that students at UBC recounted of early relationships where they struggled to understand how and why their interests differed from those of classmates and friends. For example, Jude, a mixed-race queer woman, explains what it was like to explore her sexuality while attending university:

It [her process] definitely wasn't linear. And there was this sort of point where I kind of got there [actively exploring attraction to women] and turned back. I had gone on a few dates with this girl and I just basically confronted like internalized homophobia, just head on. Because I never considered myself a homophobic person, I was always like, you know [...] one of those “straight people” who love the gays. [...] It just really surprised me that I was [queer] too, but I had too much internalized homophobia. Like I couldn't do it, like we went out and I just freaked out. And I just kind of like crawl[ed] back into the closet for a while.

Despite actively exploring her same-gender desires, Jude was confronted with her own sense of ‘internalized homophobia’, which stopped her from exploring sexual/romantic relationships with other women. She referred to this as ‘crawling back into the closet,’ retreating back to the familiar space of heterosexuality. There are many aspects of people’s lives that contribute to their process of becoming queer. Here, Jude expresses the difficulty of feeling (dis)orientated in the realignment of her desires toward women and the clash with her understanding of and complicity with heteronormative expectations. These expectations have a strong impact on students as they work to establish their own sense of self, especially when this process takes place while attending university since it is often one of the first times they are away from their family and friends. However, these expectations can add to the already hefty weight of the pressure to excel in their studies. In fact, students, under the current neoliberal context of higher education are expected to arrive at university as fully functional adults ready to manage the pressures of learning, excelling, and building a resume that makes them the best candidate on the job market.

As students oriented themselves, they found other strategies to explain or justify the feeling of (dis)orientation between their queer desires and the heteronormative expectations which weighed on them. For example, Oskar explained how he understood his sexuality and his identification as gay:

I guess, I thought it was a phase. I was always like ‘no, it will change, you know’. I think every day, from [age] 12 to 17, I woke-up wanting to be straight. I woke-up saying ‘today is the day. Today is the day you’re going to meet a girl and you’re going to fall in love, and you’re going to—everything will [be] normal. It’ll be fine’. And I think I was, I was waiting for it every single day. And in the biggest depths of my depression, that was when I realized that it probably wasn’t going to happen. That it had been, you know, three years that I had been hoping for this [to wake-up straight], and nothing had changed, chances are slim to none. But I didn’t admit, I didn’t admit that I was gay—even to myself. I was a gay, I was just [...] It was a phase. I was just experimenting.

Similarly, Standford, a Chinese-Canadian student who immigrated to Canada just as he was about to start high school, was reluctant to embrace his queer desires.

Many times I tried to convince myself, and was even convinced at some points that, you know, there is a girl. I'm sure, things will play out. It would be fine. [...] I tried over time, of course, I've always thought 'okay, if I find the right person, get married and have a life together. [...] Like you know, suck it up. It's expected, come on you know. I've always harbored that thought until I guess, I think I came out.

Undoing or reworking years of compulsory heterosexuality can be difficult. All three students were at some point willing to deny their queer desires, hoping, wishing, and struggling to maintain their 'straight orientation.' Both Oskar and Standford waited and hoped for a special woman to make their lives 'normal,' to (re)orient their sexual desires to the heterosexual imperative. For Standford, he was willing to 'suck it up' and had convinced himself that the right woman would make all the difference. Oskar's experience was similar in that he had hoped each day that he could fall for the right woman, which would make everything 'normal.' In all three instances, these students wrestled with the social expectations that they *ought* to be heterosexual, without entirely denying their queer desires. Ahmed (2006) describes this sense of disorientation as "the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home" (p.10). Although all three students express the strong desire to 'go back home,' they are unable to find a way to maintain their ties to heterosexuality; at the same time, they have only begun to explore a new sense of orientation. Consider how both Oskar and Standford put a great deal of energy into hoping and convincing themselves that it would be better to be straight before or instead of acting on their queer desires, while Jude 'retreats to the closet' after confronting her own internalized homophobia. These experiences suggest that this process is neither linear nor finite, but rather an ongoing and shifting process of becoming queer.

I am moved and inspired by the dissimilarities, variety, and fluidity of experiences that students expressed throughout the interviews. In an effort to tease out the difference between

identity categories and subject positions, I found it useful to draw on Butler's (1993) argument that "identity categories are insufficient because every subject position is the site of converging relations of power that are not univocal" (p.229-230). In the (re)telling of moments of realization and identification, as well as through the communication of their sexual and romantic desires to others and myself, these students both utilize *and* destabilize identity categories. I argue that these categories are insufficient for capturing the specificity of students' everyday/night lived experience. Despite the multiple ways in which students destabilized their own stories of identification, some students continue to draw on and work at maintaining a unified identity category. This effort is evident by the dramatic celebration of their identification as gay or lesbian, and/or the refusal to consider any other possibilities. For example, when I asked 'how do you define your sexuality?', nineteen of the twenty-six students (73%) answered this question with one word, such as gay, lesbian, queer, bisexual with very little embellishment or qualification. In one instance, Brad was emphatic about how he identified himself: "*Gay... very very very gay!*" Although we both giggled at his enthusiastic reply, his response made a statement about his commitment to this particular sexual identity category.

In other cases, a student's commitment to a particular identity category was alluded to when I asked how their sexuality might have changed over time. Anna, a white Jewish student, provided a particularly poignant illustration of her commitment to a lesbian identity when she recounts her encounter with the woman who became her first girlfriend.

Um...when I first met her, I was kind of confused, like the first day I wasn't like 'oh I'm gay.' But then like within a week after her, after first kissing her, I was like 'you know what, I'm definitely a lesbian. Like there's no denying it.' It makes me feel so much more comfortable and like obviously the process of doing physical stuff with her took longer—but yeah. I pretty much, since I met her, I identified as lesbian. I haven't really wobbled like with the bisexual thing. [...] Like, I'm a person though who believes you can fall in love with anyone, where like a gender shouldn't be excluded. But physically, I could never be with a guy, like it wouldn't happen. If I were to fall in love with a guy, to have a relationship with him, [it] would be [a] very boring relationship, because there would be

no sex. I mean, I do have men that I love. I have a lot of guy friends who I love, but not in that way.

The way that Anna reports her quick transition from straight to confused to lesbian demonstrates a linear progression that has become synonymous with the ‘coming out story’ (Kinsman, 1996; Rasmussen, 2004; Seidman, 1998, 2004; Gill Valentine et al., 2003). Anna’s complete identification with her lesbian desires provides a stable sense of identity, one that she is not willing to challenge. Even in her discussion of bisexuality, a kind of ‘wobbly’ transition point, Anna acknowledges that gender should not be the only defining factor in her attraction to others. Despite this admission, Anna states she could never be sexual with ‘a guy’ again and admits that any subsequent relationship with a man would remain sexless. Thus, Anna’s investment in her lesbian identity is important to her sense of self and also acts as a refusal (at that moment) of any other reiterations of ancillary sexual possibilities.

While Anna’s and Brad’s assertions of lesbian and gay identification are grounded in stable and unified categories, other students expressed a different understanding of sexuality. Here, the reliance on identity as a fixed category of identification is troubled and challenged. When I asked Livia how she identified her sexuality, she asked if I wanted the long or the short answer. When I said I wanted both, she explained it to me this way:

Yes, okay. So, the long answer is that, unlike many other people who consider themselves queer/bisexual and who maybe find that they like all different genders sort of at once [...] they may be attracted to any kind of gender at a time. I find that I tend to go more in phases, which is of course a really contentious word in the community, but that’s actually what I sort of think I do. So I feel like I always have a sense of queerness about myself, but that I bizarrely alternate between a very, I guess, homosexual and very, I suppose, heterosexual experience or times in my life. So it’s weird when I’m in one or the other to think about how I would define my sexual orientation or, you know, that sort of thing, but I do say that I am definitely always queer, yes.

The change in attraction for Livia oscillates between straight and queer; yet, there is no definitive timeline that shapes her sexual and romantic desires. Not only does Livia’s understanding of her experience trouble what would be expected in either the straight or queer communities, it also

disturbs the linear understanding of moving from a heterosexual to a homosexual identity—from one fixed identity category to another. Rather, Livia's experience illustrates a much more fluid movement between relationships with people of all genders. Here, she relies on the flexibility that the term queer implies to more fully capture her desires as compared to a static identity category like bisexuality. Livia's explanation also demonstrates a commitment to remaining open to others whom she might find attractive in contrast to Anna's definitive and explicit attraction to women. Thus, Livia's willingness to identify as queer provides her with more movement and allows her to acknowledge the fluidity of her desire.

Identifying as queer is also about acknowledging the possibility of sexual and gender diversity. In a particularly reflective moment, Steve, a student in his sixth year at UBC, explained how he thought his sexuality has changed over time:

In high school I would probably have preferred a more clinical term, like 'homosexual' ... as opposed to 'gay,' because gay was still very pejorative in high school. But by the end of high school, I was like, 'yeah, I'm gay, I'm a faggot, it's not a big deal,' to my friends, anyway. Since I was the leader of the gay/straight alliance, I was very top-down: 'These are the terms for this—you don't say 'fag', ever—it's not OK'. I wouldn't identify as 'queer' back then. Queer was still a foreign concept to me. At the beginning of university I was pretty comfortable saying I was gay, but I didn't actually start identifying as queer until probably third or fourth year, and that was...I think as I let my personal appearance go, and stopped caring about what other people think, I realised, well, being queer shows more solidarity. I guess, it's such a politically-charged—such a charged word that...I would sit, and I would just have these moments of deep introspection where I'd think, 'well, queer seems ... it erases that binary [more] than just saying 'gay', because if there's gay and there's straight, then there's—it sort of cuts out the middle part, and the rest of it—not even the middle, but everything else that can possibly be.' So, rather than identifying as 'gay', just as singular, I'll just make it a nice spectrum, call it 'queer.'

What is interesting in Steve's response is the connection he makes between a specific iteration of the identity 'gay' and how it relies on a binary construction vis-à-vis 'straight' to create a powerful opposition that denies the 'middle' of the continuum. He also realizes the potential for a politics of coalition when using the term queer, because it "shows more solidarity" and is a politically charged word. While Steve enacts a version of the 'coming out story' in terms of his

movement from identifying himself as homosexual, to gay, and then queer, it also reveals how the process of transition from high school to university opens up other possibilities that lay ahead. Through his involvement with his high school GSA and then through his own journey of becoming queer, Steve reflects on the politicization of the term queer, something that was unlikely to be available to him within the confines of high school. While attending university, Steve was no longer putting the same amount of energy into caring about what people thought of him, which freed him to act on his political convictions rooted in the GSA he started in high school several years earlier. His acknowledgement of the politics of sexual identifications extends the idea of a sexual identity beyond the attraction or desire one may have for another, to how that desire then shapes other parts of students' lives. As Ahmed (2006) suggests, "a queer politics does involve a commitment to a certain way of inhabiting the world" (p.177), one that is often out of sync with heteronormative goals and ambitions (Halberstam 2005). This commitment also disrupts the conventions often attributed to, and idealized by, the white heterosexual couple that marries and has children in the conventional manner. Instead, Steve's reflection on his experiences at UBC reveals how he has expanded his understanding of his sexual self to include a broader set of possibilities and a related politics which are not necessarily governed by an identity category. It also suggests that the students who are actively using queer might be more politically engaged than students who use and are invested in identity categories like gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Through both Steve's and Livia's reflections, a glimmer of the political potential of the term queer (Sullivan, 2003) is revealed in contrast to the definitive approaches that Brad and Anna took in identifying their sexuality at the time of the interview. Rather than constructing the latter as a 'deficit,' I argue that they could be a measure of engagement in gendered and sexual politics on campus. Given the neoliberal context of post-

secondary education (Lewis, 2005), political engagement ceases to be a compelling aspect of university experience when making the grade is much more valued in the market place.

As students come to understand their sexuality and what it means for them, part of becoming queer involves communicating this process to others in moments of recognizability and intelligibility (Butler, 2004). Typically characterized as a moment of disclosure or confirmation where one admits one's queer desires to another, this process often includes people who witness it unfolding—but not always. Here, family members, friends, even classmates, teammates, authority figures, and other people whom one regularly comes into contact with become part of the process of becoming queer. As Rasmussen (2004) suggests, the communication of one's queer desires and romantic attractions is an ongoing process. By recognizing the multiple reasons and times when students have disclosed their sexuality to others, we can see that this process is anything but straightforward or complete. It is, however, a process of recognition that “takes place through communication, primarily but not exclusively verbal, in which subjects are transformed by virtue of the communicative practice⁴⁰ in which they are engaged” (Butler 2004, p.132). For instance, the students I interviewed all discussed the multiple times and ways in which they decided to disclose their non-heterosexuality to others. The communicative part of this process weighed heavily on students when they felt they needed to tell friends or parents about identifying along the queer spectrum.

Although the telling of their sexual identifications was not always under their control, the students I interviewed, for the most part, expressed a great deal of thought about how, where, when, and to whom they were willing to disclose their queer desires. The weight of this decision, especially the risk and fear of a negative response, often kept students from disclosing their gay,

⁴⁰ It is important to note that this communicative process has become increasingly textual through the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Google+) and other textual mediums like texting/phone text messaging. I touch on this point as a limit of the present study in the conclusion.

lesbian, bisexual, and/or queer sexual identification. Yet, in becoming queer, students have a strong desire to break the silence of their assumed heterosexuality in order to reconcile their queer sense of self with what family and friends might expect or understand (Telford, 2003; Valentine et al., 2003). For example, Charlotte came out to her parents while she was in the last years of high school. But she *still* wrestled with her sexuality and did not come out to friends, or participate in the queer community, until her second year of university. The fear of coming out often stopped Charlotte from telling people, especially her parents. She explains why she was so scared to come out to her mom:

So I thought she would really disapprove but it was really easy, once I [...] like well, no I can't say it was really easy, because I still haven't told some people. But, I mean, it was definitely a *weight* off my shoulders, and helped, like, realize that it would be okay sort of, that my parents were okay with it (emphasis added).

For Charlotte, it was important to have the support of her parents as she began to explore her sexuality. Charlotte felt relieved to tell her mom and was encouraged when her parents did not disapprove of her sexuality. Indeed, many students are fearful of telling their parents and family, because they do not want to risk losing their financial and emotional support. Many researchers (see Telford, 2003; Valentine et al., 2003) have commented on the risks that students face in disclosing their queer sexualities. Telford (2003) argues that often students who tell family and friends “encounter hostility, threats, and even violence, along with demands they provide a cause or [need to] give reasons for their sexual difference” (p.123). Although the risk of hostility and violence can apply to anyone who discloses a non-heterosexual identity, for queer students who need to rely on their family for financial support while they attend school, the act of disclosure can put them in an especially precarious position. This is especially important for queer students of colour who often turn to their families and ethnic communities for support when facing racism in addition to homophobia outside of the home. As Han (2006) argues, “not everyone experiences racial, sexual and gendered categorizations in the same way...Gay Asian men do not

simply feel racial and sexual oppression but are oppressed in the unique ways and experience unique identity issues precisely because they are gay, Asian and ‘male’” (p.8). More specifically, Han found that gay Asian men in the West are marginalized in both the gay community and in their respective Asian communities, leaving little room to find sites of comfort and belonging. Thus, the consequences of revealing one’s queer desires are more than just hypothetical, particularly for queers of colour; they are very real in a home where young people are still under the authority of parents or guardians (L. Johnston & Valentine, 1995; Moran et al., 2004). The process of becoming queer in the family home has profoundly affected the students interviewed for this project. Nineteen of the twenty-three students who had disclosed their sexuality to their parents, were accepted without question while four students endured hostility at the time of disclosure.

As noted above, family is an important part of post-secondary students’ financial and emotional support. Charlotte’s account illustrates that despite the support she received, she was still very fearful of disclosing her sexuality. Another white student, Jack, was also fearful about disclosing his sexuality to his mother because he was sure she would react negatively. He felt the need to be honest with her, but the fear was so palpable he had to find another way to express his identity. He explains:

I told my friend Abby from Chinese class and she was really good with it. And then I told a few other friends. This was around the age of 14 or 15, and then it wasn't until after I told some friends and really kind of got comfortable with it myself, I finally found the need to tell my mom. And I had a huge problem, telling her, because I knew that she wasn't going to be okay with it. It was really hard for me, I couldn't even vocalize it. I had to type it on the computer and when she read it, she kind of exploded and was really upset. And then she basically did all the telling for me. She told the rest of my family, as kind of like, she felt the need to talk to everyone about it. And it wasn't until my sister called me and asked me about it one day, if I was gay, that I knew that she had done that. None of my family had mentioned it to me, so it was all like hush-hush. And kind of like they were a little bit uncomfortable with it. So....

Rachael: and how did you feel about your mom going and talking about it with all the rest your family?

Jack: I kind of hated her for it. I was really angry when I was a teenager, and I just kind of, she was just kind of homophobic.

In the end, Jack moved out with his boyfriend to get away from his family. It was also at this time that he stopped attending high school. However, when the relationship with his boyfriend broke down, he moved in with another relative and returned to complete his high school requirements. Even though Jack knew his mother would react negatively, he felt he had to be honest with her about his sexuality. It was at a point in the process of becoming queer when Jack felt compelled to disclose this to his mother, regardless of the consequences. Telford (2003) describes this as an obligation, one that must be navigated so that students “attune themselves to the expectations of their friends [and families] as they adjust to their new ‘families of choice’” (p.123). Here, Jack created a new family with his boyfriend and then with another family member in order to find the support he needed to finish high school. After high school, Jack worked in the service industry before attending a college program that would allow him to transfer into his program of choice at UBC.

Once students have disclosed their non-heterosexuality to their family members, they rarely have control over how that information is shared. In some families, both the student and the parents decide whom to tell next and how, allowing the student to share this information when they feel compelled to do so. However, in other families, especially when there has been a negative reaction, this information is often shared throughout the family as in Jack’s case when he came out to his mother. Jack was fortunate to have a member of the family to support him despite the negative reaction he endured after telling his mother. However, there are times when a student does not get a chance to do the telling; rather, parents and siblings discover their queer desires and/or attractions. In Brad’s case, he did not have a chance to tell his mom because she read about it in his journal. One day, she decided to confront him about it, as he describes below:

Rachael: Aside from your mom reading your journal, did you ever tell her?

Brad: mmm... no. Not directly. I think there were a couple of times where she, after she read it, she came into my room, and she is like 'YOU'RE going to get AIDS' and then I'd like throw my pillow at her. And then be like 'No I'm NOT!!!' And then the next day she'll come in being more calm and [she'd] be like 'it's okay Brad, it's [a] phase.' And then I'll be like 'no it's NOT a phase!!!' So we definitely had confrontations about it and [I] still thinks she has denials today. We've never really addressed it, and I'm going to have to introduce her to my boyfriend soon, so we'll have to deal with it eventually.

The lack of support Brad experienced from his mother and her reaction was, in part, fueled by stereotypes often associated with gay men and queerness in general. Now that Brad is older, no longer living at home, and in a serious relationship, he hopes that his mother will be able to accept his sexuality. This further highlights how both Jack and Brad endured their parental home as a site "where the sexual self is experienced as a self that is invisible, absent and a 'self at risk'" (Moran et al., 2004, p. 89). Once both Jack and Brad were able to move out of their parents' homes, they could more fully explore their queer desires and the process of becoming queer, which also coincided with their desire for post-secondary education—even without the full support of their parents.

To limit the risk of being thrown out by their parents, students would sometimes tell one parent or sibling before the rest of the family. For example, Red explains how he told his mother, but waited before telling his father:

I told my mum when I was twelve. I knew who I was. I knew I was gay. And [...] I always felt it's just like [...] it felt like a pressure, to just not have anyone know. And me and my mum were watching this documentary of High School bullying and they did this experiment where they got the kids in the gymnasium and they all apologized for something they had done to someone else. It was really emotional and I was crying and my mum was crying, and I ran into my room and I was just like crying and I was like I have to tell her. So I went back into the room and I just told her and I was just balling and the first thing she said was like, why are you crying? This is good news. So she was really supportive.[...] So I always had that like idea of support. And then I just came out to my dad last February.

Rachael: Oh wow. How did he take it?

Red: He took it ... he was a little shocked. I don't think shocked because he didn't know, I think shocked because it was real now but he still said he loved me and everything and he supported me as well.

The span of time between Red's disclosure to his mother and father highlights the multiple ways queer students *become* queer at different times with different people and in different places. In this case, Red's mother had known and supported her son for over a decade before her husband was told by Red. Unlike Jack's and Brad's experiences where they had very little control over the timing and telling, Red and Charlotte exercised more control in disclosing their queer sexualities. Here, we can see how the moment of disclosure happens out of sync with the 'standard narrative' of the coming out story (Halberstam 2005). Even the vignettes provided by Jude, Anna, Livia, and Steve demonstrate that the process of becoming recognizable and intelligible (Butler 2004) is an ongoing one that is never complete.

On the whole, the concept of becoming queer is compelling in helping to grasp the complexity of how students come to understand their queer desires and identification with lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or queer (LGBTQ) labels. While some students like Brad and Anna rely on identity categories to give their sexual desires and attractions structure and meaning, other students like Livia and Steve are more willing to explore the intricacy and uncertainty of their queer sexual identifications. Despite how students come to understand their own sexual subjectivities, the complexity of this process is revealed in their relationships with others, their friends, and families. As students weigh the risk of disclosing their queer desires, they consider the consequences of this admission for these relationships as was the case for Jack and Brad, and even for one's self, as Jude realized. In the end, becoming queer, as demonstrated in the experiences of the students interviewed, is always an ongoing process, one that takes time, energy, and courage to risk unintelligibility of the self, alongside rejection, hostility, and potential abandonment by one's family and friends. As a result, the university provides a certain

amount of freedom in which to explore these desires and attractions, while also providing important resources for students. This transition operates at several levels as students move from adolescence to adulthood, from dependence to independence, and from prescribed to self-directed learning. The overall effect has had profound consequences for the sexual subjectivities of students.

CONCLUSION

Based on what students expected from a university education highlighted earlier in the chapter, we can see here how resourceful students are despite the different paths they took to get to UBC. For all the students interviewed, university was both a destination and part of the journey. As students worked towards completing their high school degrees, they anticipated admission to university and the freedom to explore themselves and their sexualities in ways not previously possible. I asked all of the students how important attending university was to them: many gave an answer that combined a love of learning with the recognition that a university degree is a means to an end, a necessary step to get ahead in terms of future employment. Most students stressed that their education was important to them. As Jeffery, explained:

[University is] very important, yes. I've worked a lot. It's just crazy when you go from high school to university and you take some of these classes here and you are like "wow!" they just baby you through all the bad things in society. I mean, there are good things too. I like knowing about the good things just as much as the bad things but it is really neat to see how much you are sheltered from the kind of crap that goes on in society that you can sort of look at and then it is neat because you can sort of try to think of ways to maybe help the crap get better. Do you know what I mean? That is what I love about it here.

The awareness Jeffery gained through his classes at UBC had an impact on how he saw the world. Not only has Jeffery realized the 'sheltered' quality of his high school education, but his new-found awareness of the 'bad things' has empowered him to explore different ways he can change the world. While Haskell and Burtch (2010) argue that high school is the place to start teaching students about sexual and gender diversity, university is where some students can begin

to make changes both to their worldview and to the world they wish to create. Queer students, especially those who waited until university to explore their queer desires, found resources, services, and the potential initiative to become who they desired to be, often despite the silence about such resources which they encountered upon first entering. In some cases, once they were oriented within the queer spaces of the UBC campus (Lefebvre 1991), these students met other queer students and found or created a community of friends where they could explore becoming queer with others.

Returning to the discussion of the experience of orientation (Ahmed, 2006; Lefebvre, 1991) we can see how striving for and attending university provides a moment of (re)orientation away from the straight line for many of the queer students I interviewed. Here, the concept of ‘becoming queer’ captures the incomplete, complex, and always-in-process way queer folk seek recognition and legitimization. In order to deepen our understanding of this process, I have extended Lefebvre’s (1991) conception of ‘conceived space’, and brought together Ahmed’s (2006) concept of orientation and Butler’s (1993, 2004) notion of recognizability to describe the reiterative process of citing a non-normative sexuality in order to approximate a whole and intelligible subject despite the precariousness of this subject position. As demonstrated above, school settings in conjunction with the parental home, provide locations and social contexts where students wrestle with their sexuality in uneven and intermittent ways. The process of becoming queer is never complete; rather it is situational and context specific. In fact, drawing from Foucault’s (1978) conception of pedagogical orthopedics, we can see how the regulation of youths’ sexuality in high school is both spatially and discursively managed. This regulation occurs primarily through the valuing of heteronormative social practices, including gender normative displays and behaviours (Toomey et al. 2011). While some of the students I interviewed managed to assert other sexual possibilities, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or

queer identifications while attending high school, these students were exceptional and always under threat of violence and harassment at school and/or at home (Taylor & Peter, et al., 2011a, 2011b). As a result, the students I interviewed, through the (re)orientation to their queer desires, cultivated an awareness of the contradictory potential for safety and danger in the spaces around them.

Overall, getting to university for the students I interviewed served many purposes: not only did it provide some students with a way to leave their family homes and explore their queer desires, but it also provided a place to grow and broaden their world view. Unlike high school, university offers queer-identified and questioning students with new possibilities as they (re)orient themselves to queer lines of desire. For the majority of these students, university has provided them with opportunities to explore their sexuality. In becoming queer, these students wrestle with the transition from a familiar, heteronormative sexuality to an exploration of queer desires that includes gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, trans and queer identifications. Although students might subscribe to the ‘standard’ coming-out narrative, there are many instances when this narrative is complicated and out of sync. Here, students share stories of ‘crawling back into the closet,’ or disclosing their sexuality to certain members of their family while waiting to tell others. As students moved through their university program, their experiences at UBC have helped to structure how they understand themselves and their queer desires. In the next chapter, I examine how queer students have come to understand the UBC campus as a ‘dangerous’ and ‘risky’ space, and how these perceptions have shaped their engagement with the campus and with other campus inhabitants.

CHAPTER FOUR: NAVIGATING CAMPUS: HOW QUEER STUDENTS ENGAGE WITH RISK, DANGER AND AVOIDED SPACES

The subject is compelled to repeat the norms by which it is produced, but that repetition establishes a domain of risk, for if one fails to reinstate the norm 'in the right way,' one becomes subject to further sanction, one feels the prevailing conditions of existence threatened (Butler 1997, p.28-29).

The process of orientation, which aligns queer students to queer possibilities, occurs through these students' exploration of what is possible, but these possibilities are only in reach when they stray from the straight line (Ahmed, 2006). As queer students orient themselves within the context of the university campus and follow these queer lines of desire, they navigate the campus in ways that engage their sense of safety, risk, and danger through a predominantly heteronormative society where it is assumed that "if one identifies *as* a given gender, one must desire a different gender" (Butler 1993, p.239, emphasis in original). Living outside of this hetero sex-gender-sexual desire matrix violates the rules of heteronormativity. As queer students move away from reproducing a heterosexual subjectivity within the high school context and begin to play with queer sexual subjectivities, they cease to (re)produce heterosexual and gender norms in ways that risk their "conditions of existence" as outlined by Judith Butler in the epigraph to this chapter. Her remarks lead me to ask: what is at stake or made im/possible for queer students on campus?⁴¹ By taking up a marginal position outside the heterosexual matrix, queer students create potential vulnerabilities and possible resistances; within these power relations they come to understand their social position in society. The queer students interviewed for this research articulated their experience of the transition from high school to university for the most part as a move from dangerous to safer spaces in which to explore their queer sexual

⁴¹ This question is especially important because the university campus as a physical place is rarely considered in the literature on lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) created enclaves, neighbourhoods, business districts, and community centres (see for example, Bouthillette, 1997; Lo and Healy, 2000; Nash, 2001; Podmore, 2001; Ross & Sullivan, 2012).

subjectivities. These notions were also integral to their experience of navigating and negotiating their presence on campus while attending UBC.

This chapter focuses on the navigation and negotiation of dangerous, risky, and avoided spaces on the UBC campus that were identified by the students on the maps they created. In an effort to understand how discourses of safety, risk, and danger were understood across the UBC campus, I asked those I interviewed to colour code a standard campus map and indicate queer welcoming and friendly spaces (in pink), spaces they would avoid (in red), and the parts of campus they had never been to (in purple). Each map produced by the students was colourful and expressive (see Appendix D for an example map). Once they completed the task, I asked the students why they coloured the map as they did, which revealed experiences and associations they had with the spaces they identified. These maps were then compiled into one comprehensive map that illustrates the common identifications of avoided spaces on campus (see Figure 4.1 on page 139). The individual maps are what I call *personal maps*, because each one represents the personal feelings and perceptions that were associated with specific places, sites, or locations on campus. For the queer students I interviewed, the personal map extends what von Schulthess (1992) describes as a ‘safety map’ in her study of a lesbian group working to stop assaults on lesbians in San Francisco. Here, I have included queer positive or friendly/welcoming spaces *and* avoided or risky places to illustrate the dynamics of both positive and negative perceptions of the campus. Building on this understanding of personal maps, I have found that queer students create similar maps of the university campus, which shape both their understanding and movement across this landscape. As such, the mapping exercise brings together perceptions (queer welcoming and risky) that queer students have of the UBC campus as a whole and their engagement with the campus. By exploring how queer students conceptualize and move through the campus, we gain insights about the discourses and practices

that shape their understanding of the university campus. This information reveals a tension between how queer students experience the campus welcoming and accommodating, while also suggesting that queer students have developed their own strategies to buffer or evade homophobic and transphobic hostility.

I have discovered Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad—conceived, perceived, and lived moments of space—outlined in Chapter One to be a useful analytic tool for examining the production of social space. Most relevant to my use of personal maps, perceived space and spatial practices work together to shape an understanding of a specific space and what is expected of people who inhabit that space. As Lefebvre (1991) explains further:

the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space...It embodies a close association within perceived space, between reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure) (p.38).

Hence, the relationship between the perceptions of a space is dependent on the routines, characteristics, and behaviours that differentiate one space from another. For example, what is expected in the library is very different from what is expected in the pub on campus. In relation to this research, I have found that queer students develop a spatial acuity, a *queer spatial awareness* (QSA) used to navigate the campus, as revealed through their personal maps, and *queer spatial practices* (QSP) that they employ to negotiate their presence on campus at UBC.

In this chapter, I extend the framework provided by Lefebvre's triad in order to consider the particular understandings and practices that queer students employ as they navigate and negotiate risky and dangerous spaces⁴² on the UBC campus. The artificial separation of risky and queer welcoming spaces serves only as an analytical tool that works to organize the dissertation. In everyday life, conceived, perceived, and lived aspects of social space operate seamlessly and

⁴² Chapter 5 will explore the queer-welcoming spaces and the limits and possibilities these spaces create for queer students on the UBC campus.

instantaneously, which requires queer students to navigate away from avoided or risky spaces and towards queer welcoming and queer friendly spaces. Thus, perceived aspects of social space should not be solely associated with negative inferences, but positive ones as well. In the end, only thirteen of the twenty-six (50%) queer students who were interviewed for this project located spaces they would avoid on campus, nearly all of the students discussed some aspect of the campus where they felt unwelcome. Here, I explore how risk and danger are identified by queer students using their queer spatial awareness and how they respond to this through two specific queer spatial practices: avoidance and/or blending-in. These strategies work to limit queer students' exposure to potential homophobic hostility: they avoid spaces perceived to be hotbeds of homophobia or, they regulate their expression of queerness by blending into the mainstream.

UNDERSTANDING DISCOURSES OF SAFETY, DANGER, AND RISK ON CAMPUS

The university campus is a complex space because it combines residential, pedagogical, social, political, and commercial sites. The combination of these various facets creates at UBC a mini-city or 'university town'⁴³ which is managed by university-appointed security and governed through approved policies and codes of conduct, as well as by all civic, provincial, and federal laws enforced by the local Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). In addition to these laws, students, staff, and faculty are also governed by specific UBC policies vis-à-vis their relationship to the university as an employer and degree-granting institution. Since visitors to the campus do not have similar existing or ongoing relationships to the institution, they face different consequences for violating university codes compared to students, staff, and faculty. For instance, UBC outlines in "Policy #7: University Safety" its aim of providing "a safe, healthy

⁴³ According to the history of the UBC Properties Trust, "the vision for a University Town came into being in 1984 when Robert (Bob) Lee, a UBC alumnus with an established record of real estate development, was appointed to the UBC Board of Governors" (See UBC Properties Trust, (2009) About Us, History, UBCPT <http://www.ubcproperties.com/history.php>, page 2).

and secure environment in which to carry on the University's affairs. All possible preventive measures are taken to eliminate accidental injuries, occupational diseases and risks to personal security" (University of British Columbia Board of Governors, 1994 p.1). However, this seems like a difficult aim to accomplish when the campus is an open and semi-public space with permeable boundaries that distinguish the campus from the rest of the city. While UBC is located about 11kms from the city centre, it is not officially a commuter campus because it offers on-campus housing and commercial amenities for faculty, staff, and students. Yet, due to its location, the majority of students, staff, faculty and visitors need to commute to and from the campus unless they are among the relatively few who live in the residential area that borders the campus. As a result, the UBC campus encounters a high volume of traffic, especially between September and April each year, making it difficult to regulate the campus boundary while reducing risks to personal security. In this section, I explore how discourses of safety, danger, and risk work to shape students' complex and shifting understandings of the UBC campus, as well as how feminist and queer researchers have focused on these issues in different ways.

Safety, danger, and risk are relative terms that are highly subjective and contextual, which are affected by momentary feelings of comfort or concern. As Moran & Skeggs et al. (2004) argue, "safety and security are at the heart of reactions and responses to violence, yet violence is predominantly represented as being in opposition to safety" (p.1). While this opposition (safety versus danger) can be experienced as a binary relationship, the definition of risk adds another dimension to this dichotomy for queer people. For instance, the definition of risk explained in Chapter One focuses on the possibility or chance of experiencing harm, which is an important aspect of becoming queer. As queer students transition away from the straight line to explore their queer desires, they become more aware of the risks associated with queerness in a heteronormative world. This awareness is partially triggered through a sense of

disorientation, which could be “an ordinary feeling, or even a feeling that comes and goes as we move around during the day” (Ahmed 2006, p.157). As will be discussed in detail below, queer students employ queer spatial practices: blending in, avoiding risky spaces, or seeking other more welcoming queer spaces on campus in order to alleviate this sense of disorientation.

In an effort to explore how safety, danger, and risk shape queer students’ perceptions of the university campus as a whole, I asked the twenty-six students interviewed for this project about their feelings of safety and danger when they were on campus. While I received a variety of answers, the most frequent given by 14 students (nine male- and five female-identified students) was that they felt ‘very safe’ on the UBC campus. The next most common answer was from a total of eight students (three male-identified and five female-identified) that they felt ‘pretty safe’ on campus. The remaining four students used terms like ‘relatively safe,’ ‘moderately safe,’ and one student chose not to answer the question directly, but reflected on particular moments of feeling unsafe on campus. For instance, one queer-identified woman, Trekkie, responded:

Well, the only time I don't feel safe would be at night-time. And I definitely, there are times like, you know, like if I have a night class that goes till 10 or something. I used to have that or like when I worked [on campus] sometimes we wouldn't get out [...] till like 12:30 on a Saturday night and there's not a lot of people around. There's not a lot of lighting on campus in general. And so, yeah, there'd be times like when I'd walk quickly or I'd look behind me or something like that. I've used Safewalk⁴⁴ once in my life. Most of the time was when I lived on campus because I was there at night on a regular basis. And Totem residence was pretty far away and it's pretty isolated, there's not a lot of people about. So, yeah. I rode a bike for first year which made me feel a lot safer.

Similarly, Charlotte shared how she felt on campus at night:

During the day totally fine, but when I lived at residence, it was so far away from the bus loop, and you have to like go through all these paths in order to get there. I would feel unsafe, especially when I would go to Fraser Hall, I'd always take that little shuttle back -

⁴⁴ Safewalk is a service provided by the Alma Mater Society (AMS) to everyone on campus, nightly from 7pm to 1am, but not on holidays. Safewalk sends a co-ed team of two people to escort anyone across campus or provide visits to anyone working late in an empty building or isolated part of campus. For more information see: <http://www.ams.ubc.ca/services/ams-safewalk/> [last accessed May 16, 2012].

even that takes forever. And I've heard some statistics about like one in four girls on campus will be sexually assaulted. And like, yeah, there's always like people around campus just because it's a big open campus and people are going to the beach and people are picking up bottles.

I was not surprised that both of these women expressed concern for their safety at night when traversing the UBC campus. Their comments resonate with the 1995 findings of a survey of student safety at UBC by Currie (1995) who found “more than 10% of women indicate that it is not safe to travel alone to *any* of [the] locations in the survey after 5pm” (p.i, emphasis added). Although nearly two decades have passed since this report was presented to the Provost of the university, many of the female-identified students I interviewed were still concerned about their safety when traveling across the UBC campus at night. In many ways, the ‘safety’ literature on drug, rape, and ‘party’ safety is specifically aimed at young women who venture to places like frat parties, clubs, and other late night social scenes; this literature tends to hold these young women responsible for their own safety (Moore & Valverde, 2000). As Moore and Valverde (2000) argue, “the maidens-in-distress of the campus scene cannot rely on anyone to save them: like good neoliberal subjects, they can only save themselves through constant risk-monitoring and risk reduction” (p.11). This neoliberal discourse of self-reliance extends across the campus for women, but in many ways is also directed at queer students, especially queer women, as well. In my research, both the personal maps and the dialectical relationship between queer spatial awareness and queer spatial practices illustrate that queer students are very much responsible for their own sense of safety while on campus.

Both Trekkie and Charlotte identified the layout of campus, citing the distance between buildings and the bus loop, the lack of lighting, and the people who were on campus at night as the basis of their concern. Trekkie was concerned about the lack of people on campus at night; Charlotte was more concerned with the type of people who traverse the campus at night. She referred to non-students heading to Wreck Beach (discussed further in Chapter Five) or people

who collect cans and bottles for money (so-called ‘binners’, some of whom are or appear to be homeless) as the most common people visiting the campus outside of students, staff, and faculty members. Also, Charlotte refers to the campus as a ‘big open campus,’ emphasising the porous nature of the campus boundaries compared to more enclosed public spaces like malls and libraries. While many of these ‘campus outsiders’ are not dangerous or intend to cause harm when they venture on to campus, as non-students these people are ‘out-of-place’ in so far as they transgress a predominantly academic space. These ‘can and bottle collectors’ and ‘Wreck Beach goers’ do not have the additional responsibility or face the same consequences for violating the university’s student conduct policies.⁴⁵ The policy indicates that anyone on the UBC campus displaying ‘at-risk behaviour’ will be dealt with in a manner in keeping with UBC’s “general legal obligations.” However, students, staff, and faculty have more intimate relationships with the university. In either case, the university has the authority to police the campus, but as Charlotte pointed out, this is a ‘big open campus,’ which diminishes the ability of UBC security and other officials to monitor the entire campus. Thus, it is up to each individual campus member to report behaviours that may put others at risk.

Additionally, the students’ comments indicate that it is not just one feature that alters their sense of safety on campus, but a combination that includes the layout, time of day, *and* the people who occupy a space. All of these factors shape students’ perception of the campus, affecting how safe or dangerous they feel as they traverse the campus. These perceptions can be seen in the specific strategies or practices that Trekkie and Charlotte employed to counteract their sense of danger and risk. For Trekkie, riding a bike made her feel safer when traversing the

⁴⁵ For example Policy #14, section 4.6 under Health, Safety & Environment states “Where the individual exhibiting the At-Risk Behaviour is neither a University employee nor a University Student, or the individual’s status has not yet been determined, Campus Security will retain jurisdiction over the matter and will be responsible for ensuring that the At-Risk Behaviour is responded to in a manner that is consistent with the University’s general legal obligations” (UBC, 2011, pg. 5) <http://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy14.pdf>

campus at night given the large distances between classrooms, commercial businesses, and the residences on campus. Likewise, Charlotte used the Translink Community Shuttle⁴⁶ to get around campus at night despite the lengthy wait for this service. Their concerns are typical of the ways in which women have been taught to deal with the threat of sexualized and gendered violence—both on and off campus (Moore & Valverde, 2000).

The threat of danger and violence that women encounter at the hands of men is in many ways different from homophobic and transphobic violence affecting queer men, women, and trans people, which can be perpetrated by men *or* women. Focusing on the gender identity of the victims minimizes the common factors that contribute to how and why sexualized and gendered violence is enacted. While it is unclear what triggers sexual and gendered violence against women specifically, homophobic and transphobic hostility and violence can be ignited by certain visible behaviours such as a same-gender couple holding hands or kissing (Mason, 2001; Stanko & Curry, 1997). Such violence can also result from the perception that a person simply exhibits non-gender conforming behaviour or appearance (Toomey et al., 2012). In both instances, homophobic and sexist violence is directed at those who do not conform to heteronormative and gendered expectations as a means of punishment and demand for compliance (see Comstock, 1991; Herek & Berrill, 1992; Janoff, 2005; Richardson & May, 1999; Toomey et al., 2012; Valentine, 2000). This connection may be dismissed or displaced by some queer activists as Jenness and Broad (1994) explain:

Gay and lesbian antiviolence activism has embraced the tactics and strategies of feminism, but forfeited a gendered understanding of violence. As result, the fact that gays and lesbians embody gender and are firmly situated in gender relations is rendered invisible when one considers ‘the problem’ of violence against gay men and lesbian women (p. 404).

⁴⁶ In the fall of 2006, campus shuttles were provided by Translink, the Greater Vancouver Regional District transit authority, providing transit around the perimeter of the campus and between all residences. (See gss.ubc.ca/wpnu/files/2009/01/06_07_handbookonline.pdf, last accessed November 5, 2011).

By losing track of connections between sexism and homophobia, it becomes difficult to determine if homophobic hostility is a reaction to not conforming to heterosexual or gendered social scripts. For example, it was difficult for the female students I interviewed to differentiate between the sexist versus homophobic hostility they experienced on campus, at least in comparison to the 14 male-identified students who expressed no concern for their safety on campus as a result of identifying as men. Here, this gendered difference was illustrated when some of the gay men suggested the example of accessing resources like Safewalk to feel safer on campus. For instance, Oskar, a white, athletic student explained his scepticism over accessing this resource:

If I was to call at 11:30pm, leaving the library and I wanted an escort to my car, they would laugh in my face. You know, they're going to be like, 'you're a 25-year-old male, muscular male.' They're really going to walk me along? What is going to happen, you know, if a group of four guys attacks me? It doesn't matter how big or old I am, I'm still gonna get my ass kicked. So, but I guess on the other hand, the Safewalk person can be like 'what you want me to do? Like pepper spray?' You know, but victimization, just because you're a guy doesn't mean it's not going to happen to you.

Oskar's comments highlight how certain types of masculinity, in this case, signified by being white and muscular, are not associated with the need for safety resources on campus. Oskar's perception is that he would be ridiculed (laughed at) for requesting the services of Safewalk. He also insists that Safewalk would be ineffective because if he encountered a situation that was beyond his own capabilities, especially given his athleticism, it would not matter who else was present unless they had pepper spray. The fictional situation Oskar constructs to explain why he would not access this resource emphasises the gendered nature of campus safety and how for gay men safety resources such as Safewalk are either not necessary or would ironically place their masculinity in jeopardy (Connell, 2005; Katz, 2006). Such perceptions may also close down the possibility for gay men, racialized men, or men with dis/abilities to access these resources. As a result, researchers and activists need to make clear the ways in which gendered and sexualized

violence are intricately connected. To this end, I have not attempted to separate gendered from sexualized, homophobic, and racialized violence, but rather have treated them as interlocking discourses that support both the gendered and sexual denigration of all queer and trans people. In what follows, I explore the spaces that queer students avoided most on campus and how students employ discourses of danger and risk as they navigate the campus.

AVOIDED SPACES: THE LIMITS OF GENDER CONFORMITY AND HETERONORMATIVITY

Before delving more deeply into a discussion of avoided spaces, I want to consider how queer students construct the university campus in complex and competing ways. As noted above, students felt ‘pretty safe’ on the UBC campus. While many were aware of the danger of exploring queer desires across campus, at least half (13 of the 26) chose not to identify any spaces that they would avoid. Rhonda, a white queer woman, explains:

I didn't mark any places I would avoid because I couldn't think of any, except for Stephen Toope's office [the University President's office], because I wouldn't want to hang out there. I consider marking down the frats and sororities, but, I don't think that I would actually be like, ‘Let's not walk past these’ or ‘okay, let's not go inside.’ I wouldn't go out of my way to go there, like—I don't know if I would be like scared to be there. I generally feel like pretty confident in my sexuality on campus, and I think that's because there's generally, because of the community I built for myself. Like I know that any kind of queer bashing wouldn't stand, so that's kind of why I didn't mark any places that I would avoid specifically.

While Rhonda cites the President of the University's office as the most likely space she would avoid on campus, she reveals later in the interview that this would be for political reasons.

Despite her reluctance to identify places she would avoid, Rhonda does concede that she considered some spots on campus, such as the fraternities and sororities (discussed in detail below), to be risky for encountering hostility based on her sexuality. In her reflection on the campus, she is cognizant of the risks for encountering violence or hostility in these spaces, but these risks are not persuasive enough for her to alter her movement through campus. However,

like the other students who did not identify avoided spaces on the campus map, she remains aware and conscious of the risks and the potential for homophobic hostility as she traverses the campus.

Additionally, Rhonda was adamant “any kind of queer bashing would not stand.” This blanket statement invokes the implicit and explicit ‘promise’ that the institution has made for maintaining a welcoming environment for all where such violence would not be tolerated. For instance, under “Intercultural Understanding,” UBC’s strategic plan *Place and Promise* states:

UBC is a safe place for significant conversations across profound cultural difference. Positioned to engage a full range of local, national, and international experiences and perspectives, UBC collaborates to reduce conflict and generate sustainable solutions to the complex questions of our time (University of British Columbia, 2010, p.20, emphasis added).

With this strategic plan, the university administration aims to make UBC a “safe place” by pledging to “reduce conflict and generate sustainable solutions.” While this section of the strategic plan does indicate that “the University strives to increase access for all and particularly for historically disadvantaged groups” (University of British Columbia, 2010, p.20), it does not specifically mention gender or sexual orientation among the historically disadvantaged. Nor does this section of *The Plan* address how one might create a ‘safe’ space for all members who traverse the campus. Yet the promise of safety seems to have some effect in so far as all 26 queer-identified students not only located at least one queer welcoming and friendly space across the UBC campus, but also said they generally felt safe on campus. In Chapter Five, I explore the spaces students identified as queer welcoming or friendly.

The mapping exercise revealed that 13 of the 26 students (50%) would not identify any spaces they would avoid on the UBC campus, reinforcing the idea that for many of these students the UBC campus was a safe space. Seven identified as male out of a total of fourteen

(50%), five identified as women out of eleven (45%) students, in addition to the only student who identified as trans. The slight variation in the number of students who identified spaces to avoid suggests that, in this case, male-identified students were more aware of their location and perhaps keen to avoid specific spaces on campus. However, while female-identified students were less willing to avoid certain spaces on campus, they indicated a greater awareness of the potential risks for gendered and sexualized violence, echoing the research on women and violence more generally (see Currie, 1995; Currie & MacLean, 1993; Moore & Valverde, 2000; Osborne, 1995; Starkweather, 2007)

From the creation of personal maps by queer students, I layered all of the avoided spaces and the spaces where students had never been to create a composite map (see Figure 4.1). The compilation map reveals several spatial patterns that queer students used to navigate the campus. One such pattern was the relationship between avoided spaces (in red) and the spaces that students had never ventured (darkly shaded areas). The grey shaded areas represent parts of campus where queer students had never been. These density clouds (darkly shaded areas) were created by layering the areas outlined by students as spaces they had never been to on campus. The red outlines indicate the areas on campus that students were most likely to avoid. When these images are layered on to a single campus map, the resulting figure is a provocative ‘snapshot’ of how the queer students perceived the campus in terms of risk and danger.

For the most part, queer students identified spaces where they felt uncomfortable or perceived they would encounter unwelcoming behaviours and attitudes from the other students. In their research on the safety and security of British lesbian and gay men, Moran and Skeggs (2004) found that many of their research participants tended to reference a sense of safety and security in terms of the language of comfort. The absence of comfort, alongside the perception of

discomfort, concern and/or suspicion can signal the risk of potential danger for queer students (Moran & Skeggs et al., 2004). As a result, the relationship illustrated in Figure 4.1 between

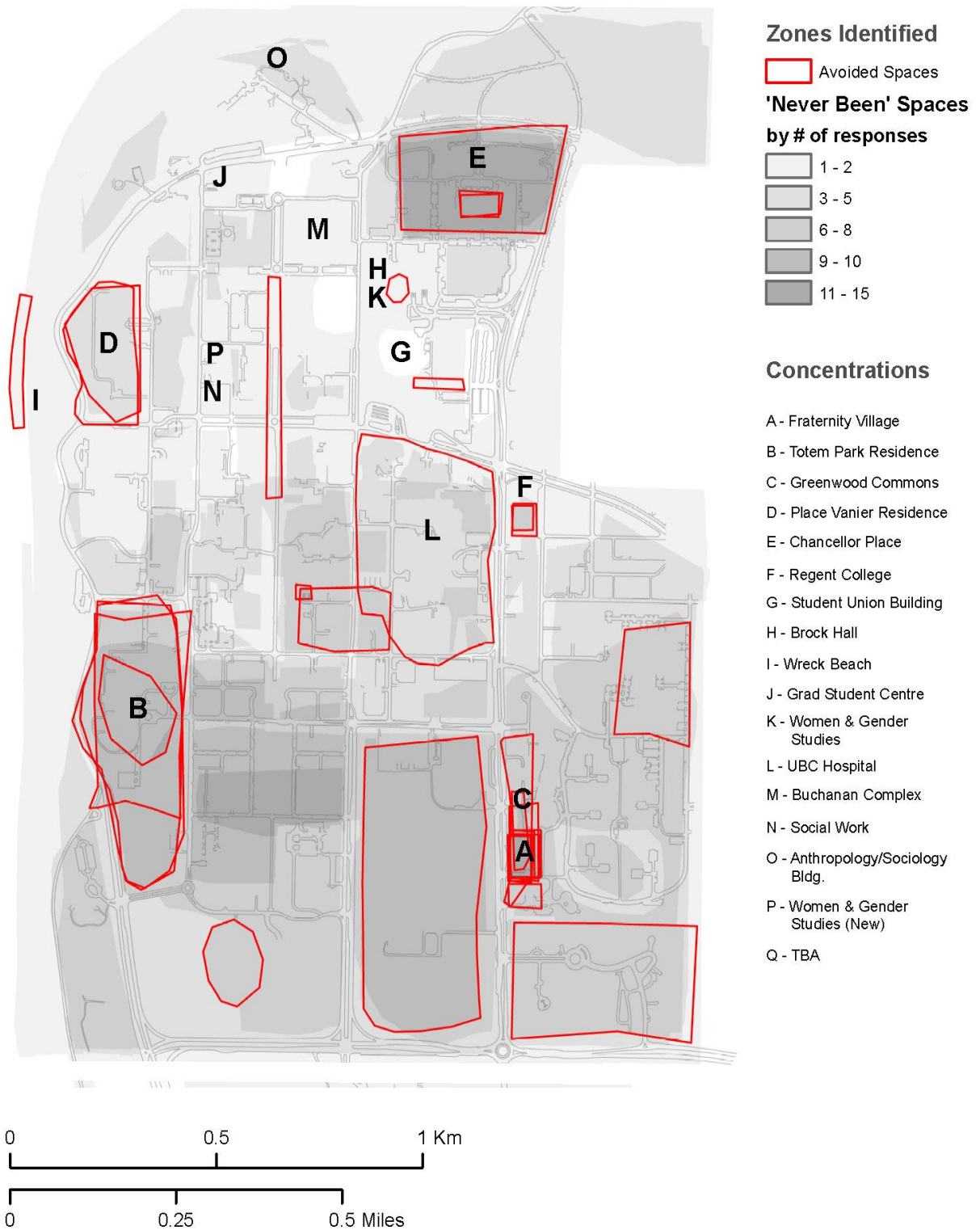


Figure 4.1: Density Map of Avoided Spaces on the UBC campus

‘avoided’ and ‘never been’ spaces on campus offers insight into how students perceived the parts of campus they rarely experienced. For example, the most avoided space on the personal maps was the Greek Village⁴⁷ (see location A, Figure 4.2). Representative of a space queer students would avoid, the Greek Village was also located in a part of campus where the queer students I interviewed rarely went. This suggests that students have a preconceived notion that this space was inherently dangerous or risky without having necessarily experienced it for themselves. It also underscores how those queer students who identified the Greek Village have interacted with the campus by avoiding these spaces, or at least by never going there. As Lefebvre (1991) explains “[Spatial] codes⁴⁸ will be seen as part of a practical relationship, as part of an interaction between ‘subjects’ and their space and surroundings” (p.18). Thus, the compilation map reveals a dialectical character inherent in how queer students understand danger and risk, as well as how their perceptions shape their interaction with particular spaces.

Combined with the interviews, the mapping activity provided me with an opportunity to understand how queer students were “imagining place[s] and practices of location” while navigating the UBC campus (Moran & Skeggs et al., 2004, p. 109). As Starkweather (2007) notes in her research on students’ perceptions of safety at Ohio University, avoidance may be a key strategy where “people [isolate] themselves from places or situations that they *perceive* to be unsafe” (p.363, emphasis added). These perceptions can shape how students navigate the campus and reveal a queer spatial awareness that queer students cultivate in order to navigate the homophobic and heterosexist society in which we live (Mason, 2001; Stanko & Curry, 1997).

⁴⁷ Greek Village is used in the University’s official language when referring to both the fraternity and sorority housing complex located on Wesbook Mall (see MAP). However, the more frequently used ‘Fraternity village’ is found in media and students’ description of this area of campus. As a result, I will use both interchangeably as they refer to the same area on campus.

⁴⁸ Lefebvre uses the term codes to refer to the meanings attached to specific spatial practices that aid in deciphering what is happening in a space. He explains, “If indeed spatial codes have existed, each characterizing a particular spatial/social practice, and if these codifications have been *produced* along with the space corresponding to them...stress[ing] their dialectical character” (Lefebvre 1991, p.17-18). The characteristics of the space are therefore communicated through the dialectical relationship between spatial practices and perceptions.

Although students may not have actually experienced violence or danger in ‘avoided spaces,’ they perceived certain spaces as unsafe, suggesting that the potential for violence exists and therefore ought to be avoided (Mason, 2001). Spaces to be avoided could be grouped together according to the type of activities likely to take place there. Below, I explore first-year residences, the Greek/Fraternity Village, and The Pit Pub as the spaces most likely to be avoided on campus.

On-Campus Residences: Institutionalized Heteronormativity

The on-campus housing stock consists of first-year, upper-year, family, and market housing, all of which are outlined on the official UBC campus map (See Appendix C). Both Totem Park and Place Vanier residences house 3,127 first- and second-year students and are located on the north east side of campus (University of British Columbia, n.d.-a). The students I interviewed agreed that living on campus was an important part of the university experience. It was also representative of what the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) found with regard to on-campus residences which was “an environment that promotes participation in campus programs and, in particular, those that promote diverse interactions” (2011, p.11). Within the sample of queer students I interviewed, 14 of the 26 (54%) students lived in residence during their first year at UBC, while six of the 26 (23%) lived at home during their first year, and five of the 26 students (19%) lived in off-campus rental units in their first year at UBC. As a result, over half of the students interviewed reflected on their experiences of living in residence during their first year at UBC. According to the personal maps, four students identified Totem Park and two students identified Place Vanier as places they would avoid—even in some cases after living there in their first year. Other university residences that were identified as places to avoid included Acadia Park Residence, a residence for families, and Fraser Hall, an upper-year residence located close to the Greek Village. Market housing complexes, such as Chancellor

Place, Hampton Place, and Greenwood Commons, were also identified by at least one student as residential spaces to avoid.

On-campus residences, especially for first-year students, offer an important opportunity to connect with other students, especially for those who have relocated from another city, province, or country. However, LGBTQ students living in residence can find it a daunting experience as they simultaneously begin the process of becoming queer and living with strangers for the first time. Researchers in the US and the UK have found that residence halls are complicated spaces for LGBTQ and questioning students (Bourassa & Shipton, 1991; Evans & Broido, 1999; Evans et al., 2001; Taulke-Johnson, 2010). In many cases, a student will share their living space with a stranger, which “strips one of the privacy and control of one’s own room,” which also constrains how one negotiates queer desires (Robinson, 1998, p.54). This pressure adds to the already stressful time for incoming students who need to acclimatize to a culturally diverse student population, locate classes, departments, student services and amenities, as well as figure out how to become autonomous adults. While there is little research focused specifically on the experiences of LGBTQ students in Canadian university and college residences, researchers have found that American and British university residences are not immune to homophobic and transphobic hostility that can occur on campus or even in the everyday/night spaces of the city where the university is located (Evans & Broido, 1999; Taulke-Johnson, 2010). As a result, much of the research is focused on homophobic incidents and the problems created for queer students (Bourassa & Shipton, 1991; Evans & Broido, 1999; Palmer, 1996; Ryan & Rivers, 2003), as well as practical and policy recommendations for preventing these incidents and meeting the needs of LGBTQ students (Evans et al., 2001; Robinson, 1998). Researchers have yet to explore in detail how these incidents are (re)produced specifically within the confines of the residences halls (see for an exception Taulke-Johnson, 2010).

In contrast to the work that focuses on homophobic violence and harassment (Evans & Broido, 1999; Evans et al., 2001; Robinson, 1998; Taulke-Johnson, 2010), the students who I interviewed did not experience homophobic hostility in the same ways. For instance, Abigail, an international student from the United Kingdom was surprised at the reaction she received from her friends and floor mates in residence when they found out she was having a secret romance with another woman. She explains:

Oh, we... I think we just, like, made out one night and then we ended up realising that there was, like, some kind of connection between us. So we ended up just, like, creeping into each other's rooms at night and, like, kind of, starting to sleep together. And then it [the relationship] was at the point where I could only go so far with a girl before freaking out and then having to, like, withdraw because I felt guilty. So then that would happen and then I would go back and then she would get really confused, and so then it all ended with... I guess it went on for, like, a couple of months or so and then it all ended with her starting to date this other guy, and it all, kind of, blew up and then everyone found out about it and...

Rachael: Oh, no.

Abigail: No, it was a good thing. I mean, because then people could actually be supportive for—like, with me and stuff. But, yes, it [the relationship], kind of, ended badly and then it was summer and so then I went home for, like, four months, so I didn't really see her or talk to her.

Rachael: Yes, okay. When people found out did you have any problems or any issues with certain people on your floor after they found that you...?

Abigail: Not at all, everyone is, like, totally accepting, totally loving and were just, like, were more just shocked that I hadn't told them before.

Rachael: Right.

Abigail: Yes, all my friends are totally accepting.

Abigail was relieved that she was accepted and supported by her friends and floor mates after they found out she was having a secret sexual relationship with another woman. The secretive nature of the relationship highlights how both Abigail and her lover were unwilling to be open about their relationship or their sexual attraction to each other. Concealing one's queer desires, or

‘passing⁴⁹,’ are typical strategies that many of the queer students I interviewed used to navigate their way through residence (see Johnson, 2002; Shippee, 2011). While Abigail’s experience of support and acceptance is remarkable, the fact that students like her felt the need to hide their desires suggests that there is still concern about how other students, specifically room and floor mates, will react to non-heterosexual relationships. Also, there is an important difference in passing as straight and blending in. For instance, queer students who use the spatial practice of blending in openly identify along the queer spectrum, but limit their expression of queerness so as not to make others feel uncomfortable or incite homophobic hostility. Passing, on the other hand, is the denial of one’s queerness, with the intention of deceiving others. In this case, Abigail was passing until things were bad enough that she broke down and talked to her floor-mates about her secret relationship.

The ability or willingness of queer students to pass as heterosexual or blend in provides some assurances that they might avoid homophobic and/or transphobic hostility in residences. As Caleb explained in response to my question:

Rachael: Did you run into any problems or have any issues in residence because you identified as gay?

Caleb: No, no. Also there was another gay guy on our floor, who did run into some problems, because he was a bit—I think he was a bit more stereotypically gay. Um, I think he did. I think people would say things about him, because he was a bit more spirited and typically gay, like bitchy and he seemed a little catty. And well, I have that side of me. I feel like at the end of the day I might be able to pass as more straight sometimes. Um...and so I guess a lot of people didn't realize that a lot of people, look for, look for something that they know is stereotypically gay and if they don't find a thing you're straight, and you pass. So I guess I passed in a lot of people's books.

Earlier in the interview, Caleb explained that he had disclosed that he identified as gay to all of his floor mates and received only positive responses. Despite this, Caleb described his ability to

⁴⁹ Passing or concealing one’s queerness is a strategy that LGBTQ people have used to organize their lives (see Seidman, 2004) or in momentary instances when heteronormative pressures create a need to pass as heterosexual. Drawing on Goffman’s theory of stigma, Cech and Waidzunus (2011) explain, “LGB individuals...can use passing and covering tactics to negotiate the visibility of their stigmatized identity” (p.6).

act straight or less stereotypically gay as part of the reason he never experienced hostility in residence, especially compared to the other ‘gay guy’ on his floor. This example suggests that there is something more complex about the negative responses that some queer students experience in campus residences. According to Caleb, the difference in avoiding negative reactions had less to do with sexual orientation than with his ability to act straight. Framed another way, Caleb’s sexual identity was less threatening to his floor mates because his male-gender expression did not violate heteronormative expectations and, as a result, he escaped hostility that might have been directed at him. By contrast, the other student presented more of a threat to the other heterosexual students in the residence space. According to Taulke-Johnson (2010),

social displays of exaggerated heterosexual masculinity, as articulated both physically through behaviours coded as hegemonically masculine and verbally through expressions of anti-gay attitudes and utilisation of fag discourse, reinforce the heterosexual matrix through assertion and thus contribute to the construction of these environments as straight (p. 407-8).

Thus, even though Caleb was openly identifying as gay when he lived in residence, he was not the target of his floor mates’ hostility because he did not disrupt the masculine gender norms of heteronormativity evident on his residence floor.

The students I interviewed were cognizant of the heteronormativity embedded in residence life at UBC and used this to gauge the likelihood they would experience homophobic hostility. In addition to the residence rooms, floors, and living spaces that were ‘heterosexualized’ through various spatial practices and behaviours, the residences were also organized through the heterosexual matrix (Taulke-Johnson 2010). In many cases at UBC, residences were either gender-segregated, or social events were organized through heterosexual pairing of floor and house mates. Several students pointed this out when we discussed their

experiences of living in residence. For instance, Cody shared his disappointment with the limited options for living in residence:

In my first year I lived in Place Vanier, which is a first-year residence, down here. In a co-ed house, co-ed floor/building. [...] In my second year I lived in Gage. So I lived in one of those towers with five boys. It was interesting. I'm amazed that for such a progressive university that they really don't have that many co-ed dorm options. Like the only one is Fairview which is a townhouse style and the only place where a boy and a girl can really live and use the same kitchen and bathroom. You technically have your own bedrooms, but like you're really living in the same space. And every other one, I guess, it's just because it was historically that way. They just left them to be single gender or by floor or whatever.

Later in the interview, Cody expressed dismay that his desire to live with only women was denied because of the way in which the residences at UBC are organized by gender. While Cody did not experience homophobic hostility in either of his residences, he was nervous about living only with men in his second year. As a gay man, Cody was wary of the potential for homophobic hostility when living with men. He lamented about how much easier it would be to live with women partly because he did not expect to encounter the same kind of hostility from them. These gendered expectations are part of what constructs and supports discourses of heteronormativity.

Livia was also aware of gender-segregation and heteronormative socializing and thought a great deal about how this affected her social opportunities. She explains:

One sort of like problem that didn't have to do directly with us [her and her girlfriend], but was just sort of the scene, was that I was in an all-girls residence and there was sort of this idea that we were all parallel to the boys in the all-boys residence. So there were two all-girls residences and two all-boys ones, but then they were paired up, so like us. And I can't ever remember the name of the other one [residence], were paired and the two other ones were paired, but we didn't have much to do with them, but we were assigned to be paired to this other boys residence. And so like the floors then would be paired, so like we're on third floor and then the third floor boys and us would be on teams together and go out for dinner. I mean, it wasn't really that we should date, but the idea was like, because you're in an all-girls house, you have the comfort of this womanness and you don't have to fear for like, you know, the contamination of your space, but there's the understanding that you need this counterpart and you need to be parallel to this other thing. I mean, in a general life sense, I think it's great that like, yes, people of all genders should interact, but the way it was, though not expressly romantic, was very much like, if

you're to live in this women's space, you need this male counterpart with you at all times and it needs to be assigned to you. So that you can have this sort of, I don't know, it seemed heterosexist, even though that maybe wasn't its intention, but it just seemed a little ridiculous. I didn't like that and I always felt awkward about it because I was like, 'oh you don't know that this counterpart doesn't appeal to me,' not that I don't want to have male friends, but just like this thing.

Rachael: What, the way it's kind of set up...?

Livia: Yes.

Rachael: With like a certain intention in mind?

Livia: Yes, so that was just this weird thing that was sort of a problem, just in that, you know, like they didn't know that I was secretly bowing out of this whole thing, yes.

Livia realized that the heteronormative organization of residence life was primarily a result of gender segregation in single-gender houses and floors as well as the expectation that co-ed socialization was an important part of living in residence. Yet these heteronormative expectations and social patterns excluded Livia and her girlfriend since they felt awkward about the compulsory socializing with the corresponding male residence house(s). Although Livia and her girlfriend at the time were not averse to having male friends, expectations loomed in the sub-text of these co-ed heteronormative social interactions that were off-putting. Consequently, queer, trans, and questioning students are at times excluded when their ideal living circumstances are not acknowledged or even considered in the social organization of residence. In response, the majority of students, including Caleb, Cody, and Livia, worked at either 'passing as heterosexual' or comported themselves in ways that did not challenge the heteronormative construction of residence spaces by 'secretly bowing out' of residence life.

For the most part, once students have established personal and political networks they tend to move to upper-year apartment or townhouse-style residences, such as Gage Towers or Fairview residences, where they live with three to five other students, or they move off-campus and rent accommodations (sometimes with friends). While this type of residence offers students

more autonomy than living with twelve to twenty floor mates, queer and questioning students still need to navigate and negotiate potential heterosexism and homophobia with often four to six students to an apartment. Despite the potential for homophobic hostility in both types of residences, six students identified first-year residences as places they would avoid on campus. For instance, Caleb explains why he would now avoid the first-year residences on campus, after having endured living in Totem:

Well, I just I don't do well around first years. It's just not my scene anymore. It was fun while it lasted. I had a great time in Totem. But, if somebody had said to me come and hang out with me in Totem, I would be like no. You could come and hang out with me in the cold [on the main part of campus], I don't care, I'm not spending time in Totem. I don't have any reason to go back...

Spanky shared a similar sentiment:

Vanier Residence, I lived there last year, and I'm not anxious to live there again. So, I guess it's not a super negative place, but there is lots of annoying undergrads. I know, I know, I'm an undergrad right, but first years can be really annoying right. I also marked the Totem Residence for pretty much the same reason.

The underlying reasons for avoiding first-year residences seem to be three-fold. First, there is a lack of desire to revisit this type of living space when there are other spaces on campus that are more comfortable and easier to access. Second, as shown in the above comments by Caleb and Spanky, some students share an aversion to first-year students citing that they are 'annoying', and a reminder of their interactions as first-year students in these residences. Finally, queer students like Caleb and Spanky could be projecting the potential for experiencing immature and heterosexist behaviour of first-year students based on the short amount of time that would have elapsed, roughly two months between the final year of high school and when university begins, if these students are entering UBC directly from high school. Perhaps Caleb and Spanky were bristling against their own experiences at high school and drawing parallels between their experiences and what they might expect to happen if they were to socialize with students who were living in Totem or Vanier at the time of the interviews.

Fraternities and Sororities: Echoes of High School

Although students indicated that they would avoid some residences, they were far more wary of the fraternities and sororities located on campus than they were of the first-year residences. Moreover, the mapping exercise along with the interviews illustrate that the fraternities (identified by nine students) and the sororities (identified by two students) were the spaces that queer students would most likely avoid. It is not surprising that my research revealed fraternities as the most likely space to be avoided by queer students since they tended to characterised these spaces as rife with homophobia, heteronormativity, and sexual danger, which will be discussed in detail below. Scholars have explored how fraternities and sororities in the United States have been sites of sexual assaults (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006; Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Martin & Hummer, 1989); dominant heteronormative displays of gender (DeSantis, 2007; Handler, 1995; Hesp & Brooks, 2009; Stomblor & Martin, 1994); and excessive alcohol and/or recreational drug use, including date-rape drugs (Menning, 2009; Moore & Valverde, 2000). All of these negative portrayals work to inform queer students' perceptions of these spaces as dangerous, which influences their sense of belonging and exclusion from these groups. Despite this, there is growing research on gay fraternities (Yeung & Stomblor, 2000; Yeung, Stomblor, & Wharton, 2006) which has complimented the literature focused on gay members of mainstream fraternities and sororities (Case, Hesp, & Eberly, 2005; Hesp & Brooks, 2009; Windmeyer & Freeman, 1998).

In his book, *Inside Greek U.*, Alan DeSantis (2007) explores the history and enduring nature of fraternities and sororities on American university and college campuses. He demonstrates how traditional gender roles and proscriptive dating practices cultivate a predominantly heteronormative environment. Moreover, the social and physical organization of

fraternities and sororities reproduce heteronormative expectations found in high schools where students are beginning to make sense of their bodies, sexual desires, and dating practices.

While DeSantis (2007) focuses primarily on fraternities in the US, other researchers have noted important differences between the American and Canadian contexts with regard to fraternities and sororities. For example, Johnston (2005) explains that prior to the 1960s, Canadian university presidents had encouraged the development of fraternities and sororities, believing that they would contribute to student life on campus. Officially recognized by the UBC Senate in 1926, fraternities and sororities grew and expanded as new chapters and organizations were added to the UBC campus (see “UBC Sororities - Initiating Excellence,” n.d. and “Going Greek,” n.d.). However, beginning in the mid-1960s many large Canadian university administrators had “insisted that fraternities and sororities neither claim nor suggest any association with the university [...] At UBC, however, fraternities were [and still are] well entrenched, and [have] a presence in student government” (Johnston 2005, p. 138), which suggests that Greek organizations are for the most part self-governing in the Canadian context. At UBC the presence of the fraternities and sororities is highly visible for anyone making their way to the main campus. In 1951, ‘Fraternity Row,’ was located just outside of the main campus with the construction of Phi Delta Theta’s building on Wesbrook Crescent (Damer & Rosengarten, 2009). Today, there are nine men’s fraternities and seven women’s sororities located on campus in the Greek Village, which includes the Panhellenic Sorority house opened in 2003. The Village provides both a central location to conduct fraternity and sorority business and residential space for many of its members.⁵⁰ These groups are open to all students, regardless

⁵⁰ Unfortunately, I was unable to access the number of fraternity and sorority members for any of the groups at UBC, as many of these numbers are not compiled or made public in published reports.

of academic affiliation; however, the ‘rushing’⁵¹ process undermines this inclusivity. There are also faculty- and department-related fraternities that have residential spaces or main offices located off campus. As a result of the central location of the Greek Village, the fraternities and sororities at UBC have had a more central spatial presence at UBC than is typical between fraternities and universities in the Canadian context.

Of the nine students who marked the Greek Village as a space they would avoid on campus, four were male-identified students, four were female-identified students and one was a trans-identified student. The following comments illustrate why students marked the Greek Village as a space they would avoid:

Livia: I had one friend who is in the sorority and [...] my friend loved it and really legitimately loved it and I can see why she did. That being said, I truly believe, and maybe this is not true, but like I really believe that there's no space for queer people in fraternities and sororities and I know some people in Pride UBC are involved with them and it's always shocking to me and they have fine experiences. You know, I'm probably being unfair, but I really don't think there's space for queer people in them.

Brad: Um, because I don't relate or identify with them [the fraternities] very much. They're very like party, party and you know jock. Well, my assumption, I've been told that this isn't very true, but that they're very much into scoring girls and stuff like that. I don't feel comfortable with that.

Red: Just for the same reason I wouldn't approach [join] the frats in general. And it is probably a pre-judgement which is wrong, but, you know, I guess it is more that like just extra cautiousness. [...] I just don't see them as welcoming or inviting places for queer youth. And even though I am like ready to fight the fight [stand up for being queer] now, I just don't want to go there. Just because I feel like, not that I would be worried or afraid, but sometimes it is more just like let's just avoid the ignorance.

In addition to the nine students who marked fraternity houses as places they would avoid as part of the mapping exercise, a total of 19 students (73%) interviewed expressed a negative impression of fraternities and sororities. Livia was concerned that there was little room or space

⁵¹ In order to become a member of a fraternity or sorority, students typically submit to a series of activities to test their commitment to the group within which they seek membership. Fraternity and sorority members accept the best recruits based on a variety of criteria, which can include one's physique, athleticism, and even personality (see DeSantis 2007).

for queer people in the Greek system and expressed shock that the people she knew who were involved with fraternities and sororities would enjoy participating. Similarly, Brad expressed discomfort with the party atmosphere and heterosexual athletic masculinity, referring to ‘jocks’ and ‘scoring girls.’ Since Brad does not identify with these pursuits, he feels uneasy with what he understands to be the central theme of fraternity life. Likewise, Red would rather avoid fraternities than endure the potential ignorance regarding queer issues. While many students acknowledged that their impressions might not be accurate because they did not have firsthand experience, they and other queer students who were interviewed took perceived threats seriously enough to alter their navigation of the UBC campus.

Another dimension discussed by the 19 students who held negative impressions of the Greek system on campus concerns the hetero-gendering of those who participate in Greek life on campus. For instance, Livia and Charlotte shared their impressions of sorority and fraternity members (emphasis added):

Livia: I think, in the way that sororities and fraternities are set up now, it almost runs counter to the point. It’s sort of like these two houses, where the point of sororities is that there are fraternities and the point of fraternities is that there are sororities and the gender divisions...It’s not just a social club, like the whole point is that there are these gender lines and that we can interact in these women and men spaces, and we purposely go out and seek attraction with the other. So I think that, though most of their activities are not romantic, I mean, they have movie nights and they do make friends there. I just think that a queer person’s presence in one of these fraternities or sororities would not, would just not be accepted by the people. I really feel like the primary interaction is on these lines. I see a connection with this brother fraternity in these potentially romantic ways, so that’s why I would never really seek it out.

Rachael: Okay. Have you ever been to any frat parties?

Livia: No, so this is all totally unfair and unfounded, my impression.

Rachael: And then you have, the fraternity village marked out in a red. So you would avoid going there.

Charlotte: yeah. I mean, I've been there before. I don't like it...Everybody I've known from a frat or sorority is like not that good of a person.

Rachael: What do you mean by 'not that good of a person'?

Charlotte: Well, I don't know. I've just like, all the people I've met are just really...like the guys I've met are really aggressive. I mean, I know that's totally a generalization or whatever. But the guys are really aggressive and piggish and stereotypical frat guys. The girls that I've known are just so like, [acts very girly—with shrill sound effects], like they actually fit the stereotypes of what frat and sorority people should be. I wouldn't go out of my way to be there.

The comments of both Charlotte and Livia indicate that these highly gendered practices contribute to be a heteronormative environment where hegemonic masculinity and femininity are idealized and valued. Livia's comments in particular illustrate her understanding of how stereotypically gendered roles are revered and embedded in the structure of the Greek system and social practices. Charlotte was clearly unimpressed with the people she has met who participate in Greek life on the UBC campus. Her assessment of the men involved in fraternities as 'aggressive and piggish' is characteristic of a macho masculinity that is hegemonic and misogynistic (Menning, 2009). She was equally unimpressed with the women who belong to sororities on campus, and mimicked a type of femininity she felt sorority women exhibited. Charlotte did not enjoy and would therefore avoid the stereotypically gendered roles and environments associated with fraternities and sororities. While Livia admitted to never actually going to the fraternities on campus, she still expressed a negative view of these spaces and the people who were involved. In fact, Livia's perception was so strong that she believed that these spaces are setup to facilitate a hetero-romantic interaction between fraternity men and sorority women. As a result, these stereotypes act as the 'discursive codes' that circulate among students and shape their perceptions of these types of spaces (Lefebvre, 1991). This is despite the fact that Livia, more so than Charlotte, admits that her impressions are based on hearsay rather than her own experience, revealing a potential gap between what is expected and what actually happens in a specific space.

Another student, Eddie shared similar sentiments about the fraternities and sororities. He explained:

They are basically like a heterosexual meat market. And it's weird because I actually know multiple gay people who are in frats, and are very open, open, with the rest of campus and the world. And then they don't ever talk about it around there [the Greek Village], which is intriguing. And it's like, 'so why are you a part of a frat?' [laughter]

Eddie cites the heterosexual 'meat market' in order to deride specific heterosexual dating practices that rely on narrowly constructed gender roles. His opinion of the fraternities and sororities parallels researchers who have also found that Greek life on campuses tends to value and celebrate traditional gender roles and heteronormativity (Armstrong et al., 2006; Boswell & Spade, 1996; DeSantis, 2007; Hamilton, 2007; Stomblor & Martin, 1994). For instance, DeSantis (2007) found that the fraternities and sororities he studied were organized through a 'gendered pairing system' where gendered practices are arranged to correspond within a binary construction of gender. He explains, "To be a real man means not to be feminine to risk being ridiculed as a sissy, fag, or mama's boy. Conversely, to be a good woman means not to act masculine or risk being disparaged as a bitch, butch, or dyke" (DeSantis 2007, p.36). These corresponding gender roles then become the foundation for the construction of heteronormativity. As DeSantis's example illustrates, a man cannot risk being identified as a fag and a woman cannot risk being identified as a dyke, further demonstrating how gender and sexuality are inextricably linked in this setting. Little room is left for other expressions of gender or non-symmetrical pairings of gendered practices. As Eddie notes, he knows gay people who are involved in Greek life on the UBC campus, but recognizes that these queer people remain silent about their queer desires when they are around the Greek Village, suggesting that queerness is not a viable discourse in this space. Moreover, portrayals of fraternities and

sororities in mainstream movies like, *The Social Network* (2010)⁵², *Old School* (2003)⁵³, *Revenge of the Nerds* (1984)⁵⁴, and *Animal House* (1978)⁵⁵, and in the news (see the discussion of date rape drugs, hazing and alcohol fuelled, out-of-control parties below), capture the excessive machismo, hyper femininity, and heteronormative practices of Greek life on campus. While these portrayals do not necessarily represent the actual activities that occur in the Greek Village at UBC, they are pervasive enough to make a majority of the queer students I interviewed wary of fraternity and sorority members, and nine of the 26 students identify the Greek Village as a space they would actively avoid as they navigate the UBC campus. In the end, queer students, through the use of their queer spatial awareness, gauge the prevalence of stringent (hetero)gender codes used to organize a specific space as a measure of how welcoming or unwelcoming a space might be. As noted above, these codes are reflective of the discourses that inform and structure the spatial practices within a space, marking its difference from another space (Lefebvre, 1991). In each case, Charlotte, Livia, and Eddie comment on the normative gender discourses that support heterosexual desire and limit the expression of other gendered and sexual possibilities, regardless of whether they have actually experienced fraternities or sororities first hand.

Other students conceptualized their perception of the fraternities and sororities based on prior instances where they became aware of gender norms and heterosexual desires. Oskar and Cody shared their insights (emphasis added):

⁵² *The Social Network* (2010) a film based on the creation of Facebook, which began as a computer website for Harvard students. For more information, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1285016/>

⁵³ *Old School* (2003) is a comedy where non-students takeover a defunct fraternity and have to fight to be recognized by the school it is affiliated with. For more information, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0302886/>

⁵⁴ *Revenge of the Nerds* (1985) is a classic college film where two fraternity houses are pitted against each other, brains versus brawn. For more information, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088000/>

⁵⁵ *Animal House* (1978) a classic comedy, where the college dean is determined to expel the members of a local fraternity, but they fight back to remain part of the college. For more information, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0077975/>

Oskar: My friend and I make fun of them [the fraternity brothers] all the time. They're standing out there trying to pledge and they're all just sitting there and they want you to be all excited. But okay—you're just sitting on the couch like [a] little clique. To me, it reminds me of *high school, I think. I think it reminds me of that high school mentality, boys club, I guess.*

Cody: My friends at home say they've seen shirts like 'I don't buy my friends' and it's kind of like an anti-Greek lifestyle thing. And it's really interesting because you do make pledges, and you have this group. My cousin was in our sorority in New Hampshire, and like, they said she made—she was kind of drunk—and she made a slightly disparaging comment to[...] a guy. From that action the rest of the sorority shunned her and she had to, like, leave the sorority. Like, why would you even want that, *and it's like high school all over again.*

Although Oskar did not identify any spaces that he would avoid on the campus map, he did have a negative impression of the fraternities on campus. In fact, Oskar's comment highlights the ways in which, for him, fraternities replicate the (re)production of hetero-gendered masculinity in high school. As discussed in my previous chapter, high school can be a difficult time for students who are coming to terms with their queer desires. The association of high school with the 'boys club' mentality that Oskar connects with his impression of the fraternity is persuasive enough that he would rather ridicule the men who participate in fraternities than passively support or participate in this type of male social bonding. Similarly, Cody's impression of fraternities and sororities has been partially influenced by his cousin's experience in the United States where the Greek system has a greater social and spatial presence on campuses (DeSantis, 2007). However, he also came to the same conclusion as Oskar in that fraternities and sororities (re)produce the same kind of social pressures found in high school. The significance of the reference to high school in both Oskar's and Cody's understanding of fraternities and sororities echoes the highly regulated gender norms and hetero-sexual desires found in the high school setting noted in Chapter Three (see also Haskell & Burtch, 2010; Toomey et al., 2012). The fact that these students make reference to high school suggests that university ought to be a time of reorientation and becoming queer when the old behaviours and ideas of high school are left behind. As students become aware of their queer desires, they also become attuned to the gender

norms that constitute heteronormativity, and that shaped their high school experiences. This, in turn, provides a template for students to hone a queer spatial awareness in educational spaces like the university campus. As a result, this queer spatial awareness relies on proximity and orientation to combat a combination of idealized gender norms of conformity and intensely heteronormative social practices.

In addition to the negative impressions that a majority of queer students expressed about the Greek system at UBC, other students referenced incidences of attempted sexual assaults and excessive use of alcohol and ‘date-rape’ drugs at fraternity parties. At UBC in 2007, it was reported that “nearly a dozen women claim they were drugged with the notorious date rape intoxicant GHB at a recent fraternity party” (Korby, 2007, p. 3). More recently, in September 2010, it was reported that RCMP officers were assaulted while breaking up a back-to-school party held at the DEKE fraternity (Mann, 2010). Beyond the UBC campus, early in 2011, the University of Alberta suspended the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity for five years after hazing incidences occurred in the fall of 2010 (Eldridge, 2011). Consequently, it is not surprising that some of the queer students who were interviewed shared their concern about the use of date-rape drugs and other potentially dangerous situations that have been reported in the school newspaper. In fact, Rhonda and Steve referenced some of these instances when discussing their perceptions of the fraternities and sororities on campus:

Rhonda: I have no experience with it [fraternity or sorority life]. I, I, tend to think of frats and sororities as really, really backwards [...] And I'm always kind of thinking of them as an environment that is just not me at all. It's really mainstream, and I don't know. I just, when I think of frats, I think of date rape, which is such a horrible thing but that's... Like I don't think of them as queer friendly, and I don't think of them as particularly—I think of them as so heteronormative.

Rachael: And is that what you mean by backwards?

Rhonda: Yeah, I think really heteronormative and Abercrombie⁵⁶. I don't know just, not very socially aware, and not very critical is how I see frats, which is not an entirely fair analysis. But if I really look inside myself, that's what I think of them. But that's not actually from much experience of any kind with people who are in frats or sororities. Like having been around, like, I think we had a cast party for a musical I was in, in one of the frats. And that's one of the only times I've been over there [in the Greek Village]. So I don't actually know anything about them. This is just preconceived notions.

Steve: I don't really have a positive view of them [fraternities and sororities]. People say they go to a frat party and I immediately warn them not to, you know, consume any drinks that are suspect, because there is such a problem. I think what happened was, it was in the second year, or something, there was a letter, some article in the *Ubysey* about the high incidence of date-rape drug usage, and things like that, and that really—it really turned me off on fraternities. [...] At the time I was very like, you're in a fraternity, OK, we're done. We're not friends. And I didn't really ever have any people to challenge that, and so I was never really too involved with the fraternities and sororities on campus.

Both Rhonda and Steve were concerned with the use of date-rape drugs at the parties held in the Greek Village. They were both aware of the 2007 GHB incident and this has shaped their impression of fraternities and sororities on campus. For Rhonda, the heteronormativity of this space, as well as the reputation of fraternities, are shaped through notions of drug-induced, coerced sex with women as victims and men as perpetrators (Moore & Valverde, 2000). The mix of (hetero)sex, drugs, and alcohol at fraternity parties also influenced how Steve perceived the Greek system on campus. Steve's concern was strong enough that he urged people not to attend frat parties, and would tell people not to consume suspicious drinks because it is "such a problem." Moreover, Steve's assertion that he would not entertain the idea of having a friend that was also involved in the fraternities suggests that, for him, what the Greek system values is utterly incompatible with his own values as a queer man at UBC.

Although students encounter a sense of danger in various places across campus, including pubs, residences, parking lots, and libraries (Currie, 1995), the fraternities and sororities are

⁵⁶ Abercrombie in this instance refers to the clothing store Abercrombie & Fitch that focuses on preppy/ivy league casual clothes for women and men aged 16-25. This company is notorious for using young, white, and athletic-looking models in their advertising, depicting sexual images in their catalogue, and discriminatory hiring practices (Rozhon, 2004). For more information see the official website <http://www.abercrombie.ca>

known to be sites for risky and sexualized behaviours that are for the most part heterosexual (Armstrong et al., 2006; Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Martin & Hummer, 1989; Menning, 2009; Moore & Valverde, 2000; Rhoads, 1995). For instance, Rhoads (1995) found that “narrow and stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and a ‘fear, hatred, and fascination’ with homosexuality may also contribute greatly to the oppressive nature of female-male relations” (p. 319). As a result, the interconnection of gender and sexual relations of power, and normative constructions of masculinity shape the discursive field of power through which masculinity, femininity and hetero/homosexualities are coordinated in the fraternity setting. These normative gender and sexual power relations become the spatial codes that queer students recognize as unwelcoming. In other words, heteronormative discourses inform queer students’ perceptions—queer spatial awareness—which then influence how queer students navigate their way through campus—queer spatial practices—and may even motivate them to warn others about the potential risks that could occur in the Greek Village.

Despite the perceived risks and the exclusion felt by a majority of queer students with regard to fraternities and sororities, some downplayed these risks and even expressed a desire to join the Greek system. For instance, Frank explains his involvement with one of the fraternities on campus:

Frank: Sure I rushed [Fraternity’s Name] in first year and didn’t make it. That’s it.

Rachael: And was that just like—did you make it through the rushing week?

Frank: I can’t really remember. It seems all I remember is I went out to a few events and then there was the decision that was handed down by them [fraternity brothers] as to who got to stay and who didn’t and I didn’t make the cut.

Rachael: Why did you go out to rush for them?

Frank: Because they would be a one-way ticket to social prosperity.

Frank's reference to 'social prosperity' suggests that fraternities and sororities offer a great deal of social mobility, social networking, and instant community. DeSanti (2007) and other researchers have found that fraternities and sororities hold the potential of increased social status in their respective college and university settings, but also provide opportunities for networking after graduation. In addition to the social clout gained by belonging to a fraternity or sorority, these student groups also provide a sense of belonging that can be an important aspect of university education, rounding out the scholastic achievements students are expected to make during their studies. While Frank was not successful in his pledge to become part of a fraternity, another student, Stanford, explained how he became involved in one of the fraternities:

So, my initial impression was something of a challenge, something to see through, I don't know what happened to me that year—but I wanted to do everything. You know? So it's like it was now or never, like, what do I have to lose, and after all—yeah like, what did I have to lose? If anything, fear is one thing, but it's even better to know how to face it. Of course, I was scared at times, you know, going down there [to rush with the fraternity]. I said okay, I'm proud of myself. I'm ready let's do this. So every time, it was with great effort. It's more like carrying forward a plan of attack, almost. Like, you know, you're prepped for it [that they would find out I was gay]. I'm thinking, the general sense for it, is the same for anybody who's rushing, but there's this huge pressure for them, and a huge social aspect to it. There is a huge social reward, which for me was not so much. Just because, like they are great guys. [...] The more I knew them [fraternity brothers], the more I liked them. Of course, things were not as—going in you know you have your own prejudices, of course, and it's a great way to challenge anything you might have [thought], and really face what it is that you're up against or that you're afraid of, and what you've created for yourself. Ummmm.... great guys, great guys.

While approaching his involvement in the fraternity as a challenge, Stanford also shared his concern and even fear of openly identifying as gay and the potential consequences of this admission. Not only does Stanford identify as gay, but also as Chinese-Canadian which might have been unfavourable in a US fraternity setting, but since 40% of UBC's undergraduate population identifies as Chinese (University of British Columbia, 2010b, p.18) the composition of the fraternities and sororities could be more representative of UBC's overall student population. However, since the fraternities and sororities do not collect or publish this type of

information, it is difficult to ascertain if this is the case. Regardless, Stanford explains how he came to openly identify as gay with his fraternity brothers:

[It] was during initiation, one guy...asked me "are you gay?" At that point, I didn't know how to react. It's just, there's no point in lying anymore, you're already into it, you know, what do you have to lose, it's sort of really like, it just seems like, childish to [say] otherwise. So I said, "yes, I am." But I [could not] help feeling that, because the guy who asked me is not your average frat guy too. He's been known to be more of a...um, a jerk! [laughter]. [...] So I asked, we all had big brothers and I asked my big brother, you know—"what was your impression of that, was it the way that it should have been done or was there a way it should have been done? Or was it just any brother can say whatever he wants?" He said, "He should have asked you privately." I thought "Oh, okay, that's good to know" because this is what the frat is all about. It's about pushing me [...]; they totally respect anybody and everybody. Like having to going through all this [rushing], nothing was really said about how they dealt with homosexuality. So I had to figure it out on my own. So the best thing was, you know, sneak under [their radar] and see what happens...but it was a huge relief, because, nothing happened[...]. I can now go on without having to factor in one huge element [that he's gay].

While Stanford was the only queer student interviewed for this research project who was involved in the Greek system at UBC, his experience provides a complex impression of fraternity life. As he stated, Stanford wanted to be part of a fraternity and saw it as a challenge both for him in terms of being accepted, and for his fraternity brothers to accept and respect him. Stanford was relieved because not only did he openly identify as gay before he was formally accepted into the fraternity, but he also successfully completed the challenge he set for himself. In fact, his main concern was what his fraternity brothers would do or say if he openly identified as gay and throughout the interview his race did not appear to be a concern for him. Despite Stanford's disclosure that he identified as gay, his fraternity brothers did not often tease or chide him. However, he did share his understanding of what was expected of him as a gay fraternity brother at social functions and activities:

A lot of the social situations are hetero, are obviously hetero focused. And I don't think they would make any effort to, to accommodate, like 'let's have a gay party for you'. You're expected to blend in, I guess. You're expected to take part, you know. Yeah, be a good sport about it. So fine yeah, I treated it as a social situation, when I was in those kinds of places.

Standford was aware that queer students in the fraternities and sororities would not be accommodated by any celebration of alternative sexualities. His comments reveal that the heteronormative expectations, which shape these social spaces, are both pervasive and thwart alternative expressions of sexuality or gender non-conformity. The role of queer students in mainstream fraternities and sororities is complex and there is scant research exploring this complexity in detail (see DeSantis, 2007; Hesp & Brooks, 2009; Windmeyer & Freeman, 1998 for exception). Thus, it is difficult to locate Stanford's experience within a larger empirical context. However, his experience does highlight how students negotiate their queerness on campus. For instance, he was passing as a straight Chinese-Canadian man before one of the fraternity brothers asked if he was gay.⁵⁷ Then, once the fraternity knew, he felt that he was expected to 'blend in' and 'be a good sport about it' at social functions. While this is accommodating for queer students on campus, in that they are not experiencing homophobic hostility, it comes at the cost of not making a spectacle of their sexuality. In fact, it suggests that if queer students want access to the social privilege that fraternities and sororities provide, they must blend in to the heteronormative social activities, while keeping their queer expression or experiences of themselves in the background or 'private.' The act of 'blending in' is one of the queer spatial practices that I found students employed in their navigation of fraternities and sororities on campus.

Overall, the gendered and heteronormative discourses that queer students in this study have associated with the Greek Village have shaped their understanding and engagement with other students and the spaces they inhabit on campus. In fact, they have made the connection between the space and the type of people they will find there. Here, the dialectical relationship between perception and spatial practice, as Lefebvre (1991) points out, is captured in how queer

⁵⁷ It is unclear if the fraternities and sororities would be considered 'white spaces' at UBC, in part due to the lack of official documentation of their members.

students understand fraternities and sororities on campus as highly gendered and exclusionary. Lefebvre (1991) explains: “The spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it” (p. 38). In this context, the impressions of queer students cited above focus mainly on the gendered and heteronormative discourses that shape the spaces where they expect to find fraternity brothers and sorority sisters—namely, the Greek village. As a result, nine of the 13 who identified places they would avoid on campus selected the Greek Village as a campus location where they would not venture. Moreover, 19 of the 26 students interviewed held negative impressions—queer spatial awareness—of the fraternities and sororities on campus based on particular readings of gender roles and heteronormative practices. As a result of this queer spatial awareness, queer students were left with limited queer spatial practices: they could either ‘blend in,’ as Stanford chose to do in order to gain acceptance, or they could avoid these spaces altogether and the heteronormativity they embodied. At the same time, the heteronormativity associated with Greek life was not limited to the Greek Village, as I discuss in the next section.

The Pit Pub: (Hetero)Gendered Socializing

The Pit Pub was singled out as a specific social space on the UBC campus that most queer students discussed in emphatically negative terms. Located in the basement of the Student Union Building (SUB), the Pit Pub was first established by Zoology professor and public intellectual David Suzuki and then AMS President David Zirnhelt in 1968. For the first five years, as an AMS-run business it was operated out of the SUB ballroom, much like a social or pub night. However, in November 1973, the Pit Pub officially opened in the basement of the SUB where it provided food, beer, and entertainment (Alma Matter Society, n.d.). The Pit Pub is

one of the more popular and spacious bars on campus; it hosts a weekly ‘Pit Night’ as well as a number of concerts and special events during the academic year.

There are a number of pubs and bars located on campus, including Koerner’s Pub⁵⁸ (run by the Graduate Student Society), The Gallery Lounge (run by the AMS), Mahony and Sons (privately owned and operated), and the Point Bar and Grill⁵⁹ (run by UBC Food Services). But the Pit Pub was of specific concern for the queer students interviewed for this study. In fact, one student actually drew the Pit Pub onto the UBC campus map in order to identify it as a space that they would avoid. Seven of the 26 students interviewed offered less than favorable views of the Pit Pub without being asked directly about that space. For instance, Abigail found that “The Pit” was different from other establishments on campus:

Abigail: Koerner’s Pub, it’s a more, kind of, low key easy going kind of pub on campus where I’ve never felt any different when I’m, like, with a partner, that I feel very, like, very welcome and very comfortable expressing myself to a partner when I’m there. [...] And I feel like the staff would intervene if anything was happening...

Rachael: Compared to, like, the Pit or the Gallery?

Abigail: Yes.

Rachael: And why are the Pit and the Gallery different?

Abigail: I just feel as though there’s just, kind of, more like a chachi⁶⁰ atmosphere.

Here, Abigail compares both the Pit and the Gallery lounge located in the SUB to Koerner’s Pub located in the graduate students’ building and finds a more welcoming atmosphere for herself and her partner. She used the term ‘chachi’ to describe the heteronormative and specifically

⁵⁸ The Koerner Pub is currently closed and has been since the spring of 2011, due to a liquor license infraction (see http://www.gss.ubc.ca/Koerners/koerners_pub_home.php for more information [last accessed June 15, 2012]).

⁵⁹ The Point Bar and Grill opened in January 2010 (see <http://blogs.ubc.ca/ubcinsiders/2010/01/15/sneak-peek-the-point-grill/>; last accessed December 22, 2011), during the time I was interviewing students (Sept 2009 – April 2010). As such, many students did not comment on this establishment in their engagement with campus because it was new at the time.

⁶⁰ According to Urban Dictionary, there are several meanings for the word Chachi (see for more information <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=chachi> [last accessed May 19, 2012]). Generally used as a slang term to describe someone who acts tough, with bravado to impress others, usually a man impressing other men or women.

macho gender norms which shape her understanding of the pubs which cater to a majority of the undergraduate clientele, comparing them unfavourably to Koerner's which is more often associated with graduate students.

Invariably, queer students discussed the Pit Pub as a stereotypically heterosexual and a potentially homophobic space on campus. Spanky shared her impression and experience at the Pit Pub:

I don't know if it's really anything specific. One time I went there with a bunch of friends last year, and everyone I was with paired off with someone of the opposite sex, and I ended up pairing off with a guy, of the opposite sex, just dancing with a guy. And I felt like I had to conform to the norms, and then I really hated myself for it because I hadn't really wanted to, but I felt like I had to. So, that didn't make me feel comfortable, and I don't want to replicate that again. I don't want that to happen again—I just didn't feel good about it.

Spanky's reluctance to go to a Pit night with her friends was confirmed when she arrived and felt forced into pairing off into an opposite-sex couple and dancing. Although she did not experience any homophobic hostility, Spanky felt compelled to conform to heteronormative gender norms rather than rebel and disrupt heteronormative social practices. It is likely that by going along (blending in) with the norms and performing heterosexual dating practices, Spanky was protecting herself from a potentially homophobic incident or at the very least a questioning of her sexuality. Here, Spanky utilizes the queer spatial practice of blending in with the group she accompanied to the bar; she also expresses discomfort that would deter her from going back to the Pit Pub in the future.

One day, while waiting for my lunch order, I reflected on the interviews and contemplated the reasons that queer students had shared with me for avoiding this particular space. I realized that I was standing in front of a mural painted on one of the entrances to the Pit Pub. The mural depicted in the photo below (see Figure 4.3, below) is a cartoon of the people and activities one might find in the pub and also what might happen there, especially during the

famous Wednesday night ‘Pit Night’⁶¹. Most noticeable is the large man with baseball cap engaging a slim, hetero-sexy woman in the foreground (Shields Dobson, 2011). The heterosexual coupling, athletic jerseys, and ball caps worn by the male characters suggest that this space is for students involved with UBC or recreational athletics. Additionally, in many of the conversation bubbles (see inset photo on the left) the Greek letters ‘DKE’ located above the phrase ‘Frats Rule!’, indicating that this might be a social space heavily frequented by fraternity and sorority members, jocks, and hetero-sexy women looking for male company (see inset photo on the right). As a visual representation, the images and the heteronormative spatial practices they capture work to code the Pit Pub as a heterosexual space for queer students. By contrast the symbolic meanings captured in the mural I painted outside of the queer student resource group at Lakehead University, discussed in Chapter 1, reinforced queer acceptance and a safe space.

While this is obviously a caricature, the mural suggests what types of people and practices might be expected in this social space. It depicts the kind of heteronormativity found in both Greek life and sports culture, which at UBC come together in one specific space. As Curry (1998) suggests, the campus bar provides a social context where “men typically bond through activities...the most obvious one, of course, is drinking” (p.206). In addition to competitive drinking, the campus bar can also be a place for hegemonic displays of masculinity through aggression and fighting. Here, Curry (1998) explains in another context, “fighters would [stage fights] and pick out a particular victim based on the fact that he ‘looked queer.’ The victim need not do anything particularly provocative...” (p. 210). The campus bar, then, becomes a site for demonstrating one’s heteronormative (macho) masculinity through derision directed at the less ‘macho’ men in the bar. These hegemonic discourses circulate through many campus pubs and

⁶¹ See <http://www.ams.ubc.ca/businesses/the-pit-pub/> for history and specifics of this.

bars across Canada and the United States. Researchers like Katz (2006), Katz & Jhally (1999), Katz & Kilbourne (2004) and Curry (1998) argue that divisions of gender, gendered social



Figure 4.3: Entrance to the Pit Pub Mural in the basement of the Student Union Building (May 2011, photo by Ting Kelly).

structures, and discourses found in sports, military, and fraternity associations work to support physical and sexual violence as a highly regarded expression of masculinity in North America.

Campus bars like the Pit Pub at UBC are often shaped by heteronormative discourses which structure how these spaces are perceived and what is possible in these spaces. Spanky became aware of her own compliance with heteronormativity and was disappointed in her own conformity in dancing with ‘a guy’ when she did not want to do so. For Spanky, the result was a stifling repression of her own queerness, leading her to blend in so that she might deter potential expressions of homophobia. It also led her to avoid the Pit Pub in the future because she did not feel welcome. As noted above, the Pit Pub functions as a central social site for students living in residence, and in the Greek Village.

CONCLUSION

In some cases, most queer students have had negative experiences at on-campus residences, in fraternity and sorority spaces, and in campus bars like the Pit Pub, which shaped their spatial practices and led them to choose to blend-in or avoid these spaces. Other students used their queer spatial awareness to guide them across campus. Mason (2001) suggests that “violence does not have to be experienced to have repercussions [...] the collective implications of violence can be understood [through] risk and possibility” (p. 25). As I have shown above, queer youth have learned through various channels like the media, the circulation of rumours and stereotypes through word of mouth, and even their own experiences in high school to understand and be wary of homophobic hostility and violence. They have created specific strategies to limit their exposure to these encounters by developing a heightened awareness of their surroundings and the people in their vicinity. The personal maps from my participants provide an illustration of how queer students use their perceptions about certain spaces and the people who occupy these spaces to navigate their way through campus. Avoiding or minimizing the risk of homophobic hostility and harassment places the responsibility of being ‘good’ queers onto the individual in order to have a legitimate right to safety and protection by the university (see

Stanko & Curry, 1997 for an example outside of the post-secondary education context). Here, we can draw parallels between the safety measures that women need to utilize as proper neoliberal subjects (Moore & Valverde, 2006) and measures that queer students must take to avoid becoming victims who deserve homophobic hostility or violence due to their own failure to anticipate danger (Richardson & May, 1999).

The concepts of the ‘personal map’ and ‘queer spatial awareness’ have provided me with insights into how queer students understand and engage with the UBC campus. My use of the personal map focuses on the perceptions of queer-identified and avoided spaces reflected in von Schulthess’s conception of ‘safety maps’ (1992), which indicates factors like clothing and appearance, interpersonal behaviours, time of day, and location. The personal maps for this project reflect individual engagement and understanding of the campus from a queer orientation; when they are compiled into one map, broader themes about the multifaceted spaces that make up the UBC campus emerge. For instance, queer spatial awareness is more than just a strategy—it is part of becoming queer. As queer students begin to shift away from objects associated with a straight orientation, they develop a heightened awareness about how this distance is spatially informed. In fact, the development of personal maps captures the process of queer spatial awareness, which relies on a combination of visual cues of a space and the discourses made available through the spatial practices enacted by people who occupy those spaces (Lefebvre, 1991). The information gathered from their surroundings allows queer folk to weigh the likelihood of encountering homophobic hostility or violence. As a result, queer students enact this queer spatial awareness on the UBC campus by gauging what spaces they might avoid in spite of the institution’s claim to provide an open and equitable learning and living space for all members of the community. This was especially evident in the first-year residences where inhabitants of gender-segregated residence houses and floors were expected to socialize with

residents of their corresponding opposite-gendered house or residence floor. Queer students also encountered these heteronormative expectations across the UBC campus in fraternities and sororities, which are quintessentially gender-segregated spaces. The Pit Pub provided another heteronormative socializing space where some queer students felt uncomfortable or avoided altogether. While many of the students described feeling a sense of safety on campus, this sense of safety was continually negotiated through their perceptions and spatial practices in response to the threat (real or perceived) of homophobic hostility. However, the pervasive heteronormativity which queer students identified across campus in residences, fraternities, and sororities, and the Pit Pub, is not easily reported to the university or regulated through UBC policy or policing as overt verbal or physical assaults would be. Thus, queer students need to rely on their queer spatial awareness and queer spatial practices in order to maintain their sense of safety when navigating the campus.

The major findings of this chapter center on the ways in which queer students identify spaces on campus based on spatial codes which inform discourses that structure their perception of spaces and spatial practices which they used to negotiate their presence in those spaces. For instance, many of the avoided spaces are characterized by deeply entrenched gender-normative roles and highly heteronormative expectations and practices. These spaces included on-campus residences, fraternities and sororities, and campus bars like the Pit Pub, all of which share a history of repudiating queer desires. Overall, the spaces that were most likely to be ‘marked’ as spaces to avoid by the students I interviewed were considered to be spaces invested in portraying and celebrating heterosexuality and idealized gender norms. While the spaces discussed above represent both gender normative and heteronormative practices, not all students felt that they needed to avoid specific spaces on campus. Indeed, 50% of the students felt that there were no spaces on campus they ought to avoid. However, rather than take this as the absence of threat, I

learned that these students were either more willing to challenge homophobic hostility (as discussed in the next chapter) or to blend in to their surroundings in an effort to pass as heterosexual. Rather than employ an avoidance strategy, they utilized other navigating and negotiating practices as they moved through the UBC campus. In the next chapter, I consider the spaces that the students I interviewed perceived to be queer friendly and welcoming on campus.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUEERING THE CAMPUS: LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF QUEER SPACES WITHIN UBC

In this project, I have drawn on the work of many researchers who have explored the barriers and violence that queer students face in post-secondary institutions (Bourassa & Shipton, 1991; Evans & Broido, 1999; Evans et al., 2001; Osborne, 1995; Taulke-Johnson, 2008; Taylor & Peter et al., 2011b; Toomey et al., 2012). Yet universities have long been lauded as progressive environments where critical thought and radical ideas flourish. As noted in Chapter One, universities have shifted from being the incubator for the elite at the turn of the twentieth century to their emergence as a site of radical activism in late 1960s, followed by a focus on equity and access in the early 1990s. While many of the queer students I interviewed reported feeling safe on the campus of the University of British Columbia (UBC), they also identified experiences of risk and danger perpetrated via discourses of heteronormativity and the potential for homophobic hostility. However, these queer students also pointed to how the university campus might, at the same time, be experienced in complex and competing ways as a ‘safe haven’ or welcoming place to explore queer desires, a point that few researchers have pursued (see Hackford-Peer, 2010 for an exception). This more optimistic rendering of queer space is considered here in an effort to explore how queer students navigate and negotiate their sexual subjectivities on campus, specifically at UBC.

The current climate on many North American university campuses is shaped by a confluence of discourses on neoliberalism, tolerance, and human rights. Together, these discourses provide the context within which students are expected to ‘make the grade’ in an institution that positions itself as equitable to all students (see University of British Columbia, 2010a). Students are encouraged to focus on receiving a degree and fulfilling their career

aspirations, enhancing their role as ‘global citizens’ and developing critical thinking skills, which are the aspirational goals identified in UBC’s visioning document. Universities, such as UBC, present themselves as ‘safe,’ diverse, equitable and tolerant places for exploring a variety of ideas, scholarly engagement, and finding the key to unlocking students’ future success. For instance, in the strategic planning document, *Place and Promise: the UBC Plan* under “Student Learning,” it states that “The University provides the opportunity for transformative student learning through outstanding teaching and research, enriched educational experiences and rewarding campus life” (University of British Columbia, 2010a, p. 9). Under “Intercultural Understanding,” the goal is to engage “in reflection and action to build intercultural aptitudes, create a strong sense of inclusion and enrich our intellectual and social life” (University of British Columbia, 2010a, p. 9). While the intention of this document is to highlight the potential for UBC to provide transformative learning opportunities and rewarding campus and social life, it lacks a specific discussion of who is likely to experience the UBC campus in such positive terms and how this can be accomplished. Additionally, this document fails to distinguish the diversity of the student, staff, and faculty population outside of cursory references to ‘aboriginal’⁶², ‘international,’ ‘intercultural,’ and ‘cultural difference.’ Just as I found during the orientation session (described in Chapter Three), UBC’s principal institutional document overlooks the importance of addressing the multiple ways in which social categories like gender, race, class, sexuality and dis/ability shape university engagement and experience for students, staff, and faculty.

I argue that the language used in *Place and Promise: the UBC Plan* may appear too broad and universal. Readers might infer that this document applies to everyone but does not

⁶²While I am critical of the approach taken in *Place and Promise: the UBC Plan* document, I am buoyed by the university’s desire to a) acknowledge that UBC is located on traditional Musqueam land in Vancouver and Okanagan land in Kelowna, and b) work collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples and include indigenous cultures, histories and ways of knowing across the campus, often found in official university documents and web pages.

acknowledge the privilege and disadvantage some groups experience on campus in relation to others, nor does it explain how lofty aims and visions are actualized on campus. *Valuing Difference: A Strategy for Advancing Equity and Diversity at UBC* is a document that attempts to support and extend the discussion of mutual respect and equity in practical terms (University of British Columbia, 2010b). It outlines commitments, and strategies, and suggests a possible metrics for achieving equity and diversity across the campus. Sexual orientation is only explicitly referenced in four different places within the document. The first two times it is listed alongside other marginal social positions—race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, or sexual orientation—that already receive protection under the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*⁶³ (University of British Columbia, 2010a, p.6). The third time, sexual orientation is referenced with regard to hiring practices within the Faculty of Science. The last time sexual orientation is referred to within this document is in a section that highlights the Positive Space Campaign. While *Valuing Difference* is related to and supports the main mission statement of *Place and Promise*, it remains a separate document located in a different, less visible area of the UBC website (www.diversity.ubc.ca). However, since *Valuing Difference* specifically addresses issues of equity and diversity including sexual orientation, it will be explored more fully throughout this chapter.

Failure to acknowledge particular differences within the diversity of the university campus population can neutralize and universalize what it means for some members to be part of this institution. As noted in Chapter One, neoliberal forces have shaped the current context of post-secondary education in North America, which frames discussions of and approaches to

⁶³ The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is a legal document that outlines and recognizes the rights and freedoms of people living in Canada. These include Equality Rights (Section 15) which states “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability”(Department of Justice, 2012). For more information see: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/charter/page-1.html> (accessed June 25, 2012).

human rights, equity, and tolerance on university campuses (Davidson-Harden, Kuehn, Schugurensky, & Smaller, 2009; Lewis, 2005, 2008; Smith, 2005; Westerman, 2008). Building on Foucault's insights, Wendy Brown (2006) challenges how tolerance has been utilized as a "neutral" discourse. To this end, Brown argues that "a moral-political practice of governmentality, tolerance has significant cultural, social, and political effects that exceed its surface operations of reducing conflict or of protecting the weak or the minoritized, and that exceed its formal goals of self-representation" (2006, p. 9). Here, Brown makes use of Foucault's concept of governmentality to communicate the process of governing. For Foucault, governmentality focuses on the inter-relationship between those who are governed and those who are authorized to govern, as well as the practices that shape this relationship (Foucault, 1994; Mills, 2003).

In Brown's reference to governmentality, she specifically states 'a moral-political practice of governmentality,' which in the case of tolerance is sustained by a level of self-regulation based on political correctness. In the university setting where tolerance is expressly advocated, students, staff, and faculty are expected to 'tolerate' differences and diversity, which can limit or encourage active and outspoken political and critical engagement (Brown, 2006). Despite university administrators' good intentions provide shelter to minority students—including queer students—from discrimination and hostility, the discourse of tolerance can curtail the development of a critical and radical engagement with the institution. Moreover, the lack of critical inquiry combined with neoliberal forces might even cultivate homonormative⁶⁴ queer subjectivities, locating queerness further and further away from the radical public politics that allowed activists to reclaim the term 'queer.' This chapter explores these themes through the

⁶⁴ Homonormative and homonormativity are terms coined by Lisa Duggan in 2003, in her book *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack On Democracy*. Beacon Press, 2003.

queer students' engagement with positive and welcoming spaces and their understanding and utilization of queer resources on campus.

Returning to Lefebvre (1991), I argue that the dialectical process that characterizes the relationship between perceived space and spatial practice is an important factor for understanding how queer students understand and negotiate their way through the UBC campus—just as it is in relation to risky or dangerous spaces (see Chapter Four). In Chapter Three, I drew on Lefebvre's use of conceived space to explore how queer students located and oriented themselves within the campus, as well as the possibilities that the queer students I interviewed expected to find once they arrived at university. In Chapter Four, I drew on and extended Lefebvre's dialectical understanding of perceived space and spatial practices to examine how queer students used their queer spatial awareness to navigate and employ queer spatial practices to negotiate their presence on campus. In this chapter, I argue that the 'lived moment' in the production of social space, that is of *representational* or *lived space*, is the final aspect of the conceived-perceived-lived triad that reveals the processes for 'queering' space. As Lefebvre (1991) explains, representational space "need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness [...]" representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre...It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations" (p. 41-42). This aspect of the production of social space is where the inhabitants can shift the meaning and use of symbols and objects within a specific space. Shields (1991) describes lived space more explicitly as "the conditioning of discursive possibilities" (p. 54) which provides a momentary opening in the dominant discourses that shape the production of a specific social space to offer alternative spatial readings and practices. I have expanded on Lefebvre's definition of lived space to capture how queer people re/make queer spaces as they strategize their movement across campuses, neighbourhoods, and cities—indeed, through any space that is socially produced.

As established in Chapter One, the term ‘queer’ can address the complexity and fluidity of sexual and gendered expressions (in noun form), while also providing an analytical tool (in verb form) to locate and undo the veneer created by norms and normalizing discourses. Here, Kath Browne’s (2006) meditation on the use of ‘queer’ in the geography of sexualities reveals how the fact and the act of queering can unsettle the normative. As she explains:

queer can remain ever elusively transgressive not just by defying being named, but by doing what queer does—operating beyond powers and controls that enforce normativity. As particular operations of power seek to normalise, categorise and fix the proper relations of objects, this makes “it” difficult to define, categorise and most importantly control. (p. 889)

The transgressive and name-defying nature of the act of queering creates openings in what is often dominating and normalizing. For example, by asking the students I interviewed to (re)create the UBC campus map, by including queer spaces, these students shifted the dominant and institutional discourses represented in the map to also include their very personal understandings of the UBC campus. Yet these openings are only momentary transgressions until they are recaptured by the concretizing power of the norm. In most cases, that is, the likelihood that the official UBC campus map would include queer spaces is negligible. The productive power of ‘queering’ is curtailed as soon as what has been queered is captured and either returned to heteronormative status or becomes institutionalized under the umbrella version of queer. The notion of lived space connects the ways in which spaces, their objects and symbols, are momentarily repurposed, resignified, and reproduced with new meaning, where queer meanings complicate and challenge heteronormativity. Hence, lived space (representational space) becomes the aspect of social space that can be queered.

This chapter explores the ways in which queer students understood and engaged with ‘queer spaces’ on campus where they felt the most welcome and free to express their queerness. Queer students employed both queer spatial awareness and queer spatial practices. However,

these queer spaces are informed by different discourses than just those outlined in Chapter Four. Rather than focusing solely on highly normative gender roles, perceived heteronormative spaces, and practices of avoidance or blending in, queer student awareness also focused on discourses of equity and human rights. Queer students identify spaces where diversity is openly discussed or, at the very least, where heteronormativity is challenged and ‘queered.’ Through the mapping exercise described in the previous chapter, all 26 students interviewed identified at least one space on campus as queer welcoming or queer friendly.⁶⁵ Here, I argue that the university context provides a unique site for exploring the queering of space: not only are there resources specifically developed for queer students at UBC, but, as noted above, the university positions itself as a place that ‘values difference’ and thereby shapes queer students’ expectations of what it means to attend a university. This chapter revisits the mapping exercise to focus on queer-identified spaces and the construction of safety on campus. This analysis is then followed by an examination of the queer spaces which legitimize gender and sexual diversity through a tacit guarantee of safety that students feel entitled to by virtue of attending university. Finally, I consider how this expression of queerness, in spite of its positive implications, has also lost its ability to galvanize the community under neoliberalizing and tolerance-driven educational policies. ‘Acceptable queerness’ is thereby pressed into homonormative constructions which may limit other more radical public engagements with queerness at UBC, and other universities in North America.

QUEER SPACES: DIVERSITY AND ACCEPTANCE ACROSS THE CAMPUS

The identification of queer spaces across the campus was important for the queers students interviewed for this project. Queer spaces are those spaces that welcome or specifically address

⁶⁵ Reference to queer-welcoming and queer friendly spaces emerged in the interviews in the context of spaces that students experienced as open to supporting gender and sexual diversity. Although no specific definition was used by students, this general understanding was used to frame their identification of these spaces. Queer friendly spaces make room for queer issues, whereas queer-welcoming spaces emphasize both queer issues and resources.

queer issues. On a university campus, these would typically include a queer student group or office that addresses issues of sexual and gender diversity. The theme of comfort (Moran and Skeggs, 2004) resonated in how UBC students identified and described queer spaces across campus. In the mapping portion of the interview, all of the students selected at least one place on the UBC campus that they felt was queer-welcoming or queer friendly. For the students, queer friendly was defined in terms of locations where they could express their queer desires and identifications without fear of hostility or reprisal. In turn, the students felt a greater sense of comfort within these spaces compared to other parts of campus identified in the previous chapter, namely on-campus residences, the Greek Village, and the Pit Pub.

As illustrated in Figure 5.1 (see below), ‘Queer and Avoided Spaces on Density Map’ queer identified spaces (in yellow) are for the most part centrally located and clustered around administrative and student-centered buildings. These queer friendly spaces are located near well-traveled parts of campus. The relationship between queer-identified and never-been spaces is largely the inverse of the previous map in Chapter Four (Figure 4.1, p. 140). This suggests a dialectical relationship between the perception of queer friendly spaces and the willingness (or necessity) of students to frequent these spaces. At the same time, students’ everyday interactions within these spaces imply a sense of comfort and familiarity that translates into a space being recognized as queer friendly. Moreover, in the course of the interviews, I detected a pattern for identifying queer spaces, which demonstrated a combination of three different spatial practices: a) known and openly queer people occupy a specific space (especially in an official capacity, like faculty members and administrators); b) a collective assembly of known queer people and/or supportive allies gather at a regular time in a regular space; and c) queer issues, and sexual and gender diversity are discussed positively and/or celebrated. As a result, each of these spatial

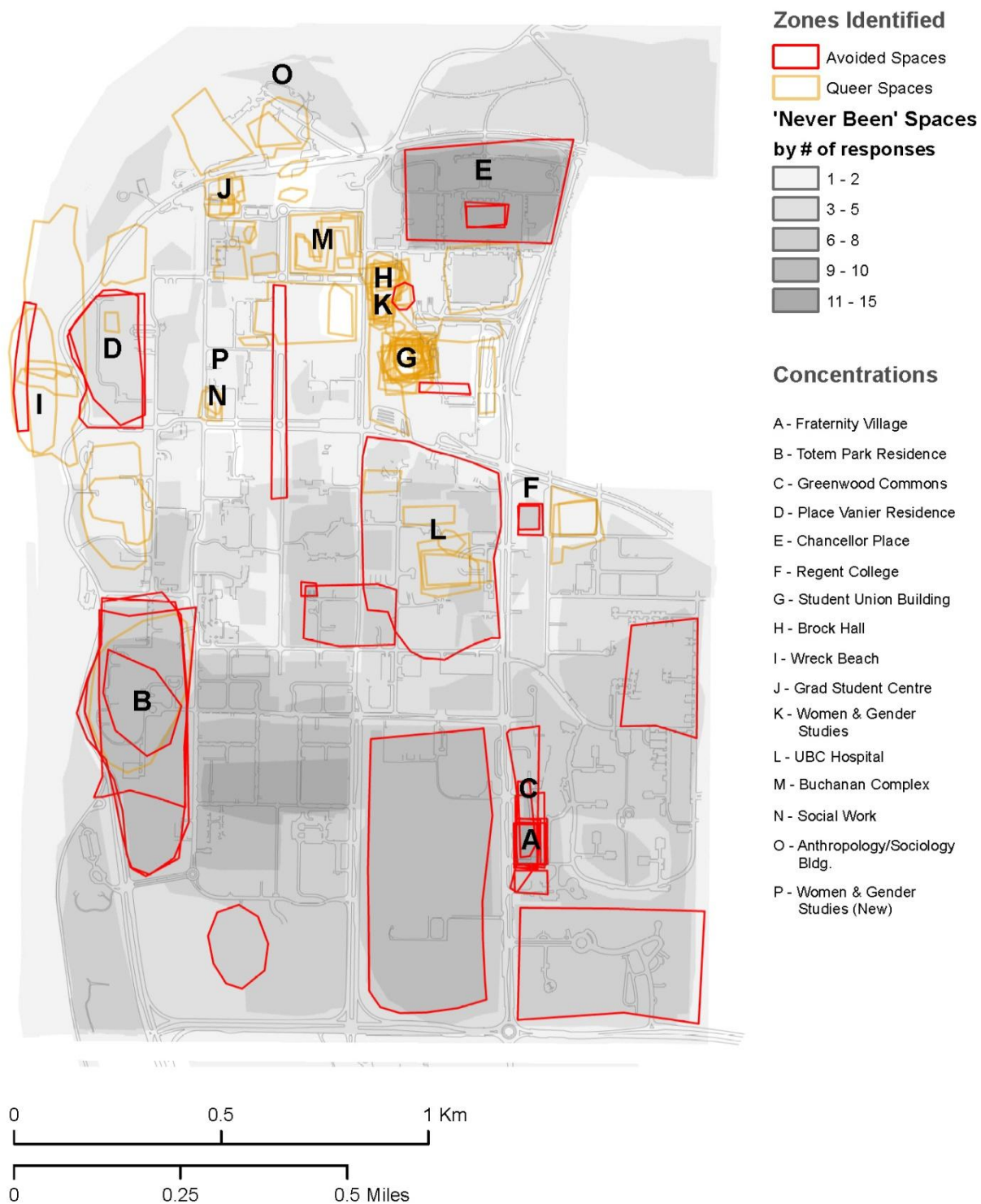


Figure 5.1: Density Map of Queer and Avoided Spaces on the UBC campus

practices provides a momentary opening which may subvert or suspend heteronormative discourses across the campus.

Three types of spaces emerged as important for queer students: administrative spaces, academic spaces, and recreational spaces like Wreck Beach. Within administrative spaces, all but one student indicated that the SUB or a specific section of it, most often the Resource Groups Area (RGA) (see location G, figure 5.2), was the most identified queer space on the campus. Brock Hall, (see location H, figure 5.2) was the second most commonly identified queer-welcoming and queer friendly administrative space by ten students—three of whom identified as male and seven as female. As the main student service center, Brock Hall contains Counseling Services, the Financial Aid Office, Access and Diversity, the Disability Resource Center, Equity Office, Enrolment and Records, and the Centre for Student Involvement. Some of these services address queer issues specifically, but overall these offices provide assistance for all UBC students. The academic spaces identified as queer friendly consisted of departments or program spaces, such as the Women's and Gender Studies (WAGS) (see location K and P⁶⁶, figure 5.2) and the Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO) building (see location O, figure 5.2) where faculty and researchers actively explore sexuality, gender, and social justice issues as part of the department's core curriculum and research activities. Classroom spaces were also included among the academic spaces identified as queer friendly by the students interviewed, often because of the course content or location on campus. Lastly, various recreational and social spaces located near the main UBC campus were also identified as queer-welcoming and queer friendly. Of these, Wreck Beach and the trails leading to the beach, which are physically connected to campus but are not directly governed by UBC, were identified the most frequently.

⁶⁶ Mid way through the interviews with students, the Women's and Gender Studies (WAGS) Program was relocated from its original location (see K, figure 5.2) near Brock Hall to its current location in the basement of the Jack Bell Social Work building (see P, figure 5.2). As a result, some students were interviewed after the WAGS Program opened in its new location. Both locations will be identified throughout the chapter.

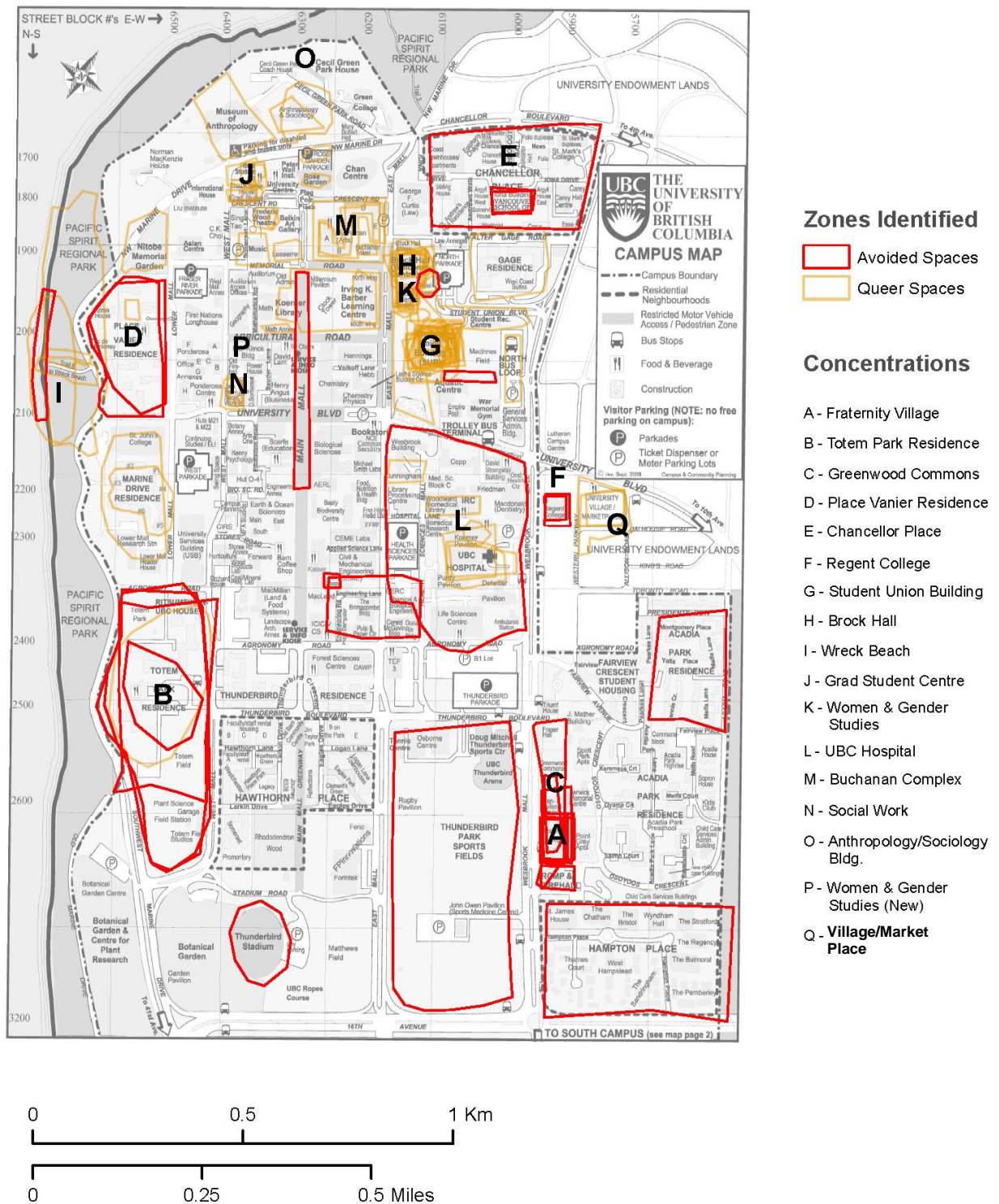


Figure 5.2: Queer and Avoided Spaces on the official UBC campus map

Each of these spaces offers interesting examples of how queer students locate and understand queer-welcoming and queer friendly spaces on the UBC campus.

Administrative and Student Centered Spaces: Officially and Institutionally Queer

As noted above, many of the spaces that were identified as queer friendly were administrative and student-centered spaces where student services or spaces dedicated to students are located. For example, the SUB and the Graduate Student Centre (GSC) building (see location G and J respectively, figure 5.2) both house student government offices: the Alma Mater Society is in the SUB and Graduate Student Society is in the GSC. Likewise, nine of the 25 students (36%) who identified the SUB or a portion of it as being the most queer-welcoming and queer friendly space on campus specifically mentioned the RGA⁶⁷. The RGC is located on the top floor of the SUB and contains the following student organizations: PrideUBC, Womyn's Centre, Colour Connected, Student Environment Centre, Social Justice Centre, and Allies at UBC. All of these groups work to support and celebrate various marginalized and minority student populations on campus. For instance, student Jeremy felt that the PrideUBC office was one of the definitive queer-welcoming spaces on campus:

I wouldn't say there is anywhere that's not queer friendly or queer-welcoming on campus. But in terms of like a specific place where it's a known kind of hang out for gay people and the like [...] I know there's the Pride UBC office in the SUB. That would obviously be a place where a lot of [queer] people would congregate, especially people who are involved in running the events and stuff. Other than that, I just don't really—well, I guess like the place where they meet for 'On the QT' and 'Flow' and 'GLOW' and 'BOTH' and all that stuff. I guess those places, yeah, would be what I'd say.

Jeremy knew that PrideUBC was a 'known hangout for gay people' and could list the discussion groups (On the QT, FLOW, GLOW, and BOTH)⁶⁸ and events organized by PrideUBC student

⁶⁷ The AMS Resource Groups are different from student clubs in that the Resource Groups are funded through a small percentage of tuition fees in order to finance events that support minority and marginalized student populations. Clubs, on the other hand, are not funded by tuition fees and are often based on cultural, linguistic, academic, and/or personal interest.

⁶⁸ On the QT, is a play on the phrase 'On the Down Low'; FLOW stands for Female Lovers on Wednesdays; GLOW stands for Guy Lovers on Wednesdays; and BOTH stands for Bisexual on Thursdays. While the names and

volunteers that are held in different parts of the SUB. However, he did not claim to be involved in PrideUBC specifically and was unsure if there were other spaces on campus that would be accommodating in the same way. He also juxtaposed his perception of the university campus as mostly queer friendly with the *exceptional* space the PrideUBC office offers as an expected place to ‘hang out’ for queer students. Jeremy recognizes that PrideUBC is the institutionalized support and resource centre for queer students on the UBC campus. Thus, his awareness that PrideUBC is the queer student resource group located in the SUB creates the perception that this is the place where queer students would be found. The purpose of this queer space is clearly evoked in its name since ‘Pride’ is often used as a non-gendered term often used in relation to the queer community, as in the case of ‘Pride Parades’⁶⁹ held in cities globally as an international celebration of sexual and gender diversity rights (Sullivan, 2003; Waitt & Stapel, 2011). The congregation of queer students, either in the PrideUBC office or in the specified discussion groups, works to queer space. In addition, a classroom maybe queered or transformed by a queer discussion. The PrideUBC office combines all three of the spatial practices that students used to identify this space as queer: it is the official and institutionalized queer student resource; it provides various spaces for queer students to gather; and it celebrates gender and sexual diversity. Thus, the queer students identified PrideUBC, the Resources Groups Centre, and the SUB as queer spaces because they are considered to be queer friendly spaces where queer students feel comfortable in expressing queer desires without fear of homophobic reprisal.

Other students identified the SUB—a central site for most student activities—as queer friendly. Steve and Caleb shared their perceptions of this space:

days of the discussion groups change over time, PrideUBC works to provide discussion groups to meet the various needs of its members. More recently a Trans Tea Time discussion group has been organized to provide support for trans students (and allies) and create awareness about trans issues across campus.

⁶⁹ Nikki Sullivan explains how ‘pride’ became a cornerstone of the liberationist movement and the positive effects of ‘coming out,’ to be proud of one’s sexuality. This then became the anthem of gay and lesbian rights parades and events used to raise awareness of gay and lesbian and eventually queer issues (see pp. 29-31).

Steve: Well, the Student Union Building is just a common area, with the Pride office [...], and all the resource groups and everything, so I figured that was a pretty good place to start [in relation to filling out the map].

Caleb: The SUB, the Pride building, the Pride office, and just because I feel like the SUB has been a more liberal area, because all the arts, sciences, all the faculties combine, where people are students more than anything else, well...people.

Both Caleb and Steve's comments connect the presence of PrideUBC within the SUB and the cultivation of a queer friendly atmosphere in the SUB as a whole. As explained in Chapter Four, the Pit Pub, which was understood as an extension of the socializing found in the first-year residences and the fraternities and sororities, is also located in the SUB. The tension between the risky space of the Pit Pub and the extension of queer friendly space to nearly the entire SUB building was not mentioned by students. I think that this is partly due to the configuration of the pub in relation to the rest of the SUB. The Pit Pub has three main entrances in the basement of the SUB and is a closed-off area because it serves liquor. Thus, queer students do not necessarily circulate within this space as they do when accessing other services or resources in the SUB, like the AMS offices, RGC, Safe Walk, or the Speakeasy, which are all open and public. Not only is the Pit Pub not as accessible but it is also difficult to see what is happening inside from the main food services area outside, which is where many student circulate for lunch and dinner. Despite this contradiction, the presence of PrideUBC and the related Resource Groups work to extend a feeling of comfort and familiarity for queer students to the extent that nearly every one interviewed included the SUB as a queer friendly space. For instance, Steve started the mapping exercise with the SUB, which suggests a strong association between queer friendly space and the SUB building. Moreover, Caleb characterizes the SUB as a 'liberal area,' suggesting that he expects students who occupy the space to be 'open-minded' about sexual and gender diversity; for him, the SUB is a place where students can be people, a humanist space that erases differences between students. This view illustrates the ways in which queer students draw on

discourses of tolerance and highlight the universality of the student identity, which removes differences between students, despite their awareness of and/or involvement in Resource Groups like PrideUBC. As a result, queer students sometimes used a discourse of 'liberal universalism' (Brown, 2006) in order to identify the SUB as a queer space on the UBC campus in spite of the presence of the Pit Pub within the same building.

Some students also felt that there were other administrative spaces in the SUB that were queer-welcoming and/or -friendly. For example, JT and Charlotte explained their impressions:

JT: Room 245 ...the Resource Groups Area is definitely queer friendly and the SASC [Sexual Assault Support Centre] office, because the coordinators are also queer. And Speakeasy is pretty friendly too and yeah that's about it.

Rachael: So, okay, why did you identify only where you eat at the SUB as a queer welcoming and friendly space?

Charlotte: Well, I meant sort of the whole SUB...well, just because I think like the SUB, I know that it has the queer spaces [like PrideUBC] that they are in there and like I would say, like Sprouts⁷⁰, where I eat is queer friendly. I don't know, I guess that's it.

Both JT and Charlotte point to other less obvious sites within the SUB that they consider to be queer friendly. Some of these are AMS services responsible for providing support for all UBC students like the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) and Speakeasy, a peer crisis support and referral service for students. Many of the students who are involved in the AMS student services (Speakeasy, Safewalk, SASC, etc.) are required to take part in the Positive Space Training. Through the Positive Space Workshop, these students (or any member of the UBC community) are given up-to-date definitions of specific gender and sexual identities, strategies for combatting homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism, and a booklet of resources for referral across the

⁷⁰ Sprouts is a volunteer-run student organization and vegetarian eatery and food co-op located in the basement of the SUB. For more information see: <http://ubcsprouts.ca/about.php> [last accessed August 6, 2012]

university, Vancouver, and the province of British Columbia.⁷¹ As AMS employees or volunteers for these services, trained students become both representatives of the AMS and a potential resource for queer students. JT identified both of the coordinators of SASC as queer. As noted earlier, having an open or known queer person, especially in an official capacity, also works to queer a space. Moreover, the presence of queer people in a specific place helps to enhance the perception that it would be more amenable to expressions of queerness. In part, this impression relies on the assumption that it would be unlikely for known queer people to perpetuate homophobic hostility, and allows for other students to queer this space by expressing their own queerness. Who occupies a space plays a key role in whether that space is seen as queer friendly. Queer students interviewed for this project pointed to how program coordinators, elected student government officials, and trained student volunteers who are known as queer themselves or allies make spaces queer friendly through their mere presence.

Similarly, five students included the Graduate Student Centre (see location J, figure 5.2) as a queer friendly space on the UBC campus. As mentioned earlier, the Graduate Student Centre contains the GSS offices, the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) which includes the university defence room, and the now-defunct Koerner's Pub.⁷² The thesis defence room, administered by FoGS, was the location of a regular Monday night discussion group on queer issues called "On the QT" for over a decade. This all-inclusive discussion group was attended by anywhere from eight to thirty undergraduate and graduate students every week. They would even head down to Koerner's for socializing after the discussion group had ended for the evening. Although the location of the group switched to the SUB in 2009 and is now held in one of the Buchannan buildings, many of the students who were interviewed remember attending it in the thesis

⁷¹ When people complete the Positive Space Workshop, they are given the opportunity to become a resource person and have their name and email address listed on the Positive Space Campaign website.

⁷² Koerner's Pub was closed due to liquor license infractions in the spring of 2010 (see <http://www.straight.com/article-300505/vancouver/ubc-suspends-liquor-license-koerners-pub>). There are some rumors that Koerner's Pub will re-open for the 2012-2013 academic year, but nothing has been substantiated yet.

defence room. For instance, Spanky and Elizabeth included the Graduate Student Centre as a queer friendly space on their campus maps. They explain their reasons for doing so:

Spanky: I identified the graduate student Koerner house or whatever [as a queer space] because QT [discussion group] is held there.

Elizabeth: And then the Grad Student Services Center [GSC], because of the ‘On the QT’ [discussion group], and that's my only experience with that particular location on campus. And so it is tainted forever in my mind as being a queer space whether they want it or not.

Although these students were not entirely sure of the building name, they did connect the GSC space with the discussion group run by PrideUBC. For both Spanky and Elizabeth, their personal interactions with the Graduate Student Society (located in the Graduate Student Centre) influenced their perception of this space. As Elizabeth adeptly explains, the GSC will remain a queer space in her mind despite the fact that the discussion group is no longer held there. More specifically, Elizabeth used the word ‘tainted’ to describe the thesis defence room, which suggests that this room became contaminated with ‘queerness,’ but a contamination she is happy to recall despite the fact that the group no longer uses that space. It also suggests that for those students who participated in On the QT, they were queering the thesis defence room by transforming it for the Monday night discussion group. Thus a connection was created between the perception (queers will be at this place at a set time to discuss queer things) and the spatial practice of actually occupying that space, even though it was only momentary (Monday nights), and is now held in a different location.

In addition to some of the AMS services, the GSC building, and the SUB, ten students included Brock Hall as an important queer space on their map and in our conversations about queer welcoming and friendly spaces on campus. Brock Hall contains many of the student services in addition to the ones provided by the AMS and GSS. Livia shares her reason for including it on her map:

Brock Hall contains some queer-positive organizations and resources for queer people, so I put that and it seemed to specifically have those resources, rather than just being kind of like generally accepting and that sort of thing.

Moreover, Abigail and Rhonda highlighted the importance of certain services within Brock Hall:

Abigail: Just because there are a lot of resources there, counselling services and stuff. I feel comfortable talking; they've got a counsellor in there. So I feel comfortable talking to them about it and they're very accepting and promote, like, queer friendly spaces..

Rhonda: Brock Hall, because UBC counselling is there and they are very queer positive, which is great.

These students identify Brock Hall as a queer welcoming and friendly space because it contains resources and services that cater to queer students. Livia perceived it to be more queer welcoming, rather than just generally accepting of queer people on campus. Also, both Abigail and Rhonda pointed out that Brock Hall contains staff and administrative members who act as queer resource persons after participating in the Positive Space Campaign (PSC). Brock Hall also includes the Equity Office, which runs the PSC and provides frontline support to students, staff, and faculty who have encountered harassment or discrimination on the UBC campus. Both the Equity Office and the PSC are direct examples of how the university as an educational institution positions itself as a queer friendly space. As noted above, offices that participate in the PSC display a rainbow decal (see Chapter One), making queer spaces, people, and allies who are aware of issues related to sexual and gender diversity visible on campus. As noted by both Abigail and Rhonda, the Counselling Centre, which features a PSC decal on its doors, is an important part of the resources that provide a queer-welcoming and -friendly atmosphere to students. Additionally, the students interviewed mentioned that some of the counsellors also identify as queer, which contributes to the perception that the UBC counselling office is a queer friendly space. For Abigail, the Counselling Services provided her with a wealth of knowledge about the issues that queer students face, as well as the resources and referrals available to students both on and off campus.

The strength of queer students' perception of Brock Hall as a queer space was not only attributed to the location of queer friendly student services, but also because it is a primary locus of university-student interaction. Students understand that university staff and administrators are bound by the university's policies and mandates. As Stanford explained:

Stanford: Brock Hall, because it's an administrative centre. It's where Access and Diversity, what's the name of the other office again....

Rachael: the Equity Office?

Stanford: yes, there you go. Yes, the Equity Office. It's a service, and many students are there. It's the administrative centre, so, any policies or whatever yeah, they would have to—

Rachael: —Intervene?

Stanford: Yeah.

Stanford's comments help to make the connection between the deployment of university equity policies and the intervention or action on the part of the staff who administer the student services in this space and who could potentially protect queer students from homophobic hostility.

Stanford's comment echoes the students' statements above, demonstrating how these students focus specifically on resources like the Access & Diversity and the Equity Office, which are hubs of human rights and tolerance discourses. As Brown (2006) explains "tolerance is among the panoply of goods promised by a universal doctrine of human rights" (p. 9). Employing the 'doctrine of human rights,' the university presents itself as an exemplary site where issues of access, equity, diversity, and inclusion are just as important as excellence and accountability (Walker, 2008). As outlined in the *Valuing Difference* document, UBC is committed "to advancing a diverse, equitable and inclusive community" (President Toope quoted in University of British Columbia, 2010b, p. 2). As a result, many students have connected tolerance, human rights, and inclusivity discourses to student services, specifically at Brock Hall, as the main site

where students interact with the institution and its administrators. Queer students in this space tend to assume and expect a certain level of safety and security.

In many cases, expectations of safety and security extend beyond the services and resources offered by university administrative units and student governments (AMS and GSS) to the majority of campus and even neighbouring sites (with the exception of the risky spaces outlined in the previous chapter). For example, four students identified the UBC Hospital (see location L in figure 5.2) as a queer friendly space. Abigail said:

I don't know, I just... For the majority of the time, like, every time I've been there [the UBC Hospital] and I haven't felt, like, as though, like, I haven't felt judged or anything. It depends on, like, I guess it depends on who's there in the hospital. But for the most part I think that they do the job in promoting queer friendly spaces.

Another student, Spanky shared a similar sentiment:

Okay, identify the UBC Hospital, because I think that they have programs in place, which was pointed out when we went there during our tour [PrideUBC facilitated campus tour], at the beginning of the year. I've been to the UBC Hospital, but not in a queer context but I feel like they would be friendly or positive.

Here, both Abigail and Spanky suggest that there are specific programs or policies that would either address the health concerns of queer UBC students through special programs, or at the very least provide a queer friendly, non-judgmental environment.

It is unclear if the UBC Hospital or UBC Student Health Services actually provide queer-specific programs; that information is lacking on both the Vancouver Coastal Health website for the UBC hospital (Koerner Pavillion) and the UBC Student Health Services website.⁷³ However, through email correspondence, the Director of UBC Student Health Services, Patricia Mirwaldt⁷⁴ explained that their office requires all staff to attend the Positive Space Workshop. While this attendance is not formalized in written policy, it has been expected for several years. UBC Health

⁷³ See <http://www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/services-resources/student-health-service/> for additional information on the UBC Health Services [last accessed: July 3, 2011].

⁷⁴ Email from the Director, Patricia Mirwaldt, confirming these details on July 4, 2011.

Student Services also displays the PSC decal at their entrance, making awareness of queer issues visible. It was also explained to me that students could ask for a medical practitioner of any gender or one with a reputation for being queer friendly. The historical construction of homosexuality as a medical and psychological problem has made sites of medical care suspect for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer people (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Foucault, 1978; Terry, 1991). When I asked directly, Mirwaldt explained that while the UBC Student Health Services are located in the UBC Hospital,⁷⁵ UBC Student Health Services have worked consistently to address queer student issues. While the hospital location might be a barrier to some students, especially those who might have previously received homophobic medical attention, both Abigail and Spanky clearly connected their understanding of queer friendly spaces with the UBC Hospital, and specifically the UBC Student Health Services where they felt sure to find queer friendly physicians and staff. And, they expected that this would be the case for all queer UBC students.

In all, the queer students I interviewed perceived the SUB, GSS, Brock Hall, and the UBC Hospital as the main queer friendly spaces on campus based on a number of aspects, including specific resources like PrideUBC, Speakeasy, Access & Diversity, Counselling Centre, and the Equity Office. All of these services promote tolerance and equitable treatment of queer students. The pervasive perception among those interviewed was that student-centered spaces would include all students, meaning that homophobic, transphobic, and heteronormative sentiments would not be tolerated in these spaces. Within these highly regulated points of contact between students, administrators, and service providers, queer students have come to expect equitable treatment. The students' comments, especially Stanford's expectations, illustrate how

⁷⁵ The UBC Hospital is one of eight different hospitals operating under the Vancouver Coastal Health, a corporation that coordinates health services across Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. See http://www.vch.ca/about_us/contact_us/ [last accessed February 20, 2012].

these sites are imagined as free from discrimination and harassment because of Discrimination and Harassment policies (see Alma Matter Society, 2008⁷⁶; University of British Columbia Board of Governors, 2011). Yet it is uncertain if staff members or student government officials would ever intervene if a student was being harassed or recognize homophobic hostility or heterosexist conduct. It is also unclear how they might resolve the situation.

In effect, not only do Discrimination and Harassment policies listed above create an expectation of an environment free of discrimination and harassment, but they also require members of the UBC community to be accountable for contravention of policies. For instance, UBC Policy #3 states that “the University and all Members of the University Community share a responsibility for ensuring that the work and study environment at the University is free from Discrimination and Harassment” (2011, p. 1). Similarly, AMS policy states that “the AMS has the obligation to provide a harassment-free environment for all attendees and participants at all AMS events” (2008, p. 1). In both of these cases, UBC and AMS administrations must provide spaces free of discrimination and harassment for all members of the UBC community. Given the history of the lesbian and gay rights movement and the strong desire to have sexual orientation protected under human rights laws (see Lahey, 1999; Sullivan, 2003; Warner, 2002), it is not surprising that these spaces on campus were most frequently cited as queer friendly. The expectations that queer students had of these spaces as queer friendly were informed by institutional and popular discourses about equity, liberal universalism, and tolerance. Other spaces that were identified as queer friendly or welcoming, including academic spaces and social spaces like Wreck Beach, were organized by different discourses.

⁷⁶Unable to locate AMS (2008) Discrimination and Harassment Policy on the AMS website, it was provided through email correspondence with Jay Shah, AMS Ombudsperson, AMS Ombudsman Office, UBC.

Academic and Pedagogical Spaces: Questionably Queer

In addition to the student-centered spaces identified above, the queer students I interviewed also identified a number of academic spaces, including departments and classrooms, as queer welcoming and friendly. As indicated on Figure 5.2, the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies building (WaGS) (see location K and P, Figure 5.2) was cited by six female-identified students as a queer friendly and welcoming space. The Buchanan classroom buildings (see location M, Figure 5.2) and the Jack Bell Social Work building (JBSW) (see location N, Figure, 5.2) were both identified by three students. Two students also pointed to the Anthropology and Sociology building (ANSO) (see location O, Figure, 5.2) as a queer friendly space. These buildings house departments that provide structured academic opportunities to engage with issues of gender and sexual diversity.

Jude, Brad, and Abigail explained why they identified some academic spaces on their personal maps as queer welcoming and friendly:

Jude: So the Women's and Gender studies [program space], is like, it openly states that it is queer positive, for one. Um... lots of queer people are like feminist people, are always there and yeah.

Brad: I think ANSO [Anthropology and Sociology building]. It's just because there's so much stuff about society, and people studying sexuality and gender that I feel very comfortable there, knowing that they will be open.

Abigail: Okay. Jack Bell Social Work building, just because generally in Social Work and Family Studies when it was there, they're very accepting programmes. And there are quite a number of queer people in different camps.

Students who were familiar with these buildings and departments within the Faculty of Arts understood that these are spaces where people can explore issues of gender and sexuality. Some of the faculty members and researchers are actively pursuing research that engages with these issues. According to Jude, for example, WaGS openly declares that it is a queer-positive space. Jude makes the connection between the queer people in the WaGS space and the feminist

perspectives they use. For her, this makes WaGS a space that is queer welcoming. Similarly, Brad and Abigail identify the ANSO and JBSW buildings respectively as places where gender and sexuality are widely accepted as topics of study. All three students refer to the people in these spaces as either being openly queer or actively supporting gender and sexual diversity, helping to create a more welcoming classroom and department space for queer students.

Additionally, the classes that students take can have a profound effect on how they perceive certain spaces. Eddie and Livia explained their understanding of certain classrooms:

Eddie: And the Buchanan building, it's just the classes I've taken in Buchanan A, maybe it's because I'm surrounded by a bunch of Arts kids, and maybe they're a bit more freethinkers or whatever, but, it's been a lot more queer friendly environment. So, I don't know. And I also take my gender relations class there, and I took a creative writing class there last year, and just in general it seems like a very friendly [space].

Livia: I put the Buchanan complex after some thought, because it's where all of the classes really that I've had, that relate to gender and sexuality, have taken place there and some of those classes have, while we've been in there, become queer spaces, so yes.

The Buchanan complex is a set of interconnected buildings that contain a mix of classroom space and faculty offices that are associated with specific academic units and departments listed under the Faculty of Arts. Both Eddie and Livia indicated that they identify Buchanan as a queer friendly space because of the classes that they have taken there, and the students who have taken these classes with them. All of these classes addressed gender and sexual diversity directly or were open to considering these issues. The combination of these aspects reinforces the importance of studying sexuality and gender issues at the university level. This was highlighted by Livia who explained that it was learning about sexuality and gender in class that made a classroom space queer welcoming at a particular moment. As a result, the class content, lecture material, and classmates all combined to create a queer-welcoming environment. At the same time, the repetition of these queering instances, specifically within the Buchanan complex, created a more fixed sense over time that the building was a queer friendly space.

Similarly, the associations that queer students attached to particular academic units affected how they understood specific academic spaces. This point was illustrated by Oskar and Steve in a discussion around their personal campus maps:

Oskar: Oh, Jack Bell building. This is where I had my Women's Studies class. So, just from that, just from my experience there, especially with that guest speaker.

Steve: For me, Buchanan. I just see it as the bastion of Arts students, so amongst them they're by and large forward-thinking, more liberal-ish. And then, Social Work, my best friend's mom, she used to work there, and she was always very...she just seemed like, if she was, like all other social workers, very forward-thinking, using appropriate pronouns, not making assumptions about people and everyday situations, which is interesting.

Here, Oskar and Steve explained how their experiences both inside and outside of these classes worked to shape their understanding of these spaces. Oskar's identification of the Jack Bell building as a queer-welcoming space was directly related to his experience with a trans guest speaker whom he talked about earlier in the interview. Steve associated the Buchanan buildings as the hub for Arts students with 'forward-thinking' and 'liberal-ish' perspectives, which characterized both Arts students and the classes they take in this building. He also identified the Jack Bell building where Social Work is located as a queer-welcoming space, as a result of personal experience with someone who worked there. He then extrapolated this experience to the School of Social Work as a whole. These associations and their queer-positive discourses help students to locate queer friendly and welcoming spaces in their academic journey.

In contrast, many of the science-focused queer students I interviewed did not actively identify academic spaces as queer friendly or welcoming. In general, academic spaces connected to faculties outside of the Faculty of Arts were not identified as queer friendly spaces. The Buchanan building complex contains many multipurpose classrooms and this space was only mentioned in relation to Arts-based courses even though these classrooms can be and are used to teach courses outside of the Faculty of Arts. When I specifically asked students about whether issues of gender or sexuality were raised in their courses, students who took courses primarily

outside of the Faculty of Arts commented that these issues were not raised. Furthermore, the students did not see these issues as relevant to their academic studies. To some extent, students in the Arts also held this opinion. For example, Spanky and Caleb, who were Arts students, and Steve, who was from a science-based faculty, reflected on the relevancy of gender and sexuality issues to some of their classes:

Rachael: Is it important to you that the instructor addresses the issues of sexuality or gender identity?

Spanky: When it's relevant. Not if it's not relevant.

Caleb: It depends on the class. Astronomy: No; Econ: No; History: Yes.... Well actually, no history, no. While the history classes I'll be taking, like the history of the fifteenth century to the twenty-first century. And while I think that the progression of sexuality is important...I'm not sure I see it as something that needs to be discussed as much as why the borders of Pakistan and India changed.

Steve: If I was doing a course that I actually enjoyed again—'cause I don't enjoy my degree any more—so if I was in some social sciences, it would be very important. Since I'm basically doing very utilitarian [courses, for example] 'this is how you make a building not fall down'—it's not an issue.

In each of the student's comments, the issue of relevancy is highlighted, which draws on the expectation that issues of sexuality and gender do not belong in science-based or math-based courses. Even within History, and specifically fifteenth century history according to Caleb, the exploration of gender and sexuality were too far removed from the main learning objectives, such as the formation of nations and borders. The queer students' responses imply an obviousness regarding the relevancy of gender and sexuality issues to their Arts-based courses; however, other students underscored the incommensurability of certain subjects with regard to sexuality and gender. As a result, queer students who took courses outside of the Faculty of Arts did not expect instructors to discuss issues of gender or sexuality because they did not seem relevant to the course material or subject at hand.

Although issues of gender and sexuality might not have been seen as directly relevant to the course material in predominantly science or numbers-focused classes, some students commented on unusual incidents where sexuality and gender were inserted into the classroom experience. For instance, Elizabeth recounted a moment in class that made her think:

Rachael: Is it important to you that the instructor address issues of sexuality or gender identity in class?

Elizabeth: No. It is important that they be, I would say gender inclusive and not as heteronormative. Like [instructors should] try and reduce the amount of stereotyping, they do. Instead of like, one teacher... she was trying to explain the study of enzymes by, comparing it [this process] to how a really attractive female celebrity model walks into the room all of the boys are going to get up and all of their girlfriends (this phosphor-luminescent thing), and they are carrying flashlights, and so then you'd be able to see where the boyfriends are going. And I was just kind of like 'wow not only is this like a very heteronormative assumption. It is also a very awkward analogy. Really?!' And so, I found it to be just, so ridiculous. Like I didn't have too much of an issue with it, but it was definitely something where, I kind of sat there and questions like 'should I be sensitive about, you know, my sexuality, and for the most part I and I hate to be a bad queer person. Is that when, when somebody says something very heteronormative, I'm usually not going to sit there and be like 'OOHHHH, you should watch your language' and jump down their throats or anything. [...] But in general, I don't, I don't, like I don't think that they should open up a lecture, saying: "Just so that you all know I'm Professor Loblawbla and I just wanted to let you know that. I think queer people are pretty awesome too." You know, there's no need to go ahead and do that.

While Elizabeth, at the outset, does not think that issues of gender or sexuality need to be addressed in her classes, her response clearly illustrates how these issues might unexpectedly have an impact in the courses she takes. The incident she recalled underlines the multiple ways gender and sexuality organize people's everyday lives. Her example shows how the instructor's illustration of scientific concepts supports heteronormative ideals. The way in which gender and sexuality continue to affect multiple sites of interaction illustrates Foucault's critique of the assumption that sexuality and gender are only relevant to those specific sites, such as medicine or psychiatry. Foucault (1978) explains that discourses of sexuality have proliferated since the 19th century through

a network of interconnecting mechanisms, the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities...never [has] more attention manifested; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold to spread elsewhere (p. 49).

As Elizabeth smoothly points out, discourses of sexuality and gender simmer under the surface in classrooms, regardless of course material, and they can be evoked effortlessly as part of a “common-sense” rhetoric. Moreover, Elizabeth’s sensitivity to the heteronormativity in the instructor’s example made her question her responsibility as a queer activist to speak out or remain silently complicit in the privileging of heterosexuality. It also illustrates how even within classrooms where sexuality is supposedly irrelevant, queer students are subject to the weight of heteronormative attitudes. Elizabeth questioned her impulse to correct or educate the instructor about using more inclusive language. Hackford-Peer (2010) explains that queer students adopt a sense of responsibility to be the ‘good queer’ or ‘activist educators’ where “queer youth have found ways around [...] institutionally supported silencing” (p. 546). Here, the responsibility for creating a voice and educating the misinformed is placed on queer youths. In order to do this work within the university setting, queer student activists need to know their (human) rights as outlined in institutional policies, and be able to utilize tolerance discourses in their activism. While resources like the PSC provide spaces where volunteers can learn how to be more supportive of queer students, staff, and faculty members, the classroom setting continues to be a challenging place for queer students to do activist work, especially outside the Faculty of Arts. Not only are they unlikely to confront an instructor, but they are also unlikely to disclose their queer sexuality in front of their classmates.

The classroom becomes a site where heteronormative discourses shape and form how issues of sexuality and gender are evoked or repressed, and how queer students wrestle with what

is im/possible. For example, when I asked Jeffery if his instructors addressed issues of sexuality or gender, he replied:

Jeffery: In certain contexts, I think it is [addressed]. Definitely in literature. I am really fascinated in queer lit, especially Canadian queer lit. We read a book last year by Hiromi Goto who was the Happa⁷⁷ child and it was really good. It was about a girl from Japan. A lot of it was about her identity as a Japanese woman but she was still born in Canada as a Japanese woman who was a lesbian as well which was also really interesting. Some courses I don't think it is always necessary. Obviously science courses—psychology is an exception I think. If it is relevant to society, then I think you should talk about it for sure. I would like to take more classes that are tailored to queer lit and stuff like that. So yeah, I think it is important that instructors discuss it for sure.

Rachael: Right, that they don't just gloss over it?

Jeffery: Yeah, because it's you know—I don't think it's fair that University advertises diversity and acceptance of that [sexuality and gender] and then doesn't address the diversity. I think we should address it from all different angles, even if it takes more time. I think people should find a way to definitely try to insert that in so that we can all learn from different ways. You can only understand something with your own personal experience. So it's good to get those different perspectives from different people to understand even more...

In his reflection, Jeffery reiterates the “obvious” unlikelihood that issues of sexuality and gender would be discussed in relation to science-related course material. The use of “obvious” underlines the norms associated with science curriculum and that there are few instances where gender and sexuality would be included in classroom lectures or discussions. However, Jeffery does think that any course that discusses society should include these issues. This line of thinking then leads him to connect the institutional ideal that the ‘promise of diversity and acceptance’ can be upheld through what is taught in his courses. He argues that the university and its instructors are responsible for fulfilling this promise by considering how sexuality and gender are in fact relevant in multifaceted ways in post-secondary education. Thus, the classroom, and the instruction given in these spaces, provides a venue for educating students about sexuality and gender diversity. Even in the social act of teaching, the students’ examples illustrate how these

⁷⁷ Happa is a Hawaiian term often used to describe a person with mixed race/ethnicity, usually with Asian and/or Pacific Asian ancestry.

issues are always emerging. This may be because of a heteronormative atmosphere where queer experiences are silenced, as seen in assumptions around science classes, or because gender and sexuality are tackled directly, as in the Arts classes cited in my interviews with students. In either case, queer students reflect on how issues were addressed or ignored in the classroom.

In the queer-identified spaces discussed above, I have demonstrated how queer students use their queer spatial awareness and queer spatial practices to locate and access queer friendly spaces on campus. This dialectical process is an ongoing negotiation of perceptions and practices that enables queer students to navigate their way through the UBC campus in order to minimize their encounters with homophobic hostility and heteronormativity as they struggle to find or create queer friendly environments. While much of the previous discussion has focused on these perceptions and practices, it has only revealed the outcome of these negotiations. As described in Chapter Three, queer students were becoming queer through an uneven process of understanding and open disclosure. Often this meant that they could choose to be open about their queer desires or choose to remain closed or silent, depending on where they were and whom they were with at the time. This process continues as queer students make the transition to university. Consequently, the classroom is a unique site where perceptions and practices help to shape how queer students engage with their willingness to become queer in a space, which works to ‘queer’ that space. I found Caleb’s provocative reflection on this process to be compelling.

Rachael: Are you open about your own sexuality, and have you ever discussed it in class?

Caleb: In sociology, I discussed my religion [Caleb is Jewish]. No, it [my sexuality] never came up. Or the opportunity for me to defend it or anything like that never came up, it never happened. So no.

Rachael: Would you in future classes?

Caleb: It depends on the size of the lecture. If it's like, a 500-person lecture, hell no! There's no reason in my mind [to do so]. It also depends on the nature of how strong the words of the professor were, if they were negative. It would also depend if I had any

friends in the lecture. If I had friends in the lecture, I'd be more inclined to talk about it. But if I was all alone, I don't know. I might protect it [my sexuality] from that point of view. But I'm not going to say 'as a gay man....' You know, I'm not sure I would do that. No I wouldn't, I don't think so. If it was a small lecture yes, maybe...but no.

Rachael: Is there some associated risk for you?

Caleb: It's a lot of exposure. To come out to a group of 500 people is a lot. Straight people don't feel that very much, because they, you know, it's kind of assumed that you're straight. That's my mind, like I also don't get passionate about it. I'm willing to get passionate about those kinds of things, but I'm more about politics. Because I know I've talked about my political stance in a lecture hall of 500 people—like I've made that very clear... but not sexuality, it's something more private.

Caleb put a lot of time, energy, and thought into his account of when and where—specifically which classroom context—he would be willing to discuss his sexuality. As the basis for discussing his sexuality openly in class, Caleb draws on various factors, such as class size, the presence of friends, or the need to correct the instructor. For Caleb, this process of reasoning works to limit his risk of exposure to homophobic hostility both in the classroom and once he and his classmates leave that setting. Caleb's account of this process illustrates a kind of 'psychic weight' carried by queer students, and queer people more generally, as they navigate and negotiate their queer subjectivities in specific contexts. I have borrowed this concept from Butler (1997) and extended it to show how queer students are both subjugated by their queer desires, and also made responsible for keeping themselves 'safe' by limiting the risk of homophobic hostility that they may encounter in a heteronormative context (Butler, 1997; Richardson & May, 1999). Here, the notion of 'psychic weight' captures the disciplining power of heteronormativity that queer students carry with them. In Butler's (1997) discussion of desire in the *Psychic Life of Power*, she explains:

The desire for desire is exploited in the process of social regulation, for if the terms by which we gain social recognition for ourselves are those by which we are regulated *and* gain social existence, then to affirm one's existence is to capitulate to one's subordination—a sorry bind (p. 79).

As Caleb explains, not only is there a great deal of exposure in disclosing one's non-heterosexuality in a lecture hall of 500 students, but this exposure is exacerbated when everyone is assumed to be straight at the outset. His reflection on this process demonstrates the sense of risk that queer students consider in negotiating their queer identity on campus. Despite UBC's commitment to valuing difference and ensuring a safe learning environment for students (University of British Columbia, 2010b; University of British Columbia Board of Governors, 1994), queer students, such as Caleb and others, are constantly negotiating the terms of social regulation and social recognition.

In the mapping exercise and the interviews, queer students repeatedly reiterated how integral queer-positive spaces were to their academic activities. Courses offered on sexuality and gender diversity allow students an opportunity to explore and critically engage with scholarship focused on these issues. Faculty members and researchers who are openly queer and/or actively pursuing research in the area of sexual and gender diversity help queer students to identify these academic spaces as queer friendly. Moreover, the idea that Arts students are 'forward thinking' enhances the perception that certain academic spaces are queer welcoming.

As noted above, only Faculty of Arts academic spaces were consistently identified as queer friendly in the mapping exercise. While students commented on when sexuality and gender were used in non-arts based classrooms, it was often in reference to negative moments when instructors used predominantly heteronormative illustrations of otherwise non-sexual, non-gendered concepts. These examples demonstrate how sexuality and gender have a bearing on the classroom regardless of the content of the course, as well as the tension between the institutional commitment to celebrating diversity and the ways in which students experience heteronormativity and non-inclusive classroom environments, especially when gender and sexuality are not seen as relevant to the course material. Thus, academic spaces are dynamic and

productive spaces for discourses of gender and sexuality regardless of the course content. As I discuss next, non-academic spaces are also important: Wreck Beach was the third most identified queer space on the UBC campus map even though it is not actually part of the UBC campus.

Recreational and Social Spaces: Wreck Beach and Queer Possibilities

In addition to the administrative and academic spaces that students identified as queer friendly, some students also identified social and recreational spaces as queer friendly. As noted in Chapter Four in the discussion regarding campus pubs and bars, one student mentioned that Koerner's Pub (now defunct) located in the Graduate Student Centre building (see Figure 5.2, location J) was her preferred pub on campus. Another space that queer students identified as queer friendly was the University Village, a block of shops, restaurants, and other amenities located on University Boulevard, just outside of the official UBC campus boundary (see Figure 5.2, location Q). The University Village was identified as queer friendly by three male-identified students. However, the most commonly identified social or recreational queer-welcoming space on or near campus was Wreck Beach. The beach, located just outside of the UBC campus boundary at the bottom of the Point Grey bluffs on the western side of campus, is accessible via three trails that each feature a steep set of stairs (see Figure 5.2, location I). The main point of access is through Trail 6 which is located on the west side of Place Vanier Residence; all three trails connect UBC campus directly to Wreck Beach (Brooks, 2007; Hemsing, 2005). As one of Vancouver's famous tourist attractions, the beach also contains a well known gay section (Brooks, 2007; Ingram, 2001) as well as a lesser known queer section. Six students (four who identified as male and two as female) pointed to Wreck Beach as a queer-welcoming or queer friendly space on the UBC campus map; an additional four students discussed the beach without any prompting from me during the interviews. Established as a beach in the 1920s, Wreck Beach is Vancouver's most well-known clothing optional beach and it is located in Pacific Spirit

Regional Park, which borders the UBC campus (Brooks, 2007; Hemsing, 2005). While this space is no longer part of the campus and has not been governed directly by UBC since the 1980s (Brooks, 2007), the beach is immediately adjacent to the campus and therefore easily accessed by most students, visitors, and residents. Moreover, there are informal boundaries instituted along the beach which have been employed by regular Wreck Beach goers. According to Ingram (2001), the main (heterosexual) and family oriented part of Wreck Beach is located at the Trail 6 entrance, expanding to roughly half of a kilometer either side of the main stairs. The queer section, according to Brooks (2007) and Ingram (2001), bridges the main beach area with a predominantly gay male area that “stretches for several kilometers along the south end of Wreck” (Ingram 2001, p. 195). These casual borders help to organize who and what behaviours are expected in each area of the beach, and establish an informal sense of community within these boundaries.

When asked, the students used similar sentiments to describe why they included Wreck Beach on their personal map:

Trekkie: And Wreck Beach because I feel Wreck Beach is a queer friendly place because it's anything goes, basically, and that starts right at the trail (laughs).

Simon: This is a queer space. I think there are a lot of [queer] people on Wreck Beach.

Brad: Wreck Beach, because it's all hippies, and there's gay sex in public...

Kevin: Oh, well, I guess there's another space. Isn't there a big gay area in, on Wreck Beach?

Rachael: Yeah, yeah there is.

Kevin: I guess that would be another area.

In addition to being a nude beach, which attracts free-spirited ‘hippies,’ Wreck Beach was understood as a space that creates an ‘anything goes’ atmosphere as Brad and Trekkie mentioned. These students included Wreck Beach on their personal map because they have either

heard about the 'gay section' of the beach or experienced it for themselves. As Brad noted, a section of Wreck Beach is known for gay public sex. While the queer section is not known for public sex in the same way as the gay section, students identified spatial practices that worked to queer this space. Here, the same dialectic process between queer students' perceptions and the corresponding spatial practices led the students who were interviewed to identify this space as one that was queer friendly. Whether or not students want to participate in the queer culture perceived and demonstrated at Wreck Beach seems to be irrelevant; they understand and associate this space with queerness in ways that might make it more likely they will head down to the beach for sun tanning, swimming, beach sports, sex, and other recreational activities.

Jack, who was relatively new to the UBC campus when interviewed, explained the significance of Wreck Beach for him:

The other day I went to Wreck Beach for the first time, and it was really quite interesting. I'm not really used to being at a clothing optional beach, but when I was there, I was comfortable enough to sort of experience that fully and to be naked. So I kind of sat there and I read. I was really happy that I was comfortable enough to be able to do that. I felt really relaxed and kind of safe. It was really nice. [...] I don't know, it's kind of weird, but it was neat, though. I thought it was great. I loved it. Like there was a lady that was selling all kinds of drugs and there was a guy selling beer. I just felt like such a hippie, I was reading and lying on the beach and just being naked. I just thought I would mention it because it's kind of a space on campus, I thought it was kind of relevant so it came to mind.

As a newly admitted transfer student, Jack was both aware of Wreck Beach and willing to experience it for himself. In doing so, he felt 'relaxed and kind of safe' and 'like such a hippie,' sentiments similarly expressed by Trekkie, Brad, Simon, and Kevin to identify Wreck Beach as a queer space. In this case, Wreck Beach offers the opportunity to transgress and defy normative expectations of beach-going activities that involve flashy swimwear and variations of sun kissed bodies that adorn the most popular beaches in Vancouver. As Brooks (2007) discusses in her book *Wreck Beach*, many conservative and religious groups have long been opposed to the nudity at Wreck Beach, suggesting that there was something inherently dangerous lurking there.

Brooks (2007) also delineates the controversies surrounding the surveillance by police and arrests of beach goers for selling or consuming alcohol and illicit drugs. Following queer theorists Namaste (1996) and Sullivan (2003) who have noted a desire to locate moments of transgression, I argue that Wreck Beach provides a space for this type of queer contravention to occur. As Jack's comments indicate, he was actively participating in the spatial practices that facilitate a queer understanding or perception of Wreck Beach. Jack wanted to include Wreck Beach as a queer friendly space because, unlike other spaces around or on campus, he felt comfortable enough to be naked and enjoy the communal environment that is characteristic of this clothing optional beach (Brooks, 2007; Hemsing, 2005; Ingram, 2001).

However, not all students saw Wreck Beach as idyllically as Jack and the students above. For example both Rhonda and Spanky shared their concerns:

Rachael: Have you ever felt unsafe on campus?

Rhonda: Um..... I don't think so. I think. I mean, nothing really stands out. So I guess, I think of maybe, might have encountered some sketchy situations like down on the Wreck Beach. Like coming up from Wreck Beach. But that's all I can think of, yeah.

Spanky: And I identified this long stretch, along the Wreck Beach, because I went walking down there once by myself. And there's a lot of 40-year-old gay men down there and I felt really unwelcome.

[Later in the interview Spanky relayed a specific encounter at Wreck Beach]

Spanky: The only time I've ever had—one time I did have a problem. And I was at Wreck Beach, I was coming back up that trail [the main trail #6]. And I had a couple of guys sort of catcalling at me and touching my butt. They didn't know I was a lesbian.

Rachael: yeah?

Spanky: You know that was just systematic, they were probably drunk, and feeling, you know, like they could get away with something. I promptly turned around and yelled at them to fuck off. But they promptly continued to try to touch my butt. And the two guys I was hanging out with at the time, promptly intervened and said 'No really. Lay off!' And that was that.

Rhonda and Spanky did not feel as welcome at Wreck Beach in this space as Jack and Brad.

Rhonda vaguely recalled encountering what she described as 'sketchy situations' on the trail

leading to and from the beach, which sounded ominous but not as much as the one Spanky shared. The main trail to Wreck Beach, as discussed by Brooks (2007), and Ingram (2001), and alluded to by the students above, is not located near the queer section, and provides access to all people as they enter or leave Wreck Beach. Spanky not only reflects on feeling unwelcome as a single woman among the '40-year old gay men' presumably because of the age difference and partly due to the gender difference. When moving through Wreck Beach, Spanky encountered and possibly disrupted the boundaries that the older gay men were using to organize that part of the beach. Her comments also highlight differences between the queer section, which tends to be gender and sexually inclusive, and the 'gay' part of the beach, which is informally regulated by gay men who might be seeking sexual encounters—a space where Spanky did not feel welcome. In her second example, she encounters sexist behaviours from 'guys' on her way back from Wreck Beach. Her understanding of the harassment, fueled by alcohol, suggests the kind of sexually provocative space that Wreck Beach can be, especially when compared to the expectation of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour on the UBC campus. Thus, both Rhonda's and Spanky's experiences suggest the potential risk for harassment and feeling unwelcome, at least for women who visit Wreck Beach, which complicates the perception that Wreck Beach is a queer space for all. Their experiences also emphasize that not all queer spaces are equally welcoming or 'safe' spaces in the way that students perceive them to be, which is evident in the contrasting perceptions and experiences provided by the male- and female-identified participants. Yet Wreck Beach was recognized as having a queer potential despite the informal subdivisions of the beach, which indicates who belongs in which section and what behaviours are possible in each of these sections.

The relationship between UBC and Wreck Beach was unclear to many of the queer students who were interviewed. Certainly, Wreck Beach was considered a social space, but it

was unclear if this space was part of the UBC campus or not. All the students who discussed this space in the interviews and the mapping exercise included it in the UBC campus. For instance, Oskar explains the relationship between UBC and Wreck Beach:

Oskar: I guess Wreck Beach. There's the gay area of Wreck Beach. Is that on campus or off campus?

Rachael: That is a question to answer?

Oskar: Is it both campus? - although it's technically on campus, I wouldn't consider it UBC. Yeah, because there's the gay area of Wreck Beach that I would go to with friends. That's probably about it that I can think of.

Oskar's confusion about whether or not Wreck Beach is part of the UBC campus indicates that the proximity of the beach to the university campus invites people to think that these spaces are connected. Jack also thought that Wreck Beach was part of campus, which suggests that there is some uncertainty about the university's jurisdiction over this space. Although the campus boundary is clearly marked on the campus map (see figure 5.2, location I), the map also includes the marking for Trail 6 and indicates that it is to Wreck Beach, which must be partly why some students included it in their personal map as a queer friendly space (the third most frequently queer-identified space on the campus maps). As a result, the proximity of Wreck Beach to the UBC campus highlights how perception about spaces can be extended informally to include other spaces. However, it is significant that the queer spatial awareness and queer spatial practices that inform how Wreck Beach was experienced by students were radically different from the discourses which shape students' understanding of other queer spaces identified on the actual UBC campus. For instance, students identified Wreck Beach as queer through the spatial practices of maintaining a queer section or informal boundary, as defined by the celebration of the naked body and gay (male) public sex. These spatial practices draw on the kinky, sexual, and provocative aspects of queerness and queer culture, which are in stark contrast to the spatial practices that create and inform queer spaces identified in administrative and academic spaces.

As noted at the beginning of this section, on-campus queer spaces are identified when known queer people are associated with a particular space, especially if they act in an official capacity; when queer people and allies meet in a specific time and space; and where there is a celebratory identification of gender and sexual diversity. These queer spaces found on the campus also draw on assimilationist and human rights discourses which work to organize these spaces through anti-discrimination and harassment policies in ways which were very different from how queer spaces are created and organized on Wreck Beach. In the next section, I explore the relationship between the process of becoming queer, the effect of these discourses on the possibilities and limits of a queer politics, and queer students' presence on campus.

BECOMING QUEER IN A PLACE OF PROMISE: THE LIMITS OF QUEER POLITICS ON CAMPUS

As the queer students identified and explained how they understood the campus in terms of queer-welcoming and queer friendly spaces, they drew on their limited knowledge about and expectations of the university to provide a “a safe, healthy and secure environment for all members of faculty and staff, students and visitors” (University of British Columbia Board of Governors, 1994, p. 1). As noted in the earlier section on academic spaces, not all classrooms were considered queer friendly, requiring queer students to assess their sense of safety and comfort through a process similar to the one articulated by Caleb. The example provided by Elizabeth was particularly enlightening, because the heteronormative example used by the science instructor forced her to decide if it was worth voicing a correction. This example parallels Caleb's own criteria for speaking out in class or keeping quiet about his sexuality. Given this weighty responsibility, it is understandable that queer students would train their spatial acuity to locate spaces where they felt less exposed, and to create queer spaces if they did not exist. As Jude explains:

Um... and just like, it's nothing that's very conscious, but you know if I'm stopping to reflect on it. [pause] It sounds trite but, heteronormativity is such a big part of campus life. So I often just feel silenced. It's funny; I don't normally think about it in this way, but now that I am answering all these questions. Like, it's true. You go to queer spaces, because that's where you can be queer. And everywhere else, you are silenced or unsafe.

For Jude, the experience of being 'silenced or unsafe' demonstrates just how important it is for queer students to identify and locate queer spaces. Here, Jude exposes how queer spaces on campus are recognized as containing a tacit guarantee that, in these spaces, queer students can be queer. In queer-identified spaces where sexual and gender diversity are accepted and discussed positively, students can momentarily escape the psychic weight of becoming queer in a heteronormative environment which requires the constant need to consider the ramifications of expressing queerness. For instance, queer resources like PrideUBC, Positive Space Campaign, Access and Diversity, and Critical Studies in Sexuality (CSIS), offer social, academic, and equity-oriented spaces where queer students expect that issues of gender and sexual diversity will be addressed positively. Alternatively, the rest of the campus, at least for Jude, is considered to be heteronormative where she either feels silenced or unsafe, which parallels many of the sentiments queer students expressed with regard to the spaces they would avoid on campus, as discussed in Chapter Four. Queer students perceive the campus as momentarily safe but predominantly heteronormative, which ultimately shapes how they navigate and negotiate their queer presence on campus.

Given the readily identified queer friendly spaces, queer students have come to expect a sense of equity and inclusion promised by the university. At the same time, these students may be reluctant to challenge the institution and its administration when subtle or covert moments of heteronormativity, or even homophobic hostility, occur. This reluctance can also limit the likelihood that queer students will take a political stance regarding issues of sexual and gender diversity, especially in light of the examples students provided of places where they did not feel

welcome or safe. When I asked the queer students about their impressions of UBC's ability to meet their needs, a variety of opinions emerged. Some students appreciated the many resources and identifiable queer spaces available to them. For instance, Simon, an exchange student from Germany, explained:

Rachael: Do you think or feel that queer students are getting their needs met at UBC?

Simon: Um, yeah more than what I was used to. Yeah, it's—when I got this, um, international student's advice book, ah, they talked about PrideUBC and about gay students and so on. And that's pretty new to me because universities in Germany don't talk about private things...[...] that's totally isolated from your university life. So, no one is talking about, sexual issues at all. And, so, I think simply the fact that you—that people here talk about it and you get information about it and you have organisations and—and whatever, community groups where you can go to is pretty good. Yeah. So, I think everybody gets what they need.

While Simon reflected on the different approaches to queer issues at UBC compared to his home university, other queer students were less optimistic about the resources and services provided for queer students on campus. Simon's reflection on his home university's approach to issues of sexuality as a personal issue demonstrates the ways in which sexuality is constructed as individual and private. This construction supports individual and personal interventions rather than larger cultural or institutional changes (Quinlivan, 2002). Abigail offered a more nuanced impression of queer students' use of these resources in answer to my question:

No, because I don't feel as though a lot of queer students know about the resources. I feel as though the percentage of queers who use PrideUBC, who use the Womyn's Centre, just have no idea that it's there. And if they do find out that it's there, it's kind of stigmatised and people don't feel as though they can go to these different places. I think that—those walls need to, kind of, be brought down. I think they [those resources] need to be incorporated into the rest of, like, the campus community, and it feels as though it needs to be accepted a lot more by the campus community rather than isolated to the, like, one spot in the SUB.

Highlighting the limited awareness or visibility of resources like PrideUBC and the Womyn's Centre outside of the SUB, Abigail laments the stigma associated with using these resources. Abigail's desire to see these resources accessed by a greater percentage of the queer students on

campus with a greater sense of integration into the campus was expressed by a number of other queer students. Moreover, Abigail's acknowledgement of this tension draws attention to how these resources may not meet the needs of queer students across campus. As Quinlivan (2002) explains in her research, the use of 'at risk' discourses to construct resources and strategies to deal with queer youth in secondary schools has unintentionally "frame[d] queer students as the problem, rather than considering that it is the heteronormative culture of schools which needs to be tackled." (p.29). Thus, the types of resources made available and how they operate within the context of educational sites, in this case the UBC campus, can affect who uses them and how they could be integrated into the fabric of the institution.

Students' primary discontent was directed at, or perhaps a result of, PrideUBC, the queer student resource group. As the most recognizable queer student resource on campus, PrideUBC was discussed by many of the students during the interview, regardless of their level of involvement with the student group. Red, who was involved for his first few years at UBC, explains his understanding of the role of PrideUBC on campus:

It's so hard for us just to keep an organization going and keep it for all the serious things, but [also] keep it really fun and social. I remember the beer gardens, when I would go to them, each successive one became smaller, and smaller, and smaller, and you know I wondered why? And you know I even heard people say like, 'well it wasn't politically activist enough.' People also argue that there isn't much to do, now that we're not fighting for [same-sex] marriage any more. I think there's still tons to fight for but ...

Red's comments about PrideUBC suggest that perhaps there has been little political or activist interest in queer politics on campus. Red cites the legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada in 2005 as an example of the kind of acquiescence this group has succumbed to without a specific issue to rally for or against. His comments highlight the disinterest of this group in political activism on the UBC campus or beyond despite the fact that he thinks that there are still things to fight for. Rhonda echoes these sentiments in her reflection of the role PrideUBC plays on campus:

I think that Pride can be a little bit lame on campus. That it's just not necessarily, like that fun or that...um, like the beer gardens, like I said there's like never anyone there. So, I've never gone. I think I'm privileged enough to feel comfortable enough with my queer identity that I don't really like need to go like talk. You know, they'd do like their lunch time talks, which I think are so awesome that they exist, but I just never felt the need to go and talk about. Because I don't need to, like, search out a specific group to deal with that part of my identity, I guess...

Here, Rhonda's comments underline the tension between gratitude that this resource exists for queer students, and contempt or frustration that this resource does not do more. Rhonda dismisses her need or desire to participate in the lunch time talks because she is privileged enough to feel secure in her sexual identification and does not need the support of others. This individualistic understanding of her sexuality reframes it as a personal rather than public or even political issue, which further imbues her perspective with hints of neoliberal ideology. Even when discussing her interpretation of the beer gardens that PrideUBC holds, Rhonda explains that they are under-attended, despite admitting that she had never gone to one, suggesting that she is likely relying on what others have said about them rather than her own personal experience. Thus, her perception of this queer resource as inadequate is perpetuated since she is unlikely to utilize it, which means that she is unable to make it better or shift this resource to make it more accessible or meaningful for other queer students on campus.

Taken together, both Red's and Rhonda's comments provide some insight into how queer students are wrestling with their ability or willingness to connect queer politics to their role on campus. On the one hand, the acceptance and tolerance that same-sex marriage represents for queer students and the queer community at large in Canada is translated through legal and political legitimatization; on the other hand, homophobic, transphobic, and heteronormative discourses and practices still pervade the UBC campus. This tension is compounded by the neoliberal forces that have reconfigured university climates where the focus has shifted from critical engagement to corporate industriousness (Davidson-Harden et al., 2009; Lewis, 2005,

2008; Turk, James, 2000). Furthermore, Quinlivan (2002) suggests that “perhaps attempting to meet the needs of students through identifying them as ‘at risk’ individuals is all that is possible within the current educational climate where issues of social justice and equity take second place to notions of efficiency and competition” (p. 29). The competing discourses of equity and competition make it difficult for queer students to decide how they want to invest their time and energy: making the grade or making the campus more equitable.

Additionally, the complexity for queer students is found in the effect of these neoliberal forces when combined with the growing normalization of a ‘same-sex lifestyle.’ I have found that Duggan’s definition of homonormativity captures the tensions and desires expressed by Abigail, Red, and Rhonda above. Here, Duggan describes homonormativity as “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized, gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (Duggan, 2002, p. 179). The students above reflect an underlying assumption about PrideUBC which pervaded their comments: all of these students acknowledge that PrideUBC provides an alternative social space for queer students through beer gardens and lunch time talks, but students’ desire to see this resource do more, such as contest the pervasive heteronormativity across campus, is palpable. Yet the impact of neoliberal forces on the UBC campus positions queer students in often significant and interesting ways. For instance, Rhonda’s comfort in her queerness kept her from needing or desiring the resources that PrideUBC has to offer. Her comments, in addition to Red’s awareness of the depoliticization of this student group, represent in many ways the effects of neoliberalism within the academy on queer students. Moreover, Abigail’s comments regarding a sense of the stigma associated with PrideUBC and the Womyn’s Centre suggest the inability of these resources to puncture the heteronormativity found across the UBC campus. Some students

desire a broader queer politics active across the campus, but communicate a collective inability to hold the institution accountable for promises to ensure an equitable and tolerant learning and living environment.

As has been laid out in various documents and glossy brochures, UBC and its administration claim to provide a respectful environment where people from various cultural, religious, ethnic, racialized, classed, political backgrounds, and abilities will work together in the pursuit of knowledge (see University of British Columbia, 2010a, 2010b). Moreover, the document *Valuing Difference* explicitly states that: “as part of the Place and Promise project, this plan provides an opportunity to embed equity and diversity goals in all aspects of strategic planning” (University of British Columbia, 2010a, p. 5). Not only does this statement illustrate the interlocking and intertextual (Smith, 2006) connection between texts, and across texts, but the statement creates the expectation that issues of equity and diversity have been resolved across the university campus. Brown (2006) explains that “in its privatization and naturalization of difference, tolerance discursively buries the social powers constitutive of difference” (p. 89). Thus, as university administrators work to efficiently embed discourses of equity and diversity into policies, mandates, and organizational strategies, these discourses become privatized and naturalized wherein conflicts over difference (i.e., discrimination and harassment) are not expected to occur. In turn, queer students come to expect that UBC’s promise of an equitable and safe learning environment will be fulfilled without critically examining what they might be losing in the process. For instance, queer students may not be willing to ask for a) instructors who are more sensitive to heteronormativity within the classroom; b) equal access to *all parts* of the university campus while also feeling secure to express their queer desires; and c) a diminished risk of confronting homophobic hostility and heteronormative assumptions across the campus.

While the commitment to equity and diversity is intended to ameliorate the structural inequalities and barriers that most marginal populations face when attempting to access post-secondary education (University of British Columbia, 2010b), there can be unintended consequences. For instance, in an effort to accommodate the diversity of the UBC community, the discourse of tolerance can work to neutralize the potential for conflict whereby the power of ‘difference’ is naturalized through a process of individualization and normative (re)inscription on the university campus (Brown, 2006; Duggan, 2002). Stories that construct the campus as an equitable and tolerant space require a dampening of potential conflict in the name of valuing and respecting differences across the campus.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the ‘universalized university student’ is removed from the multiple positions of difference (i.e., race, class, gender, sexuality, etc) that make up the student population. When this core identity is deployed by the university, it may lead to a depoliticization of the student body, and of queer students in particular. This abstraction works to limit the ways in which queer students can engage politically, as Brown (2006) explains:

The retreat from more substantive visions of justice heralded by the promulgation of tolerance today is part of a more general depoliticization of citizenship and power and retreat from political life itself... The political and the social [become] places where individuals with fixed identities, interests, and ideas chafe and bargain... (p. 89)

While the queer students I interviewed were able to locate the queer friendly spaces identified earlier in this chapter, their experiences demonstrate gaps in their feelings of acceptance on the UBC campus. At times, their encounters were predominantly heteronormative, which both confirmed and contradicted their expectations of what they would find at university (discussed in Chapter Three). However, the historical and political significance of hard won queer resources (which were identified by queer students) fades into the background because these resources are no longer connected to the politics or social justice movements that led to their initial creation on the campus. Without a clear connection between the political action and historical memory, how

can queer students continue to be politically active on campus? How is the current climate at UBC supporting the development of a homonormative subject rather than a queer activist?

At the end of the interviews with the queer students, I asked “if you had a meeting with the deans and president of the university, what would you ask for?” The overwhelming desire that students expressed was for the lowering of tuition and more funding for various programs and departments, including Critical Studies in Sexuality (CSIS), followed by concerns about accessing residence, and the quality of teaching at the university. Of the eight students who mentioned issues of sexuality or gender, most of these concerns were related to additional funding for queer resources like PrideUBC and CSIS. The majority of students were less reflective about what they would ask of the UBC administration. For instance, Charlotte explained why she was unsure of what to ask for:

I don't know, I guess I'm like, maybe not a good person to ask because I'm just trying to get through my degree and get out. I'm not really like involved in what's going on and stuff. I'm sure other people would have like better ideas than me.

Similarly, Frank expressed his understanding of what queer students need at UBC: “They are getting an education, that’s what they need.” The reluctance of queer students, like Charlotte and Frank, to ask for more than the very basic education suggests that the function of attending university is primarily a means to an end: to obtain a degree which they hope will lead to a career. This framing of their university education by Charlotte and Frank is limiting because it devalues the ‘extracurricular activities’ which are part and parcel of being in a community—even if they are not always willing or able to acknowledge their participation in this wider community. Thus the potential function of post-secondary education as both a place and a time for students to become politically engaged or aware of social injustices becomes limited as a step in the process of building a career. As a result, queer students, among other groups of students, have lost the need and desire to question the authority of the university.

Returning to Caleb's reflection the circumstances in which he would or would not discuss his sexuality in a classroom, he expressed the idea that his sexuality was too private an issue to discuss in such a public setting. He claimed that, compared to his sexuality, he would be more willing to share his stance on international politics or his religion within a public setting like a classroom. Similarly, Jude disclosed her awareness of the campus as predominantly heteronormative and only found relief in certain pockets of queer friendly spaces. In Chapter Four, I noted that the queer students interviewed were keen to avoid risky spaces altogether or pass either as straight or as a good queer without the need or desire to transgress gender norms in those spaces. In the end, queer students appear unable to locate opportunities for radical engagement with the university campus or with the institution as a whole. Instead, at UBC they recognize that there are enough resources to ameliorate some barriers to accessing post-secondary education and appear to be encouraged to make their way through university without causing too much trouble or encountering too much hostility. In effect, these queer students become 'docile subjects' (Foucault, 1977), internalizing the responsibility of becoming an 'acceptable queer' by minimizing their risk of encountering homophobic hostility. Even before queer students get to university, they learn how to sense danger and risk, and to identify sites of welcome and refuge in high school and at home. While the university campus once held the promise of radical activism, neoliberal forces have changed the landscape, diminishing the political opportunities of marginal student groups through an emphasis on grades, competition, and securing employment.

CONCLUSION

All the queer students who were interviewed for this research project could identify and access queer spaces on the UBC campus. In doing so, a pattern emerged concerning the criteria required for a space to be identified as queer. These spaces need to be inhabited by openly queer-

identified people, especially in an official capacity; they need to be spaces where queer people and allies gather at regular times; and they need to be spaces where sexual and gender diversity are discussed positively, or where heteronormativity was challenged. A number of queer-identified spaces emerged across the campus university, including administrative and student centered spaces (SUB, GSS, Brock Hall and the UBC Student Health Services); academic and pedagogical spaces (WAGS, ANSO, JBSW, and Buchanan Complex); as well as social and recreational spaces, especially Wreck Beach. However, even within these spaces, queer students had different experiences and expectations, revealing tensions between what they thought should be queer friendly and the moments when heteronormativity resurfaced and closed down queer possibilities. Moreover, queer students demonstrated strong expectations that queer friendly spaces should be governed by human rights and tolerance discourses, and expected a greater sense of safety within these spaces.

The drive to seek queer friendly spaces is in many ways a result of the ‘psychic weight’ (Butler, 1997) of what it means to become queer and the inherent homophobic hostility that is part of this experience in the heteronormative social context of Canada and the United States. Here, queer students seek queer friendly spaces where they feel free of the constant surveillance and risk of violence, which may be the result of their expression of sexual and/or gender diversity. For instance, Jude’s perception of the university as heteronormative, where she either felt unsafe or silenced on campus, illustrates how the identification of queer friendly spaces is important for lifting the weight of becoming queer, even just for a instant. The convenient fiction of the university as a neutral space works to erase both the historical and political struggles of previous generations of queer students, staff, and faculty. The use of tolerance and equity discourses both enables and blunts the galvanizing political potential of queerness for students on the UBC campus. I have detected a uniform version of acceptable queerness that is organized

through homonormative and neoliberal forces. Indeed, the university campus has become a site for ‘making the grade’ rather than political or radical engagement with the campus or post-secondary learning at UBC. I posit that university campuses need to be examined more closely for how they construct tolerable queerness, as well as for the political possibilities they offer queer students.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING QUEER ISSUES ON THE UBC CAMPUS

As I write this final chapter in early June, 2012, students and supporters in Quebec are embroiled in one of the largest student protests since student activism in the 1960s (Peritz, 2012). On February 14th, 2012 an estimated 150,000 students walked out of classes to protest the proposed seventy-five per cent increase in university tuition fees (CBC News, 2012). The protests over tuition have since cost many of the students their semester and prolonged their studies. The unrest in Quebec is not just about tuition, but about the future of education and political leadership. There has been little show of support or similar protests over recent tuition hikes, here at UBC. In a recent newspaper article, Peritz (2012) looked back to reveal the names of student leaders in Quebec from the 1960s, many of whom are current powerful political leaders including Bernard Landry, Premier of Quebec (2001-2003), Jean Doré, who was the mayor of Montreal (1986-1994), and Gilles Duceppe, former leader of the Bloc Québécois (1997-2011), to name a few.

The connection between political activism encountered within post-secondary education and political engagement later in life is echoed in Gilles Duceppe's comments about the students' actions as a sign of civic engagement (Peritz 2012). He explains, "Young people are getting involved again. Let's hope this means they'll go to the polls in the future as much as their elders do and will get seriously involved in politics" (Duceppe, quoted in Peritz, 2012, p. F.7). I agree with Duceppe's sentiments; it is encouraging to see students banding together over their education and standing-up to fight the government. Yet, I wonder what this might mean for queer politics and activism on the UBC campus and elsewhere? When the topic of the Quebec protests surfaces, I argue against the hostile attitudes and opinions from friends and

acquaintances, who claim these students who pay the lowest tuition in Canada are being selfish and privileged, by highlighting the importance of the students' political engagement. I wonder if queer students imagine enduring similar sentiments if they asked for additional new resources to address their changing needs.

These discussions have led me to reflect on what I see as the relative lack of political action by queer students about queer issues on the UBC campus. Perhaps there are more pressing global issues that need energy or activism. No longer do student activists combat local police or the RCMP, as was the case on the UBC campus when the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference took place at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) on November 25, 1997 (Higgins & McElroy, 2008; Pecho, 2008); or more recently, when students and RMCP officers clashed at a protest against the underground transit station and commercial development of the UBC campus in early April 2008 (Higgins & McElroy, 2008). Conceivably, as noted in Chapter One, the struggles and successes gained by previous lesbian and gay student activism at UBC have cultivated an expectation that this campus is a place to explore queer desires. It would also appear that the fight for queer resources has shifted from the university campus to the high schools, as evidenced by the growing number of disputes over anti-bullying laws (Houston, 2012), the inclusion of Gay Straight Alliances (GSA) in Catholic schools (Hammer & Howlett, 2012), and the ability to take same-sex dates to the prom, or high school graduation (Clark, 2006). Perhaps, in addition to a growing awareness of LGBTQ issues in educational spaces more broadly, the next stages of queer activism will take place in less conventionally public and visible spaces, in everyday places like residences, classrooms, faculty offices, and even online.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As I briefly noted in Chapter One, queer students have worked together at UBC for over 40 years to create social, political, and educational opportunities for queer students. A number of

resources have been developed by faculty and staff who identify as queer or straight allies to address issues of homophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia on the UBC campus. However, as I demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five, queer students' sense of safety and acceptance today can and does break down within gender-segregated on-campus residences, or was a result of social practices organized through heteronormative expectations, or in response to the heteronormative language used in lectures, course materials, and in-class discussions. I illustrated how queer students wrestle with and weigh their need and/or desire to publicly declare their sexuality and gender identity in an effort to educate, challenge, or just share their experiences within the UBC campus setting—an environment that administrators assure parents and students is tolerant and celebratory of diversity. At the same time, my dissertation has revealed moments when the promises of equity and access fall short for queer students. The fact that half of the 26 students interviewed identified at least one space on the UBC campus map that they would avoid, as well as countless examples where hegemonic heteronormativity is asserted (Kinsman, 2003), including the classroom, suggests that heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia still need to be addressed across the campus. However, the ability for *all* the queer students interviewed to locate queer-welcoming and friendly spaces as well is also telling of the progress made since the early 1970s when the lesbian and gay rights movement began gaining momentum across Canada and the West.

This dissertation has explored the current climate and spatial understanding of queer students' engagement with the campus as a queer space. But what does the future hold? The tagline of UBC's vision statement reads: "Creating an exceptional learning environment...towards global citizenship and a civil and sustainable society..." (*Place and Promise: The UBC Plan*, 2010, front cover). And yet how are today's queer students to become global citizens who support a civil and sustainable society when they encounter and expect

repressive heterosexist norms as part of their campus experience? In what follows, I consider the main contributions of this project and how they add to the current knowledge of queer student experience in a Canadian post-secondary institution like UBC. I also address the limitations of the study and suggest directions for future research. Finally, I recommend changes to current policies and practices which may offer new possibilities for exploring and expressing queer sexualities at UBC and other universities across Canada and internationally.

In Chapter Three, by asking queer students about both their secondary and post-secondary school experiences, I found a stark contrast between what is expected and im/possible in high school and what becomes possible within the university setting with regard to non-normative sexual desires and identifications. Here students regarded their entry into university as a (re)orientation both spatially within the physical layout of the UBC campus, and socially as they moved away from family, friends, and reputations they had cultivated within the confines of high school. Their (re)orientation illustrates Lefebvre's conception of conceived space, where orientation relies on the spatial relationship between physical aspects of space, which became imbued with meaning and ideologies about where to become queer and locate other queer members of the UBC campus community. As students worked to (re)orient themselves in relation to family and friends, they were immersed in the orientation of UBC Imagine Day and the expectations they had of university education.

Mindful of research exploring homophobic and transphobic hostility and heteronormativity in schools (Goldstein et al., 2007; Saewyc et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2011b; Toomey et al., 2012), I identified three main paths that queer students took in their transition from high school to university education: 1) the direct path from high school to university; 2) the Running Start program; and 3) the College Transfer programs. The significance of the last two paths is that they are organized through specialized programs which provide alternative entry

points into the university campus. The Running Start program provided an early escape for both Eddie and Spanky who were eager to leave their confining high school environments, especially once they became aware of the possibilities for becoming queer on the university campus. At the same time, the College Transfer programs for Bard, Jack, and Sam also provided alternative paths to gaining a university degree. In this case, all three students had difficulty finishing their high school requirements and took time off after high school to work before deciding that they were ready to pursue a university degree. The College Transfer program provided them with an opportunity to build skills and improve their grades for admission into UBC. As a result, the queer students' reflections on their transition between high school and university education highlights for me both the lack of research on this moment of transition and the need to explore how queer students will manage this transition in the future, especially as the high school setting changes.

In Chapter Four, I examined the heteronormative organization of on-campus residences at UBC. My main finding noted that first-year residences, Place Vanier and Totem Park, were identified as places to avoid by six students. All of the market housing areas on campus were identified at least once as places to avoid. Additionally, nine queer students identified the Greek Village, with its fraternity and sorority housing, as a space they would avoid. The combined interviews and mapping data illustrated Lefebvre's conception of perceived space, where queer students utilized a spatial acuity to read spaces for highly valued gender norms and heteronormative discourses. For instance, queer students revealed how heteronormative structures and practices in the first-year residences had a direct impact on their experience at UBC. One of the characteristics participants often referenced was gender segregation of residences with male or female houses or floors within the larger residence. Cody, a gay male student, was disappointed that he could not live in a mixed residence, or with women in an

apartment style on-campus residence. Many of the gay male students were wary of how straight male roommates might treat them in intimate settings such as residence halls or apartments.

Additionally, gender segregation embeds heteronormative expectations with respect to socializing within and among residences. Livia was particularly perceptive of the expectation that her all-female house was expected to socialize with the corresponding all-male house. Moreover, the regularly occurring social events in residences, often organized by UBC housing staff, were often described by students as having underlying (hetero)sexual goals. Together all of these university-organized living arrangements are saturated with heterosexual expectations that appear to leave little room for alternative sexual and gender expressions, despite the university's public commitment through *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan* to provide safe and respectful learning, living, and work environments. The danger that queer students identified lies in the potential for homophobic clashes between straight and queer students, especially in the ways that queer students might not participate in residence life because they do not see their experiences or identifications reflected therein. As I noted in Chapter Four, there is little research that explores on-campus residence life at Canadian universities and more research, including alternative housing options for queer students, is required.

In Chapter Five, I consider how queer students create and locate queer welcoming and queer friendly spaces on the UBC campus. All of the queer students could identify at least one queer space on campus where they expected to feel welcome and able to express their queer sexualities without encountering homophobic or transphobic hostility. Many of these spaces were recognized as institutionalized queer resources, but others were momentary and shifting. Often queer students would participate in queering a space on campus, illustrating the 'lived' dimension of Lefebvre's conceptualization of the production of social space. Students frequently identified classrooms and student spaces as areas where they could 'queer' space by either

challenging heteronormative expectations or discussing sexual and gender diversity in a positive manner.

Throughout the dissertation I explored how the university represents a paradoxical space for queer students. On the one hand, administrators have promised an equitable, accessible, and tolerant environment for all students, yet on the other, queer students have pointed out how and when these promises are thwarted by both overtly and covertly heteronormative expectations and assumptions. As neoliberal forces continue to shape post-secondary education, queer students no longer connect political and queer activism to the university campus in the same way gay and lesbian students did a generation ago (McLeod, 1996; Warner, 2002). The result is the rise of a homonormative subjectivity, which as Duggan (2002) argues, is constructed through a “privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (p. 179). On the UBC campus, this homonormative subjectivity is reflected in the individualizing power of competition which appears increasingly valued in higher education. Additionally, queer students cited the legalization of same-sex marriage and the social nature of the queer student group PrideUBC, which also illustrate connections to domesticity and consumption, as potential reasons for the decline of a visible and vocal queer politics on campus. For those students who do recognize the need for a queer politics, they must weigh the resources already in place to address queer issues, against the homophobia, transphobia, and heteronormativity that occur on a regular basis. Given the subdued character of queer political action on campus, what kind of queer political leaders will emerge from UBC? In fact, what kinds of political opportunities are available for university and college students in general? Just as the tuition protests in Quebec have helped to cultivate current political leaders, the political opportunities for today’s students will shape our future leaders. My findings invite future assessment of the influence of heteronormativity on the political climate on campuses nationally. Burtch and Haskell (2010),

Saewyc et al., (2009), and Taylor & Peter et al., (2011a, 2011b) have begun an exploration of the secondary schools at the local, provincial and national levels respectively, which has contributed to my understanding of homophobia, transphobia, and heteronormativity within school settings more generally. Next, I outline the contributions and limitations of this research project, while exploring future directions for research.

REFLECTING ON CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS: BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

My research makes a number of contributions to the areas of sexuality and gender studies, queer geographies, and educational research. Not only do these contributions add to the literature in each of these fields, they also extend the work of previous scholars of sexuality, space, and schooling. First, I review the mapping exercise I created and employed as an innovative methodological tool. I then outline the theoretical concepts of ‘becoming queer,’ ‘queer spatial awareness,’ and ‘queer spatial practices’ which I employed to make sense of students’ responses to the mapping exercise and the interview questions. Finally, I reflect on what I consider to be three main findings from the research and discuss how they enrich the study of sexual and gender diversity within educational settings.

Methodological Contributions

The research questions and diverse research areas I drew on for this research project compelled me to create a methodological tool that would capture the gap between queer students’ perceptions and their actual engagement with the campus as a queer space. Since there was no specific method which addressed this social phenomenon in the literature, I developed a ‘mapping exercise’ by drawing on Lefebvre’s (1991) spatial triad, specifically his reflections on conceived, perceived, and lived space and spatial practices, as a technique for bringing the entire campus into view from the students’ standpoint. The mapping exercise accomplished three key

goals. First, the campus map brought the materiality of the UBC campus into view for students within the interview setting as both a ‘conceived’ space and a ‘perceived’ space. While the map itself is only a representation of the campus in two dimensions, it provided a recognizable version of the codes, buildings, and spatial relationships between various spaces on campus. Visual cues were then discussed as part of the interview. Second, I developed a colour-coding schema to capture queer students’ perceptions and engagement with the campus. I measured engagement by asking students to identify the spaces they went to on a daily basis, and the spaces they had never been to. The pattern that emerged from this indicated the frequency with which students occupied spaces and moved through the campus. I was also keen to understand how queer students perceived the campus as queer friendly and/or risky by asking them to identify parts of campus they would avoid and those they felt were queer welcoming or queer friendly. Third, the individual maps were combined into one compilation map, revealing the relationship between students’ perception of avoided and queer spaces and their actual movement through campus according to specific patterns. For instance, students often went to parts of campus they felt welcome and did not go to parts of campus they thought were risky. While this finding was not a surprise, it confirmed that students were navigating the campus in specific ways in relation to their sense of safety and risk. In future research, I aim to adapt my mapping exercise to other educational and social settings and for other marginalized groups.

Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this project derive from my combination of queer, feminist post-structuralist, risk, and spatial analytical concepts. I sought to explore how queer students understand and engage with the UBC campus as a queer space. The first main contribution is to re-articulate the standard ‘coming out of the closet’ story which was so pivotal to gay and lesbian activism in the West in the 1970s. Instead, I discovered ‘becoming queer’ as

an ongoing process for identifying with queerness as a fluid and mobile form of sexual subjectivity. In Chapter Three, I argued that the concept of ‘becoming queer’ more adequately captures the complexity of how students who were interviewed (re)oriented themselves between straight and queer lines of desire. I found Ahmed’s (2006) discussion of orientation to be a provocative formulation of sexual identification, especially her argument that “risking departure from the straight and narrow makes new futures possible, which might involve going astray, getting lost, or becoming queer” (p.21). Ahmed’s comment beautifully captures the meandering path that the students I interviewed seemed to take in becoming queer. Through the interview process, students shared how and when they began to identify their queer desires and with whom they shared this information. The result was an illumination of the uneven, multiple, and non-linear ways in which students began to identify their queer desires, and when they articulated these openly to other people. Here, my understanding of ‘becoming’ describes a generative process, one that relies on a process of (re)iteration and citation in an effort to present oneself as recognizable and intelligible to oneself and others along the queer spectrum. Becoming queer resides as a site of both creation and imitation or identification (Butler, 2004; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Moreover, I found that the expression ‘becoming queer’ captured a sense of process, a continual and risky practice, rather than a onetime announcement or proclamation often associated with the descriptor ‘coming out.’ Becoming queer then, is a reformulation of sexual identification that deepens an understanding of the needs of queer youth. Perhaps this more nebulous construction of queer identification will provide researchers with more useful language and analytical tools to explore the depth and complexity of human sexual diversity, since it works to challenge current understandings of sexual identity development (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Taylor et al., 2011b).

As queer students identify openly with their queer desires, they also become aware of how this open identification potentially results in exposure to homophobic and transphobic hostility. A second theoretical contribution more specifically addresses the confluence of queerness, risk, and space as queer students negotiated and navigated the UBC campus. Once queer students ‘oriented’ themselves within the campus, both the interviews and the mapping data demonstrated that queer students assessed and moved across the campus in specific ways. I have termed this dialectical process ‘queer spatial awareness’ and ‘queer spatial practice’. Queer spatial awareness captures how queer students have developed a spatial acuity for navigating the campus that focuses on two sets of discourses: heteronormative and gender normative discourses which characterize risky spaces, and discourses of equity and tolerance that they associate with queer-welcoming and queer friendly spaces. I also identified a set of corresponding queer spatial practices that queer students used to negotiate their presence on campus: avoidance, blending-in, and passing practices used to minimize risk on campus. Queer spatial practices were also used to locate and participate in queer-welcoming and queer friendly spaces. Indeed challenging homophobia, transphobia, and heteronormativity helped students to create queer spaces on campus. The identification of queer spatial awareness and queer spatial practice is significant because it shifts the construction of queer students by theorists, educators, and administrators as ‘at risk’ for homophobic, transphobic and heteronormative hostility (Hackford-Peer, 2010; Quinlivan, 2002), towards an understanding of how queer students actively navigate and negotiate their sense of safety and risk on the UBC campus.

In Chapter Five I identified three strategies that students used to locate and create queer spaces on campus: first, queer students seek out openly identified queer people who occupy a specific institutional spaces (especially in an official capacity, like faculty members and/or administrators); second, queer students gather together in specific spaces where queer people

and/or supportive allies are known to meet at a regular time; and third, they seek out spaces where queer students and allies discuss sexual and gender diversity and queer issues in positive ways. Taken together, an analysis of these strategies advances an understanding of how queer students cope with issues of sexual and gender diversity in educational settings. In many ways these strategies provide a 'blueprint' for constructing, locating, and maintaining queer spaces. Moreover, by contrasting the discourses and spatial practices used to create queer spaces on campus and those which work to construct Wreck Beach as a queer space, the use of human rights and equity discourses become entrenched on the UBC campus. In fact, reflecting on the political possibilities created and maintained on the campus, I employ Duggan's (2002) concept of homonormativity to characterize an acceptable queer subjectivity that is tolerated on campus. Influenced by the neoliberal construction of many current Canadian and American post-secondary education sites (Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012; Lewis, 2008), queer students face limited possibilities for a radical and public queer politics. By considering the impact of these neoliberal forces and the reformulation of post-secondary education, I argue that teachers, administrators, and researchers need to assess how queer students are navigating and negotiating queerness. Perhaps queerness and queer politics are happening in new and different ways in educational settings, and my hope is that the concepts I have developed might lead to better and more comprehensive queer resources at all levels of schooling.

In the end, my use of queer theory helped to develop and extend Lefebvre's spatial triad, (conceived, perceived, and lived space), which I have re-drawn in the triad form (see figure 6.1 below). Here, I have combined the themes of orientation, navigation, and negotiation to the corresponding concepts of 'becoming queer', 'queer spatial awareness', and 'queer spatial

Rachael's Queer Spatial Triad

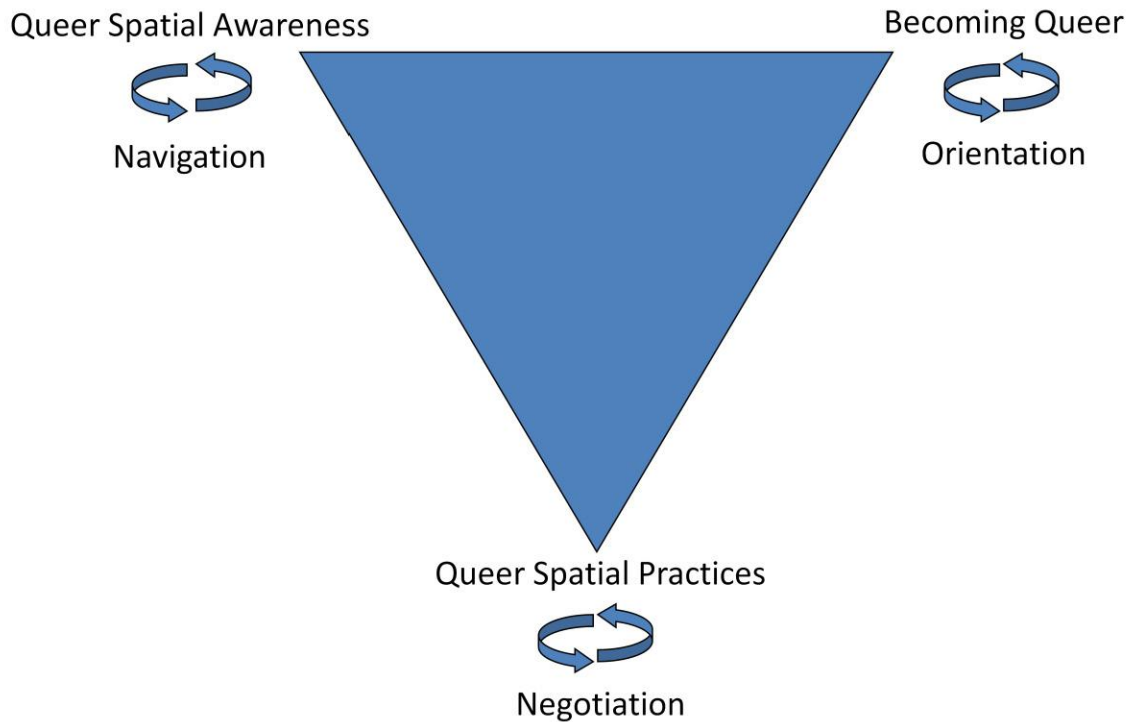


Figure 6.1: Rachael's queer spatial triad, a queering of Lefebvre's spatial triad (created by author)

practice' to queer Lefebvre's original formulation of the production of social space. My newly queer triad illustrates how queer students enter into the production of queer space through the ongoing and complex process of becoming queer. As Ahmed (2006) explains "queer orientations are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable by lines of conventional genealogy...[it] allows other objects to coming into view" (p.107). As the queer students I interviewed became aware of their queer desires other bodies and object came into view and their relation to these queer bodies and objects (re)oriented their desire. The process of navigation is captured in queer students' use queer spatial awareness, where these students come to perceive the UBC campus through queer welcoming and risky spaces. The Queer and Avoided

Spaces Maps (figures 5.1 and 5.2) illustrate how queer students use their spatial acuity to navigate the campus. Lastly, the queer students I interviewed expressed different strategies they deployed when negotiating their presence on campus. They would combine their queer spatial awareness with specific queer spatial practices which provided different modes of engagement with the campus. For instance, when queer students negotiated their engagement with risky spaces, they either avoided such spaces, or they chose to blend-in, or to pass as straight. At the same time, queer students used different spatial practices to create and support queer welcoming and friendly spaces, which sometimes meant challenging homophobic or heteronormative discourses and momentarily queer a space. However, just as Lefebvre's spatial triad is an artificial separation of these interlaced elements, this queered triad faces the same simulation of separateness when each aspect of the triad is simultaneously at work in the creation and identification of queer space.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

As with any research project, there are always limitations to the methods used, the theoretical frameworks selected, and the analysis conducted. However limitations are also opportunities to build new, different, and better future research projects. In this dissertation, I designed a project using the case study method which limited my ability to generalize the findings to a larger queer student population in Canada or elsewhere. As discussed in Chapter Two, a case study methodology is ideal for a close and in-depth study of a social phenomenon that uses multiple types of data within a bounded population or site. While I cannot generalize conclusions from this particular research project, a case study design does address a specific set of circumstances that could be replicated in a number of other university settings, thereby building generalizability across a number of cases through the comparison of differences and similarities which might confirm or refute the findings presented here. My mapping exercise

along with the concepts of ‘becoming queer,’ ‘queer spatial awareness,’ and ‘queer spatial practices’ could be applied to the analysis of social, community, religious, family or work place settings in order to explore how queer people orient, navigate, and negotiate their queer subjectivities in various locations.

Another methodological limitation of this project was participant recruitment. As acknowledged in Chapter Two, I obtained a relatively homogenous student population across categories of race and ethnicity. For instance, I was only able to recruit three students who identified as Chinese, one student who identified as South Asian, and two students who identified as mixed-race, with the remaining twenty students identifying as white. A lack of diversity with respect to the shifting demographics of the UBC student population limited the breadth and depth of themes and analysis. Although I utilized various scholars who address race and ethnicity (Collins, 2005; Han, 2006; Kumashiro, 2001), future research ought to address whiteness and white privilege (see Ward, 2008 for example), as well as the dynamics of racialization for students of colour. I recognize that my position as a white, female-identified, queer graduate student in the UBC setting provided access to some groups of students while closing down other connections. In the end, methodological and recruitment processes should be refined to maximize the diversity of student participants. I hope that researchers will be able to utilize a variety of recruitment tools, from posters and newspaper advertisements to online posts, emails, and social networking sites, to increase the diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and insights among participants.

On the whole, there are a number of avenues to explore in future research, including an examination of specific spaces of the university campus, such as on-campus residences (especially in the Canadian context), fraternities and sororities, and how queer students understand and engage with religious affiliated spaces. More generally, future research could

explore the relation between the ‘queer’ campus and the ‘queer’ city within which it is located. This relationship is both historically and spatially constituted and more research could explore how these two spaces influence the ways in which queerness is expressed. Lastly, additional research that addresses queer students’ virtual or online communities, social networking sites, and internet use in general would enhance research on queer youth and new media (see Bryson, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, n.d.; Bryson, Macintosh, & Lin, 2006; Pullen & Cooper, 2010 for example). This would productively link recent cases of cyber bullying, like the use of technology in the death of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi (Parker, 2012), to discourses of homophobia, transphobia, and heteronormativity.

MAKING IT BETTER: CAMPUS RECOMMENDATIONS

My research has been driven by a strong desire to address and improve the current institutional configuration of policy and practice as it relates to queer students at UBC. The campus recommendations provided below address both policy and practice, and were developed partly from suggestions students made during the interviews and my own reflections that arose after sifting through their responses. These recommendations are preliminary and can certainly be refined through broader consultation with queer and queer-positive students, staff, and faculty members of the university community. They could be developed into substantive changes that would directly affect institutional, residential, academic, and political channels of resource delivery.

Institution-Wide Recommendations:

In terms of institution-wide recommendations, I have developed three suggestions that would aid in shifting queer students’ engagement with the campus. One of the central insights gained from the interviews was queer students’ awareness of resources and services that addressed sexual and gender diversity. While many of the students I interviewed had a cursory

understanding of the resources and services that addressed queer issues specifically, often their knowledge was determined by their involvement in student government or queer resources such as PrideUBC. Some students, particularly those with little or no engagement with the campus, were less likely to name these resources, or how and where they might be accessed.

Since resources such as PrideUBC, Outlaws, Positive Space Campaign, Equity Office, Access & Diversity, UBC Counselling, and Critical Studies In Sexuality are organized through different departments and units across the campus, it is difficult to locate and access them. Providing a centralized booklet or online resource would aid queer students in locating on-campus resources. In addition to providing a centralized venue that would bring together these resources, it would also help students, faculty, and administrators to detect gaps in current resources and work towards filling them. Once this new centralized resource booklet or webpage was created, it would be vital to design a media campaign to ensure that students know a) the variety of resources that exist on campus and, b) how to access and locate these resources. This would ensure that if queer students were dealing with a specific issue they would have easy access to a directory of on campus resources.

The second recommendation would be to provide information about student resources and services that address queer issues along with other marginal issues during Imagine Day (Orientation). As the first official introduction to UBC culture and expectations, Imagine Day orientation activities offer a unique site to introduce incoming students to the variety of resources, including those that specifically address queer and trans issues. This suggestion would require a two-part intervention, the first being the inclusion of Brock Hall into the guided campus tour. It would include a short tour of the services and resources contained within the building and booths set-up for resources that are located elsewhere on the campus. The second intervention would include an overview of the student services found in Brock Hall, Student Health Services,

the SUB, and other resources when the students gather to hear the address of their faculty's dean or chair. More specifically, highlighting the Positive Space Campaign as one resource would provide information about attending a Positive Space Workshop, and also provide an opportunity to explain what the Positive Space Campaign decal looks like and what it means to see it in a specific space. All students would benefit from this knowledge and awareness that homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism are discussed critically and not tolerated on campus. Moreover, by including this overview, all students would be provided with this information which could aid with broader student health issues like suicide prevention.

The third campus-wide suggestion would be to create a committee or group that would bring together students, staff, administrators, and faculty in an effort to improve current queer and trans resources and create new ones that address the current climate and research regarding queer youth and educational settings. These groups would become increasingly important as students are identifying along the queer spectrum at an earlier age, predominantly in high school, which could mean that universities and their administrators need to (in consultation with queer students) create different queer resources; streamline current resources so that they are easier to locate and access; and to comprehensively address social, pedagogical/academic, mental/physical/emotional well-being of students while they attend UBC.

Residence-Based Recommendations

As I illustrated in Chapter Four, many of the queer students interviewed identified the on-campus residences, including first-year dormitories, and fraternity and sorority residences as spaces that contained higher concentrations of heteronormative and idealized gender norms. This indicates that more education and awareness needs to be focused at these particular sites on campus. One strategy would be to target Positive Space training and other awareness-building discussion groups and activities to address racism, sexism, heterosexism, ablism and other social

justice issues for Resident Assistants and residents alike. This approach would complement and extend UBC Housing posters “Busting bias” and “Have you ever wondered?”, each of which addresses racism and homophobia respectively and can be found as part of the “Community Living and Citizenship” component of their resources webpage.⁷⁸ This would mean providing specific workshops and/or training for students in first-year residences and fraternities and sororities. The goals would be to create awareness about social justice issues, power, and privilege, while also introducing students to a common understanding and language about these various issues.

Additionally, the students interviewed for this research project identified the structural arrangement of gender segregated residence halls and houses as heterosexist. To amend this, some of the students interviewed suggested that UBC provide alternative living arrangements that do not rely on gender segregation or opposite-sex/heteronormative social practices. For instance, by providing non-gendered or mix-gendered housing arrangements, queer students will be able to access housing where they will feel more comfortable to express their queerness without fear of homophobic or transphobic hostility. This would also create different social expectations and composition that do not rely on heteronormative expectations. More specifically, residence programming would need to employ strategies that did not necessarily rely on ‘sister and brother’ house/residence configurations as the basis for events in residence.

Pedagogical Recommendations

As noted in Chapter Five, queer students identified a number of academic and pedagogical spaces as queer friendly, but also provided examples of when heteronormative assumptions are invoked within the classroom setting. While there are many resources that instructors and faculty members can access through the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and

⁷⁸ See <http://www.housing.ubc.ca/resources> for more information (last accessed July 1, 2012)

Technology (CTLT)⁷⁹, it appears that students want their instructors to use more inclusive language and examples that do not rely on heteronormative constructions of gender, sexuality or dating practices. Materials that address student diversity in the classroom at CTLT would help to address these issues, and remind instructors to use non-heteronormative language in lectures, classroom discussions, and assignments.

Another issue, generated through the interviews with queer students, was their desire to take more courses in Critical Studies in Sexuality (CSIS). When I asked about their willingness or desire to take CSIS courses, many of the students lamented that the courses were full before they had a chance to register, classes conflicted with their required courses, or classes did not fit within their program of study. Thus, it would be beneficial to increase the number of CSIS courses taught in the academic year, and during the summer, as well as at different times and days in order to open up these courses to a wider variety of students outside of the Faculty of Arts. More CSIS courses would provide graduate students and junior faculty who specialize in the areas of gender and sexuality studies, an opportunity to teach within their field. Lastly, increasing the number of CSIS courses would provide more opportunities for queer and allied students to learn about queer issues within an academic setting.

Outside of the university campus, there are some recommendations to address queer students in high school. Since my research explores the transition between high school and university educational settings, I would suggest that teachers and administrators become familiar with the different ways students wrestle with becoming queer. It would be ideal for teachers and administrators to work with students to create a more welcoming space within high schools by targeting heteronormativity and cultivating an environment that could support diverse gender

⁷⁹ See the Centre for Teaching , Learning, and Technology website for more information at ctl.ubc.ca (last accessed July 1, 2012). How about you?

expressions and different types of relationships. As I explained in Chapter Three, queer students used Running Start programs or College Transfer programs to make the transition to university education. By recognizing the different learning needs of queer students, teachers, administrators, and guidance counsellors can provide support and access to these alternative programs as tools for navigating and negotiating homophobic, transphobic, and heteronormative high school climates.

Queer Social and Political Recommendations

In this final set of recommendations for improving queer students' engagement with the campus, I offer a set of suggestions that could improve political and civic engagement between the UBC campus and the city of Vancouver. Since many students complained about a lack of social and political opportunities on campus, one strategy for improving this situation would be to work with student groups across campus to ensure more diverse and responsive training on issues of sexuality and gender diversity within interlocking systems of race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability and Aboriginal issues. In addition, students could be encouraged to work with community groups within and beyond Vancouver. This could be in the form of Community Service Learning opportunities with various agencies (Qmunity, AIDSVancouver, BC Persons with AIDS Society, Trans Alliance Society, Pride Health Services, LEGIT: Canadian Immigration for Same-sex Partners) to help make the connection between what students are learning at UBC and services available within Greater Vancouver Regional District. Community partnerships with queer and trans community groups, health organizations, and other volunteer services would signal other opportunities on the UBC campus. As has been noted, these recommendations suggest small steps that could improve queer students' engagement with the UBC campus. Further implementation of these recommendations should take place with consultation and feedback from queer, trans, and allied students, staff, and faculty.

In the end, the goal of this research project was to explore how queer students understood and engaged with the UBC campus as a queer space. Through the use of mapping tools, semi-structured interviews, and the university's publicity materials, I have demonstrated that the university campus is a unique and complex space for queer students. The campus provides a number of resources and services for queer students, staff, and faculty which help queer university members' traverse homophobic, transphobic, and heteronormative impediments. Yet the necessity for these resources and the desire to improve them or create new ones suggests that there are still inequities and injustices that occur on campus. However, as noted above, this research provides new insights into some of the factors that impede queer students' engagement within the whole campus. As awareness of power, privilege, and interlocking oppressions grows, my hope is that this research will aid students, administrators, and researchers as they explore issues of sexuality, gender, and education in the future.

The empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions of this dissertation suggest that queer students are active participants in orientating, navigating, and negotiating their sense of safety and risk on the UBC campus. Part of my study takes seriously the spatial turn in Sociological research, and thus I centre my analysis on the spatialization of sexuality and queerness. Here, I have demonstrated that queer students experience their queer desires through the production of social space (Ahmed, 2006; Lefebvre, 1991). I have illustrated how queer students have developed a queer spatial awareness and corresponding queer spatial practices, which they utilized to occupy and traverse the UBC campus. I have revealed, by incorporating insights from feminist, spatial, risk, and queer theories, that queer students weigh the potential risk of encountering homophobic and transphobic hostility alongside their need for belonging and safety. While university administrators have made public promises for providing safe and welcoming spaces for all students including, queer students, my dissertation establishes a need to

examine the everyday ways in which heteronormativity is embedded into the university setting. I urge students, faculty, and administrators to reevaluate the current construction of the university campus and to make interventions to create a welcoming space for all students.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexual identity
Abigail	22	Female	White	queer
Anna	20	Female	White/Jewish	lesbian
Brad	20	Male	Chinese	gay
Caleb	20	Male	White/Easter Euro	Gay/bi
Charlotte	21	Female	White/Jewish	lesbian/gay
Cody	20	Male	mixed/other	gay
Eddie	18	Trans	White	queer/trans
Elizabeth	21	Female	White	Bi-romantic Asexual
Frank	21	Male	White	bisexual
Jack	22	Male	White	homosexual/gay
Jeffery	20	Male	White	gay
Jeremy	22	Male	White	gay
JT	21	Female/Androgenous	Chinese	lesbian
Jude	22	Female	mixed/other	queer/gay/lesbian
Kevin	29	Male	White	gay
Livia	22	Female	White	queer/bi
Nate	21	Male	White	gay
Oskar	25	Male	White	gay
Red	22	Male	Indian/South Asian	gay
Rhonda	21	Female	White	queer
Sam	24	Female	White	queer
Simon	23	Male	White	gay
Spanky	19	Female	White	lesbian
Stanford	22	Male	Asian	gay
Steve	23	Male	White	gay/queer
Trekkie	21	Female/gay	White	queer

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Biographical/Definition Questions:

How did you find out about the study?

- If poster: where did you see the poster?
- If email: where did you get the email from?
- Other? Please explain further?

How old are you?

How do you define your gender?

How would you define your race and/or ethnicity?

Do you identify with any religious or spiritual communities?

Do you identify with disabled and/or DEAF communities?

How do you define your sexuality?

What does the term 'queer' mean to you?

Educational Background:

Where did you grow-up?

What was your neighbourhood like?

What did/do your parents do for work?

How much education did they receive?

- How important is your attending university to them?

What was your high school like?

Academically, how did you do in high school?

Can you tell me about your friends in high school?

Did you participate in any extra-curricular activities?

- If not, Why not?

Outside of school, were there community groups or activities you were involved with?

- If not, Why not?

- If so, which one and why?

How did you balance family, school and social life?

Can you tell me about any romantic or sexual relationships you had while in high school?

How open was this relationship(s)?

- Did everyone know at school?

- What about at home?

How sexual were they?

How did you define your sexuality then?

When did you realize that you identified as [gay, or lesbian, or bisexual, or two-spirit, or trans, or queer]? Can you tell me about that process:

How did you know?

Who did you tell/share this with?

Has the way you define your sexuality changed overtime?

How do you make sense of or see your high school experiences now that you are in University?

Experiences on Campus at UBC:

Did you attend university immediately after graduating high school?

How did you end up attending UBC?

Why did you pick UBC?

Residential Spaces:

Where do you currently live? (Off/on campus?)

How long have you lived there?

Have you lived elsewhere while attending UBC?

Off campus living

*How did you come to live there?

*What kind of neighbourhood do you live in?

*Would you like to live in another location? Where and why?

**Roommates:* How did you meet them?

*Do they know you identify as ____? How did they find out?

*If you change anything about your current living situation would you and what would it be?

On campus living

Did you ever live on campus?

YES→ When did you live on campus?

Which residence was it?

Did your roommates/Floormates know you identified as [LGBTTQ]?

What was it like to live on campus?

Did you have friends who were out in residence?

Did you hang out at the residence? With who?

Did you ever encounter any pamphlets, posters or workshops in residence that addressed issues of sexuality and gender?

→Did you ever see this poster, posted any where? (Show Poster?)

Did you *date* anyone that lived in residence?

Were you and your partner accepted?

Did you or your partner experience any problems or harassment in residence because of your relationship?

*If you change anything about living on campus would you, what would it be?

*Can you tell me about your impression of or experiences with the fraternity and sorority housing system on campus? Would you be interested in belonging to one of these organizations and living on campus?

Comparative questions: Off campus living

[If YES to off campus living]

Can you tell me about any differences between living on and off of campus?

Where did you enjoy living the most?

What made it a good experience?

Where did you least like living? Why?

How do you travel to campus?

How often do you come to campus?

Labour/Working Spaces

How do you afford school?

Can you tell me about your working life?

→Do you work on campus? Where and how long have you worked there?

→Do you work off campus? Where and how long have you worked there?

How do you juggle your work, social and school life?

How public or secretive are you about your sexuality at work?

Is being open about your sexuality (or gender identity) and romantic relationships at work important to you?

Pedagogical Spaces

What program are you enrolled in at UBC?

What year are you in?

Which classes are you taking?

Where are most of your classes located on campus?

Have any of the classes you attended or currently attend, contain queer content (books, articles or lectures)?

Have you ever discussed issues of gender and sexuality in class?

Is it important to you that the instructor address issues of sexuality or gender?

Are you open about your own sexual/gender identity?

In terms of how issues of sexuality and gender have been approached in class(es), have you ever had any positive or negative experiences? What happened?

Have you met other queer students by attending class?

Have you completed research or assignments that focused on issues of sexuality and/or gender?

Can you tell me about any in-class guest speakers who addressed issues of gender and/or sexuality?

Have you attended any lectures or workshops outside of your program that addressed issues of sexuality or gender? Which ones?

How did you find out about them?

Have you heard of the Critical Studies in Sexuality at UBC?

→If YES: Have you attended any of these classes? Or working towards the CSIS minor?

→If NO: Now that you know about it would you consider taking some of these courses?

Why or why not?

Have you sought out advisors or instructors whom you thought might be queer for either academic or personal guidance?

Are there any instructors that have made a positive or negative impression in your academic career, so far?

What do you plan to do with your degree once you are finished at UBC?

How will your degree help you in your future plans?

Social/Cultural Spaces

Can you tell me about some of the non-academic activities you are involved with on campus?

→Are you involved with any groups on campus? Which ones?

→Are you involved with your department or faculty student association?

→Are they welcoming to queer students?

Tell me more about your social networks:

How did you meet them?

Do any identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, two-spirit, trans, or queer?

Is it important to have/make friends with classmates? If so, why or why not?

Have your friendship groups changed over time while at UBC?

Why?

What kind of events do you attend on campus, outside of lectures or classes?

Have you come to campus, just to attend an event?

Which one? Was it worth while?

Where do you tend to socialize on campus? Are these places important to you? If so, why?

Social Queer spaces on Campus

Are there specific spaces on campus that you would identify as 'queer'?

Have you attended queer identified events or social groups on campus? Which ones?

Did you enjoy them?

Are there queer identified social groups or events that you would avoid attending on campus?

Why?

Aside from the queer spaces you identified, are there other spaces on campus that are important to you? Why these spaces?

Have you had romantic relationships while attending UBC?

How did you meet them?

Do you socialize or have dates on campus?

→If so, where and what did you do?

→If not, where did you go and what did you do?

What do you do for fun off campus?

What are some of your favourite queer places?

→How did you find out about them?

Which queer places do you avoid in Vancouver?

→Why?

Social Queer spaces off Campus

Where might you go off campus to socialize?

→Why these places/sites?

Are some of these queer spaces? Which ones?

Are these spaces easy to access?

How did you find out about them?

Aside from the queer spaces you identified, are there other spaces in the city that are important to you? Why these spaces?

Are there community/political groups or activities you are involved with off campus?

→If not, Why not?

→If so, which one and why?

Virtual spaces

What are some of your favourite websites? Do you visit them daily?

Are there specifically queer, gay or lesbian websites you visit?

How often?

Are any connected to UBC? (for instance Pride UBC website?)

Of the ones connected to UBC, are there any that specifically address issues of sexuality or gender?

Of the sites NOT connected to UBC, which site do you visit frequently? Why these sites?

Have you ever met with anyone you first encountered online?

Have you dated anyone you first encountered online?

Have you sought out porn or sexually explicit websites? Which ones? Is there a sense of community on some of these sites?

Safety, Strategies and Accessing Services

Mapping Exercise:

This is a map of the UBC campus.

Please outline in green which parts of campus you visit daily, frequently.

Next, in Yellow outline the parts you would visit once and a while (once or twice a month). Now, in

Purple outline the parts of campus you have never visited.

Third, in Hot Pink, outline the parts of campus you see as queer spaces.

Last, in Red, please outline any parts of campus you might go out of your way to avoid.

(In reference to the map)

-Why did you identify these spaces as queer friendly/positive?

-If there are places you avoid, why do you avoid them?

-Have you ever had to/felt pressure to go to parts of campus you would not feel comfortable going?

Safety, Discrimination and Harassment

How would you define a sense of safety?

How safe do you feel on campus?

Have you ever felt 'unsafe' on campus?

→ Why, what was happening at the time?

→ If not, what would make you feel unsafe?

How do or would you make yourself feel safe on campus?

→Can you tell me about a specific incident or example of this?

Have you had any problems on campus because you identify as _____?

→What do you think triggered the event?

How would you define discrimination or harassment on the UBC campus?

→What would it look like to you?

→NOTE: Think about ways to introduce a sense of violence as a continuum (invisibility – to – subtle harassment & intimidation – to – verbal abuse – to – stalking, assault, rape, sexual violence)

Have you ever experienced verbal/written threats (discrimination or harassment) on the UBC campus?

→What happened?

→Where on Campus?

If NOT, have you heard of friends or classmates experiencing who were verbally threatened or abused due to their sexual or gender identity, while on campus?

Have you or do you know of anyone that was gay-bashed/physically assaulted while on campus?

→Do you know what happened?

→What would you expect the university to do?

If there were an increase in reported gay-bashings on campus, how would you feel?

→What would you do?

→How would you try to prevent it from happening again?

What about in Vancouver more generally, how safe do you feel in the city?

→How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood?

Have you or anyone you were close to (friend or partner) experience verbal harassment or physically assault in Vancouver because of their sexuality or gender?

→What happened?

→What did you do?

→How would you try to prevent it from happening again/in the first place?

Access to Queer Spaces on Campus

Aside from the queer friendly/positive spaces identified on the map, can you tell me about the services and organizations that address queer issues on campus?

How many of these services have you accessed yourself?

My LIST: Positive Space, Pride UBC (discussion groups – Exec), Access & Diversity, Equity Office, OutLaws, Queer Engineers, Out Week

[**Note:** ask questions about the Services + Resources they list first, then follow-up with questions about the services they did not list]

Have you attended a **Positive Space** workshop?

If **Yes:** When did you attend? Why did you sign-up for it?

If **No:** Why did you choose not to attend?

Have you ever attended a **Pride UBC** event?

If **No:** Why not? Tell me some of the reasons you have not attended any events? Would you attend Pride UBC events in the future? Tell me why or why not?

If **Yes:** Which one(s)? What interested you? Did you enjoy it? Would you continue attending these events? How did you hear about the events?

Have you ever visited the **Access and Diversity Office**?

What has your experience been like there? Or Why not?

If not, would you access the services provided by this office, now that you know about the group?

Have you ever visited the **Equity Office**?

What has your experience been like there? Or Why not?

If not, would you access the services provided by this office, now that you know about the group?

Do you know about other queer student groups like **OutLaws, Queer Engineers**?

→Have you ever attended one of their lectures?

→What has your experience been like there?

→If not, would you attend one in the future, now that you know about the groups?

Are there things that could be done to improve queer students' safety on campus?

Do you feel/think that queer students are getting their needs met at UBC?

If you had a meeting with the Deans and the President, what would you ask for?

Access to Queer Spaces off Campus

Are there queer services or resources that you have accessed off campus?

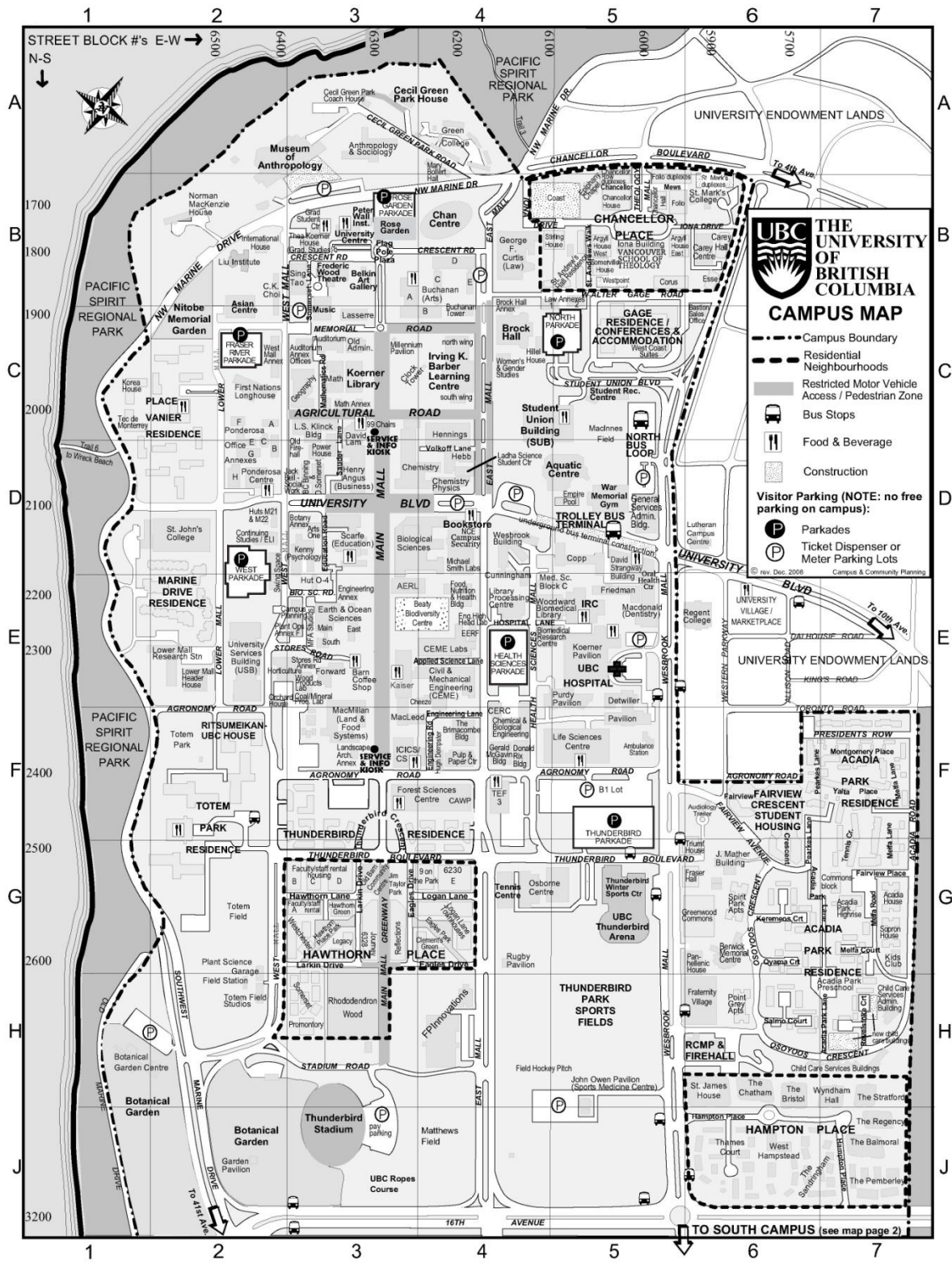
How did you find out about them?

Why did you go there, rather than another place?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX C: OFFICIAL UBC CAMPUS MAP



APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE STUDENT MAP

