

**QUEER NEWCOMER YOUTH'S UNDERSTANDINGS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION
THROUGH THE PROCESS OF SCHOOL INTEGRATION**

by

JULIA BREANNE TOEWS

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the thesis entitled:

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submitted by Julia Breanne Toews in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
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in School and Applied Child Psychology

Examining Committee:

Anusha Kassan, PhD, RPsych, Associate Professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, UBC
Co-supervisor

Laurie Ford, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, UBC
Co-supervisor

G. Thomas Schanding, PhD, RPsych, Associate Professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, UBC
Supervisory Committee Member

Abstract

Understandings of sexual orientation vary across individuals, cultures, geographic regions, and time. In queer theory, sexual orientation is seen as a social construction that is understood through the subjective experience of individuals. *Queer newcomer youth* are defined as immigrants, refugees, and international student youth between the ages of 19 and 24 who have immigrated in the last five years and identify broadly as non-heterosexual (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, queer, questioning etc.) (hereafter, *QNY*). QNY experience a process known as *school integration*, which is defined broadly as the adjustment of newcomer youth to student life both inside and outside school spaces. For these youth, school integration may also entail negotiating competing cultural understandings of sexual orientation with those of their host country. This process and the resulting understandings of sexual orientations may be of particular importance to QNY, as adolescence is considered a significant period for sexual identity development.

However, extant literature has focussed on Western-centric, non-immigrant understandings of sexuality and sexual orientation and has subsequently failed to consider the intersectional experiences and understandings of QNY. In this study, I used a phenomenographic methodology guided by a queer theory theoretical framework to explore, understand, and compare various ways QNY understand sexual orientation through the process of school integration. The aim of this study was to explore the ways QNY understand sexual orientation, and to inform broader conceptualizations of school integration and immigration. Data analysis revealed four qualitatively different understandings of sexual orientation collectively held by QNY: (a) *attraction to gender*; (b) *attraction to type*; (c) *what you do*; and (d) *what you feel*. Findings are discussed in the context of van Anders' (2015) sexual configurations theory and

Fuks et al.'s (2018) integrative model of cultural, sexual and gender identity development, alongside extant queer immigration, and sexuality literature. Limitations and strengths of this study, and implications for school psychology practice, training, research, and policy are also discussed.

Lay Summary

Cultural norms, geographic regions, and time influence how individuals understand sexual orientation. Queer youth are adolescents and emerging adults between the ages of 19-24 who identify as broadly non-heterosexual (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, queer, questioning etc.). Queer youth who are also immigrants, refugees or international students and have immigrated in the last five years are known as *queer newcomer youth* (hereafter, *QNY*). QNY experience a process known as *school integration*, which is the adjustment of newcomer youth to student life both inside and outside school spaces and involves exposure to cultural norms. Throughout school integration, QNY may encounter different understandings of sexual orientation than those predominant in their country of origin. The aim of this study was to explore the ways QNY understand sexual orientation throughout the process of school integration. Results of this study were four qualitatively different understandings of sexual orientation. These results are discussed in the context of extant literature. Strengths and limitations of the present study, as well as implications for school psychology practice, training, research, and policy are also discussed.

Preface

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the graduate student, J.B. Toews. The graduate student, under the advisement of their co-supervisors, developed the research question and study design. The graduate student performed a literature review and culminated the results for this study. The graduate student planned and conducted participant recruitment through paid and unpaid advertisements on Facebook and Instagram social media platforms and the distribution of printed poster advertisements. Under the advisement of their co-supervisors, the graduate student designed recruitment materials, including scripts, digital advertisements and posters. The graduate student designed the interview protocol in accordance with the broad parameters delineated in phenomenographic research and with feedback from their co-supervisors. The graduate student completed the analysis of the research data with feedback provided by their co-supervisors. The writing of this document was completed by the graduate student through an iterative editing process with their co-supervisors. This study was approved by UBC's Research Ethics Board (H22-01469).

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother. My first sounding board and favourite debate partner. I miss you.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Understandings of sexual orientation vary across individuals, cultures, geographic regions, and time, and can evolve through the process of immigration (Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Diamond, 2008; Epstein et al., 2012; Fuks et al., 2018; Rosario et al., 2011; Tskhay & Rule, 2015; van Anders, 2015). After arriving in Canada, newcomers (i.e., immigrants, refugees, and international students: IRCC, 2018) begin to experience *acculturation*, the process through which they acquire the beliefs, values, and behaviours of a host country, while either preserving or modifying those of their culture of origin (Berry, 2006; Gibson, 2001; Williams & Berry, 1991). For some newcomers, the process of acculturation may entail negotiating pre-migration understandings of sexual orientation with the range of those that are predominant in Canadian culture. Negotiating competing understandings of sexual orientation can result in the retention of pre-migration understandings, the blending of more than one understanding, or the adoption of understandings predominant in Canadian culture (Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Fuks et al., 2018).

Given their cultural backgrounds, sexualities, and subsequent exposure to Canadian cultural norms, it is likely that newcomers to Canada who embody diverse sexualities have unique understandings of sexual orientation. This may be especially true of *queer newcomer youth* (individuals between the ages of 19 and 24 who have immigrated to Canada in the last five years and identify broadly as non-heterosexual), hereafter known as *QNY*. I use “queer” because the term encompasses all non-heterosexual sexualities. Further, the term challenges Western binary definitions of sexuality and gender (Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003). Because this thesis is concerned with understandings of sexuality, I emphasize non-heterosexual sexualities in my definition of QNY. However, it is important to recognize that QNY may also

hold non-cis gender identities. Youth are often defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 (UNDESA, 2008). However, I chose to focus on youth between the ages of 19 and 24, as late adolescence (Erikson, 1968) and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) are significant periods for the development of sexual identity. Specifically, queer youth are more likely than their heterosexual-identified peers to engage in active introspection about their sexuality and to develop their sexual identity when cultural norms (e.g., compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia, biphobia, etc.) are incompatible with a growing awareness of an orientation towards same-gender attraction (e.g., Dillon et al., 2011). Since QNY undergo acculturation to Canadian norms alongside ongoing sexual identity development, their understandings of sexual orientation are likely to be uniquely influenced by the process of immigration.

Further, for QNY, educational settings can function as central points of entry (or acculturation) into Canadian culture, and this may include social inclusion and exclusion, linguistic development, and introduction to provincial education systems, among other factors (Brewers & McCabe, 2014; Devine, 2011; Selimos & Daniel, 2017). These experiences contribute to a process known as *school integration*, which is defined as the academic, social, emotional, relational, familial, and communal adjustment of newcomer youth to student life both inside and outside school spaces (Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Kassan & Mukred, 2022). Exposure to cultural understandings of sexual orientation as a part of school integration is probable, especially in schools which implement sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)-inclusive educational policies and procedures. For instance, SOGI 1 2 3 (Arc Foundation, 2019) is a SOGI-inclusive educational resource that is available to school districts in British Columbia (BC) and Alberta (AB). School integration is one focal point from which to address the acculturation process of newcomer youth and represents a growing field of research (e.g.,

Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Kalchos et al., 2022; Kassan & Mukred, 2022; Matejko et al., 2021; D. J. Smith et al., 2022). However, this research has not specifically explored how QNY experience school integration or how QNY understand sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration.

1.2 Researcher Positionality

Qualitative inquiry recognizes that the researcher is an instrument and, as such, is not separate from the process of data collection, analysis, or interpretation of findings (Patton, 2002). Given this, and my queer theory theoretical framework (outlined below), I accepted that my personal experiences, biases, and expectations had the capacity to influence the development, process, and results of the present study. Thus, it was important to consider how my positionality might have affected my role as the primary researcher throughout the research process and to take preliminary steps to limit any undue influence.

As the present study explored the experiences of a group who has been and continues to be minoritized in society, it was imperative that I be reflexive and considerate of the unique challenges faced by my participants. I began this process by considering the intersection of my own identities. I am both an insider and an outsider to QNY. That is, I identify as a queer person, and as such, I am an ingroup member of the broader queer community. My identity and lived experiences allowed me specific insights, which may have served to facilitate my role as a researcher. That is, I have the lived experience of considering, questioning, and reevaluating my understanding of sexual orientation as a queer person. Compared to those without a minoritized sexual or gender identity, I have a personal understanding of the stakes involved (emotional, political, or otherwise) when questioning heteronormative models of sexual orientation. However, it was important that I was careful not to overemphasize such similarities, as the

study's QNY participants also held a multiplicity of identities different from my own (e.g., Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In that vein, I do not have any prolonged lived experience as a newcomer, immigrant, refugee, or international student. While I once lived as an international student in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, my immigration experience spanned only six months, and I had no intentions of long-term residency. I grew up in BC, Canada, and I have Eastern European ethnic heritage. I am perceived as a white woman, and as such, my appearance affords me a privileged social standing, often at the expense of Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples, and Peoples of Colour (i.e., IBPOC). During data collection, several participants communicated experiences of stigmatization at the intersection of their ethnicity and newcomer status. In consideration of the limitations of my knowledge and my social location as a member of an ethnic majority, I employed several methods to ensure that my research did not contribute to the re-stigmatization of participants with IBPOC identities. First, I routinely checked in and asked for feedback from my participants before, during, and after the research process. Second, I engaged in ongoing education in culturally sensitive research practices. Last, I recorded and reflected upon my research expectations prior to conducting interviews or engaging in data analysis. The steps I took in relation to my positionality contributed to the rigour and trustworthiness of the present study, which are discussed in more detail in chapter three.

1.3 Rationale

A great deal of immigration research has examined newcomer youth as a homogenous group, disregarding the intersection of their diverse cultural backgrounds and unique experiences of acculturation into Canadian culture (Schwartz et al., 2010; Yakushko et al., 2008). More recently, an intersectional approach has been employed to explore the unique experiences and specific needs of newcomer youth through the process of school integration (e.g., Selimos &

Daniel, 2017; A. C. Smith et al., 2022). Youth spend most of their time in educational spaces, and as such, schools play a significant role in their social, cultural, and identity development (Brewers & McCabe, 2014). Extant school integration literature indicates that while newcomer youth face multiple barriers, they also experience facilitators to school integration (Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Kalchos et al., 2022; Matejko et al., 2021; Selimos & Daniel, 2017; D. J. Smith et al., 2021). However, it is unknown whether these facilitators are specifically applicable to QNY, as sexuality is rarely addressed in conjunction with the intersections of newcomer status, age, and ethnicity. It is, however, known that queer student youth in schools across Canada experience disproportionate rates of homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, and queerphobic discrimination, which is correlated with significant health disparities compared to their heterosexual peers (e.g., Peter et al., 2021; A. Smith et al., 2022).

Comprehensive and applicable SOGI-inclusive education is meant to aid all students in the development of their sexual identity and understandings of sexual orientation, and it is known that school districts that have effectively employed such educational policies report lower rates of discrimination and higher rates of school connectedness (Arc Foundation, 2019; British Columbia Centre for Disease Control [BCCDC], 2019; Peter et al., 2021). Despite this progress, a BCCDC project summary report identified several areas needing further support, including the inclusion of student voices and taking an intersectional approach to supporting queer students (BCCDC, 2019). While an intersectionality module was subsequently developed, it fails to specifically address the needs or include the voices of QNY. Thus, it is currently unknown whether SOGI resources are relevant or applicable to QNY, given that they may hold unique cultural understandings of sexual orientation. Further, it is unclear whether and how such SOGI educational policies and modules in schools (or lack thereof) have influenced how QNY

understand aspects of sexual orientation as they experience school integration. Therefore, studies that investigate how QNY understand sexual orientation through school integration, the process of which may or may not entail exposure to SOGI-inclusive education, are of vital importance.

Finally, queer theory research (Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003) calls for scholars to explore and document alternative and non-Western-centric understandings of sexual orientation (i.e., understandings of sexual orientation that fall outside those prominent in Western and Northern Europe, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), Canada, and Oceania). Researchers and scholars who espouse a queer theory orientation have noted that historically predominant theories of sexuality, which reflect and prioritize cisheteronormative Western conceptualizations of gender and biological sex, often fail to capture the lived experience of the individuals they claim to represent (e.g., Better & Simula, 2015; van Anders, 2015). Further, research on the cisheteronormative, gender-centric models derived from such theories tends to conflate sexual orientation with sexual identity and sexual behaviour which, as van Anders (2015) notes, are separate but interrelated subconstructs of sexuality. This has led to a base of sexuality literature wherein researchers run the risk of being misled that the same phenomena are being invoked (Gagnon, 1990; van Anders, 2015). Such criticisms of predominantly Western-centric theories and models are summarized by Better and Simula (2015), who thus conclude that no one model or understanding of sexual orientation can explain the lived experience of all individuals. Given these criticisms, it follows that non-cisheteronormative, non-gender-centric ways of understanding and experiencing sexual orientation should be documented, and as distinct subconstructs of sexuality. Moreover, such research should be conducted from a multicultural perspective and in a manner that does not assume a stance of Western centrism.

That is, QNY come from diverse cultural backgrounds and may hold unique understandings of sexual orientation which differ from those predominant in Western cultures.

In this way, the understandings of sexual orientation held by QNY are highly important to the expansion of school integration (and more broadly immigration) literature, the future of SOGI educational practices and policies, and the expansion of queer theory and parallel research.

1.3.1 Aim and Purpose

I addressed this research gap through the present study by exploring the ways QNY understand and interpret sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration. My aim was to document the rich and nuanced understandings QNY have of sexual orientation after reflecting on their experience of school integration and immigration to Canada. It was my intention to address this research gap in a manner that centered the experiences of QNY who have historically been ignored or misrepresented in sexuality and gender research (Ream, 2021). My purpose was to reveal unique understandings of sexual orientation which have developed because of these youths' lived experiences, contribute to intersectional and multicultural understandings of sexual orientation, and inform broader understandings of school integration.

1.4 Research Question

Given the purpose of the study, my research question was: *What are QNY's understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration?*

1.5 Theoretical Framework

In the present study, I explored how QNY understand sexual orientation through the process of school integration. As such, this study addressed themes of sexuality, queer identities, intersectionality, and multiculturalism. Given these central themes and my phenomenon of

interest, I chose queer theory as a theoretical framework. Queer theory refers to the critical examination of sexuality and gender essentialism, which arose out of feminist and post-structuralist discourse in the 1990s (Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003). With roots in social constructionism, queer theory deconstructs (or “queers”) set definitions of biological sex, gender, and sexuality by questioning and falsifying their stability. Central to queer theory is its resistance to models of stability or any set, objective definition; its discourse focuses on the inherence of the socially constructed, indeterminate, and often incoherent nature of sexuality and gender. As such, queer theoretical discourse is ever-evolving and unanticipated. True to this perspective, there is no set, agreed upon school of thought in queer theoretical practice besides indeterminacy; disagreement among prominent queer theorists is common and expected (Ream, 2021). However, as with many other critical discourses, there is generally a consensus that the primary authorities involved in the exploration and research of minoritized issues should be members of that minoritized group. This perspective is, in part, a reaction to historical research practices where individuals who had been marginalized were not given agency or priority to voice their lived experiences from their own perspectives (Ream, 2021). Thus, in the case of queer theory, the primary authorities on queer issues should be queer people.

By using queer theory as a theoretical framework in the present study, I understood that gender and sexuality are constantly changing constructs with no set empirical definitions. Given this, sexual orientation was also understood to be an unstable, socially-constructed phenomenon. Still, it was important to the bounds of this study to provide some sort of definition of sexual orientation, while understanding that it may be incomplete. I did this in order to select relevant interview excerpts and place emerging understandings of sexual orientation within a bounded framework. Before stating my chosen definition, it is important to restate that *sexuality* is a broad

term that encompasses aspects of human sexual experiences including attitudes, feelings, and behaviours as well as identity, orientation, and relationships (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2014). *Sexual orientation* is, therefore, a subconstruct of sexuality. I employed two similar empirical understandings of sexual orientation to guide the present study. First, Better and Simula (2015) understand sexual orientation to be a concept that broadly describes and structures preferences of sexual desire, attraction, and experience. Second, van Anders (2015) understands the meaning of sexual orientation to be interests, approaches, attractions, and fantasies. Better and Simula's (2015) definition was chosen for its inclusion of preferences of sexual experiences. van Anders' (2015) understanding was added to leave space for desires, attractions, and experiences that are not inherently sexual, but reflect the subconstructs of love and lust noted in sexuality literature (e.g., Diamond, 2003). By employing these broad definitions, I left space for aspects that fell outside predominant, gender-centric, heteronormative models of sexual orientation and addressed the queer theory criticism which asserts that such models do not reflect the lived experiences of all individuals (e.g., Better & Simula, 2015; van Anders, 2015). Further, these broad definitions allowed for participant collaboration by prioritizing their lived experiences of sexual orientation over gender-centric, heteronormative models. Indeed, van Anders (2015) states that there is "no a priori reason" for gender to be the singular defining feature of sexual orientation (p. 1178). Finally, employing both broad definitions was meant to control for my own assumptions and bias derived from the limitations of my own lived experience. Thus, employing Better and Simula's (2015) and van Anders' (2015) definitions of sexual orientation in the present study were in keeping with my queer theory theoretical framework.

In addition to my queer theoretical framework, I employed a model of school integration to direct the focus of the present study. QNY are underrepresented in both queer immigration

literature and literature regarding the experiences of queer youth in Canada. Further, recent literature has indicated that the support service needs of QNY in Canada are not being met by either educational or non-educational organizations (Flett, 2021). While extant school integration literature has not specifically considered the needs of QNY, current school integration literature has explored the unique experiences and specific needs of newcomer youth as they resettle in Canada (e.g., Selimos & Daniel, 2017; A. C. Smith et al., 2022). Thus, this literature base can be used to guide research pertaining to the experiences and needs of QNY in Canadian schools, while acknowledging that the specific experiences and needs of these youth will vary. Further, much of the school integration literature has been conducted through a lens of intersectionality, multi-culturalism, and social justice (e.g., Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Kalchos et al., 2022; Matejko et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2021; D. J. Smith et al., 2021). Queer theory arose from multi-cultural and intersectional feminist critical theories (Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003). As such, it shares many of the theoretical positions of the frameworks employed in school integration literature (e.g., intersectionality, social justice, etc.) Thus, employing a model of school integration was an appropriate lens through which to explore the experiences and understandings of QNY through the process of immigration to Canada.

1.7 Key Terms

Key terms for the present study are detailed below.

Queer immigration is a concept with no shared scholarly definition. Broadly, though, it is a dynamic, two-way process whereby the experience of immigration can influence and be influenced by sexual and gender minority identities (Mole, 2021).

Queer Newcomer Youth (QNY). For the purposes of this study, a QNY is an immigrant, refugee, or international student between the ages of 19 and 24 who has immigrated to Canada in the last five years and identifies as broadly non-heterosexual.

School Integration. In the present study, school integration refers to the academic, social, emotional, relational, familial, and communal adjustment of newcomers to student life both inside and outside school spaces (Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Kassan & Mukred, 2022).

Sexuality is a broad term encompassing aspects of human sexual experiences including attitudes, feelings, and behaviours as well as identity, orientation, and relationships (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2014).

Sexual identity refers to labels, communities, politics, and positioning (van Anders, 2015) which identify and categorize aspects of sexual orientation and/or experience.

Sexual orientation is a concept that broadly describes and structures preferences of sexual desire, attraction, and experience (Better & Simula, 2015) or, interests, approaches, attractions, and fantasies (van Anders, 2015).

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) inclusive education involves educational policies and procedures that support the creation of safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments for all students regardless of their race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression (Province of British Columbia, 2021).

Understandings are qualitatively different ways of experiencing, comprehending, or understanding a specific phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997).

1.8 Chapter Summary

Understandings of sexual orientation vary across individuals, cultures, geographic regions, and time, and can evolve through the process of immigration (Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Diamond, 2008; Epstein et al., 2012; Fuks et al., 2018; Rosario et al., 2011; Tskhay & Rule, 2015; van Anders, 2015). After arriving in Canada, QNY experience acculturation, the process in which they acquire the beliefs, values, and behaviours of a host country, while negotiating those of their country of origin (Berry, 2006; Gibson, 2001; Williams & Berry, 1991). One aspect of acculturation includes school integration, which is the academic, social, emotional, relational, familial, and communal adjustment of newcomer to student life both inside and outside school spaces (Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Kassan & Mukred, 2022). School integration can also involve exposure to Canadian cultural understandings of sexual orientation. Because of the intersection of their sexual identity development and immigration experience (among other identities and lived experiences), QNY may have unique understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration. In the following chapters, I review relevant extant literature, explain my methodology and the procedures I undertook, present my results, and discuss the findings, limitations and strengths, and implications of the present study.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of the current literature pertaining to models of sexuality, queer immigration, queer newcomer youth in Canada, and school integration. I begin this chapter with a review of models of gender-centric sexuality, as well as an introduction to an important theoretical outcome of current queer theory critical discourse. Following this, I review relevant queer immigration literature pertaining to understandings of sexuality throughout immigration and acculturation. Finally, I discuss what is currently known regarding the experiences of QNY in Canada. This will also include an overview of queer youth in Canadian schools, as well school integration experiences of newcomer youth in Canada.

I use “queer” throughout this literature review as an umbrella term to encompass all sexual and gender minority identities (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, etc.), unless otherwise specified. Importantly, the term “two-spirit” is often invoked in references to broad sexual and gender minority communities (e.g., two-spirit, lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, plus [2SLGBTQIA+] communities). *Two-spirit* refers to an Indigenous North American social identity whose experiential meaning is situated in Indigenous understandings of sexuality, gender, and spirituality (Driskill, 2010; Robinson, 2020). While two-spirited identities are often considered to be queer identities, extant queer literature has not uniformly addressed the colonial history, cultural genocide, and forced assimilation of two-spirited identities into binary Western understandings of sexuality (Driskill, 2010; Robinson, 2020). With these points in mind, my usage of the term “queer” in this review of current extant literature is not meant to invoke the

complex and culturally situated experiences of Indigenous North American two-spirited individuals.

2.2 Models of Gender-centric Sexuality

Sexuality is a broad term which includes the subconstructs of sexual identity, orientation and behaviour (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2014; van Anders, 2015). Because it was my intention to capture different understandings of sexual orientation, it is important to review and consider which theories and models of sexuality have been posited in extant literature on sexuality. Various theoretical frameworks to explain sexuality exist across scientific disciplines. These frameworks can be divided into three broad categories: (a) biological science that emphasizes the partial heritability of sexuality; (b) modern sociological and psychological frameworks which often view sexuality through a social constructionist lens (and include queer theory discourse); and (c) conservative moralist views which assert that those who hold minoritized sexualities are disordered and potentially dangerous (Ream, 2021). Consistent with the present study's queer theory framework, I was interested in exploring facets of modern sociological and psychological frameworks, and not those regarding potential biological aspects of sexual orientation or those that stigmatize and contribute to the oppression of and violence against queer individuals.

Until quite recently, all widely accepted sociological and psychological models of sexuality universally positioned *gender* as the singular determinant of sexual identity and orientation (Better & Simula, 2015; van Anders, 2015). Such gender-centric explanations of human sexuality are preeminent in both academic and non-academic spaces. Thus, I present an overview of two of the most widely accepted and researched models of *gender-centric sexuality*, in order to contextualize the goals of queer theory, as well as the results of the present study. Importantly, the following models of sexuality are not meant to represent understandings of

sexuality held worldwide. Extant literature has been limited by a cisheteronormative, Western-centric lens which prioritizes proximity to whiteness and masculinity (among other social majority positions), and as such, dissuades alternative explanations of sexuality (e.g., Cohen, 1997; Hagai et al., 2020; van Anders, 2015).

The model of gender-centric sexuality which is preeminent in the Western world is rooted in a proposed homosexual/heterosexual binary wherein discrete sexual identities are used to describe discrete sexual orientations (van Anders, 2015). The popularity of this proposed explanation of sexuality rapidly increased at the turn of the 20th century, and at the time Sigmund Freud (1905) proposed the theory of object-choice relations to explain differential attraction to sex/gender. The Freudian psychoanalytic term, “object-choice,” has since been adopted by some sexuality researchers to describe a sexual orientation towards same- or differently-sexed/gendered “objects” of attraction (e.g., Thing, 2010). While other terms have been used across extant sexuality literature to describe a homosexual/heterosexual binary model, I chose to use *gender-centric object-choice* throughout the rest of this thesis to refer to this proposed explanation of sexuality. I chose to do this because I felt this term better communicated the inter-relationship between one’s gender and the gender(s) to which they are attracted without using discrete sexual identity labels.

Within the original gender-centric object-choice model, homosexual individuals were those who were exclusively attracted to same sex/gendered individuals and, conversely, heterosexual individuals were those who were exclusively attracted to other (often described as “opposite”) sex/gender individuals. Importantly, questions regarding whether the defining feature of this model is attraction to sex (biological features relating to femaleness and maleness) or attraction to gender (socialized, cultural features relating to masculinity, femininity, and

gender identity), or a combination of both remains highly debated in sexuality literature (e.g., Better & Simula, 2015; van Anders, 2015). Therefore, the gender-centric object-choice model is contingent upon understandings, beliefs about, and attractions towards aspects of biological sex and gender.

Subsequent iterations of the gender-centric object-choice model have moved away from a discrete homosexual/heterosexual binary explanation. The landmark research of Alfred Kinsey (e.g., Kinsey et al., 1948; Kinsey et al., 1953) and subsequent research conducted by Fritz Klein (e.g., Klein et al., 1985; Klein, 1993) shifted widely held understandings of gender-centric sexuality to include a non-pathological bisexual orientation towards both men and women. Bisexuality was conceptualized by researchers on a continuum between homosexuality and heterosexuality or, alternatively, as a discrete orientation wherein attraction to one gender did not imply less attraction to another (Moser, 2016; Shively & De Cecco, 1977; Storm, 1980; Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012). Modern versions of the gender-centric object-choice model have come to understand bisexuality and later, pansexuality, to include attraction to two or more sexes/genders, although this definition has been and continues to be contested as beliefs and understandings of sex and gender vary (e.g., Eisner, 2013). The modern iteration also now concedes that sexuality is fluid and can shift over time (Diamond, 2008; Epstein et al., 2012). Yet *gender* remains the central determinant of sexuality in all iterations of the gender-centric object-choice model. Importantly, my use of the gender-centric object-choice model throughout the rest of this thesis is in reference to the current modern iteration.

Other models of gender-centric sexuality focus less upon an object-choice relationship and more upon social gender roles associated with sexual behaviours. For instance, in Latin American communities of men who have sex with men (i.e., MSM), sexual orientation was

conceptualized as a preference for performing specific sexual behaviours that were associated with gender roles (Cantú, 2009; Parker, 1999). These roles were tied to physical and social traits associated with femininity and/or masculinity and did not necessarily imply the sex/gender of the person of sexual interest. Two dichotomous sexual identities were associated with this *gender-role-performance* model: activo (insertive) and pasivo (receptive). The activo identity was associated with the expression of masculinity, while the pasivo role was associated with femininity. These homoerotic roles are predominantly associated with gendered traits (i.e., femininity and masculinity) and as such, Western sexual identity labels such as “straight,” “gay,” “homosexual,” or “heterosexual” do not apply to what it means experientially to be activo or pasivo (e.g., Vance, 2007; Vasquez del Aguila, 2012; Weeks, 2008). However, parallels exist between the social implications of identifying as activo versus pasivo and the social implications of identifying as straight versus gay in a traditional gender-centric object-choice model. While both men in the gender-role-performance model engage in same sex/gender sexual behaviour, the activo, masculine men considered themselves to be and were perceived as straight/heterosexual (i.e., normative) while the pasivo, feminine men were perceived as gay/homosexual (i.e., non-normative) and experienced stigmatization as a result of their perceived femininity (Thing, 2010; Vasquez del Aguila, 2012). Indeed, sexuality researchers and feminist scholars have argued that homophobic attitudes are intrinsically linked to and maintained by sexist, misogynist values (e.g., Herek, 1986; Rich 1980; Vasquez del Aguila, 2014).

It is important to note that both the gender-centric object-choice and the gender-role-performance models can co-occur within and around communities. Thing (2010) noted that while gender-role-performance was the primary model of sexuality within Mexican MSM

communities, the gender-centric object-choice model was also present, which can result in so-called “hybrid” models of sexuality and sexual orientation. Further, such hybrid understandings often occur in diasporic communities wherein immigrants to a host country negotiate competing understandings of sexuality and sexual orientation (Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Vasquez del Aguila, 2012). For those with hybrid understandings, the relevance or importance of specific aspects or parameters of either model was influenced by their current social context (Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Thing, 2010).

2.2.1 Sexual Configurations Theory

Better and Simula (2015), along with other queer theory-aligned sexuality researchers, have questioned whether these gender-centric models of sexuality can adequately explain the sexual orientation of all individuals. A social constructionist and queer theory perspective implies that any single model invariably *cannot* adequately explain the subjective experience of all individuals, even within their presiding cultures. Given that a Western lens is commonly applied to understandings of sexual orientation, this may be especially true for those originating from non-Western cultures (e.g., Daley et al., 2007).

van Anders (2015) also criticized these gender-centric models as they fail to account for non-biological, non-gender-related preferences. They explicitly challenged the centrality of gender as the singular defining feature of sexuality and proposed the sexual configurations theory (SCT) as a framework for understanding alternative and diverse experiences of sexual identity, orientation, and behaviour. The SCT offers additional parameters for sexual orientation aside from gender, including partner number, preference for monogamy/non-monogamy, and kink-orientation. Thus, the SCT is posited to offer a way of framing sexual orientation that is more reflective of the lived experiences of individuals. The SCT represents a modern outcome of

queer theory research and embodies the movement towards broader and more nuanced understandings of sexuality that are not necessarily tied to gender.

2.3 Queer Immigration

Since the 1990s, substantial immigration literature has documented the movement of queer asylum seekers from non-Western to Western countries (Luibhéid, 2008). However, this perspective has reinforced a narrative of “movement from repression to freedom” (Luibhéid, 2005, p. xxv) which simplistically frames Western countries as “safe havens” (Jenicek et al., 2009, p. 648) for queer asylum seekers fleeing homophobic and transphobic countries of origin. This has led to a culturally racist paradigm of sexual migration wherein queer asylum seekers are pressured to demonize their countries of origin in order to prove discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Jenicek et al., 2009). The safe haven narrative has been particularly prevalent in Canada because of its history as the first Western country to grant refugee status on the basis of sexual orientation (LaViolette, 2009). However, queer immigrants, especially those with racialized ethnicities, continue to experience queerphobic and racist discrimination after immigration to Canada (e.g., Chbat et al., 2023; O’Neill & Kia, 2012). Criticism of the culturally racist and colonialist undertones of early intersections of immigration and sexuality literature led to the field of *queer immigration literature*, which, as Murray (2014) states, “explores how overlapping regimes of power and knowledge generate and transform identity categories, particularly as they related to gender and sexuality” (p. 23). The field of queer immigration understands sexuality to be constructed within multiple intersecting social positions. The following sections describe queer immigration literature pertaining to understandings of sexuality throughout the process of immigration and acculturation. Themes that arose included

(a) cultural acceptance and sexual identity development, (b) situational sexualities, and (c) an emerging framework for queer acculturation.

2.3.1 Cultural Acceptance and Sexual Identity Development

The simplistic and Western-centric narrative of “safe haven” countries reinforces a colonialist narrative about race and sexual migration (Luibhéid, 2005; Jenicek et al., 2009). At the same time, cultural climates that espouse queer-friendly social norms have been found to facilitate sexual identity development and are associated with greater overall wellbeing for queer immigrants (e.g., Golembe et al., 2021; Mole et al., 2014; Mole et al., 2017; Patrick, 2014). For instance, Patrick (2014) found that perceiving a university climate as accepting of queer individuals was correlated with a degree of identity reflexivity as participants came to understand and express their sexualities. Patrick (2014) used semi-structured interviews to investigate the experiences of seven self-identified queer (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, demisexual, and questioning) international students attending a large university in Ontario, Canada. Participants experienced changes in self-identification and labels, changes in self-acceptance of their queer identities, changes in the degree to which participants expressed their sexual identities, and changes in perceptions of their professional and romantic futures as queer individuals.

Other literature has found an association between immigration to queer-friendly cultural climates and sexual health behaviours (e.g., Adam & Rangel, 2017; Mole et al., 2014; 2017). For instance, Mole et al. (2014) documented the diminishing influence of repressive, heteronormative cultural norms on the sexual identity confidence and sexual behaviours of 15 gay and two bisexual men who had immigrated from seven Central and Eastern European states (CEE) to London, UK. Moving to the UK had an immediate impact on respondents’ sexual

behaviour; opportunities for sexual exploration in a less restrictive environment resulted in increased high-risk sexual behaviour (i.e., casual sex with large numbers of partners, unprotected sex, infrequent sexual health check-ups). However, as integration into gay communities in London progressed, respondents' sexual identity confidence grew, and high-risk sexual behaviour decreased. Findings from Patrick (2014) and Mole et al. (2014) demonstrate the influence of queer-friendly cultural climates on understandings and expressions of sexual identity, and subsequent sexual health-related behaviours.

2.3.2 Situational Sexualities

Queer immigration researchers have found that many queer newcomers report shifting between models of sexuality as well as between sexual identities, practices, and behaviours, depending on their social context (e.g., Acosta, 2008; Cantu, 2009; Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Lee & Brotman, 2011; Thing, 2010; Vasquez del Aquila, 2012). In their study of 80 self-identified gay and bisexual Mexican immigrant men, Carrillo and Fontdevila (2014) found that the men experienced changes in their interpretations and understandings of sexual identity, orientation, practices, and lifestyles after immigration to San Diego, United States (US). Three distinct premigration models of sexuality were identified: (a) gender-role performance (i.e., activo/pasivo binary) (b) gender-centric object-choice (i.e., homosexual/heterosexual binary), and (c) homosocial interpretations (i.e., sexual encounters with non-gay/bisexual-identified men outside of the activo/pasivo model). Carrillo and Fontdevila (2014) found that most (68) participants eventually retained or adopted a gender-centric object-choice understanding after immigration to San Diego. However, individual experiences of acculturation and paths to these conclusions were diverse. Further, some participants retained a combined understanding of the three models of sexuality before and after immigration, with one participant noting that they

moved between the gender role performance, gender-centric object-choice, and homosocial models. This participant noted being inspired to take on different identities depending on his social context.

While Carrillo and Fontdevila (2014) looked at changes in sexuality broadly, Acosta (2008) sought to explore the ways in which sexual identities shift through the process of immigration. They conducted 15 in-depth interviews with Latina lesbians aged 27-47 living in the US who had migrated from six Latin American and Caribbean countries. This study was an expansion of the concept of “mestiza consciousness” (Anzaldúa, 1999). Anzaldúa (1999) describes developing mestiza consciousness as becoming conscious of the transfer of cultural and spiritual values from one group to another. In the context of their study, Acosta (2008) used mestiza consciousness to mean the “synthesis of Mexican women’s negotiation of situated and plural identities” (p. 640). Acosta (2008) found that the sexual identities of their Latina lesbian participants were situational; how they understood and described themselves was dependent on circumstance and geographic location. Migrant Latina lesbians created “borderland spaces,” which were intangible and primarily virtual communities whose members resided in the US and were separate from the participants’ families and communities of origin. In these communities, participants sexually identified as lesbians, accepting a gender-centric object-choice model of sexuality. However, participants still maintained or performed seemingly incongruent, non-lesbian sexual identities when with engaging with their families and communities of origin. For some participants, this meant not being “out” to their families and accepting an implicitly straight/normative identity. For those who had come out directly to their families, engaging with their families and communities of origin meant experiencing the erasure of their identities

through disbelief and being forced to maintain a code of silence for the sake of family, as well as other forms of invalidation and discrimination.

2.3.3 An Emerging Framework for Queer Acculturation

Understandings of sexuality through immigration can be conceptualized through Fuks et al.'s (2018) emerging framework for queer acculturation. Fuks et al. (2018) described the acculturation processes of 20 self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender immigrants, aged 21-42, at the intersections of cultural identity development, and sexual and gender identity development. In their study, the acculturation process occurred through three chronological categories: before immigration, during the decision to immigrate, and after immigration.

The “before immigration” stage of development was characterized by a growing awareness of feeling “different” and “othered,” and lacking access to queer-specific resources, leading to internalized heterosexism and cissexism as well as stigma and feelings of exclusion (p. 308–313). This stage was strongly influenced by the heterosexism and cissexism of their country of origin. While in their country of origin, many queer participants found solace in “Western” values of sexuality and gender and often began to adopt these values prior to immigration. This is reminiscent of Carrillo and Fontdevila’s (2014) findings that gay and bisexual men from rural locations began to adopt gender-centric object-choice models before migrating to San Diego. Fuks and colleagues’ (2018) called this phenomenon “remote acculturation” and noted it may be particularly relevant for queer immigrants.

The “during immigration” stage of Fuks et al.’s (2018) study was associated with feelings of disconnection from home culture, looking to Western values of sexuality and gender for affirmation, and a decision to immigrate to Canada (pp. 313–314). For many of these

participants, the desire to explore their sexuality or gender meant that staying in their home country was not an option.

The “after immigration” stage was exemplified by a shift towards Western values of sexuality and gender, but this change was not always smooth (Fuks et al., 2018, pp. 314–320). Many queer newcomers found integration into queer communities to be difficult; internalized heterosexism and cissexism often persisted through the process of immigration. Further, many experienced culture shock when exposed to the sex positivity and openly queer norms celebrated in Canadian queer communities. While integration was reported to be easier when participants embraced Canadian values about sexuality and gender, these values sometimes clashed with diaspora cultural values. For example, participants who were “out” in their ethnic communities in Canada risked becoming an object of gossip or stigma. Because of this, many participants felt forced to choose between their sexual and/or gender identity and cultural identity. However, feelings of wholeness and authenticity were reported from participants who were able to integrate both identities. From these findings, Fuks et al. (2018) introduced an integrative model of cultural, sexual, and gender identity development. I discuss this integrative model in relation to the results of the present study in chapter five.

2.4 Queer Newcomer Youth in Canada

Relatively few studies have specifically focussed on the immigration and acculturation experiences of queer newcomer youth. Indeed, in a scoping review of the mental health needs of queer refugees worldwide, D’souza et al. (2022) found only two studies that specifically considered the experiences of youth. However, available Canadian literature has found that QNY in Canada are particularly vulnerable to bullying and discrimination as a result of multiple marginalized social locations (e.g., racism, xenophobia, classism, and homophobia) (Daley et al.,

2007; Munro et al., 2013; Munroe et al., 2020). For instance, Daley et al. (2007) found that gender-nonconformity was associated with more severe bullying experiences compared to QNY whose appearance and behaviours aligned with societal gender norms. Bullying and homophobic discrimination against QNY has been reported in multiple settings, including schools, workplaces, social service organizations, through the immigration process and within diasporic communities (Daley et al., 2007; Munro et al., 2013). Further, multiple studies have found that QNY in Canada feel pressure to choose between their culture and their sexuality (Daley et al., 2007; Fuks et al., 2018; Munro et al., 2013). For instance, Daley et al. (2007) explains that youth in their study felt pressure to embody Western understandings of sexuality and sexual identity labels which were not necessarily congruent with the understandings of sexuality in their culture of origin or diaspora ethnic communities. In light of these experiences, QNY share a need for support services that take an intersectional approach. However, in their content analysis of youth-serving organizations in Canada, Flett (2021) found that most youth-oriented settlement organizations did not include support for newcomers who also identified as queer. Thus, there remains a need for institutions, such as schools, to address the needs of QNY through the process of immigration. Given this point, as well as the limited literature base concerned with the experiences of QNY, in the following section I review literature pertaining to the experiences of queer youth in Canadian schools.

2.4.1 Queer Youth in Canadian Schools

Literature regarding the experiences of queer student youth in Canada has documented significant health gaps compared to their heterosexual peers (e.g., Cénat et al., 2015; Di Stasio et al., 2023; Peter et al., 2021; A. Smith et al., 2022). For instance, in a 2018 survey of 6,300 queer youth in BC public schools, A. Smith et al. (2022) found that while health gaps between queer

and heterosexual youth have narrowed since the early 2000s, significant health disparities remain across all surveyed areas. For example, queer youth still reported experiencing higher rates of bullying at school compared to their heterosexual peers and were more likely to miss school and extracurricular activities due to fear of bullying. Queer youth were also less likely to feel like a part of their school, less likely to feel that staff treated them fairly, less likely to ask for help at school and less likely to feel happy at school, compared to their heterosexual peers.

Similar results were documented by Peter et al. (2021) in a national school climate survey in Canada. Peter et al. (2021) collected data from 3558 Canadian high school students grade 8 or higher (i.e., up to two years since completing high school), of which 39% identified as queer. Results indicated that while improvements had been made in the last decade, a national school climate which contributes to the emotional distress, isolation, and victimization of queer student youth still exists. For example, these student youth were still more likely to experience targeted bullying compared to their cisgender/heterosexual peers. Further, many queer students reported neglecting to disclose bullying and harassment because they felt school staff would not take them seriously or handle the situation effectively. For those students who did disclose, school staff often took no action to address or correct the incidents.

Participants from both A. Smith et al.'s (2022) and Peter et al.'s (2021) research indicated a need for more queer-inclusive education and programming in Canadian schools. One participant in A. Smith et al.'s (2022) survey noted that they would like to learn more about queer issues in class so that their peers "could also learn and be more accepting" (p. 44). Another participant commented that "SOGI 123 is a good step" (p. 11) towards positive and supportive school environments. Indeed, extant literature indicates that student perceptions of a supportive and safe school environment are associated with better mental health and wellbeing for queer

students (Di Stasio et al., 2023; Peter et al., 2021; A. Smith et al., 2022). One such way to improve perceptions of school climate has been through the promotion of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs). Indeed, recent literature has found that student-led GSAs can effectively reduce challenges queer students experience at schools in Canada (e.g., Cénat et al., 2015; Di Stasio et al., 2023). Another aspect that may be particularly important to QNY's perceptions of school climate is successful school integration. Thus, in the next section I review literature regarding the school integration experiences of newcomer youth in Canada.

2.4.2 Newcomer Youth and School Integration in Canada

Literature pertaining to newcomer youth in Canada has documented their experiences through the process of school integration. School integration refers to the emotional, relational, familial, and communal adjustment of newcomer youth to student life both inside and outside school spaces (Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Kassan & Mukred, 2022). This may involve adapting to a new education system, negotiating language and cultural barriers, and developing new social connections, among other processes related to immigration and acculturation (Brewer & McCabe, 2014; Selimos & Daniel, 2017). Schools can act simultaneously as sites of inclusion and exclusion for newcomer youth as they experience resettlement in Canada (e.g., Selimos & Daniel, 2017). Challenges faced by newcomer youth in Canadian schools include but are not limited to experiences of racism and bullying, lack of transitional support to new education systems, language barriers, difficulty forming new social connections, and stress (Guo et al., 2019; Selimos & George, 2018; A. C. Smith et al., 2022). Such challenges have contributed to underuse of school-based psychosocial support services (S-BPSS), which are defined as additional support programs or services used outside of the classroom to support and aid the process of integration in schools (Kalchos et al., 2022; Thomson et al., 2015). Further, previous

literature has suggested that teachers and other educational stakeholders lack cross-cultural competencies, a critical social justice lens, and other necessary skills to successfully support newcomer youth as they transition to Canadian schools (Brewer & McCabe, 2014; Ratković et al., 2017).

While these barriers continue to negatively impact the school integration experiences of newcomer youth, recent literature has begun to document factors of newcomer youth resiliency through the process of school integration. Maintaining a connection to cultures of origin, accessing quality newcomer supports, developing a sense of community, forming connections at school, and socio-emotional support from friends and family were identified as some facilitators to school integration for newcomer youth in Canada (Edge et al., 2014; A. C. Smith et al., 2022).

Finally, recent research had focussed on suggestions from newcomer youth regarding facilitators of school integration. Newcomer youth have noted a need for class-wide discussions of culture and immigration, for school professionals to demonstrate patience and understanding when working with newcomer youth, for improved academic placements, and for the need to gradually transition newcomer youth to regular classrooms since many newcomer youth reported struggling without the supports provided in ELL classes (Ratković et al., 2017; A. C. Smith et al., 2022).

2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature around sexuality, queer immigration and QNY. This included a discussion of literature pertaining to queer youth in Canadian schools as well as the school integration experiences of newcomer youth in Canada. I began this chapter by reviewing models of gender-centric sexuality and introduced the sexual configurations theory (SCT; van Anders, 2015). Themes that emerged from my review of queer immigration research

were: (a) cultural acceptance and sexual identity development, (b) situational sexualities, and (c) an emerging framework for queer acculturation. My overview of literature pertaining to QNY in Canada found that these youth are particularly vulnerable to experiences of discrimination and bullying as well as competing cultural and sexual identities. Queer youth in Canadian schools, which include QNY, are also vulnerable to health gaps compared to their heterosexual peers. My overview of school integration literature indicated specific barriers and facilitators to the school integration experiences of newcomer youth. Finally, both queer youth and newcomer youth in Canada have indicated a need for more relevant educational resources and in-class discussions to promote greater understanding of their backgrounds and specific needs in educational spaces. In the following chapter, I will outline my chosen methodology and guiding theoretical framework as well as the procedures I followed throughout the present study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview and justification for my methodological approach and guiding theoretical framework along with the procedures that I followed to carry out this research. To address my research question, *what are QNY's understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration?* I chose phenomenography as my methodology, within a queer theory framework. In the following sections, I will introduce phenomenography, addressing its understandings, development, and outcomes, and how queer theory has informed my use of phenomenography in the present study. Then, I will explain the ethical considerations I employed to increase benefits and minimize risk of participation in the present study. Next, I will outline the methods I used to sample and recruit participants as well as collect and analyze data. Finally, I will discuss the methods and techniques I used to establish rigour in the present study.

3.2 Phenomenography

Phenomenography is a qualitative research methodology that is used to explore and describe various ways that phenomena are experienced, conceptualized, realized, and understood (Martin et al., 2000). Phenomenography espouses a *second-order perspective* of experience, which emphasizes post-reflective perceptions or understandings of a phenomenon. This is differentiated from a *first-order perspective* which describes pre-reflective experiences of a phenomenon (Marton, 1981). “Whole” or “gestalt” understandings of a phenomenon are formed from collective conceptions or understandings, which are the unit of description in phenomenography. Phenomenographic research has two aims: (a) to investigate the range of distinctly different ways of understanding the same phenomenon, and (b) to investigate the “part-

whole” (inclusive) relationships between these different ways of understanding (Åkerlind, 2015b, p. 8). Thus, phenomenography first emphasizes variation over similarity; understandings of the same phenomena are documented on the basis that they are qualitatively different from each other. However, it is also necessary to document similarities between understandings of the same phenomena in order to investigate logical relationships between understandings. These logical relationships inform the structure of whole understandings of a phenomenon.

Phenomenography was an appropriate methodology for this study, as its purpose was to document the qualitatively different ways QNY understand sexual orientation. That is, the phenomenon of interest was sexual orientation, and the conceptions or understandings were the qualitatively different ways QNY collectively understood sexual orientation. My research question and purpose were addressed by collecting understandings of sexual orientation through interviews with QNY and analyzing them for qualitatively different variations using procedures outlined in phenomenography.

3.2.1 Origin and Development of Phenomenography

The evolution of phenomenography as a research specialization began in the early 1970s with the field of educational psychology (Marton, 1981). Its roots were not in philosophical theory but formed from a dissatisfaction with the prominent realist psychological theories of learning of the time (Säljö, 1997; Svensson, 1997). Ference Marton and his research colleagues, including Lennart Svensson and Roger Säljö of the Department of Education at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden found that students understood the same learning materials in qualitatively different ways (Marton, 1975; 1986). These ways of understanding were limited, clearly definable, and logically related. Marton and colleagues reasoned that these finite variations in understanding could explain qualitative differences in learning outcomes. The

theoretical assumptions regarding the relationship between understandings and learning outcomes that arose from this initial study led to the birth of phenomenography as a research methodology.

Since its origin, phenomenography has gone through several methodological and theoretical developments (Åkerlind, 2015). As phenomenography arose empirically, the initial challenge for phenomenographers was the clarification of its theoretical underpinnings. In the late 1990s, a theory of learning and awareness was proposed to underpin phenomenographic research (Marton & Booth, 1997; Bowden & Marton, 1998). Within this theory, the act of learning a concept (or phenomenon) involves expansion of awareness of that concept. Thus, variation in understanding is due to variation in awareness of the aspects that make up that concept (Åkerlind, 2015). The epistemological and ontological implications of this theory of learning and awareness mean that phenomenographic research undertakes a relational stance to knowledge of reality. That is, approaches in phenomenography are neither positivist/objectivist, nor are they wholly cognitivist/constructivist. Instead, phenomenography takes on a non-dualistic, second-order perspective of experience: “there is not a real world ‘out there’ and a subjective world ‘in here’. The world [as experienced] is not constructed by the learner, nor is it imposed upon her; it is *constituted* as an internal relation between them.” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 13).

Out of this theoretical development arose the variation theory of learning (Marton, 2015; Marton & Tsui; 2004). Principles that underpin the variation theory of learning are intertwined with current approaches in phenomenography, leading current phenomenography to be considered a theory of awareness, with learning being a subset of awareness (Åkerlind, 2018). This iteration of phenomenography was an appropriate methodology for my population of

interest: QNY. The variation theory of learning posits that to be aware of and subsequently understand a phenomenon, an individual must experience variant aspects of that phenomenon. By way of their marginalized social positions, QNY are uniquely situated for conscious awareness of alternative aspects of sexual orientation. That is, QNY innately experience aspects of sexual orientation that differ from those experienced by sexual majorities and these differences may be further emphasized by experiencing cultural variations through the process of school integration and immigration. Thus, current approaches in phenomenography were an appropriate methodology to explore QNY's understandings of sexual orientation.

3.2.2 Unit of Description

The unit of description in phenomenography is a conception or understanding of a specific phenomenon. Importantly, “understandings,” “conceptions,” “ways of experiencing,” “ways of understandings,” and “conceptualizations” have been used synonymously and interchangeably within phenomenographic research. I chose to limit the terms used in the present study to “understandings” or “ways of understanding” in order to clearly and consistently communicate what is being expressed by my phenomenographic exploration and to avoid inappropriate cognitive connotations (e.g., Åkerlind, 2015). Thus, the units of description of the present study are understandings or ways of understanding sexual orientation.

Understandings represent qualitatively different ways of experiencing reality and are held by individuals who experience a particular phenomenon (Marton, 1981). Because phenomenography espouses a relational stance to knowledge of reality, it posits that understandings arise from the relationship between an individual and their experience of a particular phenomenon. That is, to have an understanding of a phenomenon, an individual must become aware of the different aspects that make up a phenomenon. To become aware of an

aspect one must experience variation in that aspect. Subjective lived experiences, such as culture, immigration, and societal beliefs influence the variety of aspects experienced. As such, lived experiences influence awareness of the aspects that make up a phenomenon, and therefore, result in qualitatively different understandings of that phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2015).

3.2.3 Outcome of Phenomenography

The outcome of phenomenography is a collection of qualitatively different interrelated understandings of a phenomenon. This collection is considered the “whole” or “gestalt” understanding of that phenomenon as experienced by the group of participants. In order to determine this whole understanding, emerging understandings (termed, “categories of description”) are first analyzed for their *referential* and *structural aspects*. That is, phenomenographers seek to determine the structure or anatomy of awareness of a particular understanding (Marton & Booth, 1997). The referential aspect of awareness describes the meaning of a category of description. This usually takes the form of an inclusive statement that may or may not expand upon the category title, depending on the complexity of the category. The structural aspect refers to the collective experience of awareness of an understanding. The structural aspect is divided into *internal* and *external horizons*. Internal horizons refer to the “parts” which structurally make up an understanding. External horizons refer to how these parts are delimited from and related to other understandings of that phenomenon, as well as related phenomena. Once the structures of awareness are determined, qualitatively different understandings can be placed together in an outcome space which visually depicts logical relationships between categories of descriptions. This outcome space represents the whole understanding of the phenomenon.

The visual structure of an outcome space in phenomenography can be hierarchical, linear, or branching, depending on the phenomenon of interest (Åkerlind, 2012). If the researcher determines that experiences of the phenomenon vary in complexity and sophistication, they may choose a hierarchical structure to denote that relationship between categories. There are three primary criteria for evaluating the quality of phenomenographic results and the outcome space (Marton & Booth, 1997). First, each category in the outcome space must reveal something distinctive about a way of understanding the phenomenon. Next, the categories are parsimonious (i.e., variations of understanding are presented in as few categories as possible). Finally, the categories are presented in a way that is logically related. I used these three criteria to develop and evaluate my outcome space.

3.2.4 Queer Theory and Phenomenography

The purpose of my study was to document qualitatively different understandings of sexual orientation held by QNY. As stated, participants with lived experiences of non-heterosexual and diverse sexualities (such as QNY) were uniquely and appropriately positioned to participate in a phenomenographic exploration of sexual orientation. However, traditional discourse in phenomenography does not address issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, or provide a framework for documenting understandings that have been historically marginalized. Further, the outcome of phenomenography is a group of *collective* understandings of a phenomenon. As such, results in phenomenography cannot reliably centre participant voices and lived experiences without initiative on the part of the researcher. Therefore, while phenomenography was an appropriate methodology for investigating understandings of sexual orientation, I decided to choose a theoretical framework that emphasized social justice and participant voices to guide my decision making.

Queer theory provided a framework to ensure that my choices within phenomenography aligned with my intention to prioritize and uplift the voices of QNY. For instance, in phenomenography, the structure of an outcome space often assumes a hierarchical structure (Åkerlind, 2012). However, a hierarchical structure implies that some understandings of the phenomenon of interest are more sophisticated than others. This implication does not align with the goals of queer theory; while understandings might vary in structural complexity, there are no “ideal” or “more evolved” ways of understanding sexual orientation. In order to avoid implicitly assigning superior value or sophistication to understandings that were less complex or less prevalent, I decided to present my results in a linear sequence, the order of which was determined by prevalence among QNY (see chapter four). This is one concrete example wherein queer theory informed my decision making within the present study’s phenomenographic methodology.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) prior to recruitment and data collection. I obtained informed consent (Appendix A) from participants via email prior to the interview. The informed consent form included the purpose of the study, what participation would entail, what would be done with the results of the study, and asked whether participants consented to audio and video recordings of the interview. The informed consent form also stated that participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time without being penalized the \$25 CAD gift card. After completing the interview, I provided participants with a debriefing form (Appendix B) which thanked participants for their time, encouraged participants to contact me if they had any questions or concerns, offered relevant support resources, and listed recommended readings if

participants were interested in learning more about the present study. Following the debriefing form, I sent each participant the \$25 CAD gift card of their choosing via email.

Beyond these procedural steps, further ethical consideration was necessary in order to ensure the psychological and emotional safety of my participants who held minoritized and marginalized identities. While there were no known physical risks posed by the interview process, I encouraged participants to only share experiences they were comfortable recalling and reminded them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Regardless, I was cognizant that recalling lived experiences might have still brought up difficult memories and emotions surrounding sexuality, homophobia/biphobia, transphobia, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and/or bullying. As such, the list of relevant support resources included links to psychological and emotional supports, to be used as needed. In addition to these considerations, I reminded participants that the interviews were confidential and would be kept confidential, and that any interview excerpts would be associated with a pseudonym of their choice. Other ethical considerations related to the rigour and trustworthiness of the present study are discussed later in this chapter.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

3.4.1 Recruitment

In line with phenomenographic research methods, I used several purposive sampling strategies in order to recruit QNY for the present study (Maron & Booth, 1997). First, recruitment advertisements were sent via email to various student pride collectives associated with colleges and universities within the Lower Mainland of BC. This advertisement directed potential participants to contact the researcher by email for a screening questionnaire. Second, paid and unpaid recruitment advertisements were posted on the Facebook and Instagram social

media platforms. Finally, printed poster advertisements were placed at consenting locations along Davie Street and Commercial Drive in Vancouver, BC. Davie Street has been known as the heart of the Vancouver queer community since the 1970s, is home to many queer-friendly businesses and community centres, and hosts the annual pride celebration. Commercial Drive and its surrounding area are popular social locales for queer women and non-binary individuals in Vancouver (Horlor, 2011). All advertisements listed my inclusion criteria and noted that eligible participants would receive a \$25 CAD gift card of their choosing for their participation in the study. Advertisements included a link to a screening questionnaire (Appendix C) which was then sent by email to the researcher for verification. The screening questionnaire ensured that prospective participants met inclusion criteria for the present study. After reviewing screening questionnaires, I contacted eligible participants via email to participate. Those who replied by email were then sent an informed consent form. Once I had received the signed informed consent form, an online meeting using the Zoom conferencing software platform was scheduled at a mutually agreeable time for a semi-structured, qualitative interview. Participants were then sent a demographic questionnaire (Appendix D) to be completed and returned with the consent form before the interview, and an individualized link to a secure Zoom meeting room hosted on UBC servers.

3.4.2 Participants

While it is necessary to purposely select participants who have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Marton & Booth, 1997), phenomenography encourages researchers to obtain a heterogenous sample of between 10 and 30 participants to ensure that sufficient variation can be identified across understandings of the phenomenon (Bowden, 2000; Trigwell, 2000; 2006). To participate in the research, participants had to be youth between 19 to 24 years

of age and identify as broadly non-heterosexual. Further, participants had to have immigrated to Canada in the last five years, attended at least one semester of university in Canada, be able to describe what sexual orientation meant to them, and engage in an interview in English without an interpreter. Importantly, my original inclusion criteria required participants to have attended at least one year of high school or university in Canada. However, I eventually decided to include otherwise eligible participants who had started but not yet completed their first year of schooling in Canada. I included these interviews because there was no indication during my transcript read-throughs that having attended less than one year of school in Canada resulted in fewer or less complex understandings of sexual orientation compared to QNY who had attended at least one year of school in Canada. Including QNY at initial stages of immigration and school integration may also have contributed to the heterogeneity of my sample (Bowden, 2000; Trigwell, 2000; 2006). Further, as Fuks et al. (2018) points out, the acculturation process for queer individuals often begins before physical immigration to a host country. As such, participants who were still attending their first year of schooling in Canada would likely have already been exposed to Canadian sexuality norms. Participant demographics are presented below.

Participants in the present study were 10 youth aged 19 to 24-years-old, who identified as broadly non-heterosexual, had immigrated to Canada in the last five years, and had attended at least one semester of post-secondary school in Canada. Participants held diverse gender identities. Five participants held transgender identities, including one transwoman, one transman, one genderfluid individual, and two nonbinary individuals. Five participants held cisgender identities, including three ciswomen and two cismen. Participants lived in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, as well as in a large city in Alberta. Each participant spoke English proficiently in order to participate in a semi-structured interview where they were asked to

describe their understanding of sexual orientation. Participants also reported diverse neurotypes, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), complex posttraumatic stress disorder (CPTSD), and bipolar disorder. Specific neurotypes are not assigned to participants in order to maintain privacy and anonymity. A description of my participants is given below in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

| Name¹ | Age | Gender Identity | Pronouns | Sexual Identity | Country of Origin | Years in Canada |
|-------------------------|------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Stephanie | 23 | Transwoman | she/her | Bi-lesbian | United States | 1.5 |
| Riley | 20 | Cisman | he/him | Bisexual/ fluid | India | 1 |
| Cameron | 24 | Nonbinary | they/them | Bisexual/ sapphic | United States | 2 |
| Gabriella | 20 | Ciswoman | she/her | Lesbian | Mexico | 2 |
| Lex | 23 | Nonbinary | they/them/ any | Pansexual | China | >1 |
| Britt | 22 | Genderfluid | she/they | Bisexual/ homoerotic | Vietnam | 5 |
| Ellen | 23 | Ciswoman | she/her | Lesbian | Germany | 2 |
| Stefan | 22 | Transman | he/him | Bisexual | United States | 5 |
| Harvey | 22 | Cisman | he/him/ any/all | Gay/queer | Philippines/ Qatar | 3 |
| Jennifer | 19 | Ciswoman | she/her | Asexual/ heterosexual | India | 1 |

¹*Participants chose their pseudonyms, apart from Riley who did not provide an alternate name. As such, Riley's pseudonym was chosen by the researcher.*

3.4.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Before the start of the meeting, participants were asked to ensure that they were in a private space so that interviews could be confidential. Once I granted access to the secure online

meeting room, I reviewed the signed informed consent form and demographic questionnaire with participants and reminded them that they were free to withdraw from the interview without penalization. Audio and/or video recording was then initiated, depending on what participants had indicated on the consent form. Audio transcription was also initiated at this time. I then began the semi-structured interview. Interviews were between 45–60 minutes long, which fit with requirements of phenomenography (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). All participant recordings and transcripts were password protected, encrypted, and stored on UBC's secure OneDrive.

Interviews in phenomenography emphasize the relationship between the participant and the phenomenon of interest, and the interviewer may seek clarification and explication from the participant to ensure richness and detail of understandings (Bowden, 2000; Bruce, 1997).

Interviews in phenomenography are often semi-structured and contain two types of questions: (a) open-ended questions that allow the participant to consider aspects of the phenomenon that are most relevant to their experience, and (b) follow-up questions to elicit rich descriptions of these experiences (Åkerlind et al., 2005). I developed a semi-structured, qualitative interview protocol that aligned with these principles (Appendix E). After establishing rapport, the first and most important question I asked of participants was, “what does sexual orientation mean to you?” which was followed by questions for clarification and explication. Other questions covered participant experiences of immigration and school integration, based on the extant literature. The protocol also allowed participants to add to or revise any of their understandings of sexual orientation at the end of the semi-structured interview.

3.5 Transcription

Immediately following the semi-structured interviews, audio and/or video recordings and transcriptions were downloaded from Zoom, password protected and encrypted. All recordings and transcriptions were uploaded to UBC's secure OneDrive. Transcriptions were then reviewed against audio and/or video recordings for transcription errors. Transcriptions were then sent to participants for verification. The results were 10 finalized transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews I conducted with study participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Phenomenographic Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in accordance with the principles and processes of analyzing phenomenographic data as outlined in Han and Ellis (2019) and informed by my queer theory theoretical framework (Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003). While there is no singular, agreed-upon procedure for phenomenographic data analysis, key stages for analysis are similar (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). My data analysis most resembled the steps delineated by Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) as well as McCosker et al. (2004). I chose this procedure because more specific and detailed instructions are laid out for the process of categorizing and contrasting emerging categories compared to other procedures (e.g., Marton et al., 1992; Säljö, 1997). Thus, my data analysis procedure took the form of seven iterative steps.

Step 1. Familiarization. I read and reread interview transcripts multiple times in order to gain familiarity with details of the data and the breadth of participant responses. I read individual interview transcripts immediately following the interview, and returned to the transcripts multiple times throughout the entire analysis process.

Step 2. Condensation. I selected the most relevant and important statements from transcripts in order to uncover data patterns. Statements were deemed relevant and important if they pertained specifically to the phenomenon of sexual orientation. I returned to this step multiple times throughout data analysis as my understanding of transcripts developed and new patterns emerged.

Step 3. Comparison. I compared the selected statements for their similarities and differences across transcripts. That is, statements were no longer tied to individual participants. I made notes of specific aspects that contributed to variation across and between statements. Many of these sources of variation would later become external horizons. I returned to steps one and two multiple times during this stage in order to refresh my understanding of whole transcripts, and to consider any additional statements of importance.

Step 4. Grouping. During this step, I grouped statements by their similarities. These became the first iteration of categories of description. At this stage, similarities were emphasized and differences between categories were undefined and less focussed. Structural similarities within groups would later become internal horizons.

Step 5. Articulating. This stage entailed my effort to extract, categorize and describe the “essence” of statement-group similarities. I alternated between steps four and five multiple times as I tested descriptive statements to adequately capture the overall meaning of emerging categories. On several occasions this step revealed that initial groupings were not parsimonious. In these cases, I returned to steps three and four (and sometimes one and two) until groupings and their similarities could be represented by an essential referential statement. These statements became the referential aspects of categories.

Step 6. Labeling. I chose labels for the emergent categories and their aspects. Emergent internal and external horizons were also defined and assigned preliminary labels at this stage. At this point of data analysis, I iteratively returned to previous stages in order to ensure that emergent categories were truthfully grounded in participant experiences and to lessen the influence of my own interpretations and researcher bias.

Step 7. Contrasting. During this stage, I contrasted the set of emergent categories and formally defined their differences. At one point during contrasting, it became clear that an emergent category did not present with enough qualitative difference from other categories. As such, the essence of this category was collapsed into the remaining categories and served to logically link my final categories of description.

3.8 Rigour and Trustworthiness

Rigour in research refers to the strength of the research design and the appropriateness of the method to answer the research question (Morse et al., 2002). While validity, reliability, and generalizability are considered important constructs for evaluating rigour in quantitative research approaches, qualitative research approaches use parallel measures of trustworthiness to determine rigour (Cypress, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Trustworthiness refers to the quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of findings and is the central concept used to appraise rigour in qualitative research (Cypress, 2017). To establish trustworthiness in the present study, I adhered to four criteria for rigour, outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989). Besides these steps, I also ensured that my results met the three criteria delineated by Marton and Booth (1997) for judging the quality of an outcome space. The steps I took to meet the four criteria for rigour (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) are presented below, while the three criteria for judging the quality of my

outcome space (Marton & Booth, 1997) are discussed alongside my results in the following chapter.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which a participant's experiences match the interpretations made by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In the present study, I demonstrated credibility by establishing a match between my participants' expressions and understandings of sexual orientation and the resultant categories of description. To do this, I took time to establish a rapport with my participants in order to avoid misinformation and distortion, and to elicit accurate understandings of sexual orientation. I maintained a reflexive journal throughout data collection and analysis, wherein I documented and referenced back to any preconceptions or biases I held. For example, I referred back to the notes I took immediately after interviews when developing my description of love/romance. I did this to ensure that my description was grounded in participants' experiences, not my own academic or personal understandings of what love/romance might mean experientially. I verified the accuracy of my transcripts with participants before commencing data analysis. I frequently referred back to the original interview transcripts and engaged in ongoing critical examination of the referential and structural aspects of emergent categories, as well as similarities and differences between categories. I consulted with queer community members, newcomers to Canada, and peers outside both communities in order to ensure emergent categories were logical and clearly communicated. Finally, I substantiated my interpretations by providing interview excerpts in my results chapter.

In addition to these methods, I also employed techniques of Mathison's (1988) approach to data triangulation to ensure the credibility of my results. An assumption in triangulation is that if two or more sources of data converge on the same conclusion, then the conclusion is more

credible (Denzin, 1978). To achieve data triangulation and bolster the credibility of my results, I recruited 10 participants from a variety of sites located in BC and AB, Canada, to ensure sufficient variation across understandings of sexual orientation.

3.8.2 Transferability

Establishing transferability involves providing an extensive and careful description of the time, place, context, and culture of participant experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The aim of phenomenography is to establish collective understandings of a phenomenon. Thus, to establish transferability in my study I included participant demographics, provided context for selected interview excerpts, and emphasized that my results represent a snapshot of QNY understandings, which are not meant to be entirely transferable to other explorations of sexual orientation.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is established when the process of data analysis is outlined, trackable, and documented (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I demonstrated dependability by adhering to the principles and processes of phenomenographic data analysis outlined by Han and Ellis (2019) and by tracking and documenting my process through reflexive journal entries and discussions with my supervisors. I used the reflexive journal to record the sequence of my data analysis, along with any thoughts, feelings, or opinions that arose during the seven stages. I did this to ensure that I closely adhered to the data analysis process and minimized my researcher bias as much as possible.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Like dependability, confirmability is established when data can be tracked to its sources (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I demonstrated confirmability by verifying my transcripts, tracking my process of data analysis, describing my process in the section above, and ensuring that categories

of description and their aspects were evidenced by participant statements in my results. For example, all referential phrases and internal and external horizons were accompanied by participant quotations that logically endorsed those aspects. When needed, I provided additional context for these quotations to demonstrate that my interpretations of the data were grounded in participant experiences, not my own opinions or experiences.

3.9 Chapter Summary

I employed phenomenography as my methodology within a queer theory theoretical framework for the present study. I used phenomenography to explore the ways in which QNY understand the phenomenon of sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration. I outlined my ethical considerations, recruitment procedures, participant selection process, and semi-structured interview protocol. Next, I discussed the stages of my data analysis process. Finally, I reviewed the steps I took to ensure rigour and trustworthiness in the present study.

Chapter Four: Results

4.1 Introduction

The present study explored how QNY understand and interpret understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration. It was guided by the following research question: *what are QNY's understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration?*

In this chapter, understandings of sexual orientation held by QNY identified through semi-structured interview transcripts and phenomenographic data analysis are described. I identified four categories of description through the iterative data analysis process: (a) *attraction to gender*, (b) *attraction to type*, (c) *what you do*, and (d) *what you feel*. The four categories and their horizons are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

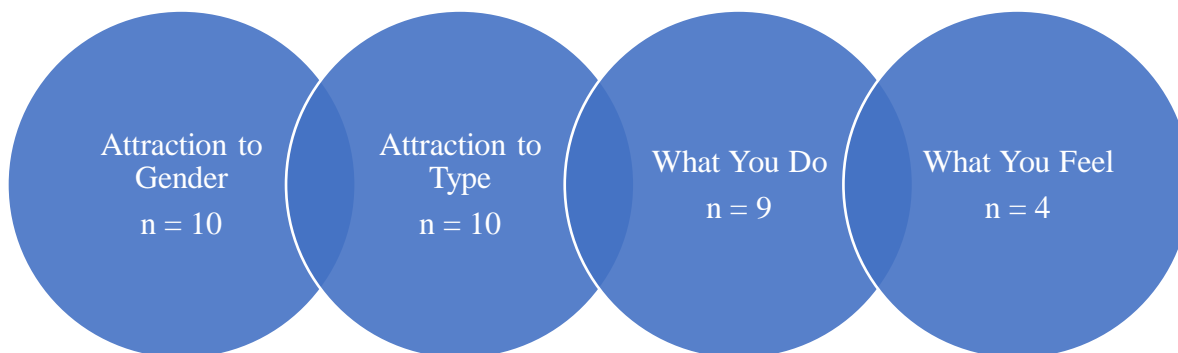
Categories of description and internal and external horizons.

| Category | Brief Description (Referential Aspect) | Internal Horizons | <i>n</i> | External Horizons |
|----------------------|--|---|----------|--|
| Attraction to gender | Attraction to aspects of gender associated with or expressed by another person. | Partner gender identity | 10 | Sexual identity labels, cultural safety, own gender identity, and gendered language. |
| | | Traits associated with femininity and/or masculinity. | 4 | |
| Attraction to type | Attraction to a type of person, relationship, and/or situation. | Lifestyle congruence | 5 | Attraction to gender and social acceptance/respect. |
| | | Kink-alignment | 2 | |
| | | Undefined "type" | 4 | |
| What you do | Behaviours enacted with or alongside a person, in a relationship, and/or in a situation. | Dating | 9 | Sexual identity labels, attraction to gender, and attraction to type. |
| | | Sexual activities | 8 | |
| | | Kink activities | 1 | |
| What you feel | Feelings of attraction or affection towards a person or persons. | Love/romance | 9 | Sexual identity labels, attraction to gender, attraction to type, and what you do. |
| | | Sexual/physical desire | 7 | |
| | | Emotional closeness | 3 | |

These four categories of description designate qualitatively different ways QNY conceptualized sexual orientation. That is, these categories represent the understandings of sexual orientation that I categorized through my data analysis process. Each category represents one collective way of understanding sexual orientation that contributes to a “whole” or “gestalt” representation of the phenomenon of sexual orientation, as understood by QNY through the process of school integration. The whole representation of my outcome space is visually depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Outcome space of QNY understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration.



As per the three criteria for judging the quality of an outcome space (Marton & Booth, 1997), each of the four categories of description are distinct, parsimonious, and logically related. That is, categories are distinguished from each other by their unique referential aspects and contain only the internal horizons (i.e., structural “parts”) essential to the awareness and understanding of that category. As for their logical relation, I found that most external horizons in the present study crossed multiple categories. Further, many external horizons were also identified as other categories of description (e.g., attraction to gender contextualized and

delimited attraction to type). Thus, the four categories of description were logically related by specific overlapping external horizons. This logical relation is supported by extant sexuality literature that emphasizes the complex and interrelated nature of sexuality, sexual identity, sexual orientation, and sexual behaviour (e.g., van Anders, 2015).

As these results represent a collective, whole understanding of the phenomenon of sexual orientation, participants endorsed multiple categories of description during the semi-structured interviews. Some participants endorsed only two categories and others indicated all four descriptions. To endorse a category, participants were required to have expressed at least one within-category internal horizon, although it should be noted that most participants expressed multiple internal horizons. Further, participants who endorsed fewer categories or internal horizons might have expressed more in different contexts or circumstances. This is cohesive with the second order perspective of phenomenographic research, which posits that conscious awareness of aspects of a phenomenon is dependent on an individual's immediate context (e.g., the interview setting) (Marton, 1994; Marton & Pong, 2005). Therefore, it is important to note that my results represent a snapshot of 10 QNY's collective conscious awareness of sexual orientation as brought about by the interview context.

Participants differed in regard to the relative relevance they personally attributed to categories as a whole, as well as the relevance they personally attributed to internal horizons. Further, participants differed in their conceptualization and usage of the prominent external horizon *sexual identity labels*. Sexual identity labels (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, demisexual, queer, etc.) were often used to illustrate and delimit aspects of the four categories of description. Thus, a level of within-category variation was identified in the internal and external horizons of the four categories of description. While the aim of phenomenography

is to document collective understandings of a phenomenon, I felt it necessary to document and describe these within-category variations alongside my phenomenographic data analysis. I did this to ensure that the results of the present study contained valid and trustworthy representations of participant experiences. This is in line with my queer theory theoretical framework as well as the steps I took to ensure rigour in the present study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). These within-category variations came to include what I identified as *within-person shifts* in understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration. That is, participants expressed shifts in their understandings of, and in the relative relevance they attributed to, aspects of sexual orientation. Importantly, my observation of within-category variation and within-person shifts are in line with extant literature, which asserts that understandings of sexual orientation vary across individuals and can evolve through the process of immigration (Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Diamond, 2008; Epstein et al., 2012; Fuks et al., 2018; Rosario et al., 2011; Tskhay & Rule, 2015; van Anders, 2015). Thus, within-category variations and within-person shifts are illuminated in the following subsections by selected quotations. Further discussion regarding within-person shifts as they relate to the process of school integration and immigration are discussed in the following chapter.

In consideration of these factors, dissemination of my results will begin with the presentation of my outcome space followed by detailed descriptions of the four categories and their respective structures of awareness.

4.2 Outcome Space of Understandings of Sexual Orientation

Figure 1 represents my outcome space of QNY understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration. The four categories of description delineate sexual orientation as: (a) attraction to gender, (b) attraction to type, (c) what you do, and (d) what you

feel. My outcome space is visually structured in terms of logical inclusiveness; categories are presented sequentially from most to least prevalent among QNY. In this sequence, participants who endorsed successive categories also endorsed all former categories. For example, participants who endorsed sexual orientation as what you feel also endorsed all other categories. Marton and Booth (1997) have suggested that such category structures, “can even be seen as different layers of individual experiences” (p. 125). Categories were placed in this non-hierarchical sequence to depict their logical relationship as well as to portray each category as equal in terms of its value to the collective understanding of sexual orientation.

In regard to its referential aspect, my outcome space shows that a “whole” or “gestalt” QNY understanding of the phenomenon sexual orientation includes understandings of attraction to gender, attraction to type, what you do, and what you feel. Each of these categories is described below and accompanied with participant quotes.

4.3 Category of Description One: Attraction to Gender

The first and most prevalent descriptive category delineated sexual orientation as attraction to gender. All 10 participants delineated attraction to gender as a dimension of sexual orientation. This category was also the most prominent; it quickly became clear that the majority of data derived from my interviews centered on attraction to gender. The summary of results about sexual orientation as attraction to gender begins with an examination of the referential aspects followed by its structural aspects.

4.3.1 Referential Aspects

Before presenting the referential aspect of attraction to gender, it is important to note that I did not specifically define gender before or during participant interviews or ask participants to define gender as a construct. Conclusively defining what gender specifically is or is not would

have been contrary to the tenets of queer theory, as well as the present study's methodology, wherein phenomenographic researchers are warned against applying or implying their own understandings to explorations of phenomena. (i.e., bracketing; Marton & Booth, 1997). Instead, this category was constructed from a grouping of expressions of attraction that I determined to be related to the sociological construct of gender, which has been broadly understood as socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities of women, men, and gender-diverse people (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

Therefore, the present category refers to a sexual orientation towards the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities associated with women, men, and gender-diverse people. This referential phrase is meant to capture the overall sense or meaning of this category of description. The overall concept of this phrase was found to be evident (or "referenced") throughout the interview transcripts of participants who ascribed to this category of description. This referential aspect is substantiated by interview excerpts, explicitly (i.e., participants directly expressed that attraction to gender was a facet of sexual orientation) and implicitly (i.e., participants used gendered terms to describe attraction as it relates to sexual orientation). Explicit references included those such as Gabriella's statement, "gender does play a role into it. I remember, I've always known I was attracted to girls." Implicit references included those such as Britt's statement "...I came to somewhat of a conclusion of, okay, so, I guess I am attracted to them [men]. I don't like them, but I'm attracted to them." In summary, I determined that the category name and interview excerpts adequately captured the referential aspect of category of description one: attraction to gender.

4.3.2 Structural Aspects

Conceptual awareness of this category of description requires an individual to direct their attention and focus upon specific structural elements ascribed to attraction to gender that are embodied within specific contexts. Based on my analysis, structural elements of attraction to gender included two internal horizons: (a) *partner gender identity*, and (b) *traits associated with femininity/masculinity* (hereafter, F/M). Specific contexts included four external horizons: (a) *sexual identity labels*, (b) *cultural safety*, (c) *own gender identity*, and (d) *gendered language*. These four external horizons provided context for and delimited sexual orientation as attraction to gender.

Figure 2

Structure of awareness –Sexual orientation as attraction to gender

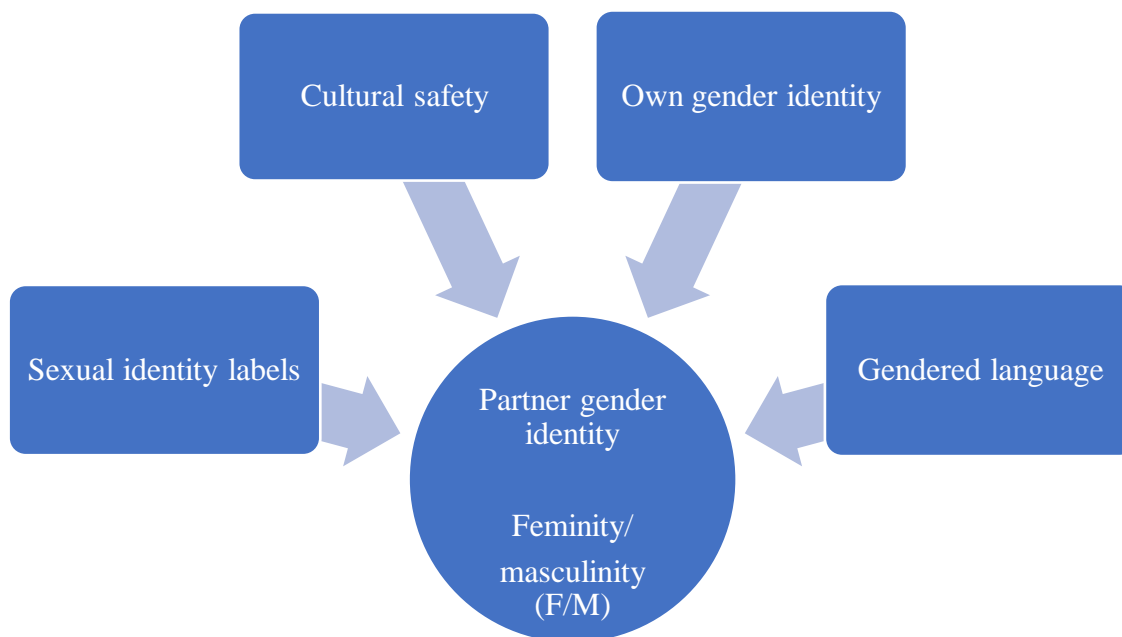


Figure 2 represents the structure of awareness of attraction to gender. The internal horizons of attraction to gender focus on the interrelated concepts of F/M and partner gender

identity. Partner gender identity was the most prevalent. Variation of participant expressions of the structure of attraction to gender were captured by these internal horizons. The internal horizon of partner gender identity was captured by the referential aspect excerpts noted in the above subsection. Other excerpts captured this internal horizon through specific expressions of attraction to gender identities, which included but were not limited to identities such as, “women,” “men,” and “non-binary individuals.”

The internal horizon of F/M was captured through statements such as: “I definitely tend towards feminine preferences” [Stephanie] and, “I’ve noticed that I’m more attracted to feminine energy in general” [Gabriella]. It is important to note that participants who expressed attraction to F/M as a function of gender saw F/M as a related, yet separate concept from both gender identity and biological sex. That is, while traits associated with F/M are generally tied to specific genders and/or sexes (e.g., in Western societies, femininity is generally associated with identifying as a woman and/or being biologically female), these participants understood traits associated with both femininity and masculinity to occur across the gender spectrum. It was for these reasons that I identified F/M as a separate internal horizon from partner gender identity. Excerpts from Stefan’s interview illuminate this understanding:

So, I guess, like, my original, personal sense of sexual orientation came from emotional, but also, like, physical attraction to masculinity.

I found that gender was not masculinity. Yeah, like, it didn't matter as much. So, the people that I was interested in in that way, I found, were male and female, and it like didn't really matter. And it wasn't something I thought about as much anymore.

If I think of like qualities that I’m attracted to, I don’t think I’m like actively attracted to femininity. But, it’s not like a turn off for me, either, it’s neutral. I feel like

the women I've been interested in have maybe tended to be not the most like feminine people, but I also don't feel like I'm like exclusively attracted to like masculine women. For Stefan, the people he found attractive generally possessed and expressed traits he associated with masculinity. The gender identity or biological sex of these individuals "didn't matter as much" to Stefan as presentation or expression of gendered F/M traits.

As stated, the external horizons that surround and delimit sexual orientation as attraction to gender included: (a) sexual identity labels, (b) cultural safety, (c) own gender identity, and (d) gendered language. These external horizons individually and collectively provided context to QNY expressions of sexual orientation as attraction to gender.

Sexual identity labels emerged as the most prevalent and prominent, yet variable external horizon. As stated, this is logical given the conceptual similarities between sexual orientation and sexual identity (van Anders, 2015). All 10 participants described attraction to gender within the context of sexual identity labels, however, views and opinions regarding these sexual identity labels varied. Some participants expressed sexual identity labels as mostly discrete, but with some movement across labels. In contrast, other participants expressed sexual identity labels as entirely fluid and without set definitions. For Jennifer, specific sexual identity labels as they relate to attraction to gender were not inherently mutually exclusive:

I think if a person is straight then they could be asexual, they could be pansexual still. There are no boundaries, or such, that you can't feel a certain way. You can still be straight and do not enjoy sexual activities... Yeah, I mean, there are some people who have their attraction towards me, they might be male, they might be female, it might be both, or it might be none. But, so how it works for me is I do like men, I do feel attraction for them. It's just when it comes to sexual activities that's like a big no for me.

Adherence to strict, fixed definitions of sexual identity labels was not necessary for Jennifer when describing her own sexual identity and her understanding of sexual orientation as attraction to gender. Identifying as both straight (i.e., heterosexual) and asexual, or pansexual and asexual, was congruent with Jennifer's understanding of sexual identity labels as fluid and without fixed boundaries.

Compared to other external horizons, views, opinions, and understandings of sexual identity labels were found to have shifted throughout the process of school integration and immigration. For example, when discussing her own attraction to gender, Gabriella stated that, “[Before moving to Canada] I felt like I had to completely eliminate the possibility that I could be attracted to guys before coming out as lesbian.” For Gabriella, her pre-migration understanding of attraction to gender was necessarily tied to her understanding of and adherence to a fixed sexual identity label (i.e., lesbian). However, once she arrived in Canada and began to integrate into her educational context, her understanding shifted to a more fluid approach to sexual identity labels. Like Gabriella, Stephanie and Cameron experienced a shift in their understandings of sexual identity labels, and subsequently their experiences of attraction to gender. Stephanie found that moving to Canada and integrating into her educational context allowed for conscious introspection about her attraction to men:

[Originally] Lesbian, yes, the bi-lesbian part came later. Well, I suppose it consciously came later, cause the crush on the aforementioned guy friend in [US state], definitely, definitely predated actually dating a guy... Yeah, I knew that queerphobia was an issue here [Canada], but on the whole, I also knew that it was going to be a lot more accepting here and then there was going to be more government protection, which was pretty important to me.

Cameron's perceived freedom in Canada to express their gender identity allowed them to consider their sexual orientation and sexual identity in a new light:

Moving to Canada allowed me, being in a more accepting environment, the freedom to actually express that, and become like, and to have a more trans masculine presentation...I identified as a lesbian for a period of about 2 years. I only recently decided I was probably bisexual after thinking about it for a long time.

Moving to Canada and integrating into their broader educational context meant safety and freedom to explore aspects of their sexual orientations, sexual identities, and gender identities for both Stephanie and Cameron. Importantly, neither participant reported a change in their internal sense of attraction to gender; these shifts were changes in focal awareness predicated by perceived safety and freedom and attributed to their broad educational contexts in Canada. These excerpts also implicated a second external horizon: cultural safety.

The second external horizon of attraction to gender I identified was cultural safety. This experience was seen as the freedom to express sexual and gender-diverse identities without fear of physical, emotional, or psychological harm to themselves or others. For many participants, Canada was perceived to be a country that espoused greater cultural safety relative to their countries of origin. As seen in the excerpts from Stephanie's and Cameron's interviews, cultural safety was often enmeshed within other external horizons of attraction to gender (i.e., sexual identity labels and own gender identity). Four participants specifically described attraction to gender within the context of cultural safety through statements such as Cameron's and Stephanie's noted above. Another excerpt from Cameron's interview consolidates cultural safety as an external horizon to attraction to gender:

“I was like 11 or so, and I had a crush on a girl, and I didn't quite understand it. But, as soon as I heard the word, I think bisexual, and it was explained to me what it meant, I identified with it pretty almost immediately...I probably still had fairly strict opinions when I was still living in [the US], and then I got up here, and I felt more safe, so I was able to open up my experience...I'm not sure I understand the identity, but I don't care if people call themselves like [specific sexual identity label] anymore.

Cameron's within-person shift regarding gendered sexual identity labels was attributed to the perceived queer-friendly norms of their new cultural, social, and academic environment. That is, experiencing school integration in Canada influenced their understanding of attraction to gender by way of perceived cultural safety.

Like Stephanie and Cameron, many participants referenced their own gender identity when describing sexual orientation as attraction to gender. Thus, I identified own gender identity as a third external horizon to attraction to gender. These expressions varied qualitatively and were enmeshed with sexual identity labels and cultural safety. For example, some participants referenced their own gender identity as highly relevant to attraction to gender. That is, these participants expressed their own attraction to gender in terms of a highly relevant reciprocal relationship between their own and their partner's gender identity. These experiences were generally expressed by pairing sexual identity labels with gender identity labels and descriptors, such as identifying as a lesbian woman attracted to feminine women (such as in Gabriella's experience). In contrast, other participants explicitly noted that their gender identity was irrelevant to their own attraction to gender. In some cases, neither the participant's gender identity nor the gender identity of a prospective partner was as important as other aspects of

attraction to gender. For Stefan, as his own sense of gender developed, relevancy of his gender identity decreased:

As my understanding, or my sense of gender, became more nuanced, I think I stopped conflating sexual orientation with [my own] gender so much ...I like that bisexual is not gendered because for me, at this point, I don't know if my attraction feels related to my own gender or not, like I guess a little bit. My attraction to men feels like less related to my own gender. My attraction to women feels unusual in that it's not really related to my own gender.

Stefan's experience illustrates that while attraction to gender often implicates the importance of one's own gender identity (as was the case for most other participants), this is not a necessary condition. That is, attraction to gender can exist alongside yet separate from one's own gender identity. Interestingly, unlike Gabriella, Stephanie, and Cameron, Stefan noted that experiencing school integration and immigration did not significantly shift or otherwise change how he understood his attraction to gender. For Stefan, gender identity introspection began before immigration and continued throughout his resettlement experience.

Two participants used specific gendered language when describing attraction to gender. Thus, gendered language emerged as a fourth and final external horizon to attraction to gender. Like the other external horizons, a degree of relatedness was noted between gendered language, sexual identity labels, cultural safety, and own gender identity. Both Harvey and Britt noted that gendered pronouns in the languages of their cultures of origin (Tagalog and Vietnamese, respectively) functioned as an avenue to express attraction to gender in a more specific and nuanced way compared to gendered pronouns in English. Excerpts from Britt's interview

illuminate how they repurposed traditionally heteronormative Vietnamese gendered pronouns for gender roles within their queer relationships:

[Pronouns in Vietnamese] are categorized in terms of gender, age, position, like social position. All of that in one word. In Vietnamese you have an, *ahn*, and an *em*. *Ahn* is the male one, so it also means brother, like older man, because that's usually what happens, right? Older man, younger woman. And *em* is just the younger one, usually female. It's very specific and when I was dating girls or like femme presenting [people]...I was usually *ahn*, even if it was the same age usually. I was acting in the place of that heteronormative kind of narrative. And then the other person will be *em*. And I love that. It's very endearing. It's sweet.

Britt's use of Vietnamese gendered pronouns to describe attraction to gender was related to, but not limited by, their own or their partner's gender identity. Neither was their expression limited by biological sex. Instead, other structural aspects of gender, like traits associated with femininity (e.g., "femme presenting"), influenced their pronoun choice. For Harvey, gendered language to describe attraction to gender held a less positive connotation. Harvey described growing up in the Philippines with gendered terms that he noted were used to marginalize same-gender attraction and/or diverse gender presentations (e.g., *baklâ*). However, Harvey also noted that more recently, such terms are being reclaimed as to celebrate sexual and gender diversities, and that the lack of gendered pronouns in Tagalog might facilitate expressions of diverse sexualities and genders.

In regard to the influence of immigration and school integration experiences, Britt noted that while their knowledge of gendered pronouns in Vietnamese was derived from their premigration experiences growing up in Vietnam, usage of these terms to describe their queer

relationships only began after immigration and integration into a queer-friendly cultural, social, and academic environment. That is, while Britt did not express a shift in their conceptual understanding, they did express a shift in their outward expression of sexual orientation throughout the process of school integration and immigration.

4.4 Category of Description Two: Attraction to Type

The second descriptive category delineated sexual orientation as attraction to type. Like category one, all 10 participants delineated this experience as a dimension of sexual orientation. Results of this category of description will begin with an examination of its referential aspects followed by its structural aspects.

4.4.1 Referential Aspects

Attraction to type refers to a sexual orientation towards specific and non-specific non-gender-centric traits held by other people or associated with specific types of relationships and/or situations. This phrase is meant to capture the overall sense or meaning of this category of description. I developed this phrase to offer further explanation as to what is encompassed by this category and to further differentiate this category from “person-centric” attraction to gender. At times, what attraction to type meant experientially to participants was indistinct and imprecise when compared to the other three categories. Given this, I recognize that this category represents a more emerging understanding of sexual orientation than what was laid out by attraction to gender. However, phrases containing attraction to “type” or “sort” in reference to a person, relationship, and/or situation, as well as the non-gender-referent and indistinct, “who you are attracted to” ran through the interview transcripts of participants who ascribed to this category of description. I do not attempt to further interpret these referential aspects, because to do so would require imposing my own understanding of “type” to the degree that this category would no

longer be a trustworthy and accurate reflection of the lived experiences of my participants. As stated above, phenomenography warns researchers against imposing their own understandings (Marton & Booth, 1997). The referential aspect of attraction to type is evidenced by interview excerpts such as Harvey's:

If we asked most people, they would say, oh, it's who you're attracted to...And then, when we say 'who,' it's interesting because it's in the name, it's *sexual* orientation, it's 'who' we're sexually or romantically attracted to. But it could also be seen as 'which sex' you're attracted to.

In Harvey's case, attraction to type is person-centric and includes "who" one is attracted to but could also refer to aspects of biological sex. Harvey went on to discuss the vague nature of what constitutes sexual orientation, and noted that neither gender nor biological sex offer a complete understanding of the lived experiences of sexual orientation. Similarly, Riley's statement succinctly references attraction to type: "[Sexual orientation] means the kind of people that you can fall in love with, and it's not limited to one thing or the other." By noting that sexual orientation is the "kind" of people, not their gender or biological sex, and suggesting that sexual orientation is not limited to a specific "thing," Riley implicated a category that encompasses non-gender-centric traits. An orientation towards non-gender-centric traits also came to include those associated with relationships and/or situations. These are evidenced by specific internal horizons detailed below.

4.4.2 Structural Aspects

Like category one, conceptual awareness of category two requires an individual to direct their attention and focus upon a collection of specific structural elements ascribed to attraction to type that are embodied within specific contexts. The structural elements of this category included

three specific internal horizons: (a) *lifestyle congruency*, (b) *kink-alignment*, and (c) *unspecified*. The third structural element was vague, yet still presented as an internal horizon. As such, it was added to represent participants who ascribed to attraction to type but did not attribute any structural specifiers. This third internal horizon might represent an emerging element of sexual orientation that has yet to be consciously defined. Specific contexts that delimited attraction to type included two external horizons: (a) *attraction to gender*, and (b) *social acceptance/respect*. Importantly, attraction to gender references the entirety of what is encompassed by category one, denoting the logical relationship of my outcome space.

Figure 3

Structure of awareness –Sexual orientation as attraction to type.

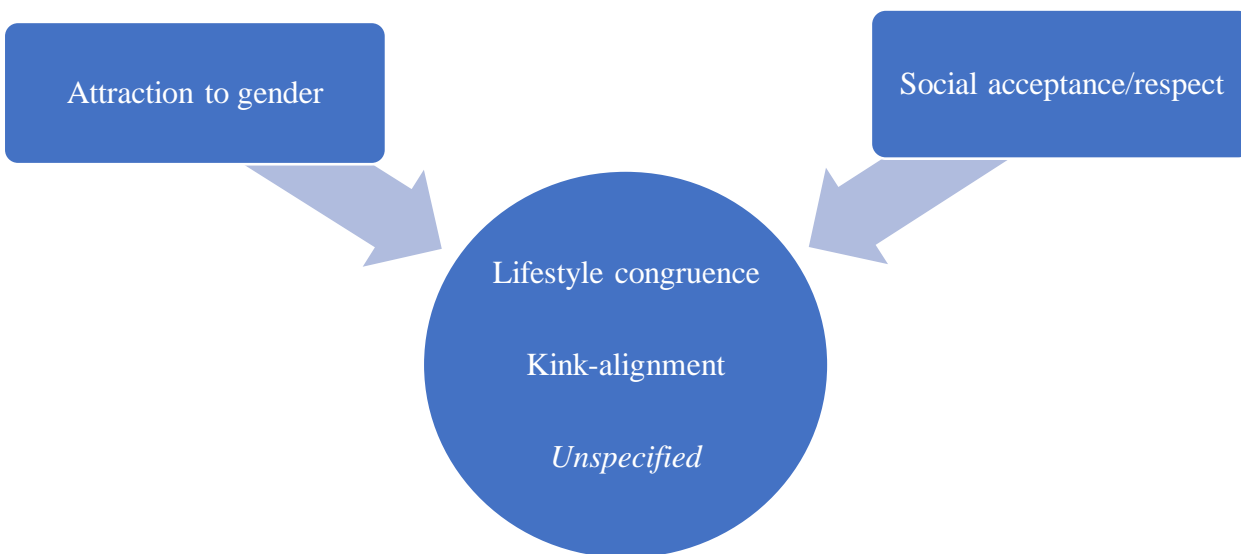


Figure 3 represents the structure of awareness of attraction to type. The internal horizons of attraction to type focus on the closely related concepts of lifestyle congruence and kink-alignment, as well as the unspecified sense of attraction to type. Variation of participant expressions of the structure of attraction to type were captured by these internal horizons.

Lifestyle refers to an attraction to traits associated with one's desired lifestyle. Lifestyle congruence as an internal horizon to attraction to type is evidenced by the following excerpt from Stefan's interview:

Eventually I found that I wasn't fixating on people like as strongly, but like, if I considered people that I was interested in, I guess I started viewing what a relationship might mean differently. Less like, unless it's just like really like being interested in somebody and having, like a physical attraction to them. But someone that I can imagine myself living with.

Stefan's attraction to type included the non-gender-centric aspect of lifestyle congruency. Interestingly, Stefan noted experiencing a shift in relevancy from purely physical attraction to masculinity to considerations of what aspects he preferred within a relationship. Once again, Stefan noted that within-person shifts occurred irrespective of his experience immigrating to Canada.

Several participants noted having engaged in or were interested in engaging in polyamory and/or ethical non-monogamy (ENM). For example, Stephanie stated that, "the main repercussion [of coming out as a lesbian and as a transwoman] was that I pretty much fell backwards into polyamory at the exact same time." However, I did not include polyamory or ENM as separate internal horizons to attraction to type. This is because the participants who engaged in or were interested in engaging polyamory and/or ENM did not express that these aspects were a prominent part of an orientation towards people, relationships, and/or situations. What was important, however, was an orientation towards overall lifestyle congruence which may or may not include polyamory and/or ENM. Therefore, I considered polyamory and ENM to fall within the internal horizon of lifestyle congruence in as much as these aspects were related to

an attraction to type. However, further research may find that these aspects represent separate and relevant internal horizons. (e.g., Simula et al., 2019).

Lex's experience captures the second internal horizon, kink-alignment. Kink-alignment, in the present study, refers to types of people, relationships, and/or situations that embrace or are associated with kink. Kink is a general term that refers to consensual non-pathological non-normative sexualities, and often includes practices, activities, and desires related to BDSM (i.e., bondage/discipline, dominance/submission [D/s], and sadism/masochism [S/m]) (Simula et al., 2023). After I summarized that their understanding of sexual orientation included an orientation towards kink-alignment, Lex agreed and elaborated that their attraction to this type occurred regardless of gender and, "especially in the context of kink, I would say." That is, Lex's attraction to type was orientated towards kink-aligned people, as well as relationships and/or situations that occur within the context of kink.

The unspecified type was captured by the referential aspect excerpts above, as well as statements such as Gabriella's:

But it's just, you just kind of notice, kind of like statistically, you see a pattern that you're just, in general, more attracted to, like certain types of people. And then you associate those types of people to a gender. But the more you don't really see gender, it gets a lot more fluid.

While Gabriella's statement also implicates attraction to gender, there is a noteworthy difference between her description and the endorsements of category one. That is, Gabriella describes sexual orientation firstly as an attraction to type, which is then interpreted through the lens with which one "sees" gender. The implication being that those who ascribe more importance to gender (i.e., "see gender more") would more often associate gender with the type

of people they are attracted to. And conversely, those who “see” gender to a lesser degree might be more likely to ascribe alternative, non-gender-centric traits to their attraction to type. In sum, Gabriella’s statement evidences this vague internal horizon and implicates attraction to gender as an external horizon to attraction to type.

As noted, the external horizons that surround and delimit sexual orientation as attraction to type included: (a) attraction to gender, and (b) social acceptance/respect. These external horizons individually and collectively provided context to QNY expressions of sexual orientation in this category.

For attraction to gender, Gabriella’s description above (i.e., “and then you associate those types of people to a gender”) evidences this external horizon. Gabriella expressed attraction to type and attraction to gender as two separate but interrelated constructs. As such, attraction to gender contextualized Gabriella’s understanding of attraction to type.

For the second external horizon of social acceptance/respect, participants expressed that either they did not pursue the “type” of person, relationship, or situation they were attracted to until they moved to a socially accepting environment, or that they had taken extra precautions when they perceived their environment to be potentially unaccepting. This was especially true for participants who were attracted to non-normative “types,” or lifestyles (e.g., polyamory and ENM), or kink-aligned people, relationships, or situations.

This experience is evidenced by excerpts from Lex’s interview. Lex noted that they had difficulty finding a respectful and safe place to practice kink and shibari (a form of rope bondage) when living in China, and attributed this difficulty to the stereotyped expectations of submissive identities that can exist within kink-aligned communities:

...I think I'm always into it [kink], I just failed to find a community or place I feel safe to participate... You don't know how the community going to treat you as an assigned female person... I think in [U.S. city] I kind of got to know the queer community and how they approach relationships and other stuff in a non-monogamous way...It was so interesting to see how people can get to respect their partners and let them know and also have fun with other people. And that made me realize that it's not about like having a [monogamous] relationship that's important. It's like about finding the people who can respect who you are and what you do and how you approach your life with each other.

For Lex, their attraction to type was less about attaining and maintaining a traditionally monogamous lifestyle than it was about social acceptance and respect regarding non-normative, kinky, or queer lifestyles. Lex initially experienced broader social acceptance of non-normative types during their first immigration experience in a major US city. However, they did not begin to regularly practice kink until after experiencing integration to their broader educational context in BC, despite the desire to do so. Once in BC, however, Lex noted that members of their queer kink-aligned community were “really talkative and really respectful.”

Importantly, Lex's experience highlights once again how gender (attraction to, or otherwise) pervades and influences other ways of understanding sexual orientation. That is, while Lex identified that a non-gender-centric kink-alignment was the most important aspect of their own sexual orientation, gendered stereotypes and misogyny still contextualized their experiences.

4.5 Category of Description Three: What You Do

The third descriptive category delineated sexual orientation as what you do. Nine participants ascribed to this category of description. I will present the results of this category

delineating sexual orientation with an examination of the referential aspects followed by its structural aspects.

4.5.1 Referential Aspects

What you do refers to a sexual orientation towards specific actions or behaviours that a person can enact with and/or alongside another person or persons, in a relationship and/or in a situation. This referential phrase is meant to capture the overall sense or meaning of this category of description. Like attraction to type, I added an additional explanatory phrase to the referential aspect of this category that is meant to further illuminate what is captured by “what you do.”

What you do was referred to throughout the interview transcripts of participants who ascribed to this category of description. It is important to note that I made a distinction between expressions of external behaviours (“doings”) and internal affections (“feelings”), which can be construed as internal behaviours. The present category of description refers to actions and/or behaviours that occur externally, or outside of the self. In contrast, the following category (i.e., what you feel) captures the internal functions, or affections held towards another person or persons. The referential aspect of the present category is evidenced by interview excerpts such as Ellen’s, “[being gay] is who you sleep with,” wherein specific behaviours are implicated.

4.5.2 Structural Aspects

For conceptual awareness of this category of description, an individual must direct their attention and focus upon specific structural elements ascribed to what you do that are embodied within specific contexts. Structural elements of this category included three specific internal horizons: (a) *dating*, (b) *sexual activities*, and (c) *kink activities*. Specific contexts included three external horizons: (a) *sexual identity labels*, (b) *attraction to gender*, and (c) *attraction to type*. It is important to note that attraction to gender and attraction to type contribute all external and

internal horizons encompassed by categories one and two. As stated, this overlap illustrates the logical relation between categories of description.

Figure 4

Structure of awareness –Sexual orientation as what you do.

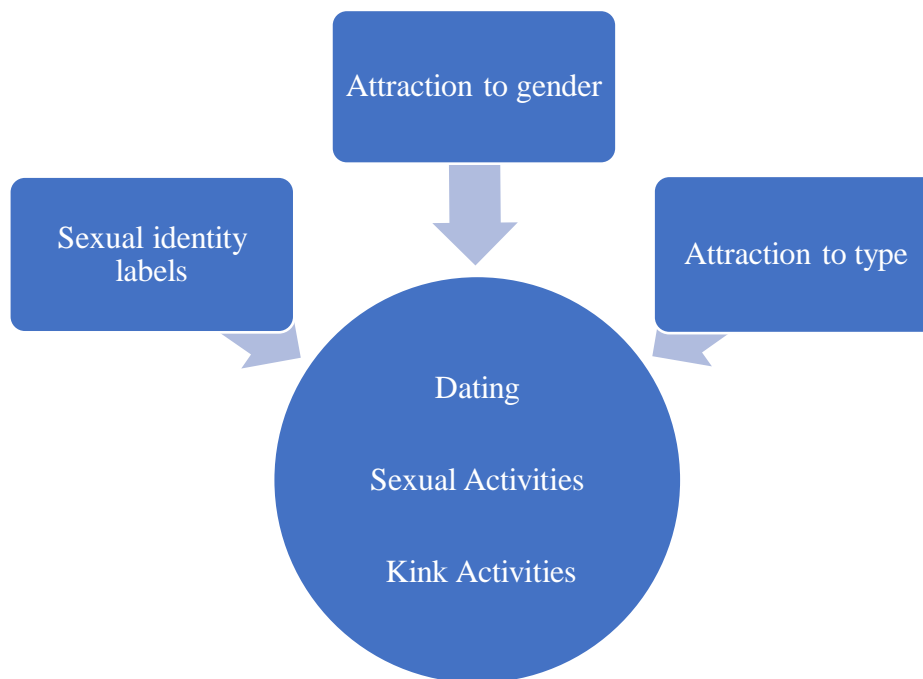


Figure 4 represents the structure of awareness of what you do. The internal horizons of this category focus on the related actions and behaviours of dating, sexual activities, and kink activities. Variation of participant expressions of the structure of this category were captured by these internal horizons.

Dating was the first internal horizon I identified for what you do. Dating referred to activities and behaviours done with a person of romantic and/or sexual interest, often for mutual enjoyment or with intention of getting to know each other. The internal horizon of dating was evidenced by excerpts such as Britt's: "[there is a] transition from like, oh, we're just friends to like, now we're dating."

Sexual activities as an internal horizon referred to behaviours or activities done with a person of romantic and/or sexual interest that are inherently sexual, including but not limited to sexual intercourse and outercourse (i.e., non-penetrative sex). This internal horizon was evidenced by excerpts such as Ellen's: "[being gay] is who you sleep with," and Jennifer's: "I do like men, I do feel attraction for them. It's just when it comes to sexual activities that's like a big no for me." While Jennifer noted that engaging in sexual activities was not an aspect of her own sexual orientation, her statement still evidences sexual activities as an aspect of what you do, albeit with far less personal relevance.

Kink activities was the third internal horizon I identified for what you do. In the present study, kink activities refers to consensual, non-pathological, non-normative sexual practices and behaviours, including BDSM (Simula et al., 2023). Kink activities are evidenced by the following excerpt from Lex's interview: "[kink] is also a pretty important part of me. I engage in, like, the shibari community, it's like rope." Importantly, I distinguished an orientation towards engaging in kink activities from an orientation toward kink-aligned people, relationships, and/or situations. For example, being attracted to people who hold kink-aligned identities or express kink-aligned traits might be related to an orientation towards kink activities, but both can occur separately from the other. Thus, kink activities were delineated as a third internal horizon to what you do.

As noted, the external horizons that surrounded and delimited what you do included (a) sexual identity labels, (b) attraction to gender, and (c) attraction to type. These aspects have been discussed in detail in previous sections. However, it is still important to understand how these external horizons specifically contextualized this category. An excerpt from Cameron's

interview illustrates how sexual identity labels and attraction to gender surrounded the internal horizon of dating:

Another aspect of this experience is, I'm dating an assigned male at birth nonbinary person that presents male. I don't view them as a man, but other people might. And if I call myself a lesbian, and I'm dating this person who everyone perceives as a man, that feels really incongruent to everybody else...so I just opt for identifying as bisexual.

Cameron noted that they understood lesbian, a sexual identity label, to describe attraction to women and non-binary people. However, they also recognized that other people might not perceive their sexual identity as congruent with their dating behaviour. Cameron's experience of dating occurred within the broader context of sexual identity labels as well as their attraction to gender.

Finally, Lex's statement regarding the importance of kink activities illustrates that attraction to type is an external horizon to what you do through the close relationship between their internal horizons (i.e., kink-alignment and kink activities). That is, attraction to type provided context for and delimited aspects of what you do.

4.6 Category of Description Four: What You Feel

The fourth and final descriptive category delineated sexual orientation as what you feel. Four participants specifically delineated what you feel as a dimension of sexual orientation. As with previous categories, my results of this delineation of sexual orientation will begin with an examination of its referential aspects followed by its structural aspects.

4.6.1 Referential Aspects

What you feel refers to a sexual orientation towards holding specific feelings or affections for another person or persons. This referential phrase is meant to capture the overall

sense or meaning of this category of description. Like categories two and three, the referential phrase explicates “what you feel” in order to specify the human targets of feelings or affections delineated by this category. That is, this category does not encompass feelings towards non-human targets such as objects, institutions, situations and so on. The overall meaning of what you feel was evidenced throughout the interview transcripts of the four participants who ascribed to this category of description. The referential aspect of this category is evidenced by interview excerpts such as Riley’s: “It could be that you feel a certain way now, you might feel a certain way in the future. So, I really believe that sexual orientation is just your capacity to love someone.” By noting that sexual orientation involves an overall “feeling” and then specifying that it is a feeling towards another person (i.e., “capacity to love someone”), Riley’s statement was deemed to adequately capture the referential aspect of what you feel.

4.6.2 Structural Aspects

Conceptual awareness of this final category of description requires an individual to direct their attention and focus upon specific structural elements ascribed to what you feel that are embodied within specific contexts. Structural elements of what you feel included three specific internal horizons: (a) *love/romance*, (b) *sexual desire*, and (c) *emotional closeness*. Specific contexts included four external horizons: (a) *sexual identity labels*, (b) *attraction to gender*, (c) *attraction to type*, and (d) *what you do*. External horizons (b) through (d) refer to all that is encompassed by the previous categories of description.

Figure 5

Structure of awareness – Sexual orientation as what you feel.

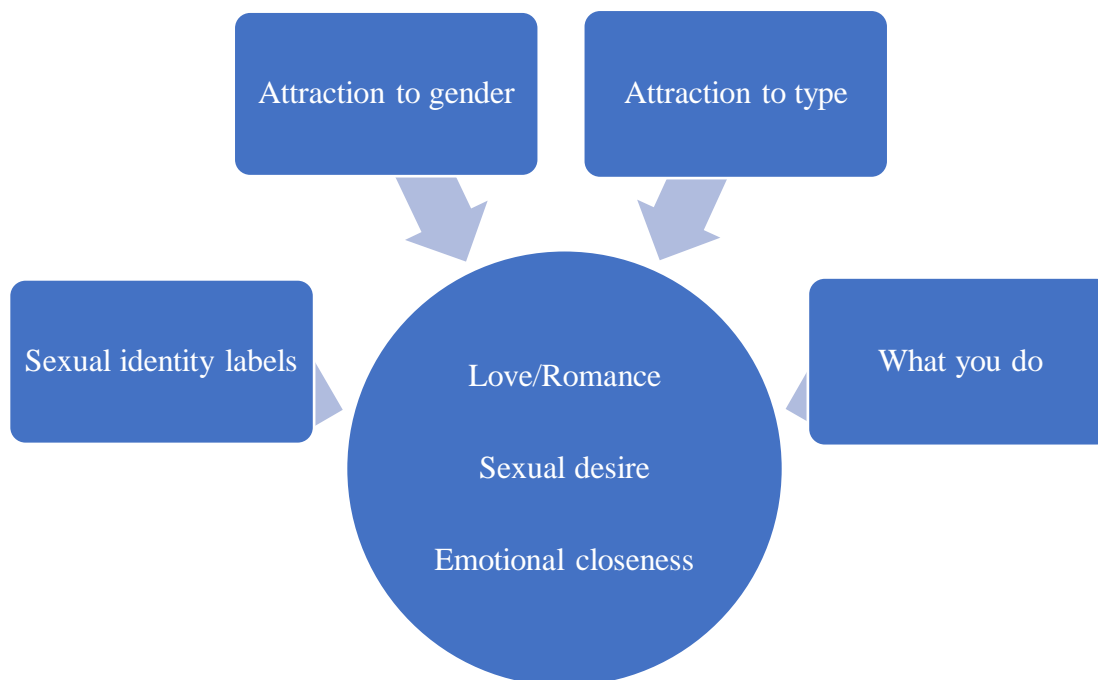


Figure 5 represents the structure of awareness of what you feel. The internal horizons of this category focus on the related affective concepts of love/romance, sexual attraction, and emotional closeness. Participant variations of experience within this category were adequately captured by these three internal horizons.

The first internal horizon of what you feel was love/romance. Importantly, I chose to regard love/romance as a singular internal horizon because the terms, “love” and “romance” were used interchangeably by participants to describe the same affective experiences. Other research in this area might differentiate conceptually between “love” and “romance,” or describe non-romantic love towards other people. However, participants who ascribed to this internal horizon expressed feeling love towards other people in romantic settings. An orientation towards feeling love/romance for another person is evidenced by Riley’s statement above (“[sexual orientation] is your capacity to love someone”) and Gabriella’s statement: “In its core [sexual orientation], it’s a way to describe your relationships with someone. And honestly, like, that’s [love/romance] a huge part of it. Like, I’m very romantic.” Both participants noted that what you

feel towards a person or persons was an important aspect of sexual orientation, and that this specifically included feeling love/romance.

I identified sexual desire as a second internal horizon of what you feel. For some participants, sexual desire was differentiated from other affections held towards other people. For instance, both Cameron's and Jennifer's excerpts evidenced sexual desire as an internal horizon to what you feel, while also differentiating sexual desire from love/romance. Cameron stated, "I guess I am attracted to them [men]. I don't like them, but I'm [sexually] attracted to them. I don't like that, but I do. So, yeah, I would say bisexual, homoromantic." Cameron noted that their attraction to men was limited to feelings of sexual desire. In order to specifically describe their sexual orientation with available sexual identity labels, Cameron expressed a bisexual identity to describe their sexual desire for multiple genders and a homoromantic identity to describe feelings of love/romance towards women and non-binary individuals. Jennifer also noted specific feelings towards men: "Yes, [there is] some sort of attraction. It might be romantic. Sexually, not so much." Opposite to Cameron, Jennifer noted feeling only love/romance towards men. Like sexual activity, experiencing sexual desire was not an important aspect of Jennifer's personal sexual orientation. However, her statement still serves to evidence both love/romance and sexual desire as separate internal horizons of what you feel.

The third and final internal horizon that I identified was emotional closeness. Stephanie's statement substantiates emotional closeness as an internal horizon: "I'll look at someone and 'disaster lesbian' mode will engage, but like, to actually want to act on that? Yeah, I need to know the person." For Stephanie, a level of emotional closeness was necessary in order for her to outwardly express her sexual orientation. Importantly, Stephanie went onto specify that a level emotional closeness was an important prerequisite to her feeling love/romance or sexual desire

towards another person. In this way, Stephanie endorsed all three internal horizons as separate, yet interrelated aspects of what you feel.

As noted, what you feel was delimited by the external horizons: (a) sexual identity labels, (b) attraction to gender, (c) attraction to type, and (d) what you do. Such aspects have been described in detail in the subsections above. However, it is still important to describe how these aspects contextualize and delimit what you feel. Sexual identity labels, along with attraction to gender, were found to be prevalent and prominent external horizons. That is, participants used sexual identity labels to explicitly or implicitly express what they felt towards specific genders. For example, Cameron used the sexual identity label “bisexual” to describe sexual desire towards multiple genders, and the label “homoromantic” to describe romantic feelings towards non-male-identified individuals. For emotional closeness, Stephanie expressed that she was considering “demisexuality” as an additional sexual identity label to describe emotional closeness as a prerequisite for feelings of love/romance or sexual desire towards multiple genders, but especially towards women.

As for attraction to type, this external horizon is evidenced by expressions like Riley’s: “[sexual orientation] means the kind of people that you can fall in love with.” In this example, it is attraction to non-gender-centric aspects (“types”) of a person which elicits feelings of love/romance. Thus, attraction to type is contextual to what you feel.

Finally, what you do as an external horizon is evidenced by the interrelationships between feelings of sexual desire and interest in sexual activities, and between feelings of love/romance and interest in dating. Excerpts from Jennifer’s interview highlight these interrelationships. Jennifer noted that she feels love/romance towards men and is interested in dating men (“yes, [there is] some sort of attraction. It might be romantic.”). However, because

she does not feel sexual desire, she is not interested in sexual activities with men (“sexually, not so much.”). A relationship where there are expectations of sexual activity would be incompatible with Jennifer’s sexual orientation:

So, I think I was around 15 years old when I realized that I’m not really into such [sexual] activities. It’s just I had, I had my first boyfriend, and he wanted to do some stuff and I didn’t want to do that...what are you going to do? We broke up.

Jennifer noted that realizing her asexual identity predicated a breakup with her then-boyfriend. Therefore, Jennifer’s understanding of what you feel not only evidenced the external horizon of what you do, but also implicated sexual identity labels and attraction to gender.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of a phenomenographic exploration of QNYs’ understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration. Four distinct categories of description were identified. Attraction to gender referred to a sexual orientation towards the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities associated with women, men, and gender diverse people. Participants who endorsed this category expressed attraction to partner gender identity and traits associated with femininity/masculinity (F/M) within the contexts of sexual identity labels, their own gender identity, gendered language, and cultural safety. Attraction to type was the second category I identified and referred to a sexual orientation towards specific and non-specific non-gender-centric traits held by other people or associated with specific types of relationships and/or situations. Participants expressed attraction to congruent lifestyles and kink-aligned people, relationships, and/or situations. A third, undefined attraction to type was also identified. These expressions were contextualized by sexual identity labels, attraction to gender, and social acceptance/respect. The third category I

identified was what you do, and it referred to a sexual orientation towards specific actions or behaviours that a person can enact with and/or alongside another person or persons, in a relationship and/or in a situation. Actions and behaviours endorsed by participants included dating, sexual activities, and kink activities. Participants contextualized these aspects with references to sexual identity labels, attraction to gender, and attraction to type. The final category I identified was what you feel, and it referred to a sexual orientation towards holding specific feelings or affections for another person or persons. These feelings and affections included love/romance, sexual desire, and emotional closeness. Participants expressed these feelings and affections in the context of sexual identity labels, attraction to gender, attraction to type, and what you do.

Collectively, these categories of description represent the “whole” of QNYs’ understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration. External horizons provided logical relatedness between categories of description. I discuss these findings and within-person shifts in understanding in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the present study was to gain insight into the phenomenon of sexual orientation by identifying the different ways in which QNY understand this concept through the process of school integration and immigration to Canada. The research question, “What are QNY’s understandings of sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration?”, was addressed by conducting 10 semi-structured interviews with QNY, which were then analyzed using phenomenographic methods outlined in Han and Ellis (2019). In this chapter, I discuss my findings in the context of existing literature, the limitations and strengths of this study, and implications for school psychology practice, training, research, and policy. This is followed by concluding remarks.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

I identified four categories of description, representing four qualitatively different ways of understanding of sexual orientation. These included sexual orientation as: (a) attraction to gender, (b) attraction to type, (c) what you do, and (d) what you feel. From these four categories, a combined 11 internal horizons and five external horizons were discerned. Within-person shifts of understanding were noted throughout the process of immigration to Canada. Within-person shifts occurred along specific internal horizons, and especially along the external horizon of sexual identity labels. The following discussion considers these findings in terms of their relevance and application to current theories and frameworks of sexuality and acculturation, as well as the proposed connection between study findings and the process of school integration.

5.2.1 QNY Understandings and the Sexual Configurations Theory

The most prominent way QNY understood the phenomenon of sexual orientation was as attraction to gender. The referential aspect of this category was attraction to aspects of gender associated with or expressed by another person. As for the internal structure attributed to attraction to gender, 10 participants specified sexual orientation as attraction to perceived or real gender identity and four participants specified attraction to traits associated with femininity and/or masculinity (i.e., F/M). Several participants expressed attraction to both gender identity and F/M as separate but related constructs. Overall, QNY's understandings of sexual orientation as attraction to gender reflected the widely accepted models of gender-centric sexuality documented in extant literature (e.g., gender-centric object-choice and gender-role-performance; Moser, 2016; Storm, 1980; Thing 2010; van Anders, 2015; Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012). Further, participant expressions of attraction to gender that included both gender identity and F/M align conceptually with the "hybrid" gender-centric sexual orientation identified in Thing (2010) and Carrillo and Fontdevila (2014).

However, QNY also understood sexual orientation in ways that fall outside traditional gender-centric models of sexuality. Given the presence of non-gender-specific aspects, the unified whole, or "gestalt," of my results is best discussed and interpreted through the sexuality parameters demarcated by the sexual configurations theory (SCT; van Anders, 2015). The SCT offers a framework to make sense of and organize diverse sexualities. The SCT framework allows for diverse expressions of sexual identity, sexual orientation, and sexual status/behaviour. The following discussion will present the parameters of SCT partnered sexuality (versus unpartnered/solo sexuality) and describe how the four understandings of sexual orientation held

by QNY identified in the present study can be conceptually mapped within the SCT framework and in accordance with broader queer immigration and sexuality literature.

The SCT (van Anders, 2015) identifies gender/sex sexuality as one parameter of partnered sexuality. Within the SCT, gender/sex refers to both “socio-cultural and innate/evolved aspects of women, men, and gender/sex-diverse people” (p. 1179) and describes “whole people/identities and/or aspects of women, men, and people that relate to identity and/or cannot really be sourced specifically to sex or gender” (p. 1181). SCT gender/sex sexuality includes a sexual orientation towards (i.e., attraction to) gender/sex, which incorporates aspects of gender identity as well as traits associated with F/M. As stated, the QNY who participated in the present study predominantly understood sexual orientation as attraction to gender, which included gender identity and traits associated with F/M. Thus, the finding of QNY attraction to gender corresponds with the sexual orientations encompassed by SCT gender/sex sexuality. Further, this finding aligns with extant gender-centric sexuality literature (e.g., Kinsey et al., 1948; Kinsey et al., 1953; Klein et al., 1985; Klein, 1993; Shively & De Cecco, 1977; Storm, 1980). Aspects of the QNY understanding of sexual orientation as what you do can also be mapped within SCT gender/sex sexuality. The referential aspect of what you do includes an orientation towards behaviours enacted with or alongside a person, in a relationship and/or in a situation. What you do was found to be delimited by attraction to gender, which meant that attraction to gender identity and/or F/M traits influenced sexual orientations towards what you do with or alongside a person, in a relationship and/or in a situation. Therefore, aspects of sexual orientation as what you do can be embodied by SCT gender/sex sexuality. These aspects also align with more behaviour-centric conceptualizations of gender-centric sexuality (e.g., Cantú, 2009; Thing, 2010; Vasquez del Aguila, 2012). Finally, for those participants who noted that gender identity was

less relevant to their attraction to gender relative to other aspects (e.g., F/M, kink-alignment etc.), the unimodal attraction strength dimension of SCT gender/sex sexuality might offer a way of representing the relevance differences of such internal structures. While the relative strength of attraction to gender has been embodied by other models and measures of sexuality (e.g., Klein, 1993; Storm, 1980), and current literature understands sexuality as fluid across time (Diamond, 2008; Epstein et al., 2012; Tskay & Rule, 2015), the SCT embodies both concepts. The SCT strength dimension is seen as dynamic and can shift depending on time and context, which best reflects the lived experiences of attraction to gender expressed by some QNY in the present study.

Partner number sexuality is the second partnered sexuality parameter delineated by the SCT (van Anders, 2015). van Anders (2015) describes partner number sexuality as the number of partners people have or are interested in having. Structural aspects of QNY sexual orientation as attraction to type, what you do, and what you feel can be understood in relation to SCT partner number sexuality. Attraction to type referred to attraction to a type of person, relationship, and/or situation, and included the internal horizons of lifestyle congruence, kink-alignment, and undefined “type.” Lifestyle congruence was expressed through interest in persons who also espoused polyamory or ENM, constructs that both imply a greater-than-one partner number. What you do included internal horizons of dating, sexual activity, and kink-activities, which imply a greater-than-zero partner number. What you feel referred to feelings of attraction or affection towards a person or persons, which implies a partner number parameter that is conditional on specific internal structure (e.g., conditional or absent sexual desire may influence the number of partners people have or are interested in having). Given these aspects, my results can be embodied by SCT partner number sexuality. It is worth noting that the proposal of a

distinct sexual orientation towards multiple partners (e.g., a polyamorous sexual orientation) has been highly debated in recent sexuality literature (e.g., Barker, 2005; Klesse, 2014; Manley et al., 2015; Simula et al., 2019; Tweedy, 2011). While my results can be mapped within the SCT partner number sexuality parameter, they did not reveal a qualitatively different understanding of sexual orientation as partner number. Instead, partner number was embedded within several understandings (i.e., attraction to type, what you do, and what you feel). Thus, while my results do contribute to this growing literature base, they should not be generalized beyond the context of this phenomenographic exploration.

The third SCT parameter is eroticism/nurturance (van Anders, 2015). van Anders (2015) defines eroticism as genital arousal and nurturance as feelings of close intimacy. The QNY understanding of what you feel can be easily mapped within SCT eroticism and nurturance. Eroticness correlates with sexual desire, while nurturance is conceptually similar to love/romance and emotional closeness. Moreover, van Anders (2015) notes that eroticism/nurturance intersects with the parameters of gender/sex and partner number, which reflects my finding that QNY what you feel was contextualized by attraction to gender, attraction to type, and what you do. What you feel is also conceptually similar to findings which posit that erotic and romantic affections are distinct dimensions of sexual orientation (e.g., Diamond, 2003; Thompson & Morgan, 2008), or more recent literature which posits that these distinct affections represent separate orientations (e.g., a romantic orientation which is separate from sexual orientation) (e.g., Antonsen et al., 2020; Clark & Zimmerman, 2022).

The fourth and final SCT parameter of partnered sexuality is sexual parameter sexuality. van Anders (2015) meant this to include parameters of sexuality not yet described, named, or conceptually validated in sexuality research. They proposed kink-identification as an example of

a potential additional sexual parameter. The SCT kink sexual orientation was proposed to entail attraction to kink-aligned partnered behaviours over or alongside other sexual parameters. QNY attraction to type and what you do included kink-related internal horizons (i.e., kink-alignment and kink activities, respectively). Given these findings, the results of the present study not only substantiate the SCT proposal of sexual orientations which include preeminent kink-identification, but also contribute to emerging research pertaining to kink and/or BDSM-centric sexualities (e.g., Better & Simula, 2015; Gemberling et al., 2015; Simula, 2012, 2014; Simula et al., 2023). Indeed, kink compatibility being more important than any other aspect of a person's sexual orientation, even gender (as in Lex's case) has been repeatedly documented in recent sexuality literature (e.g., Bauer, 2008; Simula, 2012, 2014; Simula et al., 2023).

Finally, attraction to type included an undefined "type." This undefined (or underdefined) "type" might be best understood as an additional parameter of SCT sexuality that has not yet been named or specifically described. An undefined "type" of sexual orientation might also reflect an attraction to a complex set of traits which fall outside traditional frameworks of binary gender and sexuality. Because such complexities do not fall within widely-accepted models of sexuality, they may be difficult to verbalize beyond terms such as "type" or "sort" to denote a distinct category of attraction. Dean's (2011) queer heterosexualities are those that contest uniform and essentialist understandings of heterosexuality and may be conceptually similar to an undefined (or, underdefined) "type." Regardless, an undefined "type" aligns with the indeterminacy tenet of queer theory (e.g., Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003), as well as with the limits of conceptual awareness denoted in phenomenography (e.g., Marton & Pong, 2005).

The SCT framework (van Anders, 2015) can also be used to understand why sexual identity labels emerged as the most prominent and expansive external horizon within the present study results. The use of sexual identity labels pervaded descriptions of all QNY understandings of sexual orientation. The SCT framework describes sexuality as a construct which includes sexual identity, sexual orientation, and sexual status/behaviour. Sexual identity includes labels which are used to describe the interests, attractions, approaches, and fantasies which make up sexual orientations. While sexual identity is a separate construct from sexual orientation, these constructs are intertwined conceptually and often used interchangeably. This high degree of “interconnectedness” with the SCT framework offers an empirical explanation for my observation that QNY often used sexual identity labels to describe their understandings of sexual orientation.

Finally, within-person shifts of understanding can be placed within the SCT framework. van Anders (2015) notes that the “SCT acknowledges the possibility of within-person shifts over age, context, and/or lifephase” (p. 1185). That is, the relative prominence of SCT sexuality parameters is not fixed and is subject to change. The context of interest to the present study was QNY acculturation experiences through the process of school integration and immigration. The following discussion subsections consider within-person shifts in understanding in relation to relevant queer acculturation frameworks and the process of school integration, respectively.

5.2.2 QNY Within-Person Shifts and Queer Acculturation Literature

Within-person shifts in QNY’s understandings focused on specific external and internal horizons. The most prominent (i.e., explicitly identified) shifts occurred in regard to sexual identity labels and across the internal horizons of attraction to gender and what you do. Understandings of sexual identity labels shifted in terms of structure. Shifts occurred along a

fixed-to-fluid graduated scale, with all within-person shifts reported as moving towards a more fluid structural understanding of sexual identity labels. Indeed, it is important to note that no QNY reported moving towards a more fixed and discrete understanding of sexual identity labels. Understandings of internal horizons shifted in terms of within-person relevancy, with some internal horizons becoming more or less relevant to QNY during specific ages and/or contexts. Beyond the SCT, QNY shifts in understanding align with extant sexuality literature which has found that sexuality is fluid and can shift over time (Diamond, 2008; Epstein et al., 2012). However, to understand these shifts within the context of immigration, I considered current and emerging models of queer acculturation.

I found Fuks et al.'s (2018) integrative model of cultural, sexual, and gender identity development to be relevant to the present study's findings. The authors describe the acculturation processes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (i.e., LGBT) immigrants in Canada at the intersections of cultural identity development and sexual and gender identity development. In their study, the acculturation process occurred through three chronological categories: before immigration, during the decision to immigrate, and after immigration. The application of Fuks et al.'s (2018) model to my findings is substantiated by its uniquely Canadian context; most information regarding queer immigration is US-based. At the time of writing, there does not exist another model of queer acculturation in Canada which incorporates cultural identity development and sexual and gender identity development. Using their study as a model, I propose that QNY within-person shifts can be attributed to sexual identity formation during the process of acculturation to Canadian queer culture and broader Canadian culture. This proposal is consistent with other queer immigration literature which has described sexual identity formation and

development at the intersection of immigration experiences (e.g., Acosta, 2008; Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Mole et al., 2013; Patrick 2015).

To apply Fuks et al.'s (2018) model to my findings, it is important to outline what constitutes present-day sexuality/queer discourse in Western popular culture (i.e., popular culture in Western and Northern Europe, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), Canada, and Oceania). It is important because present-day sexuality/queer discourse theoretically reflects the cultural norms of sexuality to which QNY are primarily exposed. Overall, Western popular culture has increasingly understood aspects of human sexuality as fluid rather than fixed. For example, there has been a documented increase in usage of the term "queer" to describe social identities and orientations that are fluid and reject binary categories (e.g., Worthen, 2023). In the present study, QNY were exposed to such cultural understandings of sexuality throughout their immigration experiences. For example, QNY who built friendships with non-immigrant Canadians reported that their friends understood sexual identity labels as mostly fluid rather than fixed. Shifts in QNY understandings of sexual identity label shifts occurred when these cultural understandings were novel (i.e., not yet considered), and/or when QNY perceived their new cultural environment to be safe enough to actively explore such understandings. Shifts in understanding were often accompanied by changes in sexual identity labels (e.g., shifting from lesbian to bi-lesbian and queer). While I did not specifically explore sexual identity development in QNY, these expressions are consistent with the experiences of sexual identity formation through acculturation described by Fuks et al. (2018).

As for shifts in relevance, by navigating Canadian queer culture and broader Canadian culture, QNY were likely exposed to novel ways of expressing and experiencing sexuality, as well as the opportunity to experiment with such aspects (e.g., Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Mole

et al., 2013). For participants, exposure initiated a process of introspection and behavioural experimentation, which resulted in a relative shift in sexual attractions and preferences. For example, while Lex was first exposed to kink, ENM, and polyamorous lifestyles prior to immigration to Canada, they noted that they came to understand the relevance of these aspects to their own sexual orientation post-immigration after participation in like-minded communities. Shifts in saliency and relative relevance of aspects of sexual orientation through exposure, introspection, and experimentation during acculturation align with findings from Fuks et al. (2018), as well as extant queer acculturation literature, sexual identity and orientation formation research, and broader explorations of human sexuality (e.g., Acosta, 2008; Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Hall et al., 2021; Mole et al., 2013; Patrick, 2014; Thing, 2010; van Anders, 2015).

In summary, the within-person shifts identified by the present study align with current and emerging theories of queer acculturation and can be understood through such models as Fuks et al. (2018). However, the framework of interest to the present study was the process of school integration. The following subsection will address the degree to which the process of school integration can explain or be applied to QNY within-person shifts of understandings of sexual orientation.

5.2.3 QNY Within-Person Shifts and the Process of School Integration

School integration is described as a newcomer's academic, social, emotional, relational, familial, and communal adjustment to student life both inside and outside school spaces (Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Kassan & Mukred, 2022). One aspect of the process of school integration can involve exposure to the cultural norms of the host country. I proposed that acculturation to Canadian cultural norms of sexuality might occur through the process of school integration for QNY who had attended educational settings in Canada. While all participants

reported experiencing integration into at least one new school in the country, the centrality of schools to their immigration and acculturation experiences differed. For example, some participants reported high involvement and identification with their school communities, indicating that schools were their central point of entry and integration to Canadian queer culture and broader Canadian culture. Other participants reported less involvement and identification with schools and cited places of employment and/or socialization as more prominent sites of acculturation to Canadian queer culture and broader Canadian culture. Accordingly, the sites QNY attributed to within-person shifts differed. QNY who experienced greater relative school involvement and identification in Canada attributed within-person shifts to the process of school integration. Conversely, QNY who placed sites of employment and/or socialization as central to their immigration and acculturation experiences in Canada attributed within-person changes to these sites.

While the process of school integration theoretically encompasses more than experiences of acculturation that occur within the physical limits of school spaces (e.g., Gallucci & Kassin, 2019; Kassin & Mukred, 2022), schools are still conceptualized as the focal point of integration experiences. My results indicate that the process of school integration was an important context for some, but not all QNY's experiences of acculturation to Canadian cultural sexuality norms. Instead, it may be more accurate to state that acculturation to Canadian queer culture and broader Canadian culture, which may or may not include the process of school integration, contextualized QNY understandings of sexual orientation in this study. For instance, it would be reasonable to assume that during their initial weeks in Canada, QNY felt pressure to learn and quickly adjust to the demands and expectations of their new educational environments rather than seek out social spaces and/or resources about Canadian culture. For these youth, academic

adjustment to student life rather than cultural and societal integration would likely be the most salient aspect of their initial school integration experiences. And indeed, many participants referred to their initial weeks in Canada when describing their school integration experiences. Once settled into student life, QNY might then direct their attention to less urgent aspects of integrating into Canadian society. That is, the process of learning and negotiating Canadian sexuality norms may have become more central to QNY's immigration experiences only after initial school integration, and thus attributed to broader societal integration.

Previous studies have found that newcomer youth experience systemic and structural barriers that impede the process of school integration (e.g., Kassan et al., 2019; Matejko et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2021; D. J. Smith et al., 2022). QNY who did not report school settings as highly important to their understandings of sexual orientation may have experienced social exclusion and discrimination in educational settings that prevented these youth from meaningfully engaging in their school communities (e.g., Kassan et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2021). This may have been especially true for racialized QNY, who are particularly vulnerable to bullying and discrimination as a result of their multiple marginalized social positions (Daley et al., 2007; Munro et al., 2013; Munroe et al., 2020). For these youth, acculturative experiences and ongoing sexual identity development may have occurred primarily within non-educational contexts such as online spaces (e.g., Acosta, 2008; Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Craig & McInroy, 2014), workplaces, clubs, or other social settings. More research is needed to explore these points and other potential school integration barriers experienced by QNY.

Differential identification, school involvement, and within-person shift attribution among QNY may be a result of the age of my participants. All participants were between the ages of 19 and 24 years old at the time of the semi-structured interview. Accordingly, all participant

schooling experiences in Canada occurred at the post-secondary level. Attending post-secondary education is associated with a greater degree of personal independence relative to the experiences of secondary school students. Therefore, it is likely that the school integration experiences of my QNY participants were more diffuse and less centered around educational sites relative to the experiences of QNY in secondary schools. Further, the decentralized nature of post-secondary schools relative to secondary schools (i.e., no homeroom, diverse degree paths) might have resulted in less exposure to Canadian cultural sexuality norms in educational settings versus sites of QNY employment and/or socialization. There is some school integration literature to support this idea. For instance, findings from Gallucci and Kassan (2019) indicated that some newcomer youth felt less pressure to conform to peer group norms in post-secondary school versus secondary school. For QNY, less pressure to conform may have resulted in less pressure to navigate and negotiate Canadian cultural sexuality norms. Further, meaningful spaces that facilitate school integration may have been less common or under-advertised in highly individualized post-secondary settings (Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Matejko et al., 2021). Indeed, several QNY in the present study expressed regret that they did not know about available supports groups or social clubs during their initial weeks in Canada. Regardless, further research is needed to explore differences in QNY's school integration experiences at both secondary and post-secondary education levels.

5.3 Limitations and Strengths of the Present Study

5.3.1 Limitations

The present study has several limitations. As noted above, the ages and associated educational experiences of my participants likely influenced the utility of school integration as an external horizon to QNY's understandings of sexual orientation. I chose to define youth as

between the ages of 19 and 24 to ensure adequate sexual identity development and sexuality introspection. However, this may have come at the cost of the saliency and prominence of school integration experiences. This limitation of the present study indicates a need to explore the experiences and understandings of sexual orientation held by QNY enrolled in secondary schools, as these QNY may be more consistently exposed to cultural sexuality norms within educational contexts.

Second, this study was limited by current usages of the term “sexual orientation” which, as van Anders (2015) explains, “awkwardly and imprecisely mark a category and a subcategory.” That is, while empirically sexual orientation refers to attraction, fantasies, and arousal towards a specific parameter of sexuality, sexual orientation is also used to “refer to itself plus sexual identity and sexual status/behavior” (p.1179). During the semi-structured interview, participants were asked to describe what sexual orientation meant to them. Some participants focussed predominately on aspects of sexual identity which complicated categorization of interview excerpts. While I believe that the resultant categories of description are trustworthy and reflective of QNY’s experiences and understandings of sexual orientation, the chance remains that I wrongly assumed descriptions of specific sexual identities implied specific orientations (e.g., interpreting a lesbian sexual identity to entail an orientation towards women). Future research in this area might circumvent this communication complication by avoiding the term “sexual orientation” during interviews and specifically asking participants about their attractions, fantasies, and arousals.

Third, most participants were sampled through paid and unpaid advertisements on Facebook and Instagram, which are social media platforms. The exception was one participant who responded to a recruitment email sent out to university pride associations in BC. This

recruitment method limited participants to mostly social media users, or more specifically, social media users who were willing to respond to advertisements on Facebook and Instagram. Social media sites can be useful sources of information for youth during gender identity and sexual identity development (e.g., Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Craig & McInroy, 2014). However, the results of the present study may, in part, reflect the social media usage of my participants. That is, my recruitment method limited my results to QNY who were likely exposed to online discussions of sexuality, and excluded understandings held by QNY who are not social media users. As such, it may be important for future studies to employ a wider variety of recruitment methods in order to obtain a more heterogeneous sample (i.e., Bowden, 2000; Marton & Booth, 1997; Trigwell, 2000, 2006).

Next, phenomenography (Marton, 1975, 1981, 1986) and queer theory (Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003) are both situated in Western ideologies and ontologies. Phenomenography as a methodology was developed by researchers in principally white and Western cultures, and thus embodies Western ways of conceptualizing reality. While queer theory strives to decenter models of sexuality that prioritize and idealize social majority locations (i.e., whiteness, heterosexuality, cis-genderedness etc.), like phenomenography, queer theory is tied to Western ways of understanding the world. Given that many of my participants originated from non-Western cultures, the use of phenomenography and queer theory to explore non-Western lived experiences is a limitation of the present study. Future research should seek to employ methodologies and theoretical frameworks which embody non-Western ways of conceptualizing reality.

Finally, while I took steps to ensure rigour, several circumstances may have limited the extent to which the present study met the criteria outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989). Critics of

phenomenographic research often point to a lack of objectivity throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the issue is not whether the researcher has influenced the research process, rather it is when researchers fail to adequately address the issue. The proposed solution is for the researcher to engage in reflexivity regarding their biases and to take action to minimize the influence of such biases. While I engaged in reflexivity regarding the influence of my social location and lived experiences throughout the research process, the chance remains that I influenced results in ways that I did not identify or control for. For instance, I may have inadvertently influenced participants to discuss aspects of sexual orientation that I was most familiar with or that I found empirically interesting. I may have emphasized certain immigration experiences over others, leading participants to discuss those experiences further instead of exploring different aspects. Further, my own empirical knowledge of sexuality may have influenced which aspects of sexual orientation were identified in the present study. Lastly, the present study was my first experience conducting a phenomenographic exploration, and data analysis was completed by myself alone.

Phenomenographic analysis and interpretation is a complex and demanding process. While the supervision I received from my co-supervisors was invaluable and I closely adhered to the steps for data analysis outlined by Dahlgren & Fallsberg (1991) and McCosker et al. (2004) in Han and Ellis (2019), results of present study may have benefited from the oversight of an experienced phenomenographer, as suggested by Sin (2010). While I was able to informally consult with members from queer and newcomer communities, transcript extractions and emerging categories were not verified by another phenomenographer (e.g., through interrater reliability). Thus, it is important to stress that these results are intertwined with my own perceptions and interpretations of the data, and the chance remains that my inexperience affected

the credibility of my results. In sum, while I strove to closely follow the four criteria for rigour (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), it would be irresponsible and unethical to assume that I met these criteria perfectly.

5.3.2 Strengths

Despite these limitations, there are several strengths to the present study. Firstly, these results contribute to the growing literature base concerned with the experiences of newcomer youth who hold minoritized sexualities. Extant research has largely focussed on either newcomer youth status or queer identity, and has failed to consider the intersections of these social locations through the process of school integration in Canada. In the present study the experiences of youth who embodied both social locations was explored, and it was found that the process of school integration was significant to some, but not all, QNY experiences of immigration and acculturation.

Second, this study used a novel approach to exploring understandings of sexual orientation. To date, there have been no studies that have employed a phenomenographic methodology to map understandings of sexual orientation. Therefore, the categories of description identified in the present study are the first documented phenomenographic understandings of sexual orientation, for QNY or otherwise. Further, the resultant QNY understandings of sexual orientation contained aspects of that fell outside traditional models of gender-centric sexuality. These results contribute to a growing base of literature concerned with exploring and identifying non-gender-centric aspects of human sexuality (e.g., Better & Simula, 2015; van Anders, 2015).

A third strength of the present study is the use of queer theory as a theoretical framework (Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003). As stated in the introduction to this thesis, there is a

consensus among prominent queer theorists that the primary authorities involved in the exploration and research of minoritized issues should be members of that minoritized group. Accordingly, this study centered and prioritized the voices of QNY; first, by recruiting participants with these social locations and second, by creating space for QNY to describe and express their understandings of sexual orientation. Further, while I am not a newcomer to Canada, nor do I have significant newcomer experience, I do hold a minoritized sexuality. As such, I shared an important intersection of lived experience with my participants. In this way, all primary authorities involved in the present study, primary researcher included, were those who held the minoritized sexual identities of interest. Moreover, my lived experience as queer person contributed to the rapport-building and data analysis processes and as such, contributed to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the present study.

In this vein, the steps and methods I used to ensure rigour were a significant strength for the present study. While there were some limitations, I closely adhered to steps outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and described in detail in chapter three. As stated, my own lived experiences as a queer person facilitated rapport building with participants throughout the interview process. Other strengths included the journal I maintained throughout the research process which facilitated my reflexivity and contributed to the credibility of the present study. I used this journal to document preconceptions and biases during data collection and to engage in critical reflexive analysis of emergent results throughout the iterative data analysis process. Further, I consulted with queer community members, newcomers to Canada, and peers outside both communities throughout data analysis in order to ensure that my results were logical and parsimonious, and that the intended meaning of my results was clearly communicated (e.g., Åkerlind, 2012; Marton & Booth, 1997; Sin, 2010). I considered the potential impact of the

present study to QNY, queer community members, and newcomers to Canada, and mindfully took steps to ensure that my results represented participant experiences in a manner that was truthful and empowering. For instance, most phenomenographies do not offer participant profiles or describe individual experiences as the aim of phenomenography is to explore collective understandings of phenomena (e.g., Marton & Booth, 1997; Han & Ellis, 2019). I provided participant demographics and described specific participants' experiences alongside collective understandings in order to establish trustworthiness and centre participant voices. Overall, my adherence to the criteria for rigour outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and the steps I took to meet these criteria represent a strength of the present study.

5.4 Implications and Considerations for School Psychology

Results of the present study have important implications and considerations for school psychology practice, training, research, and policy. Given my queer theory theoretical framework, it was my aim that the outcomes and implications of the present study should benefit the individuals and communities whose experiences are represented. Thus, the following implications and considerations for school psychology are meant to benefit QNY, broader queer communities, and newcomer youth to Canada.

5.4.1 Sexual Diversity Awareness in School Psychology

School psychology, as a field and a profession, has a responsibility to address the diverse needs of the communities served by its members, including those of QNY (e.g., Blake et al., 2016; National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2017, 2018). This study documented understandings of sexual orientation held by QNY, some of which fall outside of widely accepted models of gendered sexuality. SOGI resources and tools that espouse such models may not currently incorporate alternative ways of understanding sexual orientation, and

as such, fail to be relevant or applicable to many QNY. Naser et al. (2022) suggests that lack of representation and/or misrepresentation of sexual and gender diverse youth (who include QNY) can cause direct harm to these youth and is a form of curricular violence. Therefore, school psychologists working directly with youth in schools and other settings should seek to promote inclusive and intersectional understandings of sexuality in order to create safe and supportive school climates (e.g., McCabe et al., 2013; Snapp et al., 2015).

Moreover, school psychologists are uniquely positioned to promote such awareness within the systems where they practice and hold influence (McCabe, 2014; NASP, 2017, 2018). Successful advocacy and allyship requires adequate training and awareness of issues pertaining to queer students (Arora et al., 2016). Unfortunately, a national survey of school-based mental health practitioners found that the vast majority of school psychologists received little to no training related to practice with queer students or promotion of social justice issues within schools (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network [GLSEN] et al., 2019). While this survey was based in the US, such implications remain relevant for school psychology training programs in Canada. Therefore, school psychology programs in Canada should seek to incorporate up-to-date research which centres queer voices into their training curricula.

Finally, school psychologists are also called to advocate for policies and practices that benefit and empower all students (McCabe, 2014; NASP, 2018). NASP (2018) offers school psychologists several suggestions to support queer students, including developing and implementing comprehensive antibullying policies, and advocating for inclusive policies that ensure students have access to needed amenities. In order for school psychologists in Canada to comprehensively address the needs of QNY, it is important to have an understanding of the group-specific needs of QNY students in Canada. While there is a growing literature base

pertaining to the experiences and needs of QNY (e.g., Asakura, 2017; Flett, 2021; Marshall, 2021; Munro et al., 2013; Munroe et al., 2020), research on the school-based support needs of QNY in Canada is limited. Thus, the following subsection will outline the school-based support needs of QNY identified by the present study.

5.4.2 School-Based Support Needs of QNY at Canadian Post-Secondary Schools

QNY experiences of integration into post-secondary schools in Canada revealed the presence of supports they had found helpful or supports that they wished had been available during the process of school integration and immigration. Two implications for school psychology practice and policy emerged. First, participant experiences indicated a need for school-based supports that are tailored to the specific needs of QNY. Specific school-based supports included easier access to information regarding queer-specific services and related needs during QNY's initial weeks in Canada. This is in line with other school integration literature wherein newcomer youth identified a need for better support during the first few weeks of attending school (e.g., D. J. Smith et al., 2021). QNY described visa delays as a result of passport gender identity/biological sex differences, retention of deadnames on school record transfers, and difficulty accessing gender-affirming healthcare and gender-affirming healthcare information, among other difficulties. Collectively, participants in the present study expressed a need for queer-informed newcomer supports from their post-secondary institutions in Canada.

The second school-based support need centered on connecting QNY to queer communities in Canada. Connection to queer communities was noted as an important aspect of immigration and acculturation for study participants. QNY noted the important role queer communities played in their resettlement experiences or, conversely, expressed a need to connect with such communities. Further, QNY who had yet to connect queer community members noted

feeling lonely and isolated. They expressed that they would have appreciated resources regarding local queer communities from their educational institutions during initial school integration and immigration experiences.

Awareness of QNY's school-based support needs raises an opportunity for institutions to take a more intersectional approach to supporting newcomer students. In order to address QNY's school-based needs comprehensively, institutional organizations should work collaboratively to implement QNY-specific policies, procedures, and/or programs. For instance at the University of British Columbia, SOGI UBC might work alongside student immigration services to develop policies and procedures to guide QNY through the initial stages of school integration. These policies might include the development of community-connecting resources and programs alongside information regarding access to gender affirming care in Canada. In line with NASP's (2017, 2018) call for advocacy and allyship, school psychologists might facilitate the implementation of these policies and procedures. However, it should be noted that the school-based support needs for QNY identified in the present study are by no means comprehensive. As previously stated, my results represent a snapshot of 10 QNY's experiences of post-secondary education in Canada. Therefore, further research into school psychology which addresses the unique needs of QNY in different educational settings is warranted.

5.4.3 Considerations for Future Research

As stated above, there is a need for further research in school psychology and allied disciplines that incorporates diverse sexualities, well as research that addresses the issue of school-based supports for QNY. Such research could entail program development and exploratory research to inform policies and procedures in school psychology. More broadly, there is a need to address the impact of intersecting marginalized cultural, sexual, and gender

identities (among others) held by newcomer youth through the process of school integration and immigration in Canada. Through the present study, I explored the immigration experiences of queer youth who may or may not have also embodied marginalized/non-cis genders. As such, I prioritized the intersections of sexuality and immigration/culture of origin relative to other social locations (such as gender) during my semi-structured interviews with participants and during the data analysis process. However, experiences and expressions of sexuality and gender can be highly intertwined, as was the case for many of my participants. Thus, future research in school psychology and school integration should endeavour to explore the intersecting social locations of immigration/culture of origin, sexuality, and gender in an attempt to avoid artificially separating aspects of lived experiences.

Other important future queer immigration and school integration research might focus on neurodiversity, Indigeneity, and socioeconomic status, among other themes. For instance, in the present study many participants reported being neurodivergent (i.e., having differences in functioning which affect how a person experiences and interacts with the world. Rosqvist et al., 2020). Indeed, emerging literature suggests a high prevalence of individuals within the queer community who are also neurodivergent (George & Stokes, 2018; Glidden et al., 2016). As such, future queer immigration literature should incorporate this intersection. There is literature pertaining to the intersections of immigration and Indigenous ways of experiencing and understanding sexuality and gender (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1999), but none that have explored these experiences through the lens of school integration. Socioeconomic status and subsequent access to means is another intersection which differentially impacts immigration experiences (e.g., Kern et al., 2020) and should be considered alongside other intersections in future research. Research that explores these intersections might continue to employ a queer theory framework to ensure

that results uplift and empower the voices of these individuals and their respective communities. Other critical theoretical frameworks, such as feminist, multicultural, indigenous, and/or emergent neurodiversity studies (e.g., Andersen et al., 2020; Hooks, 2015; Rosqvist et al., 2020; May & Sleeter, 2010) might also be applied for a more intersectional theoretical approach.

Another direction research in school psychology could take would be to focus on the school integration experiences of QNY in *secondary* schools in Canada. As I noted in a previous section, the ages of my participants during immigration meant that their education experience in Canada was limited to the post-secondary level. This likely affected the centrality of school integration as a framework for interpreting immigration experiences. Therefore, more research at the secondary level is needed to further explore QNY experiences of school integration.

Finally, there remains a need for further exploration of non-Western and alternative understandings of sexual orientation. The present study represents a snapshot of 10 QNY's collective understandings of sexual orientation and was both empowered and limited by its methodology, method, and theoretical framework. Future research might explore understandings of sexual orientation through different methodologies, methods, theoretical frameworks, etc. For instance, a methodology that gives more focus to individual understandings (versus phenomenography which is concerned with the collective), or a survey-based method that allowed for a greater number of participants, are potential alternative strategies for the exploration of QNY understandings of sexual orientation. Further, future research might consider exploring QNY experiences of sexual orientation at different stages of immigration. For instance, such research could survey or interview QNY as they arrive in Canada, after a year and then after five years. A longitudinal design would allow researchers to track shifts in understandings of

sexual orientation without relying on retroactive reports which can be influenced by memory accuracy and ability to recall previous ways of understanding.

5.5 Chapter Summary and Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the phenomenon of sexual orientation by identifying the different ways in which QNY understand this phenomenon through the process of school integration and immigration to Canada. The research question was addressed through semi-structured interviews with 10 QNY. Subsequent data analysis revealed four categories of description, representing four qualitatively different ways of understanding sexual orientation. These included understanding sexual orientation as: (a) attraction to gender, (b) attraction to type, (c) what you do, and (d) what you feel. From these four categories, a combined 11 internal horizons and five external horizons were discerned. Within-person shifts of understanding were noted throughout the process of immigration to Canada. The four understandings of sexual orientation can be understood alongside the sexual configurations theory (SCT; van Anders, 2015) and the within-person shifts aligned with Fuks et al.'s (2018) theory and model of queer immigration and acculturation. The process of school integration was found to be central to some, but not all, QNY experiences of immigration and acculturation. Limitations and strengths of the present study were then discussed, followed by the implications and considerations for school psychology practice, training, research, and policy.

The present study contributed to extant queer immigration and school integration literature by identifying qualitatively different ways in which QNY understand sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration. Further, the present study contributed to queer theory literature by designing and conducting this research in a manner that prioritized the voices of QNY.

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Appendices

Appendix A Informed Consent



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty of Education

Immigration and Change: A Phenomenographic Exploration of Conceptions of Sexual Orientation through the Process of School Integration

Informed Consent Form

Principal Investigator(s): Laurie Ford, PhD, Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology and Special Education,
Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia
Email: xxx@ubc.ca
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Anusha Kassan, PhD, RPsych, Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology and Special Education,
Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia
Email: xxx@ubc.ca
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Co-Investigator: Julia Toews, MA candidate, Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology and Special Education
Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia
Email: xxx@student.ubc.ca

Dear Participant,

Please read the following letter carefully. This is a request for you to take part in the study we are doing with sexually diverse newcomer youth in Canada. This project is part of a master's degree in School and Applied Child Psychology at the University of British Columbia for Julia Toews. If after reading the letter, you would like to take part in the study, please sign one copy and send it to the researcher at xxx@student.ubc.ca. Keep the other copy for your own records.

Participants:

Taking part in this study means that you:

- **Are 19-24 years old**
- **Identify as sexually diverse (i.e., non-heterosexual)**

- **Immigrated to Canada in the last five years**
- **Have attended at least one year of high school or post-secondary school in Canada**
- **Are comfortable with conversational English**
- **Have an understanding of sexual orientation.**

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the phenomenon of sexual orientation by identifying the different ways in which sexually diverse newcomer youth understand sexual orientation through the process of school integration and immigration to Canada. Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) educational resources have been identified as important facilitators in schools for the health and wellbeing of sexually diverse students. However, despite the positive impact of these resources, there is a need for more multi-cultural, intersectional SOGI resources. This study aims to address this need by examining the ways sexually diverse newcomer youth understand sexual orientation through the process of school integration.

Taking Part in our Study Means:

1. If you agree to take part in our study, you will participate in a one-on-one interview about your experience and understanding of sexual orientation through integration into a Canadian school.
2. If you agree to take part in the study, we will ask you to answer a brief (10 minutes) background questionnaire before scheduling the interview.
3. The interview will take place over Zoom at a date and time that works for both you and the researcher.
4. The researcher will use a secure Zoom account licensed by the University of British Columbia. You will receive a secure Zoom link by email prior to the interview. The researcher will use the Zoom waiting room function to ensure only you have access to the interview.
5. The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.
6. The researcher will take electronic notes and the conversation will be video and/or audio recorded if you give your consent to do so. The audio recording will be transcribed by Zoom and checked over by the researcher after the interview.
7. The information gathered during the interview, including the interview notes and transcripts, will be used as data in Julia Toews' thesis. Your identity will remain confidential, but excerpts and/or direct quotes from the interview(s) may be used anonymously in the text of the thesis's results chapter.

8. The outcomes of the study will be determined by the research findings. Besides this thesis project, possible project outcomes may include journal articles, a report summarizing findings, or conference presentations. When project results are determined and available, you will not be able to withdraw your contributions. Your name and any other identifiable information will be removed from your contributions to the study.
9. Only the Principal Investigators (Dr. Laurie Ford and Dr. Anusha Kassan) and the co-investigator (Julia Toews) will have access to the information gathered through the interview(s). **No individual information will be reported, and no participant identified by name** in any reports about the study. The information collected will be password protected, encrypted, and stored on secure servers owned by the University of British Columbia, located in Canada. The only people who will have access to the information you give us are the researchers working on this study.
10. It is not expected that you will experience significant discomfort during the process or risks as a result of your participation. However, given the topic of the research, it is possible that the interview could bring up uncomfortable memories (e.g., those regarding homophobia/biphobia, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, bullying etc.). You are encouraged to only share experiences you are comfortable discussing with the researcher. Nonetheless, you have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.
11. If you indicated you are interested in the results of this study, we will contact once a summary of the findings is available.
12. All eligible participants selected to participate in this study will receive a \$25 CAD gift card incentive to participate. You will be required to show photo identification over Zoom to receive this incentive. Your photo identification will not be recorded. You will receive a \$25 CAD gift card via email after the Zoom interview. You will not be penalized this incentive should you choose to withdraw from the Zoom interview.

Contact for information about the study:

- If you have any questions or desire further information about this project you may contact Dr. Laurie Ford, Dr. Anusha Kassan or Julia Toews at the email or phone number at the top of this page.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research participants:

- If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent to participate in this Research Project

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this research project. When you sign below it also means that you have received a copy of this consent form (pages 1, 2 & 3) for your own records.

Please check all that apply:

Yes, I consent to participate in this study.

IF YES:

Video Recording:

Yes, I give my consent for the interview to be video recorded.

Audio Recording:

Yes, I give my consent for the interview to be audio recorded.

Your Name (Please Print)

Your Signature/E-Signature

Date

Appendix B Debriefing Form



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty of Education

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Should you have any further questions or concerns regarding your participation in this study, please contact either Julia Toews (Co-investigator; M.A. student), Dr. Laurie Ford and/or Dr. Anusha Kassan (Co-principal investigators).

Concerns or Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant or your experience participating in this study, please contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598

Support Resources

Crisis Help Across Canada – Association for Suicide Prevention

<https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/>

Call 1.833.456.4566

Text ‘Start’ to 45645

The Colour Project

<https://www.thecolourproject.ca/>

One-on-one anonymous text-based, stigmatization-free, peer-based support for individuals struggling with mental illness.

QMUNITY – BC’s Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Resource Centre

<https://qmunity.ca/>

Free counselling, information and referrals, access to gender-affirming chestwear and youth one-on-one peer support.

MOSIAC – Services for Newcomer LGBTQIA+ Refugees

<https://mosaicbc.org/our-programs/services-for-newcomer-lgbtq-refugees/>

I Belong Program: LGBTQIA+ community resources, peer support, individual/group counselling support, one-on-one social mentorship.

The University of British Columbia (UBC) Scarfe Free Counselling Clinic

A free counselling clinic based at the Psychological Services and Counselling Training Centre (PSCTC) at UBC. They mainly operate from September to April.

<https://ecps.educ.ubc.ca/counselling-centres/scarfe-free-counselling-clinic/>

To Learn More

If you are interested in learning more about understandings of sexual orientation through immigration, youth immigration and/or school integration, the follow list includes recommended readings:

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Appendix C Screening Questionnaire



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Screening Questionnaire

Name: _____

Date: _____

This information is being collected to determine your eligibility to participate in a study about immigration and sexual orientation. This study is being conducted by Dr. Laurie Ford and Dr. Anusha Kassan (co-principal investigators), and Julia Toews (co-investigator) at the University of British Columbia.

Only the principal investigators and the co-investigator will have access to the information gathered by this questionnaire. Information from eligible participants who are selected to participate will be password protected, encrypted, and stored on secure servers owned by the University of British Columbia.

Not all those who respond to this questionnaire will be selected to participate. Information from respondents who are not selected to participate will be destroyed immediately. No copies of information from non-participants will be retained on servers owned by the University of British Columbia.

Concerns? Please contact Dr. Laurie Ford (co-principal investigator) at xxx@ubc.ca, Dr. Anusha Kassan (co-principal investigator) at xxx@ubc.ca or Julia Toews (co-investigator) at xxx@student.ubc.ca

Please answer the following questions by circling or highlighting the appropriate answer.

1. Do you sexually identify as non-heterosexual? (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, bi-curious, pansexual, fluid, queer, questioning, asexual, demisexual, activo, pasivo etc.). If you identify as a sexual identity other than heterosexual, please mark "Yes." This may include sexual identities not listed above.
 - Yes
 - No
2. Are you 19-24 years old?
 - Yes
 - No
3. Did you immigrate to Canada in the last five years?
 - Yes
 - No
4. Have you attended at least one year of schooling in Canada?
 - Yes

- No
5. Are you able to participate in an interview in English? (i.e., without a translator).
- Yes
 - No
6. If asked, could you describe what sexual orientation means to you?
- Yes
 - No

Appendix D Demographic Questionnaire



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Demographic Questionnaire Queer Newcomer Youth

Please answer the following questions by filling in the blank sections. If you need any assistance or clarification, please feel free to ask the researcher. If there are any questions that you feel uncomfortable with, you are free to decline to answer any or all questions.

Background Information:

1. Current Age: _____
2. (Dis)Ability: _____
3. Social class: _____
4. Religion / Spirituality: _____
5. Languages spoken: _____

Migration:

6. Ethnicity / ies: _____
7. Country of birth: _____
8. Country of origin: _____
9. Nationality / ies: _____
10. Year of immigration to Canada: _____
11. Current immigration status: _____
12. Reasons for immigrating to Canada: _____
13. Who did you immigrate with? _____
14. Area of Metro Vancouver / Lower Mainland where you currently live: _____
15. People with whom you currently live (please do not include specific names): _____

Sexual and Gender Identity

1. Gender Identity: _____
2. Sexual Identity: _____

3. What was your age when you first became aware of your sexual identity? _____
4. What are your preferred pronouns? _____

Educational / Occupational Information:

1. In what grade did you begin your schooling in Canada? _____
2. What is your highest level of educational attainment? (Please indicate whether completed or in progress).

3. How many years have you spent as a student in Canada, in total? _____
4. Are you currently a post-secondary student in Canada? _____
5. Are you currently employed? If so, where? _____
6. Do you currently participate in any extracurricular activities? If so, which ones?

Appendix E Interview Protocol



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Interview Protocol Queer Newcomer Youth

Topic A: Open Ended Warm Up Questions

Key concept: Establish rapport, get a sense of who the participant is, and help make them feel comfortable.

- 1) Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? What would you like me to know before we begin?
 - a. What are some things you enjoy doing? Hobbies?
 - b. Can you tell me about your family/social network?
 - c. What are some of your goals or dreams for the future?

Topic B: Understandings of Sexual Orientation

Key concept: Transition the interview into the first overarching question of the study to provide them with the opportunity to focus on whatever is most important and salient to them.

The focus of this study is to learn about the ways queer newcomer youth understand sexual orientation through the process of integrating into high school or post-secondary school in Canada.

Sub-topic 1: Personal Understandings

- 1) How would you describe sexual orientation?
 - a. *Clarifying questions, to be used as needed:*
 - i. What does sexual orientation mean to you?
 - ii. Can you define sexual orientation to me?
- 2) Why do you think that [PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING] is what sexual orientation means to you?
 - a. *Clarifying questions, to be used as needed:*
 - i. How do you think you came to that understanding?
 - ii. When/where were you first exposed to [PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING]?
- 3) Were you exposed to any other ways of understanding sexual orientation?
 - a. Why do think [ALTERNATIVE UNDERSTANDING] doesn't fit your own experience?

Sub-topic 2: Pre-migration experiences

- 1) Did you know you were queer before coming to Canada?
 - a. If yes:
 - i. How did you know?
 - ii. What was this like for you in your home country?
- 2) How did you understand sexual orientation before moving to Canada?
- 3) How do people in your home country understand/describe sexual orientation? Your family?
- 4) How long before you left your home country did you know you would be coming to Canada?
- 5) Immigration can be a bit of a culture shock. Were you able to prepare? If so, how?
- 6) How did you feel about coming to Canada? Were you part of the decision to move here?
- 7) Before coming to Canada, did you have an idea about how Canadians understand sexual orientation? How would you have described LGBTQ culture in Canada before moving here?
 - a. Are there similarities/differences to how you did/currently understand sexual orientation?

Sub-topic 3: Introduction to Canadian Schools

- 1) What were your first few days in your new Canadian school like?
- 2) What was challenging about the start of school? What was easy?
- 3) Were there any supports for queer or LGBTQ students at your school? What did they look like?
 - a. How were these supports helpful?
 - b. How could educators improve supports for LGBTQ students? For queer newcomers?
- 4) How was the topic of sexual orientation approached in your school? (if applicable).
 - a. How was sexual orientation described in school/through school resources?

Sub-topic 4: Social transition

- 1) What was your experience of making friends in high school/post-secondary school in Canada?
- 2) How do you think your peers/friends would describe sexual orientation?

Sub-topic 5: Community involvement

- 1) Have you become involved in any community organizations since moving to Canada? If so, what has that been like?
- 2) Did you access any out-of-school supportive services? If so, what was that like for you?
- 3) Did you join any after school clubs, if so, what was that like for you?
- 4) Did you participate in any LGBTQ organizations, and if so, what has that been like? Where such services available to you?
 - a. How did these organizations describe/explain sexual orientation?

Sub-topic 6: Return to Personal Understanding

- 1) Given what we have discussed today, is there anything you would like to add to your personal understanding of sexual orientation?

Topic C: Process Questions

Key concepts: Reflecting on the interview process, allowing participant to add any information he/she deems pertinent.

- 1) What was this interview like for you?
- 2) Was there anything helpful about this interview/discussion?
- 3) Is there anything that you would like to add about your experience?
- 4) What prompted you to participate?

Discuss debriefing form and end interview.