LGBTQ Youth’s Development in Ontario Schools

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LGBTQ Youth’s Development in Ontario Schools

By

Sijia Li

A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
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at the University of Windsor

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LGBTQ Youth’s Development in Ontario Schools

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March 21, 2018
Author’s Declaration of Originality

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Abstract

In order to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students, the Ontario government recently introduced a new sex education curriculum that seeks to educate all students about the LGBTQ community. Through a progressive initiative, the rise of social media and information technology have changed the way in which students interact and learn, so it is critical to develop a current understanding of struggles that LGBTQ students face, whether it be with conventional forms of discrimination and bullying, or instances of cyberbullying. It is likewise important to understand how these issues impact their self-perceptions and development. To understand these concerns, the current study employs an extensive literature review, then, through the lens of the anti-oppressive practice (AOP) and theory of change, explores potential solutions and considers the effectiveness of Ontario’s new sex education curriculum. The findings suggest that qualitative, longitudinal, and comparative research will need to be done in the future to determine the nature of the issues that current LGBTQ students face and the effectiveness of proposed solutions.

Key Words: sex-education, LGBTQ youth, suicide, discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, Ontario
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Introduction

As there are more and more LGBTQ youth in Ontario, how to appropriately address LGBTQ-related issues are becoming increasingly important in and out of schools. Canada, a country that experienced a somewhat successful period of dealing with LGBTQ-related issues, such as legalizing same-sex couples, involving LGBTQ-related policies in schools, and explicitly including gender identity under human rights codes, still faces several challenges. Specifically, LGBTQ youth face several challenges at school, such as being bullied verbally and physically by peers, feeling depressed, having difficulty in getting along with others (Schneider & Dimito, 2008). These negative experiences might affect LGBTQ adolescents’ mental and physical health and cause severe consequences, such as mental health issues and suicidal ideation.

This paper first discusses some challenges the LGBTQ population face in Ontario. For example, highlighting a mental health challenge, the American Psychiatric Association (2018) stated that discrimination against the LGBTQ population causes mental health issues such as Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depressive disorder. Other forms of challenges faced by the LGBTQ population include insufficient healthcare resources, family misunderstanding and intolerance, cultural adversity and child abuse. Next, I analyze a variety of policies and regulations regarding the legalization of same-sex marriage, the statement from Toronto District School Board which prohibited any forms of discrimination towards the LGBTQ community in Canada, specifically in Ontario, to briefly introduce the LGBTQ-related issues. One of the purposes of this paper is to explore the barriers that LGBTQ youth currently meet in Ontario, such as being bullied physically and
psychologically. There is no doubt that LGBTQ youth are targets of discrimination and harassment in school (Schneider, & Dimito, 2008). Because of these negative influences, LGBTQ youth are more likely to suffer from chronic stresses which lead to severe physical and mental harms. Furthermore, this paper proposes corresponding suggestions to address these issues, particularly reducing discrimination and bullying in schools, and improving LGBTQ youth physical and mental health. Teachers and peers could play important roles in decreasing homophbic, transphobic and biphobic behaviors by establishing anti-discrimination regulations and programs. For principals and school administrators, establishing anti-discrimination policies can prevent LGBTQ youth from bullying and harassment so that students can live in a safe environment. Workshops are essential in that professional trainings assist teachers and students to know accurate information about LGBTQ-related issues.

Educators, school administrators, parents and teachers should take responsibility to reduce bullying victimization in schools. This should be done in order to help establish a positive and safe school climate that is the precondition of successful academic outcomes for all students (Wang et al., 2014). Namely, in this paper I explore what future research needs to be undertaken to provide a better and safer learning environment in schools. I further suggest how educators can address homophobic, transphobic and biphobic harassment in schools. Theory of Change and Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) will be used to explore the solutions based on an analysis of the history and current phenomenon of LGBTQ youth. Future studies need to be done to explore what steps are needed to help solve the problems that Ontario LGBTQ youth face.
Background

Definitions of LGBTQ. According to STOP-homophobia (n.d.), LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender and it has been adopted by the majority of sexuality and gender identity-based community centers in the United States and Canada. As Mental Help Net (2005) stated: “The terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) describe distinct groups within the gay culture” (para.1). The initialism LGBT is intended to demonstrate a diversity of sexuality and gender cultures. “L” stands for lesbian. A lesbian woman is one who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women. Many lesbians prefer to be called lesbian rather than gay. The word gay refers generally to lesbian; A bisexual person is someone who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of both sexes; Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity differ from that usually associated with their birth sex. In 1996, the letter Q is added for those who identify as queer or are questioning their sexual identity.

Definitions of Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. Discrimination and bulling are more likely to happen when students have negative and uncomfortable feelings about the LGBTQ population, which fuels homophobia, transphobia or biphobia. Homophobia comes from the Greek ‘homo’, which means the same, and the word phobia, which means fear. It is defined as a fear or a negative attitude towards gay people, or, people who are perceived to be non-heterosexual (STOP-homophobia, n.d.). According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary (n.d.), the definition of transphobia is “fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender or transsexual people.” To sum up, homophobia and transphobia refer to the fear and discrimination towards LGBTQ people, or people who are perceived to be coming from
these populations. LGBT Resource Center (n.d.) defines biphobia as “the potential, not the requirement, for involvement with more than one gender/sex. This involvement may mean sexually, emotionally, in reality, or in fantasy” (para. 2). Biphobia refers to the fear or intolerance towards bisexual people. Unfortunately, in and out of schools, homophobia, transphobia and biphobia are common experiences for many in the LGBTQ population.

A Brief Summary of LGBTQ-related Policies across Canada. In the past, we lived in a society that typically only recognized two distinct genders (the gender binary, male-female), and one ‘normal’ sexual orientation. Although these views still remain, much has changed. In fact, there has been much progress on LGBTQ issues over the past 15 years in Canada. The Canadian government has introduced multiple policies to address issues faced by the LGBTQ communities. Historically, in 1978, Immigration Law shifted to permit homosexuals to immigrate to Canada. Later, from 1980 to 1990, the government forbade all forms of discrimination towards lesbian and gay across the country. In 1996, the Canadian Human Rights Act was amended to prohibit discrimination because of sexual orientation and gender identity (Government of Canada, 2017). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 15 also stated that each person is equal in spite of different religion, race, nation, color, sex, etc. (Constitution Act, 1982). Moreover, the same-sex marriage became legal in 2003 in Ontario, Canada. During 2005, other provinces in Canada legalized same-sex marriage as well (MacIntosh, Reissing, & Andruff, 2010). These steps affect gay and lesbian couples deeply, and it seems like the public is becoming more tolerant towards LGBTQ group. From Federal Civil Marriage Act (2005c), part three:
In respect of marriage between persons of the same sex, of the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the expression of their beliefs in respect of marriage as the union of a man and woman to the exclusion of all others based on that guaranteed freedom. (para.1)

It indicates that same-sex marriage in Canada is legal and protected. This big step makes a difference for gay and lesbian couples in that their life satisfaction improves significantly, and they are able to express their sexual orientation the same as heterosexual couples. To some extent, Federal Civil Marriage Act (2005c) symbolizes the acceptance of same-sex marriage. Even though Canada has legalized the same-sex marriage since 2005, homosexual couples represent a minority part. According to Statistics Canada (2017), there were approximately 20 000 married lesbians and gay couples, and more than 40 000 common-law same-sex couples. However, same-sex couples represented only 0.8% of the whole population across Canada in the year of 2011. Clearly, they are a minority group. Minority group is defined as a group that is different from the larger community politically, racially, physically (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). Generally speaking, minority groups often suffer from discrimination and unfair treatment (Kende, Baysu, Van Laar, & Phalet, 2016). Namely, discrimination often happens when someone is not part of the predominant population. The LGBTQ population refers to sexual and gender minorities and they face minority stress as well. People who belong to a minority group in a heterosexual dominant society are going to face many challenges in daily life. The low tolerance and acceptance of minority group might lead to homophobia/transphobia/biphobia harassment. Undoubtedly, LGBTQ people live in a world which is dominated by heterosexism. It goes without saying that, in light of the varying
degrees of heterosexism in Canada today, conflicts might lead to a sense of shame among the LGBTQ populations regarding their sexuality.

A Brief Word on the Concept of Heterosexism. Heterosexism is the prejudice belief that heterosexuals are socially, morally and culturally superior to LGBTQ people. Heterosexism highlights the parallels between antigay sentiment and other forms of prejudice, such as racism, antisemitism, and sexism (Herek, 1990). Following this, heterosexism functions to establish the belief that queer people are not equal or deserving to be equal to heterosexuals.

While it is true that bullying towards the LGBTQ population is a serious problem, the Ontario government and Ministry of Education make corresponding measures. In order to control bullying in Ontario, some regulations are designed, especially for protecting LGBTQ adolescents. In the revised Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Education (2015), it mentioned:

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all students, parents, caregivers, and other members of the school community – regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other factors – are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. (p.67)

This is to say, social and personal circumstances, such as family background, cultures, religions, sexual orientation and gender identity should not be factors that lead to exclusion and isolation. People with different sexual orientation and gender identity should be respected as heterosexuals. All individuals in society have the rights to be treated equally and the LGBTQ population definitely needs acceptance and respect.
Current Phenomenon of LGBTQ People

Generally, discrimination happens commonly among the LGBTQ community for both adults and teenagers. Mcgee (2016) has done a study to explore 98 countries’ acceptance towards homosexuality. Canada, which has 37.3% population of Catholic, and 14.6% of protestant, ranked the 85th. In other words, Canada is comparatively tolerant when refers to this sensitive topic. Nevertheless, Steele et al. (2017) concluded that the current situation in Ontario does not meet the needs of LGBTQ people. This special population, which belongs to minority group, faces barriers in all walks of life, from youth to adulthoods.

Social Stigma. Stigma refers to negative beliefs towards a community. Teliti (2015) defines stigma as “an enduring condition or attribute, a physical or figurative mark borne by an individual; the attribute or mark is not inherently meaningful; meanings are attached to it through social interaction” (p.61). According to Major and O’Brien (2005), social stigma negatively affects psychological health. In fact, LGBTQ people face insufficient support from society, and social attitudes and religious proscription are causes of bias. Meyer (2012) demonstrated that part of the Black and Latino communities can accept homophobic violence because they believe that the LGBTQ group negatively represents racial communities. Similarly, some western cultures cannot accept homosexuality, transsexuality or bisexuality because of the widespread Judaeo-Christian ethic. In the Bible, it is believed that God’s creativity and the establishment of marriage has its purpose, which is to procreate. Any forms of sexuality unrelated to childbearing should be restrained. Under this culture, LGBTQ students pose a challenge in Christian schools (Gore, 2016). Biblical teaching tradition might lead to conflict between a strong judgement and self-identity (Wood, & Conley, 2014).
Social stigma largely affects LGBTQ people’s daily life. In particular, both LGBTQ employees and heterosexual coworkers report that they experienced or witnessed discriminations because of sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace (Seals & Mallory, 2011). 15% to 43% of LGBTQ people report that they experienced workplace discrimination (Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007). In addition to this, comparing to non-LGBTQ employees, LGBTQ people get fewer opportunities and lower salaries, which lead to lower job satisfaction. Other unfair treatments may include short retention. It is noteworthy that the LGBTQ population has a higher risk of being fired. This situation not only leads to short retention, but also puts much stress on LGBTQ people’s daily lives.

Overall, social stigma refers to all non-heterosexual behaviors, and it creates social exclusion (Teliti, 2015). It destroys one’s social identity and causes threat and stress. Consequently, youth those face serious social stigmas have a higher risk of experiencing low self-esteem and academic achievement. Intolerance and Bias towards LGBTQ youth will also form a hostile and negative environment in schools.

**Family Attitudes.** Family rejection is another factor results in poor mental health among LGBTQ youth. Obviously, parenting relationship is important during the growing path of children. Warm and healthy environment can positively affect youth’s mental health (Vidal et al., 2017). However, parental attitudes towards LGBTQ youth can be a factor that contributes to worse mental development. To be precise, parental rejection leads to poor mental health such as depression and anxiety. Besides, higher risky behaviors such as self-harm, suicide, substance use are all associated with family attitudes.

Katz-Wise, Rosario, and Tsappis (2016) did a comparative study to investigate family
acceptance between heterosexual youth and transgender youth. They found that general family attitudes towards heterosexual individuals and sexual minority individuals differ significantly. The reason for parental rejection is because of race and ethnicity. These two factors influence parental attitudes towards children’s sexual orientation and gender identity deeply. As shown in the research, 33.33% of LGBTQ youth’s parents accept children’s sexual orientation and gender identity, while 33.33% of parents cannot. The remaining LGBTQ adolescents do not disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity to parents. When analyzing the group that disclosed sexual orientation and gender identity, it was noted that 79% of LGBTQ youth had disclosed their sexual orientation to at least one parent. 66% of LGBTQ youth had disclosed their sexual orientation to other family members (Katz-Wise, Rosario, & Tsappis, 2016). It is noteworthy that people who disclose their sexual orientation and get enough support have greater self-esteem, health condition, and less self-harm behavior (Juster, Smith, Ouellet, Sindi, & Lupien, 2013). Overall, family supports are able to improve LGBTQ youth’s well-being and help them build a positive attitude since a young age.

However, when it comes to LGBTQ youth, negative family attitudes can lead to homelessness as well. Family conflict is one of factors which lead to homelessness among LGBTQ youth. Homophobia, transphobia and biphobia from families deeply affect the LGBTQ youth’s mental development, and times fueling metal health issues. According to the data from Josephson and Wright (2000), there are approximately 25% - 40% of youth that experience homelessness who identify as LGBTQ. When adolescents cannot get enough support from family members, they might choose to run away from home. In fact, LGBTQ
youth still face discrimination and hostility when they leave home. Social stigma also happens frequently among homeless LGBTQ youth. Due to issues fueled by heterosexism and homophobia, gay and lesbian, transgender and bisexuals are under tremendous pressure and often feel isolated, misunderstood and unable to integrate into their community.

**Healthcare Issues.** Healthcare issue is a serious social problem that the LGBTQ population faces. Abramovich (2012) has mentioned that LGBTQ youth are overrepresented the homeless youth population in Canada. Namely, it indicates that the prevalence of LGBTQ youth homelessness in Toronto is higher. According to a survey that explored the health issues of homeless people in Toronto, it was found that this community has poorer health condition because majority of homeless people do not have a family doctor. Consequently, 74% homeless people report that they had at least one chronic disease, and approximately 35% homeless people were diagnosed with a mental issue (Khandor, Mason, Chambers, Rossiter, Cowan, & Hwang, 2011). Homelessness inevitably results in a lack of primary health care. It is noteworthy that in Canada, there are few specific systems and health insurance that aims at solving the health problem of homeless people (Gaetz, 2010), so they have a higher mortality rate than general population due to financial problems and insufficient knowledge associated with where and how to get medical help. The LGBTQ population suffers from discrimination, which also reduces their motivation to seek social support. As a result of low self-esteem brought on by homophobia, the LGBTQ population in Canada suffers from a decline regarding health care services and medical support (Mulé et al., 2009). However, little research has been done to study the needs of LGBTQ population in Ontario. The reason for it is due to research method is unavailable for part of homeless
people. For example, some homeless people do not have a phone. Hence, it is impossible to come into contact with all homeless people in Canada. In this way, Government Census and population-level health cannot investigate all homeless population in Canada about their healthcare issues.

Overall, LGBTQ youth are afraid of disclosing their sexual orientation and gender identity to family members. Being a member of minority community seems to be shameful so that LGBTQ youth believe it is better to keep as a secret. Meanwhile, low acceptance from family members reinforces LGBTQ youth’s intention of hiding sexual orientation and gender identity. As shown, family rejection not only affects LGBTQ youth’s mental health, but also increases the rate of homelessness. The attitudes from parents will contribute to physical and mental health issues. It is also noteworthy that homeless population has a higher rate of health issues, which affects LGBTQ youth’s physical and mental health. Therefore, it is important to understand what cause these issues and how to fix them. In addition, most LGBTQ people in Ontario report that they have experiences of workplace discrimination, insufficient support from society, exclusion from healthcare. This is to say, Ontario needs to take LGBTQ-related issues into consideration. Also, inclusive and nonjudgement medical support programs, which is especially for LGBTQ population, might address the health care problem.

**Literature Review**

**Harassment towards LGBTQ Youth in Ontario Schools**

LGBTQ individuals might face several forms of discrimination because of sexual orientation and gender identity. Seals and Mallory (2011) stated that although there is no relationship between sexual identity and sexual orientation, LGBTQ people are still being
discriminated in both the public sector and the private sector. Although for over a decade, the Toronto District School Board has regulated that any discrimination behaviors based on sexual orientation are illegal, the truth is that LGBTQ youth still face discrimination and bullying in schools. According to PREVnet (n.d.), bullying is defined as:

Repeated aggressive behavior by a student where the behavior is intended to have the effect of or the student ought to know that the behavior would be likely to have the effect of, causing harm, fear or distress to another individual. (para.1)

Obviously, bullying and harassment involve unwanted physical, verbal or online discrimination that disturbs or offends others. It can also be behaviors which cause negative feelings such as threat and upset. Bullying destroys equity and rights, and stimulates physical and mental harms. Pepler et al. (2006) suggested that “Bullying takes place when there is an imbalance of power between people. An ‘imbalance’ could mean one student is older, of a different race or has more friends than another” (p.376). In terms of the negative influences of bullying and harassment, Bill 14: Anti-Bullying Act (2012) summarized as:

It leaves a harmful and long-lasting mark on its victims. It can leave children with painful emotional and mental scarring and a lifelong struggle with self-esteem. Bullying can therefore impair the ability of a victim to contribute meaningfully to society and to function normally in the victim’s family environment. (para.3)

Although bullying experiences among LGBTQ youth are similar to other forms of bullying among heterosexual peers, due to the pervasiveness and power of heterosexism LGBTQ youth face a greater risk of isolation, physical abuse and sexual harassment. Victimization
occurs from elementary school to high schools (Flores, 2014; Peter, 2014), which includes exclusion, verbal aggression and physical harm. In short, due to structural and systemic forms of discrimination, LGBTQ teenagers are afraid of going to school. The LGBTQ youth has trouble integrating their sexual identity with school learning. Many LGBTQ teenagers find it difficult to admit their sexual orientation to others because other people will ‘shun’ them, and in some cases, may even threaten them once they know the truth (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2009). These negative feelings might result in lower self-esteem, higher anxiety and depression among LGBTQ youth.

As noted, LGBTQ youth have lower self-esteem than heterosexual peers (Jones, Robinson, Oginni, Rahman, & Rimes, 2017). Certainly, living in a world that is defined through the lens of heteronormativity, it is easy to see how feelings of shame are a burden for sexual minorities. LGBTQ are encouraged to feel shame, because they are understood not to be ‘normal.’ Therefore, it is important to build an advantaged school climate for students. Based on this target, many anti-bullying programs are established in Ontario, such as the Rainbow Health Ontario, the Human Sexuality Program and the Triangle Program. In the implication portion of this paper I will introduce each program respectively. To sum up, bullying and discrimination not only negatively influence the emotional and mental development of LGBTQ adolescents, but also have the power and potential to destroy their physical health.

Physical Bullying. A study from Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2013) reported that, 63.5% LGBT youth report that they feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and sexual identity. 18.3% of LGBTQ adolescents suffer from physical
attack such as punching, kicking, and injuring with a weapon. The study also found that long-term misunderstanding of LGBTQ youth might cause heterosexual people to express bias and discrimination in an extreme way (Alter, 2017). Researchers stated that a gay boy was raped by classmates and kicked at his stomach several times. Due to these harassments, he had to do surgery. The boy reported that even school administrators discriminated against him, and they did not really take actions to avoid bullying even though the boy’s parents reported the abuse for several times (Blumenfeld, & Cooper, 2010). To some extent, this example reflects that LGBTQ youth not only experience discrimination and prejudice in society, but also experience disparate treatment from peers and teachers in schools. Formby (2015) found that homophobia, transphobia and biphobia from teachers can be as severe as bullying from peers. In some extreme cases, LGBTQ students were required to change for physical education from heterosexual peers because the teacher believes that LGBTQ students might cause a stir in class. In this way, bias-based bullying and harassment happen commonly, and LGBTQ youth need to fight to protect themselves in schools.

Accordingly, LGBTQ youth have a higher risk of suffering from physical attacks from peers. Homophobic and transphobic behaviors often contribute to injuries and violence among LGBTQ youth (Short, 2013). More seriously, severe physical attack and fighting might lead to death (Oral et al., 2015). Being bullied is associated with higher risk of mortality (Matthews, Jenning, Lee, Pardini, 2017). In the same way, Srabstein (2008) noted that 2% students who died had the experience of bullying others. The consequences of childhood bullying extend into adulthood, and childhood bullying experiences are associated
with later psychiatric morbidity (Srabstein & Leventhal, 2010).

**Verbal Bullying.** Generally, a verbal attack is the beginning of discrimination. Homophobic language is one of the factors that cause psychological problems toward LGBTQ youth (McCabe, Dragowski, & Rubinson, 2012). Every Class in Every School, which is the first program across Canada to support the rights of LGBTQ youth, has done a survey to explore the life of LGBTQ youth in Canadian high schools to investigate the impacts of homophobic and transphobic experiences at school. It is found that 10% of participants report that they hear homophobic comments from teachers daily or weekly. Only 1% students report that they never hear any negative gender-related comments from teachers. The result shows that most Canadian sexual minority students experience verbal comments based on their sexual-orientation and sexual identity. Taylor et al. (2011) also stated that 70% Canadian students report that they hear epithets such as “gay,” “faggot,” “lezbo,” “dyke” almost every day in school. Undoubtedly, these words are category labels, which take a toll on the mental health of LGBTQ youth. In addition, hearing gay-related epithets have some potential harmfulness such as affecting friendship mutually (Slaatten, Anderssen, Hetland, 2015). This can explain why LGBTQ youth report that they often feel unwelcome at school (Short, 2013).

Besides, the interaction between LGBTQ students and non-LGBTQ students can cause some problems as well. LGBTQ youth might have different preferences when interacting with non-LGBTQ peers. According to Jellison, McConnell, and Gabriel (2004), gay and straight men have different attitudes towards sexual-orientation-related behaviors. Other elements such as the limitation of cultural differences, communication across sexual-identity and sexual-orientation, the sources and outcomes of heterosexism and homophobia are
barriers when LGBTQ students make friends and integrate into the class (Tillmann-Healy, 2011)

**Cyber Bullying.** Equally important, online bullying affects the well-being of the LGBTQ population, especially for youth of this digital generation. Text-messaging, emails and chatrooms are three approaches to transfer negative information about LGBTQ youth. Hinduja and Patchin (2015) also defined cyberbullying as: “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (para 1). In order to know the consequences of cyber bullying, Cassidy, Jackson, and Brown (2009) did research that explores the influences of long-term cyber-bullying towards adolescents. They found negative language online, such as labeling and sexual connotations cause a sense of isolation, fear and despair. The researchers also investigated where cyber-bullying started. They noted that cyber-bullying often begins at school, and then goes on at home by the same students. Students usually use computers or phones to send negative messages, and continue to engage in bullying behaviors through other digital media at home. The most frequent forms of online and in-school bullying involved name-calling or insults, and the online incidents most typically took place through instant messaging (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009).

Cooper and Blumenfeld (2012) mentioned that cyber bullying towards LGBTQ youth can be divided into 11 types: (1) by sending threatening message such as “flame mail”. (2) by sending “hate mail”, which is known as cyber harassment. This kind of message often builds on individuals’ region belief, ethnicity and gender identity. (3) by sending negative messages to others through a fake name or other’s name. (4) by sending negative message through
anonymous posting such as blogs. (5) by voting which boy or girl is the most gay people in school. (6) by taking photos from gym and sending to others, which is known as sexting. (7) by creating websites and making fun of LGBTQ peers. (8) by sharing other’s private information online. (9) by sending threatening messages, which is known as cyber talking. (10) by destroying gaming websites deliberately, which is known as griefing. (11) by crowding out people through online communications. To some extent, the increasing number of social network sites such as Facebook and MySpace increase the risk of cyberbullying.

Although cyberbullying does not cause immediate psychological or physical harm comparing to face to face bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015), LGBTQ youth who are cyberbullied frequently are more likely to be self-loathing and depressed in the future.

**Sexual Assault.** As for sexual harassment and assault, many LGBTQ students suffer more of these terrible circumstances than their heterosexual peers, especially for heterosexual women. People who are unsure about their sexual orientation and gender identity have higher risk of sexual assault (Coulter et al., 2017). In addition, females associated with peers who abuse substance will increase the possibility of suffering from sexual assault (Felix, Hoyle, Posick, Miller, & Stogner, 2015). As the study shown from the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (n.d.), both LGBT students and students of color are at least twice likely to be assaulted as their non-queer and white counterparts. The data indicated that gay men and lesbians are at higher risk of sexual victimization in school than heterosexual students.

The reason for the higher risks of sexual assault among LGBTQ people may be that these people could not attain enough support from their families and friends because of discrimination and bias. Therefore, they intend to be reliant on their partners that are more
supportive of their identities as gay people or lesbians. This may cause their passive position in their relationship with their partners. When the sexual harassment occurs, they have nobody else to seek help from. On the other hand, these students have another problem, that is, find it difficult to report bullying issues. The first reason may be government’s policy, as the narrow legal definitions of rape used in some states can make it especially hard for LGBTQ survivors to pursue justice. For example, the Alabama’s limits the definition of rape to happen between two opposite sexes. North Carolina does not consider anal sexual behaviors in its rape laws. Another reason may be that LGBTQ survivors fear not being taken seriously because of stereotypes about their identity or sexual orientation and they are unwilling to explain sex life in intimate detail to unfamiliar administration in schools.

**Self-Perception.** Canadian Health Survey of Statistics Canada (2014) reported that 1% Canadians over 18 years old identified themselves as lesbian or gay in 2009 General Social Survey. According to Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, and Azrael (2009), sexual orientation greatly affects student’s mental health. It is noted that, comparing to heterosexual and non-transgendered youth, LGBTQ students are more likely to have depressive emotion (Bostwick, Boyd, Hughes, & McCabe, 2010). In general, there are three significant determinants of positive mental health and well-being as follow: social inclusion; freedom from discrimination and violence; and access to economic resource (Keleher & Armstrong, 2005). Undoubtedly, social inclusion and discrimination are the two most intuitive factors affecting the mental health of the LGBTQ youth. For instance, when LGBTQ youth face discrimination from other people around them, it may change their original autognosis, which means the behavior of understanding one’s character and peculiarities (Marriam Webster,
n.d.). Since their original autognosis affected, they begin to doubt themselves including the value and direction of their life. During the process of self-criticism such as anxiety and self-loathing, multiple uneasy and negative emotions form. Generally, LGBTQ adolescents have a hard time accepting themselves. Messages from society continue reminding that they are different from others. Besides, media, which reflects the social attitude, sometimes deepens the idea that being LGBTQ is shameful (Penney, 2015).

To conclude, a high level of youth violence not only leads to physical attacks, but also has some devastating psychological consequences such as mental issues and suicidal behaviors. Undoubtedly, ridicule and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and identity are the key factors that negatively affect LGBT youth’s mental development. Verbal violence and physical abuse decrease LGBT youth’s motivation to attend school. Based on previous studies, it was found that there is a strong relationship between school-level homophobic and transphobic behaviors and LGBT youth’s physical and emotional health. Therefore, LGBTQ youth need to be supported emotionally and physically. Without a healthy and safe environment, LGBTQ youth are prone to negative life outcomes.

School’s Roles in Dealing with LGBTQ Issues

In Ontario, there are several policies and regulations that are designed to reduce bullying in schools. The Ontario Safe School Act regulated that all school members are supposed to be treated with respect and dignity. Meanwhile, any forms of conflicts and differences should be addressed in a respectful and non-violent means (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.). In this way, people’s safety in schools can be ensured. School board and principals should follow the conduct to establish a safe school environment for people with different region and
social class. Furthermore, school must take accountability to solve bullying problems.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) mentioned that the original goal of schools is to provide equal opportunities to all students. They also demonstrated that “schools for all children would create a stable society in which people would obey the laws and add to the nation's political and economic well-being” (p. 266). School must make sure that every student in class would have an equal opportunity to achieve an education, regardless of different background such as gender, personality and ability. LGBTQ students have the equal rights to receive the same education and a fair chance to success. However, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) believe that schools do not fully achieve these goals because “school achievement and economic outcomes are related to social class and family background” (p.267). Similarly, it is tricky for schools to equally treat students with minority sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Theoretical Framework**

Anti-oppressive Practice and Theory of Change are frameworks to deal with the issues related to bullying, harassment and discrimination among LGBTQ students in schools.

School administrators and teachers could follow the Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) to build equity. Furthermore, policy-makers, school administrators and teachers could follow the Theory of Change to encourage students to build a safe climate by reducing bullying in schools.

**Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP)**

According to Clifford (1995), Anti-oppressive practice is defined as:

Indicate an explicit evaluative position that constructs social divisions (especially ‘race’,
class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and age) as matters of broad social structure, at the same time as being personal and organizational issues. It looks at the use and abuse of power not only in relation to individual or organizational behavior, which may be overtly, covertly or indirectly racist, classist, sexist and so on, but also in relation to broader social structures for example, the health, educational, political and economic, media and cultural systems and their routine provision of services and rewards for powerful groups at local as well as national and international levels. These factors impinge on people’s life stories in unique ways that have to be understood in their socio-historical complexity. (p.65)

In general, Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) is a concept that is used in both social work education and practice. Access Alliance (n.d.) mentioned that oppression in Canada is generally based on race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, mental health status, age and ability.

In terms of LGBTQ students, Anti-oppression framework is conducted to fight against inequity (Dominelli, 2003). When using an anti-oppressive framework, we need to consider several principles which include: social difference, linking personal and political, power, historical and geographical location, and reflexivity/mutual involvement (Clifford, 1995). Social difference includes religion, family background, social class, and other important social justice factors. Linking personal and political background means that individual background must be combined with social systems, such as families, peers and communities. Power is affected by economic, cultural and psychological factors, which need to be considered when analyzing the different resources towards a person or a
community. Additionally, historical and geographical location emphasizes the influences of personal experiences in a specific time or location. Reflexivity/mutual involvement refers to the interactions between individuals. These five factors are overlapping (Burke & Harrison, 2006). Namely, we need to analyze leading cause of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. For instance, Catholic schools face an increasingly public challenge to their teaching mission and cultural issues because of religions and cultures. Thus, specific measurements must be taken to deal with this aspect.

Additionally, Hines (2012) employed Anti-Oppressive Framework (AOP) in promoting both individual and structural change towards lesbian’s issues. He mentioned that when conducting AOP, it is important to acknowledge that individuals may possess numerous identities, and each of identify might differ from other oppressed population. Anti-oppressive social work involves taking action to improve the lives of LGBTQ students and promote equal relationships in schools.

**Theory of Change**

Theory of Change is an approach to evaluate appropriate outcomes in the right sequence. It describes how and why a desired change takes place in a given situation.

Center for Theory of Change (2017) defined Theory of Change as:

A comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or “filling in” what has been described as the “missing middle” between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. (para.1)
In other words, Theory of Change is used to design, manage and assess interventions. Theory of Change has three major components: goals, assumptions and strategies (Anderson, 2004). Goals deal with long-term outcomes. Assumptions refer to the logic and feasibility of the specific framework. When conducting the Theory of Change, organizations should review if their assumptions are realistic. Strategies are used to develop specific outcomes. It is noteworthy that Theory of Change is a causal model. In each step, assumptions should be articulated so that people can understand why and how the outcome will happen. For instance, if school administrators expect to reduce homophobia, transphobia and biphobia, they need to figure out what causes homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. Once they find the factors, school administrators could evaluate if designed interventions could reduce homophobic, transphobic and biphobic behaviors in schools. Most importantly, it is necessary to explain why and how the intervention could lead to the next change. To be precise, when bullying happens because of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia, it is important to understand whether religious diversity is a factor that results in discrimination against sexual minorities. In this case, interventions could be designed in accordance with specific influence factors. Mayne (2015) presented a model of how Theory of Change affects the outcomes (see appendix A). Similarly, when school harassment exists because of students’ misunderstanding about LGBTQ people, it is important to figure out whether involving in LGBTQ-related materials and courses can address this problem. By following the sequence and logic, targeted activities can be planned and created.

In order to achieve expected goals, assumptions and interventions are necessary.
Theory of Change explains the pathway that is necessary in achieving specific goals, and explains the connections between conditions, outcomes and long-terms goals. In the process of conducting the Theory of Change, it is necessary to define the results the organization is trying to achieve. Meanwhile, it also requires the organization to define the possible situations that cannot be controlled. In reality, there might be several results and these results affect each other (Anderson, 2004).

Theory of Change can be applied to evaluate the proposed LGBTQ-related solutions. In the first step—identifying the desired long-term goals—the purpose is to develop ways to decrease homophobic/transphobic/biphobic bullying in schools. The next step involves making a connection of preconditions to investigate why each precondition is necessary. In this process, educators and administrators are supposed to find out the causes of homophobia/transphobia/biphobia in schools, which include different racial, religious, and ethnicity issues. Once this has been done, it is important to identify conditions that are needed to lead to the expected outcome. For instance, establishing a safe and positive school climate is a precondition for reducing harassment and discrimination. Finally, the result of the proposal must be predicted. It is important that the success of any proposed programs can be verified through measurable results. If policy-makers and school administrators follow these steps, a safe and comfortable school climate can be gradually established.

Theory of Change helps educators, policy makers and school administrators to fully understand how and why the interventions work. In addition, it specifies the approaches that need to be utilized to improve the situation. When conducting the Theory of Change, it is important to outline the specific activities, inputs, outputs and expected outcomes.
The Outcome Framework is conducted in proposed solutions and specifically seeks to determine how to decrease harassment. As an illustration, by involving more LGBTQ-related materials and resources, students can get access to LGBTQ information, gaining a better understanding of how to get along with LGBTQ peers. When educators and school administrators identify the current phenomenon and possible approaches to solve these problems, the link between activities and outcomes are understood. After these problems are diagnosed, organizations can come up with solutions.

The Theory of Change can be divided into the organization level and the project level. The organization level emphasizes the long-term results. Organization level covers all aspects of interventions and activities. The Project level is more specific and simpler. The solutions will focus on both organization level and project level. The ultimate goal is to offer a safe and comfortable environment for both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students. However, there are multiple interventions regarding this goal. For instance, teachers’ interventions might be helpful. Also, involving more LGBTQ-materials can also be helpful. It is a long-term target if school administrators and educators want to establish and maintain a healthy school climate. Nevertheless, decreasing harassment in schools can be achieved at the project level in accordance with the Theory of Change.

Analysis

Understanding the causes of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia is necessary in order to decrease bullying and harassment behaviors in schools. Besides, we need to identify the consequences of schools bullying. After solving these problems, specific measurements can be designed in accordance with homophobic, transphobic and biphobic bullying.
Causes of Homophobia/ Transphobia/ Biphobia

The roots of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia are diverse. Sometimes, youth bully others just because of peer pressure. For instance, some boys make homophobic nicknames at others (Pascoe, 2007). This does not always mean they cannot tell what is wrong. Instead, they are afraid that showing signs of weakness or empathy to victims might cause other peers’ bullying. Some boys might choose to imitate their peers’ behaviors and follow a trend because being admired might offer a sense of superiority, which can attract others’ attention. Meanwhile, brotherhood between peers is emphasized too much. Boys are required to demonstrate a hyper masculinity that includes being physically brave, having a body that is muscular, displaying physical strength and being rugged. Hunt, Fasoli, Carnaghi, and Cadinu (2016) mentioned that some homophobic behaviors happen because heterosexual men deliberately keep distance from gay men. This is to say, anxiety and fear about the possibility of being LGBTQ or being perceived to be non-heterosexual might influence youth’s attitude, and even cause homophobia, transphobia and biphobia in schools.

Based on the above-mentioned reasons, people are unwilling to talk about this topic. Everything about sexual orientation seems obscure and mysterious. Although some people are born knowing that they are “different” from others, they dare not tell the truth. For example, the cause of homosexuality is so complex that it is generally accepted that homosexuality is genetic, innate and immutable. The reason why this interpretation is so recognized is because it minimizes the conflict between people of different sexual orientations. It is better for the LGBTQ community to accept themselves based on this explanation. For others, it is easier to accept the idea that being LGBTQ is not a pathological
behavior, but the same as other different characteristic of people such as eye and skin colors. Homosexuality, bisexuality and being transgender should not be treated as diseases.

**Mental Health Issues Due to Homophobia/Transphobia/Biphobia**

The World Health Organization (2014) defined mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community” (para. 1). A healthy mental attitude will allow a person to be positive and confident and help that person deal with the challenges of life. Nevertheless, LGBTQ youth are unable to realize their potential and cope with severe stress in their lives. Unlike heterosexual people, discrimination creates pressure and depression among LGBTQ youth. According to Meyer (2003), LGBTQ youth have a higher risk of mental disorder than heterosexuals. LGBTQ youth bear the pressure from their family, their peers and society. Homophobic and transphobic behaviors result in a stressful environment for LGBTQ youth. Therefore, more and more students find other approaches to escape from this reality, which might have harmful outcomes throughout their life.

**Depression, Anxiety and Self-loathing.** Jones, Robinson, Oginni, Rahman, & Rimes (2017) did a survey to explore if there is a relationship between LGBTQ adolescents’ mental health and bullying, and the results showed that LGBTQ youth express more anxiety symptoms than heterosexuals. The level of pressure LGBTQ youth bear is extremely high, which brings negative consequences on their life spans. Nearly 80% of LGBTQ youth report that they experienced at least one anxious period during the past 12 months (Bostwick, Boyd, Hughes, & McCabe, 2010). This data suggests that LGBT youth might be the highest population of
those suffering from anxiety. Social stigma is another factor leading to a high level of stress. Steele et al. (2017) found that transgender people are 1.6 times more likely to be extremely depressed because of social stigma. In summation, LGBTQ youth are at an increased risk of depression.

Furthermore, LGBTQ youth feel extremely unconfident with their sexual orientation and sexual identity, and they have difficulties in establishing interpersonal communication, forming correct self-cognition, and expressing sexual-orientation honestly. For LGBTQ youth, coming out can be an approach to accept themselves, which is beneficial for their psychological health. Nevertheless, coming out might bring more bullying and discrimination. Coming out promotes LGBTQ youth’s self-esteem and reduces depression, but it also increases the risk of being bullied (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2014). Juster, Smith, Ouellet, Sindi, Lupien (2013) found that there is a significant increase in bullying and discrimination once LGBTQ individuals’ sexual orientation is known by others. In other words, sometimes coming out might cause negative consequences regarding homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. Based on these reasons, LGBTQ students might choose to burden chronic pressures that lead to depression, anxiety and self-loathing.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).** Bullying or other traumas, including the inability to face up to one's own sexual orientation or sexual identity, might cause post-traumatic stress disorder. According to Beckerman and Auerbach (2014), the risk of having PTSD among sexual minorities is higher than among heterosexuals. The symptoms of PTSD are expressed as a fear to interact with people, gradually withdrawing from family members and friends, feeling especially anxious and depressed, relying on alcohol and drugs, etc. LGBTQ youth
face a variety of barriers to maintain a healthy mental attitude. The types of PTSD include different kinds of violence against homophobic/transphobic/biphobic youth, intimate peer violence behaviors and sexual assault. According to Brown and Herman (2015), the possibility of imitating partner violence among bisexual women is 56.9%, and 40.4% among lesbian women, comparing to heterosexual women (32.3%).

**Physical Health Issues Due to Homophobia/Transphobia/Biphobia**

LGBTQ youth are more likely to have negative moods such as depression and self-contempt. In order to cope with these negative emotions, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths turn to tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.

**Substance Abuse.** The LGBTQ population is more likely to be addicted in substance use. Substance use refers to club-drug, cigarette and alcohol abuse. Substance disorder expresses as feeling extremely hard to interact with person, disregarding of law and public regulation associated with drug use, trying to control or give up using drugs again and again (Hasin et al., 2013).

In comparison with heterosexual youth, LGBTQ youth has a higher risk of addicting in alcohol heavily and frequently. Long-term drinking and early drinking habits are more likely to happen among LGBTQ youth (Talley et al., 2014). Drinking abuse brings many problems. In addition, sexual assault is more likely to exist after drinking. What is noteworthy is that the older the first sexual activity is, the lower chance of lifetime drinking habits one would have (Talley et al., 2014). The environment LGBTQ youth stay can be an essential factor for their emotional and physical health. If LGBTQ youth live in a homophobic, transphobic and biphobic environment, they bear much sexual orientation related pressure.
Griffin and Ouellett (2002) stated that isolation from school may cause alcohol and drug abuse. For youths who are suffering from long-term discrimination because of homophobia, there is a 3.4 times likelihood of abuse of illegal drugs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.). Hughes and Eliason (2002) also pointed out that drug abuse is especially prevalent among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning youth. Previous studies also showed that discrimination against bisexual women is one of the factors contributing to drug abuse (Feinstein, Dyar, & London, 2017).

In fact, smoking prevalence has become increasingly severe in Canada, particularly for LGBTQ youth. Although there is little specific research that aiming at finding out all the reasons that cause a higher risk of smoking habits towards LGBTQ youth, most people generally think irresistible factors are long-term stress which caused by social and peer stigma, homophobic, transphobic and biphobic discrimination, and low self-perception from LGBTQ youth themselves. Depression and high level of stress push LGBTQ youth to a vulnerable community, and smoking seems like an approach to escape from the reality and release pressure. However, escaping from the reality cannot completely solve discriminated problems, and it is not a long-term method to earn respect and self-esteem. What is more, violence worsens the interaction in class. Consequently, an opposed relationship between homosexual and heterosexual group are built. In order to be understood and treated fairly, young LGBTQ adults begin to integrate the gay community. Smoking seems like a cool way to make friends with LGBTQ cohort. Based on these motivations, LGBTQ youth are more likely to become a smoker. After ascertaining the actual situation and thoughts of LGBTQ youth, some tobacco companies mark LGBTQ youth as their targets costumer. More and
more advertisements are focusing on LGBTQ youth currently (Washington, 2002).

**Cardiovascular Diseases.** Long-term negative emotions and habits such as smoking increase the risk of having cardiovascular diseases (Appelmana, Van Rijn, Ten Haaf, Boersma, & Peterse, 2015). Smoking is the most effective factor to damage cardiovascular health reversely (Messner, & Bernhard, 2014). According to American Heart Association (2014), smoking damages the lining of arteries, and increases the development of cardiovascular diseases. Moreover, Roberts, Dibble, Nussey, and Casey (2003) investigated the association between lesbian and cardiovascular diseases based on 648 women, and asserted that lesbians are more likely to become abdominal obesity. Obesity is one of the leading causes of cardiovascular diseases. Specifically, a high increase body mass index (IBM) might cause cardiovascular diseases (Akil, & Ahmad, 2011). This is to say, there is an association with LGBTQ youth, smoking and cardiovascular diseases.

**Self-harm Behavior and Suicidal Ideation.** Homophobic and transphobic reaction result in self-destructive and self-harm behavior. According to Mental Health America (n.d.), self-harm is defined as the deliberate and voluntary physical self-injury that is not life-threatening, and is without any conscious suicidal intent. Cutting is the most common behavior. Other behaviors such as burning, self-stroking, plucking, and disturbing wound healing are the typical symptom of self-harm. Of course, self-harm is an unhealthy way to deal with mental issues such as depression, anxiety and frustration (King, 2008). LGBTQ youth expect to get rid of stigma, biased perspectives, unfair treatments and physical harm from peers. By harming themselves, LGBTQ youth can gain a feeling of satisfactory and pleasure. Many LGBTQ youth struggle with self-harm because majority of them do not know
how to cope with negative feelings that come from peers and society, even family. Sometimes, LGBTQ youth are insecure and doubtful with sexual orientation and gender identity, and they are uncomfortable to talk about this sensitive topic. Due to social stigma and discrimination, LGBTQ youth seldom receive support they need. In this case, they use physical pain to combat the overwhelming emotions, and to release pressure that cannot be coped with. Additionally, there is also a strong association between LGBTQ people and self-destructive because they regard themselves as dirty and unnatural (McDermott, Roen, & Scourfield, 2008). Self-harm is an approach for LGBTQ youth to implement self-punishment. It seems like their shame on being one of LGBTQ community can be decreased by hurting themselves.

What is more, LGBTQ teenagers have higher risk of suicidal behavior due to their negative emotions. In 2014, there were 241 suicides between 10 to 19 years old across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). Suicidal behavior among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are devastating. According to Rosenstreich (2013), the suicide rate of the LGBTQ students are 14 times higher than heterosexual peers. 33% of LGBTQ youth have the intention to commit suicide in comparison to 7% heterosexual youth. 33.4% of homosexuals and bisexuals report that most time they feel extremely stressful, comparing to 26.7% of heterosexuals (Statistics Canada, 2017). Negative emotions and unfriendly environment can lead to suicide act. When researching the people who have attempted to suicide, Taylor et al. (2011) found that 26% of them never suffered from any verbal attack and physical harassment. 33% of them experienced verbal attack, whereas 47% of them suffered from both physical bullying and sexual assault.
Generally, there are three reasons of higher suicide rate of LGBTQ people. First, LGBTQ youth are more likely to feel distress and self-loathing. The homophobic reactions from surroundings may provide the intention for a suicide behavior. Second, teenagers are more likely to feel shameful being called a ‘gay’. The root of stigma might lead to a suicide desire. Third, LGBTQ youth are more likely to be isolated from peers. It is difficult for the special community to make friends with classmates in that they are regarded as unnatural and strange.

**Early Sexual Behavior:** If young adults cannot acquire proper sexual education in schools or from parents, they might find other approaches to know about this information. Generally, adolescents search the Internet and communicate with peers regarding sexual information. However, inappropriate approaches might lead to negative consequences. LGBTQ youth are more likely to engage in sexual behavior at an early age (Blumenfeld, 1992). It is obvious that students express their attitudes and personality more than adults because they want to attract other students’ attention. If these students are anti-gay, they may take actions to show that. For example, LGBTQ youth may engage in sexual behavior earlier to prove that they are straight. According to DeLonga, Torres, Kamen, Evans, Koopman, and Gore-Felton (2011), the greater the feelings of isolation, the more sexual partner people will have. This behavior can cause the spread of AIDS if protection is not guaranteed. In addition, anti-gay students pose a threat to sexual education program in schools. Many schools have been considering adding a sexual education curriculum to the compulsory courses, and are hoping to instill students with an objective and healthy recognition towards sex at an early age. However, some students may prevent this from happening by behaving badly. Without an effective
sexual education program, students may be unable to prevent STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).

**Academic Performance**

Burton, Marshal, and Chisolm (2014) also pointed out that students who suffer from unfair treatment might lose passion in learning and be absent from class. Consequently, academic performance may be negatively affected. Undoubtedly, discrimination against LGBTQ youth will affect their academic outcomes because of stigma and bias. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (n.d.), bullying and harassment negatively influence students’ learning, safety and school climate. In order to effectively prevent homophobic/transphobic/biphobic bullying, it is necessary to build a tolerant and friendly school climate. School climate refers to the relationships of all school members. When people in the school feel comfortable, safe and welcomed, the school climate is positive. Positive school climate can improve students’ academic performance and well-being. In addition, a positive school climate leads to less suicide thoughts (La Salle, Wang, Parris, & Brown, 2017). School that lack support and safe policies on protecting LGBTQ youth might affect academic performance (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013). School-based support and programs can improve students’ academic performance and self-esteem. To some extent, a safe and positive school climate is the precondition of students’ academic success.

Wang et al. (2014) found that lower school climate is linked with lower GPA (grade point average). This is to say, peer victimization negatively affects students’ academic performance. There is also a considerable relationship between bullying and academic performance. Some adolescents even prefer bearing the consequences of dropping from
schools rather than seeking help to deal with mental illnesses (Burton, Marshal, & Chisolm, 2014). King & Bernstein (2001) believed that there are several reasons of school absenteeism: social phobia, isolation anxiety and fear of harm. In terms of absenteeism, Burton, Marshal, and Chisolm (2014) categorized excused absences and unexcused absences. In other words, excused absences refer to reasons that are deliberately come up with. For instance, students might find excuses such as illnesses and family vacation to avoid going to school. Unexcused absences refer to absences without any explanation and permission.

**Implication**

In order to reduce bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools, the following measurements can be considered for schools administrators, teachers and parents. Some of them aim at reducing homophobia, transphobia and biphobia by involving more LGBTQ-related courses and materials, while others might focus on providing more support for LGBTQ students.

**Curricula Design**

Helmer (2015) stated that students feel embarrassed to talk about LGBTQ problems initially. However, after taking the specific courses that design for sexual orientation and sexual identity, student’s discomfort on LGBTQ issues has decreased. They changed their mind more or less and feel confident and comfortable related to LGBTQ topics. Similarly, school could set up related topics in sex-education curricula, which is an approach to enrich youth teenagers’ knowledge about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning population. Although there are several programs to protect the right of the LGBTQ population, the LGBTQ population still faces many challenges in daily life. For example, the
revised sex education curriculum causes a fuss because it not only encourages youth to use condoms and birth control to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), but also shares some controversial issues such as sexual orientation and gender identity in grade 9. These concepts are inconsistent with Catholic school system. Hence, parents are unsatisfied with Ontario new sex education curriculum and some of them even shift children from public school to private school or home school. This example proves that insufficient understanding of different cultural background can cause misunderstanding. Thus, enriching the knowledge of diverse religious cultures can help students to understand the origin of discrimination and harassment. Liboro, Travers and St. John (2015) found that admitting the values of Catholic schools and realizing LGBTQ students’ needs can be helpful when dealing with these issues. However, there is little support for LGBTQ youth, especially for students in private schools without the regulation of Bill 13 (2012). Some private Catholic schools even refused to enroll LGBTQ students, which struck a responsive chord with the public. In Rhode Island School’s parent-student handbook, it regulates that transgender students are not allowed to enter school (Allen, 2016). This regulation largely reflects the conflict between religion and tolerance. To some extent, it also shows that discrimination and exclusion do exist in some certain situations. Although there are many educators and parents standing out to fight against Rhode Island School’s regulations, a small part of people agree that allowing transgender students to use school restrooms and locker rooms would pose problems. Therefore, for Christian schools, it is important to find out an approach to address the challenges between sexual minorities and heterosexual students. Undoubtedly, LGBTQ students need to have the right to experience love, acceptance and justice. Any school they attend should be safe and tolerant.
Schools that claim to reflect God’s nature should evaluate discrimination against LGBTQ students, shifting homophobic/transphobic/biphobic attitudes and policies. Meanwhile, religious schools can analyze other factors that cause bullying.

School administrator should take the accountability of students’ physical and mental health. Regular sex educational classes can make a big difference in forming correct sex-identity and sex-orientation diversity. Ontario students are required to take sexual education since grade 1. From Government of Ontario (n.d.), the sexual education plan at Grade 6 is to learn “how stereotypes, such as homophobia and assumptions about gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture and abilities, can affect how a person feels about themselves, their feelings of belonging and relationships with others”(para.6). This is to say, students in grade 6 are supposed to learn about different sexual orientation and sexual identity. Students begin to learn how culture, ethnics, and race affect others’ feelings in a relationship. Likewise, students should be able to understand the consequences of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia.

**Anti-Bullying Programs**

Stigma, intolerance, and discrimination are the main causes of physical and emotional impact. Educators and administrators realized that solving bullying in schools is an important task to do. Some methods have been applied to allow more people to know this bad behavior and to offer information for LGBTQ people who suffered the pain from the harassment and assault. McGill University and University of Toronto have both set up websites to dispel myths about LGBTQ survivors and explain why they are likely to deal with difficulties - for example, that fear of additional discrimination might prevent them to seek for help from
police and administration (“Princeton Bisexual”, n.d.). These websites also acknowledge their identities and challenges. Besides informative websites, a multipronged approach is required to address sexual violence for LGBTQ students. For example, schools could collect data on the experiences of LGBTQ students through a confidential climate survey. If more data is available, these schools could create better targeted solutions for this issue such as writing policies for LGBTQ students as supplement. This means colleges should account for more special circumstances rather than assuming that all students are the same.

Rainbow Health Ontario. Rainbow Health Ontario is a program that aims at improving the well-being and health care of LGBTQ people in Ontario. Rainbow Health Ontario also focuses on health services among LGBTQ people by introducing LGBTQ-related resources and organizations (Rainbow Health Ontario, n.d.). LGBTQ youth in Ontario can get help from the website of Rainbow Health Ontario, including health and social services.

The Human Sexuality Program. The Human Sexuality Program within social work services of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has been providing help for LGBTQ youth in Ontario since 1999. The Equity Policy Statement approved by the TDSB offered help to all aspects of sexual orientation, sexual identity equity (Ferfolja, 2013). Anti-homophobia workshops aiming at ensuring LGBTQ youth safety are sent to different schools by the Human Sexuality Program so that students, teachers and parents could get much information about this community.

Triangle Program. The Human Sexuality Program also supports the Triangle Program, which is the only LGBTQ high school in Canada. It was established during 1995, especially for LGBTQ youth who cannot integrate in regular high schools and other students who
victimized by homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. Triangle Program is operated by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) at the Oasis Alternative Secondary School. Students in Triangle Program are able to learn regular required courses, meanwhile take other classes which are designed to address LGBTQ-related problems, particularly with respect to LGBTQ history, literature and health concerns (Triangle Program, n.d.). The biggest feature in Triangle Program is that it offers students a safe atmosphere physically and psychologically in learning and life. LGBTQ students can avoid suffering from homophobia, transphobia and biphobia from heterosexual peers (Solomon, 2017). Providing a special community for LGBTQ youth peers to obtain education is also a useful approach to get away from homophobia, transphobia and biphobia.

Walton (2008) stated that, although researchers have done many studies on school bullying issues, there are insufficient LGBTQ-related programs which are designed to reduce discrimination and harassment at school. Specific policies and programs could remove the bully from bullying situations, and ensure LGBTQ youth safety at school. Meanwhile, establishing regulations and policies are beneficial for young bullies to figure out what is true and what is false. Typical bullies have negative attitudes toward others. For severe homophobia youth, they are more likely to grow up in a family with conflict. Teachers should communicate with parents; mutually find out the reason of bullying behaviors. It is also noteworthy that, when violence happens, peers are the closest people to intervene. In order to stop bullying as soon as possible, teachers can establish prevention programs.

**LGBTQ–related Materials**

Insufficient understanding of LBGTQ issues causes prejudice, discrimination and even
bullying. In order to truly understand the situation of LGBT youth, it is suggested that encouraging students to read specific materials aimed at LGBT topics are helpful.

The Canadian Teachers’ Federation and the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (2002) created a book called *Seeing the Rainbow: Teachers Talk about Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Two-Spirited Realities* to support LGBTQ youth. The book provides substantial list of organizations that support LGBTQ youth. Both teachers and students are able to follow the book to find reliable resources. Teachers could also know about specific teaching method and LGBTQ-related information in solving LGBTQ issues. Gomillion and Giuliano (2011) found that media role models in the media can be a helpful approach to improve the sense of pride among LGBTQ community. By portraying positive models in media, LGBTQ people report that they earn comfort and inspiration. This is to say, if teachers can provide some positive roles from movies or books, it will be an effective way to promote LGBTQ students’ self-perception and self-esteem. With respect to school harassment that is due to insufficient understanding on sexual orientation and gender identity, involving in more sex-education courses and material might improve students’ knowledge in this field.

**Teachers’ Interventions**

Principals should intervene when bullying and harassment happen (Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.). Teachers’ intervention may make a big difference with regard to bullying issues. According to Robinson (2002), solving sexual problems at school is a vital and necessary course based on educator’s accurate recognition of this issue. Teachers are expected to notify the parents of both bullies and their victims. By figuring out the factor that
influence bullies’ characteristics can effectively decrease harassment and bullying at school. Additionally, for students who timely report bullying should be encouraged and protected. Due to the fact that personal safety is the precondition of helping others, teachers should build trust towards students, ensuring that their report is anonymous. In summary, interventions should be done to eliminate and decrease bullying behaviors.

In order to improve LGBTQ youths’ safety and wellbeing at school, it is suggested that preventative interventions are required to reduce homophobia and transphobia toward LGBTQ youth. Teachers, parents and peers all have the responsibility to solve discrimination and harassment collectively. However, both teachers and parents sometimes mix conflict and bullying. Conflict occurs when people have different opinions. In conflicts, people have the right to express their opinions, and the power is balanced. However, in bullying people behave aggressively. When the power is imbalanced, conflicts become bullying and harassment (Government of Ontario, n.d.). According to Ontario Ministry of Education (n.d.), the school has a responsibility to ensure that no one is discriminated and bullied in schools. When homophobia, transphobia or biphobia happens, school should quickly find out what has happened, who is involved.

Identifying and designing appropriate LGBTQ program is essential for students’ physical and mental development. However, the process of operating the program might be challengeable (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013). LGBTQ youth are more likely than heterosexual peers to experience negative mental health. For teachers, it is important to guide students how to respect people with diverse sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTQ people often contend with depression, anxiety, traumas and self-acceptance because they face
persistent discrimination against them throughout their lifetime. In order to provide LGBTQ people a positive climate to live in, it is important to guide them correctly when they are young. A positive school climate can make sure LGBTQ youth’s safety. It is suggested that people should have a more humane and accepting view of the variety of the world we live in. Educate students with an accurate and appropriate sexual information could better help youth to form a healthy and correct perspective towards this sensitive topic. It is necessary to teach students how to protect themselves, and how to respect others as well.

**Psychological Counseling**

LGBTQ youth who suffer from frequent bullying might have mental health issues including lower self-esteem and higher depression. Therefore, individual psychological counselling is necessary. Administrators could employ professional psychologist for LGBTQ students at school. Psychological counseling is based on the use of psychological theory. Languages, text, and other media are utilized to help consultants to encounter their psychological problems and obstacles. Schools can offer psychological counseling to promote LGBTQ students personality constantly, stimulate their potential as a psychological aid process, and encourage LGBTQ youth to change in the aspects of emotion, attitude, thinking and cognition, and etc. When LGBTQ youth feel stressed, they are able to talk with psychologist for suggestions rather than being helpless. In this case, a healthier attitude can be built gradually. Professional counseling given by psychological experts is effective to reduce LGBTQ suicide behaviors as well.

In terms of mental health, this paper mentioned chronic stress, which leads to mental disorder and PTSD. Thus, making sure the factors that result in chronic stress is the
precondition of releasing pressure. Psychological counselling can be a means to cope with stress. What is more, in the process of psychological counselling, deeper-level of mental issues can be discovered thereby preventing other severe mental illness even suicidal ideation.

Teachers are supposed to make sure that LGBTQ students know multiple ways to seek psychological help.

**Teacher Education Workshop**

Teacher education can help teachers to address homophobic/transphobic/biphobic harassment and bullying in Ontario schools. School could also provide general teachers special trainings on LGBTQ-related issues. In this way, teachers could be more confident and professional to deal with these affairs. In order to thoroughly address these issues, LGBTQ students’ special needs must be acknowledged. Generally, educators and school administrators should analyze the mental and physical harms separately. More importantly, teachers need to ensure that they know how to intervene students with suicidal ideation.

However, Kearns, Mitton-Kükner, and Tompkins (2017) found that although many teachers realize that genderism and sexism issues are important in schools, they do not know how to solve these challenges effectively. There is no doubt that teachers are willing to talk about LGBTQ-related issues because they want to address gender issues in an effective way. With sufficient knowledge, teachers are able to be aware of physical and mental illnesses, and assisting marginalized youth to maintain physical and mental health. By providing professional training, teachers could acquire knowledge, policies, and skills about specific program. Teachers could implement new teaching skills and requirements in class effectively.

When dealing with LGBTQ-related problems, sufficient understanding on LGBTQ youth and
proper ways are important. Kitchen and Bellini (2012) did a research to explore teachers’ different attitudes and skills to deal with LGBTQ-related problems after conducting a workshop which is called “Sexual Diversity in Secondary Schools”. Researchers found that the majority of teachers that participated in the workshop are comfortable in that the program gave them a chance to better know how to handle this sensitive issue correctly and appropriately.

Kearns, Mitton-Kükner, and Tompkins (2017) explored the influences after Involving compulsory courses for pre-teachers. They found pre-teachers enabled to identify, disrupt and address gender issues after training. The result indicated that teacher educators also need to prepare pre-service teacher to realize their responsibility when dealing with sexual minority students in schools.

**Anti-Bullying Clubs**

Ontario Education Minister Laurel Broten stated that all public schools should have clubs to address the bullying problems among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. Besides, Bill 13: The Accepting Schools Act (2012) requires all publicly funded school in Ontario to support LGBTQ students.

**Gay-straight alliances (GSAs).** Gay-straight alliances (GSAs) is a student-operated club which contributes to provide a safer environment for LGBTQ youth. The first GSA was set up in 1988 in an America high school, which aims at ending homophobia, transphobia or biphobia at school, and offering a safe environment for LGBTQ youth to talk about sexual orientation and gender identity (Gsanetwork, 2009). Ontario passed anti-bullying legalization in 2013, which required that all public schools in Ontario must accept GSAs (Donlevy,
Brandon, Gereluk, Patterson, 2014). According to the report from Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Canadian Civil Liberties Education Trust (2014), 85% of people believe that GSAs is beneficial for LGBTQ students, and it helps to build a safer and comfortable school climate. This is to say, students that join in a school with GSAs are more likely to be away from bullying and harassment. LGBTQ youth might be forced to live in an unfriendly environment in schools. Hostile school climate negatively affects students’ motivation to attend school. With supportive programs such as GSA, LGBTQ students’ safety can be ensured. GSAs make a big difference in creating supportive and safe school environment for LGBTQ students in Waterloo Region, Ontario. More specific, GSAs offers an opportunity for LGBTQ youth to get in touch with other members of LGBTQ community at school, which reduces isolation and improve close connections (St. John et al., 2012). Although there is no evidence to show that having a GSA can directly improve students’ academic outcomes and well-being, GSAs do improve the safety of schools and reduce victimization (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013). Currently in Ontario, all students in public schools have the right to form a GSA (Donlevy, Brandon, Gereluk, Patterson, 2014). Establishing anti-bullying clubs provides students opportunities to challenge homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. In addition, LGBTQ students can learn to be a leader and fight for their rights.

**Smoking Cessation Club**

Intervention has been proposed to decrease the high risk of smoking issues among LGBTQ youth (Baskerville et al., 2017). The Last Drag, which is a free quit-smoking club for LGBTQ people, successfully reduced smoking issues in San Francisco. Eliason, Dibble, Gordon, and Soliz (2012) found that after six months post-intervention, nearly 60% of
participants gave up smoking successfully. In Ontario, there are also special quit-smoking clubs, such as N-O-T on Tobacco organized by the Lung Association. The N-O-T on Tobacco Program is especially for teenagers from 14 to 19 years old. Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) makes it an effective method of quitting smoking for adolescents (The Lung Association, n.d.). Teachers and parents could encourage LGBTQ smokers to join in quit-smoking clubs to receive professional treatment. In addition, school can cooperate with smoking cessation clubs, inviting experts to conduct programs that aiming at LGBTQ students’ physical health in Ontario.

**Future Research**

A common phenomenon is that, LGBT youth are facing multiple challenges because they cannot be understood by parents and peers. Challenges that LGBTQ youth face include: verbal and physical bullying, violence, isolation, guilt, depression, anxiety, etc. These negative influences might lead to a higher rate of self-harm behavior, suicidal ideation, substance abuse and school absenteeism, and a lower rate of academic performance and well-being. In order to better address school harassment and bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity, a study is needed to explore students’ desired intervention measures. This will be done by interviewing LGBTQ students the most severe issue they face and which solutions have worked for them and which solutions they would prefer. Through analyzing the results of the qualitative study, researchers are able to design corresponding intervention measures to involve in school programs. It is noteworthy that constructing a Theory of Change map is helpful when analyzing the causal pathways and long-term outcomes. Examples of Theory of Change map is shown in appendix B.
In order to effectively conduct Anti-oppressive practice in solving LGBTQ harassment at school, educators need to work based on “continuous reflection and evaluation of practice” (Larson, 2008, p. 138), a future study that improves school climate needs to be conducted. This study will choose one high school as the target, using one year longitudinal research to explore the difference before and after school administrators and teachers’ intervention. Specific LGBTQ-related programs and clubs will be established in this school. After that, researchers should record students’ attitude towards LGBTQ people prior to the new sex-education program and another afterwards: compare and contrast experiences in high school including academic performance and bullying experiences. Questionnaire that aims at evaluate depression and anxiety level will be used to investigate students’ mental health towards these programs.

It is predicted that after involving in more LGBTQ-related programs and support, a better and safer school climate can be established. LGBTQ students’ level of well-being will be increased and bullying and harassment can be controlled effectively. In addition, LGBTQ students’ academic outcomes and self-esteem will be improved. Homophobic, transphobic and biphobic behaviors will be reduced and eliminated gradually.

Conclusion

Discrimination towards the LGBTQ youth is an ongoing problem in Ontario. Jones, Waite and Thomas (2012) believed that school violence is associated with bullying, physical fighting/weapon carrying, alcohol/substance related school violence, street gang presence on school property, safe school legislation, school-associated violent death, and school violence prevention strategies. This paper illustrated the current situation of LGBTQ youth in Ontario.
They are targets of bullying, verbal attack, physical attack, cyber abuse, and sexual harassment. The majority of LGBTQ youth suffer from long-term physical assault and harassment due to their sexual orientation and sexual identity. Prejudice and discrimination from peers lead to both physical and mental harms. Homophobic and transphobic behaviors at school include both negative comments, and physical attack (Schneider, & Dimito, 2008).

Generally, LGBTQ youth are regarded as marginalized people in that discrimination on LGBT teenagers results in negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, self-loathing, self-abased, and etc. More seriously, homophobic and transphobic reactions from peers contribute to a higher risk of self-harm and suicide behavior. In addition, mental harms directly lead to physical impacts, which include bullying, teasing, harassment, and physical attack. The above-mentioned unfair treatments will negatively affect students’ mental and physical development.

Discrimination from society produces pressure for the LGBTQ population, especially for adolescent who are in sensitive ages. I discuss the causes of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. On the one hand, young adults are unable to tell what is right and what is wrong. In other words, they might be easily influenced by what others think and talk. On the other hand, religions affect individuals’ perspectives regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

In order to address bullying towards LGBTQ students, I suggest conducting Anti-oppressive Practice and Theory of Change as theoretical frameworks. Teachers, parents and peers all have the responsibility to solve discrimination and harassment collectively. By implementing LGBTQ-related regulations or policies, school could provide a safer environment for students. Schneider and Dinito (2008) found that both LGBTQ youth and
heterosexual students feel more comfortable and more supported in schools that involve in anti-LGBTQ bullying policies. Besides, other approaches, such as encouraging students to seek for psychological counselling, setting up anti-bullying associations and teacher education workshops can make a difference in dealing with bullying towards LGBTQ youth.
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Appendix A

Theory of Change Model

Appendix B

Example of Theory of Change Map

Vita Auctoris

NAME: Sijia Li

PLACE OF BIRTH: China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1994

EDUCATION:

Sichuan International Studies University, B.A., China, Chongqing, 2012

University of Windsor, M.Ed., Windsor, ON, 2016