Making Sense of the Senseless:
The Experience of Being Gay Bashed

By

Dale Chad Allen Smith

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University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg, Manitoba

ABSTRACT

Violence against gay men occurs every day. Stories can be found in newspapers, magazines, and on the World Wide Web reporting these incidences, yet there has been little research done from a qualitative perspective that explores the impact of violence on the lives of gay men. How do gay men make sense of the experience and the affects that violence perpetuated against them has on their lives? This research project examines the experiences of gay men that have been victims of various levels of violence directed at them as a result of their sexual orientation and identity as gay men. Using a qualitative approach, six gay men were interviewed and shared their experiences through personal interviews. The data collected within the interviews was then analyzed using Grounded Theory as the methodology. As there has been little research done on the impact that gay bashing has on gay men's lives, the main objective of the research was to explore the experience of gay bashing with gay men that have been victims of such violence and gain a better understanding of the issues related to this experience.

This research will add to the knowledge base around the experiences of sexual minority men and provide information for social workers, medical practitioners, law enforcement agencies, teachers and other service providers that will encounter gay men that are victims of violence. It provides valuable information that can be used to shape policy and practice to better assist gay men that are victims of violence. It also provides a voice to the many men whose stories are never heard and whose experiences are often discounted.

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only hope to be involved in as much positive change in the world that Lisa has been directly responsible for. Thank you for your support and your friendship.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Within my career as a social worker, I have had the opportunity to work with many gay men. Often this work revolved around various incidences of violence and harassment these men had experienced directly as a result of their sexual orientation. Within my life as an out gay man, I have also shared many of these unfortunate experiences.

Homophobia exists not only at the subtle levels in society, but also at direct and violent levels within individual lives. Homophobia is a term used to describe hatred, dislike or disapproval of individuals that are not heterosexual and often results in oppression and discrimination to sexual minority individuals. Audre Lord (1984) described homophobia as "the fear of feelings of love for members of one's own sex and therefore the hatred of those feelings in others" (p. 45). Homophobia is manifested in many ways—physical violence, verbal harassment, subtle judgements and decisions based on a person's sexual orientation and can be experienced in different forms—internalized homophobia, personal homophobia, cultural homophobia and institutionalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia is the internalization of a hatred or dislike of self, based on the knowledge that you are gay in a world that doesn't approve or accept gays. Personal experiences of homophobia occur everyday. Slurs, insults, and derogatory comments are experienced by many gay men (and, ironically, by many straight men) based on a perceived sexual orientation—gay. Jobs are lost,

promotions are denied, housing vacancies are suddenly filled when these men

apply. In extreme cases, violence is perpetrated towards gay men for not living

up to the societal expectation and belief that men should behave and men should

be a certain way—heterosexual. Cultural homophobia occurs when cultural

beliefs state that homosexuality does not exist or is a sickness or perpetuate

negative stereotypes and beliefs about homosexuality. Institutionalized

homophobia occurs in institutions or systems that have policies or practices that

discriminate against sexual minority individuals, such as not providing benefits or

privileges to same sex partners that are allotted to opposite sex partners.

Within Canada, gay men theoretically have all the rights and privileges

that straight men currently hold. Positive strides forward in public opinion and

beliefs have led to legal achievements and accomplishments in changing

discriminatory laws, policies and practices that have theoretically created an

equal playing field for all individuals. However, theory and reality are often

related, but can look very different. Such is the case for many of the gay men I

have worked with in the past, gay men that I know personally, and for myself.

The negative effects of homophobia and heterosexism on queer

individuals have been documented by many different researchers (Banks, 2001,

2003; Faulkner, 2004; Janoff, 2005; Lombardi & Wilchins, 2001; Monohan,

1997). Heterosexism can be defined as "the belief in the inherent superiority of

one pattern of loving and thereby its right to dominate" (Lorde, 1984, p. 45). The

term queer is often used by some as a positive and all encompassing label to

describe and include individuals within the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender,

and two-spirit (GLBTT) communities (Rainbow Resource Centre, 2005). The

term can also be used by some heterosexual individuals who do not fully identify

with the dominant heterosexual society and the beliefs and norms associated

with this group. Homophobia—the fear of homosexuality and of the feelings

associated with it—and heterosexism—an assumption that all people are

heterosexual or should be, are major health and social issues in our society. In

his research, Banks (2001; 2003) discusses the costs and societal health

impacts related to homophobia within Canada. Using a formula looking at

various health issues, statistics and rates within the general Canadian population

and comparing these to the same health issues, statistics and rates within the

GLBTT communities, Banks calculates the health and social costs associated

with suicide between $695 million to $823 million (2001), with between 818 to

968 people committing suicide annually within Canada as a direct result of

homophobia (2003). The cost to the healthcare system from clinical depression

related to homophobia is calculated to be between $543 million to $2.289 billion.

Negative coping skills to deal with homophobia through drug and alcohol usage

are also calculated by Banks. He calculates the monetary costs of alcohol abuse

and treatment to the healthcare system at between $285 million to $4.1 billion

(Banks, 2001), with anywhere from 236 to 1843 people dying annually as a result

of alcohol abuse as a coping skill related to homophobia (Banks, 2003). The

costs of illicit drug use to the health care system is calculated at between $119

million to $221 million (Banks, 2001), with between 64 to 74 people dying

annually as a result of illicit drug usage to cope with the negative affects of

homophobia (Banks, 2003). As a member of a sexual minority, I am only too

aware of these costs and impacts based on my personal experiences.

Research Interest

The term gay bashing is used to define the experience of some form of

violence upon an individual based upon a perceived sexual orientation other than

that of heterosexual. Gay bashings occur in a range of presentations, from verbal

insults to physical beatings to death. I come to write this proposal and approach

this research from the perspective of a gay man that has experienced a

physically violent gay bashing, in addition to numerous verbal assaults over my

lifetime. My own experience of the physical gay bashing had different impacts in

my life at different times. A few months after my gay bashing, I noticed an

integral change in my personality and outlook on the world. I found myself afraid

of not only confrontation, but of discussion in general with strangers. Once a

man that had been confident and quite outgoing, I began to isolate myself and

found myself dreading the thought of having to venture into very public, overall

safe places and perhaps have to interact with people I didn't know. This fear was

not limited to interacting with only men (my own bashing had been by three men)

but also included women. I recall this period of dread, generalized anxiety and

fear in interacting with strangers lasting for approximately six months. A few

years later in my life I found myself in the role of an educator, speaking about my

own experience. In the current period of my life, I still do anti-homophobia workshops and work as an activist and a social worker to create change in society around this and many other issues.

My own experience was that the impact that this gay bashing had within my life was varied—I moved from a place of relative comfort and perceived safety in the world before this bashing to a place of fear and paralysis in dealing with unknown people almost immediately afterwards, and for an extended period of time. Later, I moved from what I saw as a victim role to that of a survivor and activist role, through sharing my experience in educating around the impact of homophobia in an attempt to create change in a homophobic society.

My own experience of "making sense of the senseless" violence I experienced in my gay bashing began with me becoming aware of the impact my gay bashing had on my life. My own reflection on my experiences helped me to understand and to interpret what happened to me as something more than an isolated event that occurred at a set point in time, to an experience that has touched and coloured my life. The title of my thesis research reflects various understandings of making sense of senseless homophobic violence—my own understanding, the experiences of the participants within the study, and the responsiveness of various systems towards victims of homophobic violence, specifically social work, healthcare, education and policing. Through this research and the findings that were discovered, the recommendations that arise can help service providers, supports and systems to better understand the

impact of homophobic violence and in a reactive manner, better respond to those

affected. In a proactive manner, these findings can help to shape policy and

create changes to prevent homophobic violence and harassment through making

sense of senseless homophobic violence.

<u>Research Study</u>

People are often surprised when I discuss my research topic with them.

The common belief seems to be that gay bashings, at least in the physically

violent sense, no longer happen, at least not in the City of Winnipeg or the

Province of Manitoba. Although often not reported or heard about from the

mainstream media, the gay community is very aware of homophobic violence.

Within my own community, gay bashings occur that are almost never reported in

the media or when covered, not reported as a gay bashing. However,

communication within the gay community happens and the truth of violence

towards gays that has occurred becomes known.

Gay bashing and homophobic violence is experienced by many people

from many sexual orientations—gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited,

and heterosexual, as well as by individuals of all genders. This research,

however, specifically explores one population from the GLBTT community—the

experiences of gay men. This population is one that experiences the socialization

to gender norms and masculinity that a larger dominant society places on most

males and is a population that often does not measure up to these norms and

standards. This outside standard is often a public marker for many gay men and

homophobia is often experienced as a result of failing to measure up to the

standards of masculinity and gender that are put upon males.

The experience of being bashed is an experience that has both common and

unique characteristics. The bashing or homophobic violence is the common

characteristic. Within the bashing, the form, level and intensity of the violence

are the unique aspect. The impact this experience has on a survivor of a gay

bashing is also unique. How a man survives this experience, how a man makes

sense of the world, and the meaning that a gay bashing has within each

individual life will be dependent on a variety of factors, such as age, race, sexual

orientation, level of outness (if gay), the existence or non-existence of a social

support network, socio-economic status, and ability, to name some.   This

research explores how the experience of being bashed has impacted six gay

men in Manitoba within their lives and how these men have interpreted their

experiences.

Within this research, the definition of a gay bashing was left open to

interpretation by participants. This was done as there are many variations of what

a gay bashing could be defined as, and various forms of harassment and

violence that could be included within the definition. As stated, the affects of a

gay bashing can differ from person to person, depending on a multitude of

factors within their lives, such as relationships, support systems, levels of

outness, self esteem, and socio-economic status, for instance. Thus, levels of

violence and harassment could be experienced in different ways based upon

such attributes. A man with a strong support system and high levels of self

esteem has the potential to survive severe violence with resiliency and surprising

ease, whereas someone with little or no supports and a low sense of self esteem

might survive what some could define as a less severe experience of harassment

or violence with more difficulty or trauma. Based upon the diversity of gay men

and their lives, the definition was left open to include the experiences of such a

group. The six men interviewed shared six different experiences of being gay

bashed, ranging from overhearing and witnessing daily derogatory remarks

towards other gay individuals, to experiencing verbal insults about being gay, to

being physically assaulted and beaten, creating the fear that they would be killed

during the attacks, attacks at levels that required medical treatment and

hospitalization.

This research needed to be completed for several reasons. As

mentioned, people are often surprised to hear that gay bashing and to some

extent, homophobia, still occurs. The fact that society has such limited

awareness to these experiences speaks to the level of marginalization that

LGBTTQ individuals live with every day. This research is important for several

reasons:

1. It contributes to the knowledge base and the limited existing

   literature and research that exist around this topic.

2. It provides voice to the experiences of men that have been gay bashed and provides additional insights into the effects of homophobia for the reader.

3. It can be used to reduce stigmatization around the experience of being gay bashed and bring awareness to the public and other survivors.

4. It can be used to create and support social change for a group of people that faces marginalization.

5. It provides the opportunity to learn about how gay bashings affect gay men and how service providers and those within helping professions can better assist survivors of gay bashings.

6. It contributes to and advances social work education by exploring and discussing an area that social work education itself has often minimized and marginalized through a heterosexist approach in educating social workers.

7. It can be used to support and to create changes in legislation and policy at various levels.

CHAPTER TWO: RATIONALE AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

Language

Throughout this research, several terms are used which are important for the reader to understand. These are included below and descriptions are given to help the reader understand how language is being used. The definitions given here are not meant to be viewed as the only or exclusive definition of these terms, merely how these terms are viewed and used by the researcher when writing throughout this document.

The acronym "GLBTTQ*" is one that stands for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit and queer. The asterisk used at the end of the acronym is meant to include and represent anyone that might see themselves as a member of a sexual or gender minority, but might not use any of the letters or descriptors used in the acronym. The order of the letters may be different, for example, LGBTTQ. It is important to note that the ordering of letters in the acronym in no way reflects a belief that one group or person is more or less valuable.

The term "gay" is used to describe men that have physical and emotional attractions and feelings for other men. All the men that participated within this research self defined as gay or homosexual. "Homosexual" is another term that the term gay is often used in place of to describe sexual orientation (Merriam-

Webster Online Dictionary, 2008). Gay men also fall under the term "sexual

minority" as opposed to the "sexual majority" (heterosexual individuals).

The term "gay bashing" is used to define the experience of some form of

violence upon an individual based upon a perceived sexual orientation other than

that of heterosexual. The definition of gay bashing that I employed within this

research was left open to interpretation by participants. This was done as there

are many variations of what a gay bashing could be defined as, and various

forms of harassment and violence that could be included within the definition.

These can range from verbal harassment based on sexual orientation to physical

violence potentially causing injury or death, all various forms and levels of

homophobia.

The term "out" or "coming out" is used to refer the process that gay men

go through in recognizing and accepting their identity as a gay man (Merriam-

Webster Online Dictionary, 2008). The Rainbow Resource Centre in Winnipeg,

MB defines it as "a process of coming to terms with and defining one's

homosexual or bisexual orientation" (2005). Gay men that have reached a place

in their lives where they are comfortable, self aware, and have incorporated their

sexual identification into their identity and overall being are often referred to as

"out", "being out" or someone that has "come out". Being out exists at different

levels and has various meanings for people. A gay man may be out in some

aspects of her/his life, but not in others. For example, he may be out with his

close friends and some family members but is not out at work or at church.

Coming out is not simply a one-time event, but a lifelong process that happens over and over. Sexual minority individuals make choices every day about who, when and where they will come out.

The term "in the closet" or "closeted" is often used to refer to LGBTTQ individuals who are not out/out of the closet. People remain in the closet for many personal, social, economic, and safety reasons. A gay man may remain in the closet for many reasons, such as for fear that his family or community will reject him if they knew he was gay, fears of losing employment or housing, shame of being gay based on cultural or religious values and teachings, or due to fears of harassment or violence, to name but a few reasons. Often sexual minority individuals are out in some aspects of their lives, particularly with people who respect and include them and closeted in others, particularly where they feel unsafe, threatened or rejected. The use of the word closet is metaphoric or symbolic of the experiences and emotions associated with hiding, being confined, and never fully being able to express oneself as a gay man.

The term "homophobia" is used to describe the fear, dislike or hatred of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender or two-spirit persons. The term also describes the oppression and discrimination against sexual minority individuals based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Homophobia exists in different forms—internalized, institutionalized, personal, and cultural, as defined in the introduction.

The term "heterosexism" is used to describe a bias that can be exhibited by individuals, communities and the larger society (Rainbow Resource Centre, 2005). Sometimes subtle, but nonetheless pervasive and dangerous, heterosexism is the method whereby cultural institutions and individuals expect all members to live their lives and operate in a certain way (heterosexually) and /or assume that everyone is heterosexual. Heterosexism is also the belief in the superiority of heterosexuality (Lorde, 1984). Those who do not live or subscribe to this "norm" are viewed as deviant, radicals and threats to the very fabric of a community or society.

Names used throughout the document are not the actual names of participants within the research, but pseudonyms. Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy and safety of the individuals that agreed to participate in the research process. All participants were aware that pseudonyms would be used to protect privacy. In addition, small descriptors, such as age and background information, have been changed in biographies to protect against readers being able to potentially identify participants.

Theoretical Framework

Within the research process, researcher bias has the potential to be present. The theoretical framework of the research process and design is important, as it is this framework that will guide how the research is proposed, framed, investigated, completed and analyzed. The framework is designed to

control for researcher bias, but there is always the potential that researcher bias can taint the framework itself. If data does not fit the framework being used, it has the potential to be missed, dismissed, or ignored. A strong design will recognize that researcher bias exists and build outside controls into the design to minimize and remove this bias. As a survivor of a gay bashing, I approached this research with my own experiences, thoughts, and beliefs on how a gay bashing impacts the lives of gay men and how they view the world as a result of their experiences. While I am not a subject within the interviews and my own experiences are not included as part of the data, as an out, gay man who has experienced many instances of verbal homophobia and harassment and has survived a violent gay bashing, it is almost impossible to fully remove myself, my views, and my beliefs from this study, as it is these that have contributed to my own framework and lens in viewing the world and how it operates. So as to not let my own framework in viewing the world become a part of the theoretical framework of this research and thus import my own researcher bias, careful considerations were made in the design of the research process for this project.

The research that was completed is both necessary and important, as it contributes to a better understanding of how gay bashing affects an individual. This knowledge will make contributions in several areas: raising awareness around the issue of gay bashing as something that is still real and is still happening, increase understanding of gay bashing and survivor issues for those that may (hopefully) never experience a gay bashing, provide data and real

experiences for clinical social workers and practices, provide data that may be able to contribute to policy and legislation changes, and has allowed the experiences of survivors to be told by the survivors themselves. This can empower survivors to gain control over their story versus their story controlling them. One of the participants, to be identified throughout this thesis as Todd, initially inquired about the research, but was adamant he was not interested in participating. Months later, Todd contacted me to be interviewed. Within the interview, Todd spoke openly and reflected on surviving a horribly violent gay bashing. Todd also shared in the interview that he was HIV+, was living with AIDS and had made the decision to go off of his medication, about one year previous to our conversation. When I inquired what had influenced him to change his decision and to participate within this study, Todd stated:

> **I find myself as I'm , as I'm nearing that duration of my life, I find that there's things that, there's things that I need to put out there. That's what changed my mind, my health. I thought, if I pass away nobody else is ever going to relay my situation or anything, or anything. If I die without telling you, nobody will ever really know what happened to me, it'll just go to my grave with me. And I have to, I have to tell somebody, I guess, because I can't tell my family. So for me it was important to, while I still had an opportunity, to be breathing this air, maybe it's to make peace, like inner peace or something, that could be. This was a way to do that.**

While quantitative research could have been utilized to investigate the experience of gay bashing, measuring such things as attitudes, anxiety, depression, or hopefulness, it would never capture the experiences, the lives, the words and the meaning of the individuals that participated in the research. The

qualitative approach studied the phenomenon of gay-bashing and allowed the

stories and interviews to reveal the words, the meaning, and the insights of the

men involved. Through qualitative research and the interview process, rich, thick

data that reveals the human side and the human impact of gay-bashing has

emerged and tells a story that quantitative research and statistics would fail to

expose.

As the literature review following this section illustrates, there is a minimal

knowledge base around the experience of gay bashing. Most of the existing

research tended to be quantitative, documenting numbers, statistics, attitudes, or

costs associated with homophobia as a general topic (see, for example, Banks,

2001, 2003; Egale Canada, 2004; Faulkner, 2004; NCAVP, 2003). The National

Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs Report on Anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and

Transgender Violence in 2002 did include stories of specific incidences, which

were helpful in illustrating the violence and hatred that often goes with gay

bashing and homophobia. However, the report did not include reflections or

impact statements from the survivors themselves. Within our own university, no

research appears to have been conducted specifically on the issue of gay

bashing or homophobic violence, with nothing appearing in literature searches

around various themes on homophobic violence and gay bashing in both theses

and practicum reports. With so little knowledge and information available around

the phenomena of gay bashing, the qualitative approach allows for more than

statistics and results, but provides the reader an insight into the experience itself.

Qualitative research is used to learn and understand about phenomenon in which

there is little information or knowledge, seeking illumination and understanding in

these areas (Hoepfl, 1997). Qualitative research leads to understanding people's

lives, stories, behaviours, or can be about organizational functioning, social

movements, or interactional relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the topic

of gay bashing and how surviving men make sense of this experience in their

lives is a topic about which there is very little research, a qualitative approach

using grounded theory as the research method is the most appropriate.

Grounded theory operates from the principle that the researcher is

informed around the data being collected, is ready to make decisions about

pieces of the data and can recognize "plausible relationships proposed among

concepts and sets of concepts" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 288). The goals of

grounded theory are to build rather than test theory, to provide researchers with

analytic tools for handling masses of raw data, to help the analysts to consider

alternative meanings of phenomena, and to identify, develop, and relate the

concepts that are the building blocks of the developing theory (Strauss & Corbin,

1998, p. 13). Using grounded theory as a methodology fits well in examining the

experiences of gay men who have been bashed. As this is an area where so

little knowledge exists, this approach allows me to generate theory out of the

data that is obtained through the research process (Brown, Stevens, Troiano, &

Schneider, 2002).

Also important within the theoretical framework in conducting this research is an Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) approach. The creation of a group (i.e. gay men) that marks them as different can be isolating and can cause feelings of insecurity, inferiority and low self esteem (Tews, 2006). As Tews (2006) states, "people may take on the attributions of inferiority that are imposed onto them by dominant groups, lacking sufficient support or social resources with which to contest these" (p. 37). Although I hold a commonality of being a gay man that has experienced homophobia and has survived a physical gay bashing, my social location and resources are different than the men that participated within the interview. All of us—the six participants and myself—each hold unique social locations that have various intersections relating to race, class, gender expression, socio-economic status, and level of outness, to name a few. Our experiences of being men, gay men, and gay men that have been bashed are all different. These experiences each work together to create unique identities and viewpoints of the world and can either reinforce or minimize our analysis of oppression, power and privilege at various life moments. "*Anti-oppressive practice* [sic] is about minimizing power differences in society and maximizing the rights to which all people are entitled" (van Wormer, 2005). An anti-oppressive practice (AOP) approach works to empower individuals, in this case the participants of the research. Tews (2006) speaks of the concept of co-operative power, in which "social workers may be seen as having a mandate to develop relationships of *co-operative power* [sic] wherever possible across many forms of

social difference—with service users, families, professionals, communities and

other agencies. These relationships must recognize the real imbalances of

power, authority and access to resources that may exist between different

parties—and there must be explicit permission for such issues to be talked about

openly. There would need to be space for support and challenge between users

and practitioners—with workers valuing and learning from the 'standpoint

knowledge' of service users" (p. 46). This approach allows for dialogue, learning,

and un-learning of previously held belief systems between the researcher and

the participant.

The topic of this research is an issue that challenges belief systems,

values, and current knowledge. It provides voice to men from a group that is

marginalized and may not have had the opportunity to tell their story and share

their experiences and thoughts about their own gay bashing. An AOP approach

challenges the views and practices of the researcher, while supporting the reality

of the client. As Sakamoto and Pitner (2005) state:

> **When social workers enter helping relationships, they enter with their
> own biases and prejudices. It is these biases and prejudices that can,
> and often do, affect how they listen to the problems of their service
> users and, ultimately, affect how they proceed to address them. In
> order to prevent such cognitive biases, social workers must first
> critically examine their own cultural backgrounds and worldviews. By
> examining their own assumptions and biases, the social workers may
> be less likely to impose their own values onto their service users. (p.
> 442)**

Thus an AOP approach fits extremely well with this research, for it deals with

both the micro (the individual client's situation) and the macro (larger belief

systems and institutionalized structures and systems) to both support the client

while affecting change of the status quo, which research has the ability to do.

"AOPs ultimately aim to change the structure and procedures of service delivery

systems through macro changes" (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005, p. 437).

Within the original design of this research process, the concept of

theoretical saturation was proposed. Within the research process, theoretical

saturation occurs when the researcher has analyzed the data and is not seeing

the emergence of any new properties, dimensions, or relationships. This

strengthens the credibility of the research and findings. However, my committee

felt that time constraints in completing the research, combined with a lack of

funding for the research, worked against reaching theoretical saturation. For this

reason, outside member checking was built into the research process to increase

credibility.

Participants were given the invitation of a second interview if so desired, to

review transcribed interviews or discuss the research data and themes emerging

from the data. This was built into the research design as a form of member

checking to strengthen credibility of the research data and findings. None of the

participants chose to conduct a follow-up interview, although email

correspondence including additional interview data was received from one

participant shortly after his interview.

An outside committee of individuals with knowledge, experience and

expertise working within the GLBTTQ* communities was created for the purpose

of member checking the themes arising out of the data. The members were presented to my thesis advisor for approval prior to being asked to sit on the outside committee.

Once data and themes were presented to the outside committee, it was then presented to my thesis committee prior to writing the findings of the research (Appendices 7:1, 7:2, & 7:3). This was done again to strengthen credibility by completing member checking with my thesis committee, who all have knowledge and experience in working with the LGBTTQ* communities.

Literature Review

The stories, information and research around gay bashing and the implications it has in how bashing survivors make sense of the world afterwards is surprisingly limited. There has been little research done in this area and the small body of research that has been completed tends to be by a select few researchers. Only one study was found in the literature that was specific to the experiences of gay men surviving a hate crime (Willis, 2008) and this is a study that has just been published; this was also a qualitative examination of the survivor's experiences, similar to this research. In conducting my review of the literature, I was taken aback at the limited amount of Canadian research, either qualitative or quantitative, that exists. Most of the existing research tended to be quantitative, documenting numbers, statistics, attitudes, or costs associated with homophobia as a general topic (see, for example, Banks, 2001, 2003; Egale

Canada, 2004; Faulkner, 2004; NCAVP, 2003). The National Coalition of Anti-

Violence Programs (NCAVP) Report on Anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and

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bashing and homophobia. However, the report did not include reflections or

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research appears to have been conducted specifically on the issue of gay

bashing or homophobic violence, with nothing appearing in literature searches

around various themes on homophobic violence and gay bashing in both theses

and practicum reports.

The reasons why there is a small body of knowledge around gay bashing

may be varied. Perhaps most people do not come forward to report. This may

be for any number of reasons—safety concerns, fear of police, fear of being

outed (which brings its own list of concerns around housing, relationships, family,

employment, etc.), fear of secondary victimization, or being unable to

comprehend the benefits of reporting or talking about their experience (Faulkner,

2004). For gay man that are not out to family or friends, with some

understanding and belief in the levels of homophobia that exist within ultra

masculine policing vocations, reporting a gay bashing to the police may not seem

like an option without being outed or treated poorly.

However, another reason for the lack of research in this area may have to

do with the topic itself. In a heterosexist world, a topic such as gay bashing does

not even make the radar for most researchers. When it does, the research is

often about the gay bashers versus the victims. Specifically examining the issue

of gay bashing and overlooking the gays that are bashed can be nothing more

than the lens of the heterosexism at work on the researcher.

One of the important distinctions that does appear in the literature is the

descriptors and distinguishing of hate crimes and hate incidences from each

other. The term hate crime is most often used to define criminal acts that occur

out of the offender's bias towards individuals, families, groups, or organizations

because of their real or perceived racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, or

disability status (Willis, 2004; Barnes & Ephross, 1994; Berk, 1990; Herek et al.,

1997). "With hate incidences there is no physical assault committed, but bias

exists. Types of hate incidents include name-calling, verbal harassment, teasing,

and bullying without physical violence. According to the National Coalition of

Anti-Violence Programs, derogatory names such as "faggot," "whore," "pervert,"

"fairy," "freak," and "sissy" are used to intimidate, tease, and dehumanize gay

males during physical assaults, including murder" (NCAVP, 2000; as cited in

Willis, 2004).

Violence and harassment towards gay men and lesbians has been

recognized as more than just random acts of violence, but as a serious social

issue (Jenness, 1995). Within his literature review on the costs associated with

homophobia in Canada, Banks (2001) estimated costs linking homophobia and

various health issues in Canadian society. However, Banks does not comment

on or estimate the cost of health care specifically associated with homophobic

violence. In a further literature review (2003), he comments that due to the

limited existing research he is unable to calculate estimates of the human costs

of homophobic violence. This declaration within a thorough literature review

comments on the lack of information available in Canada around gay bashings.

Ryan (2003) includes nothing on homophobic violence or gay bashing in his

research, *A New Look at Homophobia and Heterosexism in Canada.* I found this

surprising, as the lack of inclusion or even discussion of homophobic violence, an

extreme form of homophobia, could be interpreted by some as no longer

occurring or existing. In their research on homophobia in schools, Pilkington and

D'Augelli (1995) found that no less than 30% of young gay and bisexual men and

35% of young lesbian and bisexual women reported harassment or abuse within

the school system as a result of their perceived sexual orientation and that

GLBTT youth are often at higher risk and experience physical, sexual and

emotional violence at the hands of their peers. Monahan (1997) found that

nearly one fifth of lesbians and one half of gay and bisexual males face

harassment, are threatened with violence or are physically assaulted in

educational institutions. Within Canada, the 2004 General Social Survey

conducted by Statistics Canada found that gay/lesbian individuals and bisexual

individuals experienced higher rates of violent victimization than heterosexual

Canadians. The 2004 survey was the most recent that focused specifically on

the issue of personal safety and perception of the criminal justice system.

Violent victimization within this survey included sexual assault, robbery and

physical assaults. The rate for gay and lesbian individuals was 2.5 times higher

than the rate for heterosexuals; the rate for bisexual individuals was 4 times

higher than the rate for heterosexuals. One could surmise that the higher rates

could be related to sexual orientation, thus the higher rates of violent

victimization might be more than violent crime experienced by gay, lesbian, and

bisexual individuals, but targeted hate crimes towards this group of people. A

2008 report released for Statistics Canada on the issue of hate crime for the year

2006 (Dauvergne, Scrim, & Brenna, 2008) found hate crimes motivated by

sexual orientation to be the third most common in Canada, at 10% of all hate

crimes. One of the key points in this report was the finding that although sexual

orientation was the third most common reason for hate crimes, victims of these

crimes experienced much higher rates of violence than did victims of other

groups motivated by race/ethnicity, religion, language, mental or physical

disability or gender. "As a result, incidents motivated by sexual orientation were

more likely than other types of hate crime incidents to result in physical injury to

victims" (Dauvergne, Scrim, & Brenna, 2008, p. 13).

Within their research on experiences of violence within the transgender

community, Lombardi, Wilchins, Priesing, & Malouf (2001) found that 59.5% of

their sample "experienced either violence or harassment" with "26.6% of

respondents experiencing a violent incident" (p.95). Again, however, the

research was only quantitative and gave no real sense of what the violence
experienced was like.

1,968 incidents of anti-LGBT harassment or violence were reported to the
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) in 2002 (NCAVP, 2003).
This report was limited to a small, specific number of places within the United
States that were collecting data around LGBT hate crimes. For the year 2003,
the NCAVP reported an 8% increase in the number of incidences (NCAVP, 2004)
and a 4% increase over the 2003 stats for the year 2004 (NCAVP, 2005). In
what seems hopeful, the NCAVP reported a 13% decrease in number of
incidences for 2005 (NCAVP, 2006) and a further 3% decrease in the number of
hate related incidents towards GLBTTQ* individuals for 2006 (NCAVP, 2007).
Sadly, the NCAVP reported a 24% increase in the number of hate related
incidents towards LGBTTQ* individuals in 2007 (NCAVP, 2008). 2007 also saw
other increases: the murder rate in incidences doubled, there was a 65%
increase of reporting by transgender men and a 61% increase in the number of
sexual assaults experienced by LGBTTQ* individuals, and a 23% increase and
29% increase in the number of reports from women and men respectively.

Overall, hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation constituted 11% of
the total hate crimes in Canada between 1993-1994 and 11.7% of the hate
crimes in the United States in 1992 (Roberts, 1995), percentages that are
surprisingly close. These numbers have maintained relatively stable throughout
the nineties to present day. Since it began to track hate crimes motivated by

sexual orientation bias in 1992, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has

consistently ranked anti-gay violence as the third most frequent form of bias-

motivated crime and in 2002, the FBI (2003) reported that 17% of the total 7,462

reported hate crime incidents were motivated by bias related to sexual

orientation, with 65.4% of these incidences being anti-male homosexual. In

2003, the FBI (2004) reported that 16.4% of hate crimes were motivated by

sexual orientation, with 61.6% of these incidences being anti-male homosexual.

This rate remains fairly consistent, with the FBI reporting rates of 15.6% in 2004

with 60.8% of these incidences being anti-male homosexual (2005), 13.8% in

2005 with 61.3% of these incidences being anti-male homosexual (2006), and

15.5% in 2006, with 62.3% of these incidences being anti-male homosexual

(2007). FBI stats for the year 2007 were not available at the time of writing.

Similarly, in our own country, which we often perceive as safer for and more

tolerant of gays and lesbians, this is the third most common targeted group for

hate crimes (Garofolo, 1997 in Faulkner, 2004), just as in the United States. The

most recent Canadian stats put hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation at

10% of hate crimes, the third most common targeted group (Dauvergne, Scrim, &

Brenna, 2008). Hate crimes and homophobic violence in Canada were not

separated or tracked by gender.

As we see in the above stats, gay males tend to bear the brunt of hate

crimes due to sexual orientation. Something about gay men appears to trigger

violence in (mostly) other men. Gay men challenge ideas around gender and

masculinity, simply with their self declaration of their sexual orientation. For in a

heterosexist world, men that are gay aren't real men. "Gay males quickly

become marginalized to the periphery and relegated to "other" status in society

partly because they do not uphold hegemonic masculinity. In essence, gay

males problematize hegemonic masculinity" (Willis, 2004, p. 123). By

challenging and problematizing the definition of masculinity, gay men appear to

open themselves up to attack. Herek (1992) states that as "a result of this

violation, normative society would claim that punishment, scorn, harassment, and

even assault are deserved in some cases" (as cited in Willis, 2004). Bashings

and violence directed towards gay men can often be especially brutal (Willis,

2004). Bell and Vila (1996), Comstock (1991), and the NCAVP (2000) all found

evidence of this brutality when examining attacks (as cited in Willis, 2004, p.

119), finding "[p]atterns of harm "such as overkill [the use of excessive violence

in wounding an individual far beyond the level required to cause death], brutality,

excessive mutilation, and aggravated assault are inflicted with the use of

weapons such as guns, ropes, and restraints" (Willis, 2004, p. 119). Bell and Vila

(1996) examined the commonly held belief by forensic pathologists that

homicides of homosexuals are more violent than those of heterosexual victims by

examining and comparing homosexual and heterosexual homicide victims. The

authors found that homosexual victims in homicides died more violent deaths

than heterosexual victims, based on greater numbers and extent of injuries. The

authors also found that the proportion of cases that had multiple causes of death

was also greater in homosexual victims (Bell & Vila, 1996).

Janoff's (2005) research exposed 120 queer-related homicides and more

than 350 assaults within the GLBTT community that occurred been 1990 and

2004 within Canada. In his research, he used a variety of methods to examine

data around homophobic violence, including interviews with survivors. Janoff

comments that when he began his research and throughout the process, he too

was surprised at the little amount of data that existed on this phenomenon in

Canada. As of 2008, Janoff's research would be the most current and complete

research on homophobic violence within Canada. However, while Janoff's

research is fascinating and horrifying at the same time, it does not give a voice or

tell the stories of those that have been bashed in detail. Small pieces of

qualitative data are intertwined with quantitative research, statistics and theories,

to support the quantitative research and statistics. The interviews and stories are

not fully explored or allowed to tell the theories they hold as they are never

examined from a qualitative standpoint. Thus the impact of homophobic violence

on the individual's life is never revealed.

Interestingly, while Janoff (2005) describes Winnipeg to be one of the

most violent places and to have one of the highest frequencies of homophobic

violence and gay bashing, Dauvergne, Scrim, & Brenna (2008) found no

incidences of police reported hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation for the

City of Winnipeg in 2006. As mentioned earlier, there are numerous reasons

why men do not come forward to report homophobic violence, one being poor

treatment by police. The lack of consistency between research finding high rates

of homophobic violence in Winnipeg and research finding no reporting of

homophobic violence within Winnipeg would seem to indicate a relationship

between reporting to police and police response. In support of this, Beauchamp

(2008) found that gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals "expressed lower levels of

satisfaction with police performance than their heterosexual counterparts. For

example, fewer gays, lesbians and bisexuals felt that the police were doing a

good job of treating people fairly compared to heterosexuals (42% of

gays/lesbians and 47% of bisexuals versus 60% of heterosexuals)" (p. 6). She

also found that the "proportion of gays, lesbians and bisexuals who felt they had

experienced discrimination was about 3 times higher than that of heterosexuals.

Furthermore, 78% of gays and lesbians believed it was because of their sexual

orientation compared to 29% of bisexuals and 2% of heterosexuals"

(Beauchamp, 2008, p.6). Herek et al. (1999) found that gays and lesbians were

less likely to report hate crimes to police than other types of crime experienced

by them, with only one third of the victims of hate crimes reporting incidences to

police as compared to 57% of the victims of random crimes.

Research has been completed around the impact of hate crimes and hate

motivated violence on victims, with an extremely small number of studies

specifically examining the issue in direct relation to sexual minority individuals.

Barnes and Ephross (1994) completed a study on the issue but while including

sexual orientation as one of the motivations for hate related violence to occur, did

not include any descriptors of participants as sexual minority individuals within

their study, nor did they include any implications specific to social workers around

GLBTTQ* related hate crimes or supporting LGBTTQ* victims of hate crimes

within their section on discussion and implications for the field of social work.

Barnes and Ephross (1994) found that within their study, approximately one third

of participants (33.9%) "reported behaviour changes as both coping responses to

the most recent attack and as attempts to avoid potential future victimization" (p.

250). They also identified similarities between the "emotional and behavioural

responses of victims of hate violence with those of victims of personal crimes

such as assault and rape" (Barnes & Ephross, 1994, p.250), such as intense

rage or anger, the fear of injury, death or future victimization, sadness,

depression and powerlessness "as elements of victims' potential reactions to

crime" (Barnes & Ephross, 1994, p.250). They also speculate that the ability of

some survivors of hate crimes to maintain their sense of self esteem may be

associated with the victim's ability to place responsibility for the attacks in the

prejudiced beliefs and racism of the perpetrators (Barnes & Ephross, 1994).

Interestingly, perhaps a fine example of heterosexism, the authors do not cite the

lack of GLBTTQ* participants as a limitation to their study, despite including

sexual orientation as a descriptor in the article abstract and introduction and

identifying sexual orientation as a motivating bias for hate crimes to occur

(Barnes & Ephross, 1994).

The impact of hate related violence on an individual can have consequences in various ways in a person's life. Willis (2004) found that in his comparison of quantitative group studies found in the literature "that sexual orientation hate crime victimization results in an overall negative differential impact on the psychological state of persons assaulted as compared to victims of crime where there was no bias or hate" (p. 126). Both Frieze, Hymer and Greenberg (1984) and Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983) found some common reactions to an event that can include such changes as "sleep disturbances and nightmares, headaches, diarrhea, uncontrollable crying, agitation and restlessness, increased use of drugs, and deterioration in personal relationships" (as cited in Garnets, Herek & Levy, 1990, p. 367). Psychological affects on the individual can range from self blame for the event occurring to a loss of self esteem and self worth, based on the fact that the victim has been violated, perceives a loss of control, and can attribute the attack happening as a direct result of their own personal sense of identity (Garnets, Herek & Levy, 1990). Thus, the individual's sexual orientation and identity as a gay man may be now linked to a sense of violence; internalized homophobia within the individual may be awakened, strengthened or created as a result of the event (Garnets, Herek & Levy, 1990). If out, the victim may have already faced challenges in the coming out process towards their self esteem and identity that will potentially provide them with coping skills and allow them to emerge from a bashing intact (Garnets, Herek & Levy, 1990).If closeted, the survivor may face additional challenges in

coming out linked directly to the violence they've experienced. Lacking positive

supports and coping skills, the closeted victim may be more vulnerable to the

effects of the attack and experience feelings of helplessness, depression and low

self esteem; denial or minimization of the attack may make these feelings even

more prolonged (Garnets, Herek & Levy, 1990). Herek, Gillis, Cogan & Glunt

(1997) found that individuals who experienced a physical assault based on their

sexual orientation appeared to have higher levels of psychological distress than

victims of other hate related crimes. "Bias crime assault survivors were more

anxious and angry than others, and experienced more symptoms of depression

and PTSD. They also displayed less willingness to believe in the general

benevolence of people and rated their own risk for future victimization somewhat

higher than did others" (Herek et al., 1997, p. 210). Findings from their study

were consistent with previous research that "hate crimes—by attacking the

victim's identity as well as her or his person or property—can inflict psychological

damage beyond that associated with nonbias [sic] crimes" (Herek et al., 1997, p.

210). Survivors of hate crimes had higher rates of depression, anxiety, anger

and symptoms of post traumatic stress present. (Herek et al,. 1997; Herek et al.,

1999)

The consequences of verbal harassment and homophobia directed

towards gay men can be just as traumatic as physical violence. The use of

derogatory language reminds the marginalized of their place and reinforces

oppression, thus verbal harassment can be as emotionally harmful as other

forms of violence directed at sexual minority individuals based on their sexual

orientation. Plummer (2001) found that the power of homophobic language in

pre-teen and early teen peer cultures was used quite decisively once meaning

was understood to mark boys believed to be homosexual. Tone, language and

context of words such as faggot, queer, or gay-boy remind the victim of the ever-

present threat of assault (Herek & Levy, 1990). Verbal assaults and insults

challenge a sense of normalcy and security, creating a world that is insecure and

more malevolent for gay men (Herek & Levy, 1990). Herek et al. (1997) found an

extremely high prevalence of verbal harassment and threats based on sexual

orientation within their study, "with approximately half of the respondents

experiencing at least one incident in the previous year, and most of the sample

reporting at least one incident since age 16" (Herek et al., 1997, p. 209). Sloan

and Gustavsson (1998) found that "verbal messages of hate evoke fear in victims

and damage the morale, safety, and cohesiveness of their communities" (as cited

in Willis, 2004, p. 118). Garnets, Herek, and Levy (1990) found that hate words,

verbal harassment, and intimidation challenge the world view of gay men and

their sense of safety; the impacts of this can restrict daily activities and

behaviours and can lead to social isolation and withdrawal as a way of coping to

avoid further incidences of violence or harassment.

Internalized oppression, in this case internalized homophobia, is

associated with "psychological patterns as self-hatred, helplessness & despair,

mutual distrust & hostility, feelings of inferiority, and psychological distress and

madness" (Mullaly, 2002, p. 123). The creation of a false consciousness in the

oppressed individual becomes a form of internalized oppression, associated with

the ideologies of the dominant group; these ideologies, in this case homophobia

and heterosexism, become internalized by the subordinate group, presented in

ways of normalcy (heterosexism) that make sense to thus accept and internalize

(Mullaly, 2002). Sexual minority individuals participate in developing their world

view and place in the world, through everyday interactions and activities in a

heterosexist and homophobic world. Herek (1990) put forth that the occurrence

of hate crimes and incidences towards "gay males are possible because of

heterosexisms. Furthermore, he believes that various heterosexist ideas and

practices are subsumed within normative ideologies of sexuality and gender and

that heterosexism as a whole is composed of heterosexisms" (as cited in Willis,

2004, p. 120).

Experiencing a gay bashing or incidences of homophobia can cause an

individual's view of the world to change. Herek et al. (1997) found that survivors

of hate crimes had fewer beliefs and perceptions about the benevolence of the

world and more beliefs about the perceived likelihood of victimization than

comparison groups. Another study (Herek et al., 1999) found that gay, lesbian

and bisexual survivors of hate crimes based on their sexual orientation also

displayed less belief in the benevolence of people, but no significant differences

in their beliefs in the benevolence of the world with comparison groups. Herek et

al. (1999) found that victims displayed "more fear, greater perceived vulnerability,

lower self mastery, and more attributions of negative life events to sexual

prejudice than did non-bias victims, victims of crime more than five years earlier,

and non-victims" (as cited in Willis, 2004, p. 127).

The search for meaning or to make sense out of the senseless is

important for survivors of gay bashing. After the occurrence of a negative event,

the search for meaning or understanding in what has happened is commonplace

for people; this understanding helps the individual to regain a sense of control

within their life and to either re-affirm or re-adjust the direction of their life

(Skaggs & Barron, 2006). Frankl (1969) described the *will to meaning,* that "the

primary motive of human beings is to find meaning and value in their lives, and

further, that having a strong sense of meaning and commitment is essential to

surviving trauma and suffering" (as cited in Park & Ai, 2006, p. 390). Individuals

that are unable to integrate the negative event into their understanding and world

view will often experience emotional difficulties as a result of this and have

difficulties adapting back to their life and former view (Skaggs & Barron, 2006).

Skaggs and Baron (2006) defined the term "global meaning" as "a person's

generalized meaning in life pertaining to their purpose/goals, values and beliefs

about what is important, and a sense that life is understandable and predictable"

(p. 562), drawing on the work and definitions of Park and Folkman (1997) and

Thompson and Janigian (1988) (as cited in Skaggs & Barron, 2006, p. 562).

Situational meaning is defined as "a person's interpretation of an event or

situation perceived as important or significant and having an impact on their

values, beliefs, commitments and sense of order in life" (Mead, 1934; Lipowski,

1983; Taylor, 1983; Cassel, 1982; Frankl, 1988; Baumeister, 1991; Lazarus,

1991; Horowitz, 1992; Fife, 1994, 1995; Park & Folkman, 1997; Reker &

Chamberlain, 2000; Lazarus, 2001; as cited in Skaggs & Barron, 2006, p.563).

An event such as a gay bashing can challenge an individual's global meaning or

situational meaning on the event and the effect that it has on their life, for such

an event is a "violation or shattering" of this global meaning" (Park & Ai, 2006, p.

391). Baumeister (1991) and Janoff-Bulman and Frantz (1997) both write that

negative events outside of the schema of global meaning "often raise questions

about the fairness or controllability of the world and one's self in the world, and

can create a sense of uncertainty about the purpose of one's life" (as cited in

park & Ai, 2006, p. 392). The individual then begins the process of appraisal,

their evaluation of the effect of the event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Park &

Folkman, 1997; Lazarus, 2001; as cited in Skaggs & Barron, 2006, p. 563).

Skaggs and Barron (2006) found that when the individual "perceives that the

outcome of an unexpected event could be negative, coping resources are

inadequate, or incompatible with global meaning, then the search for meaning

ensues" (p. 564). Frankl (1986) and Park and Folkman (1997) both found that as

the individual searches for meaning, they go through a process in which

meaning-making is used as a coping process, to understand and comprehend

the event and the impact it has had on their life; this meaning-making can lead to

lasting changes in their life view and in their global meaning for those who are

able to find meaning in unexpected, significant negative events (as cited in

Skaggs & Barron, 2006, p. 564).

In the only directly comparable study to my own research, Willis (2008)

explored how gay men understood and created meaning out of their experience

of hate crimes perpetrated against them and the aftermath of these crimes within

their lives. Willis interviewed seven self identified gay men that had all

experienced a hate crime; he describes that "all seven of the participants were

verbally attacked; all seven were punched, kicked, or beaten, six were chased or

followed, and one participant reported sexual advancement without sexual

assault. Five participants contacted police to report their hate crimes, three

received medical care for physical injuries, and two sought professional

counselling" (Willis, 2008, p. 571). Willis (2008) used open ended interviews with

participants and utilized a phenomenological approach to analyze data. Willis

(2008) identified two categories in his analysis of interviews, with themes

separate to each category.

Willis (2008) entitled the first category "Being Personally Assaulted

Because I Am a Gay Man" (p. 572). Themes that he identified under this

category were:

- Homophobic verbal harassment

- Brutal physical attacks

- Active resistance (Willis, 2008, p. 572)

The second category he labelled "Living Awareness and Psychosocial

Restrictions While Attempting to Heal" (Willis, 2008, p. 572). Themes identified

under this category included:

- Embodied distress

- Enacting vigilance

- Meaning-Making related to hate crime

- Identifying consciousness raising needs among others

- Impaired intimacy

- Restricted socialization (Willis, 2008, p. 572).

Themes identified by Willis (2008) are similar to the themes identified

within this research. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

However, with only one directly comparable study to my own research, it is hard

to comment on the generalizability of findings. Further research specific to the

experiences of gay men and hate crimes is clearly needed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Methodological Framework

Exploring the experiences of survivors of gay bashings and looking at the

different ways and impacts these experiences have had on their lives provides

valuable information and data to society. A qualitative examination of how gay

men have made sense of the experiences, and how they see the world today has

the potential to provide us with rich, thick descriptions of data that can be used to

create change in a homophobic world. My own experiences as a survivor of a

gay bashing and as a member of a sexual minority have created my world view

and tell me that the world I live in is homophobic. It is from this lens that I

approach the research.

Grounded Theory

A qualitative approach using a grounded theory methodology was the

most suitable approach for this research. This approach is a method which

focuses on "the study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it"

(Charmaz, 2000, p.522). Qualitative research is used to learn and understand

about phenomenon in which there is little information or knowledge, seeking

illumination and understanding in these areas (Hoepfl, 1997). Qualitative

research leads to understanding people's lives, stories, behaviours, or can be

about organizational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships

(Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the topic of gay bashing and how surviving men

make sense of this experience in their lives is a topic about which there is very

little research, a qualitative approach using grounded theory as the research

method is the most appropriate.

A grounded theory approach has been used for research around different

forms of violence and the effects that it has on individuals (Blesdoe & Sar, n.d.;

Cruz, 2003; Kia-Keating, Grossman, Sorsoli & Epstein, 2005; Plummer, 2001).

Violence comes in many forms and can have varied effects on those that

experience it. For this reason alone a grounded theory approach makes sense,

as it is unknown how the experience of being gay-bashed will affect different gay

men. Depending on a multitude of factors, such as age, self esteem, level of

outness, ethnicity, religious background, ability, and socio-economic status to

name some, a gay-bashing has the potential to be experienced in a personal

manner by different men with only a common sexual orientation.

Grounded theory operates from the principle that the researcher is

informed around the data being collected, is ready to make decisions about

pieces of the data and can recognize "plausible relationships proposed among

concepts and sets of concepts" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 288). Grounded

theory was first developed in 1967 by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm

Strauss. The research method allows for on-going, constant interpretation and

analysis of data based on systematically carried out inquiry (Glaser & Strauss,

1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Glaser and Strauss believed that "theories should

be "grounded" in the data from the field, especially in the actions, interactions,

and social processes of people" (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). Strauss and Corbin (1994) state that "a theory is a plausible relationship among concepts and sets of concepts. This theory, developed by the researcher, is articulated toward the end of a study" (Creswell, 1998, p. 56).

Grounded theory is thus an appropriate choice as the research method for this study. The approach has been used by many researchers when studying the experiences of violence, the development of identity, or a combination of both these phenomena (Blesdoe & Sar, n.d.; Cruz, 2003; Kia-Keating, Gossman, Sorsoli & Epstein, 2005; Plummer, 2001).

Within their research on student's perceptions of safety and experiences of violence, Blesdoe and Sar (n.d.) used a grounded theory approach to explore the experiences of violence and safety perceptions students had at the University of Louisville. One of their findings was that gay and lesbian individuals experienced violence at higher rates than heterosexual students. The grounded theory approach worked well for this study, building on a previous quantitative study on safety and violence conducted a few years prior to this one. This study allowed the stories and beliefs of the student's on the campus to come forth in a way that the quantitative research was unable to achieve. A benefit that arose from the approach was the many recommendations on improving safety on campus that were made as a result of the research by the research participants.

Cruz (2003) used a grounded theory approach to explore the issue of gay male domestic violence and the reasons that gay men stay in an abusive

relationship. Although there exists a plethora of research on heterosexual

domestic violence, the issue of gay domestic violence is one in which little

research has been completed. By using a grounded theory approach, Cruz

found 14 different categories for why gay men stay in abusive relationships. He

also states that gay domestic violence appears to occur at an alarmingly higher

rate than perceived and discusses that as men are socialized on gender, not

sexual orientation, there appears to be many similarities in gay domestic violence

and heterosexual domestic violence. Cruz cites the need for further research in

the area of gay domestic violence to continue to better understand the dynamics

and impacts of domestic violence on gay males and to continue to develop and

provide better and more comprehensive resources and services specific to this

population.

Kia-Keating, Grossman, Sorsoli and Epstein (2005) used a grounded

theory approach to explore ideas of masculinity and the subject of resiliency in

male survivors of childhood sexual abuse. They were able to identify themes and

concepts common to all the men, as well as some specific to the gay and

bisexual men within their study. As a result of their research, the experiences of

men who have been sexually abused can be viewed through a lens relating to

gender in society. This research can assist in therapeutic approaches for

working with this population.

Plummer (2001) used a grounded theory approach to explore the use of

homophobic language by young men and the meaning that these men assigned

to the language. Plummer found that initial language choices came out of a

shared peer culture of language and that homophobic meaning was not originally

intended with the language choices when the participants were young boys and

first learned the words. However, as the boys became older, true meanings of

words were learned and language choices were made with the intent of being

homophobic. Plummer found that the power of homophobic language in pre-teen

and early teen peer cultures was used quite decisively once meaning was

understood to mark boys believed to be homosexual. Homophobic intensity in

the language choices rose as boys became men and the power of homophobic

insults was better understood by the participants. As the boys became young

men, the use of the language was significantly decreased as compared to when

they were young boys and teens, but when the language was used by older

teens and young men, it was done deliberately with homophobic intent to insult

and attack the dignity of individuals believed to be gay.

Using grounded theory as a methodology fit well in examining the

experiences of gay men who have been bashed. As this is an area where so

little knowledge exists, this approach allowed me to generate theory out of the

data that is obtained through the research (Brown, Stevens, Troiano, &

Schneider, 2002). Grounded theory was able to illustrate how the experience of

being bashed has impacted gay men within their lives at various stages and

times, how the men interpret the experience over time, and why the men hold

these interpretations, with the constructs grounded in the data that was collected.

As a gay man who has survived a gay bashing and as a social worker with practice experience in the gay community, this background was helpful in collecting, coding and analyzing the data collected. It allowed for "theoretical sensitivity" (Glaser, 1978 as cited in Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider, 2002) in picking up subtleties within the data generated.

This background was also helpful in conducting the research, as in qualitative research the role of the researcher is very different from the role in quantitative research. The researcher within qualitative research is not seen as a supposedly impartial, non-biased, neutral party. Instead, the researcher is seen as a critical part of the research, an individual who comes into the process with beliefs, ideas and experiences. My own experiences allowed me to enter into this area with sensitivity and empathy to the participants experience throughout the research process (Glaser, 1978 as cited in Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider, 2002). Awareness, reflexivity and transparency throughout the research process worked to counteract the effects of researcher bias towards the data throughout the interpretation process.

Anti-Oppressive Practice Approach

Within my practice as a social worker, I use an Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) approach. This is an approach in working with people, not specific to my role as a counsellor or as a social worker. It made sense to me to this would be the approach that I used when approaching my research, for an AOP approach

to me is more than just a style of working with people, it is a lens at which I view the world through. Thus, this approach is a part of how I not only do my work as a social worker and as a counsellor, but how I approach life.

Mullaly (2002) defines oppression as "the domination of subordinate groups in society by a powerful (politically, economically, socially, and culturally) group.   It entails the various ways that this domination occurs, including how structural arrangements favour the dominant over the subordinate group" (p. 27). Mullaly (2002) speaks of how oppressed persons can find everyday living a challenge; having to live to the rules of another culture requires versatility and personal repression (p. 127). Gay men living in a heterosexist society are a perfect example of this, either living in the closet and repressing self identity or coming out and feeling the wrath of a societal structure geared only for the dominant group—heterosexuals. Bulhan (1985) speaks of how the oppressed learn to wear many masks and to adapt to this society, developing skills and behaviours to detect any threats towards themselves and to adapt to an unfriendly dominant majority (as cited in Mullaly, 2002, p. 127). Mullaly (2002) states that based on this bi-cultural adaption and hiding, it is no wonder that these repressive coping skills result in higher hospitalization, mental health, mortality rates etc. We see this demonstrated in the work that Banks (2001; 2003) conducted around the impact of homophobia on the GLBTTQ* population.

Mullaly (2002) states that False Consciousness is a form of internalized oppression, associated with ideologies of the dominant group which are

internalized by a subordinate group. This concept fits in with the definition of

internalized homophobia and demonstrates how this is created. A dominant

society presents its ideologies and beliefs in ways of normalcy that make sense

to thus accept and internalize; this becomes problematic when you don't live up

to these ideologies and behaviours. Gay men participate in the development of

their world view and the construction of their place in the world through their

everyday interactions and activities. Thus they interpret what happens to them

(homophobia; heterosexism; oppression; gay bashing) from these daily lived

experiences.

Within the Canadian Social Work Code of Ethics (2005), the first of the

Core Social Work Values and Principles listed is "Respect for Inherent Dignity

and Worth of Persons". One of the principles listed states "Social workers

respect the unique worth and inherent dignity of all people and uphold human

rights" (2005, p. 4). An AOP approach in research fits well with this core value

and principle of the Canadian Social Work Code of Ethics guideline. "*Anti-*

oppressive practice [sic] is about minimizing power differences in society and

maximizing the rights to which all people are entitled" (van Wormer, 2005). This

approach allows for experiences of the client and the practitioner, allows for

beliefs and bias that exist, and allows for the truest expression or evaluation of

the client's experiences. Using this approach challenges me in my own views

and practices as a researcher and as a social worker/service provider/counsellor,

while supporting the reality of the client. As Sakamoto and Pitner (2005) state:

When social workers enter helping relationships, they enter with their own biases and prejudices. It is these biases and prejudices that can, and often do, affect how they listen to the problems of their service users and, ultimately, affect how they proceed to address them. In order to prevent such cognitive biases, social workers must first critically examine their own cultural backgrounds and worldviews. By examining their own assumptions and biases, the social workers may be less likely to impose their own values onto their service users.

"AOPs ultimately aim to change the structure and procedures of service delivery systems through macro changes" (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005, p. 437). This fits well with the goal of this research, to add to the body of knowledge and to effectively create change. AOP deals with both the micro (the individual client's situation) and the macro (larger belief systems and institutionalized structures and systems) to both support the client while affecting change of the status quo. Tew's (2006) speaks of the concept of co-operative power, in which "social workers may be seen as having a mandate to develop relationships of *co-operative power* [sic] wherever possible across many forms of social difference—with service users, families, professionals, communities and other agencies. These relationships must recognize the real imbalances of power, authority and access to resources that may exist between different parties—and there must be explicit permission for such issues to be talked about openly. There would need to be space for support and challenge between users and practitioners—with workers valuing and learning from the 'standpoint knowledge' of service users" (p. 46). This also fits with the role of the researcher and the participant. As a researcher from the University of Manitoba, I was aware of how my role could be

interpreted by participants. This awareness is one of the necessities in beginning

to utilize an AOP approach. Anne Bishop (2002) states that in her experience,

> **There are six steps involved in becoming an ally. They are:**
> 1. **understanding oppression, how it came about, how it is held in place, and how it stamps its pattern on individuals who then turn around and recreate it;**
> 2. **understanding different oppressions, how they are similar, how they differ, how they reinforce one another;**
> 3. **consciousness and healing;**
> 4. **becoming a worker for your own liberation;**
> 5. **becoming an ally;**
> 6. **maintaining hope (p. 13).**

Bishop's understanding fits well with how I approach my practice and how

I approached this research, for as mentioned in the theoretical framework,

although my own story is not included as data within this research, I as the

researcher come with my own experiences and I am a part of the research

process. As the researcher, an AOP approach must be one in which there is not

only the theoretical understanding of the causes and links between oppression

and domination, but the personal understanding and growth at the micro level, or

becoming an ally as Bishop would state, to be able to truly affect change at the

macro level. It seems to make the most sense that the approach to research

must mirror or at the least, fit with, the approach to practice. The researcher

must be able to ponder, process, and analyze how knowledge, discourse and

power have been utilized in the research process (for example, see Strega,

2005a and Potts & Brown, 2005) and be able to provide a critical reflective

analysis of "whose account of truth is privileged, on looking for silences and on

demanding multiple perspectives" (Napier & Fook, 2000, p.9). An AOP approach

to research involves the participation of the individuals in giving feedback about

what the researchers have written, to ensure as much as possible an accurate

representation of their experiences, an opportunity that was present in this

research. This research also built in various forms of member checking to

ensure this, which are explained in more detail within Chapter Four—Methods

and Procedures.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Data Analysis

Data analysis through constant comparison is a necessary component of

a grounded theory approach. Analysis happens simultaneously with data

collection and provides the basis for subsequent data collection in follow-up

interviews and member checking on the developing categories and their

properties and dimensions. This constant comparative analysis is the primary

form of data interpretation and coding in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss,

1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Consistent with developing a grounded theory,

the initial data from the interviews was analyzed through constant comparison of

the data, open coding and concepts established out of the interviews. Reflexivity

is a concept and process that was utilized throughout the research process.

Reflexivity involves the researcher being reflective upon his or her involvement in

the research process. As the researcher, throughout the research study I

engaged in the process of reflection on my own experiences and any potential

assumptions that I as the researcher may have entered into the research with. I

employed reflexivity throughout all the stages of the research and theory

development, through the use of memos. Memos, as defined by Strauss and

Corbin (1998) are "written records of analysis that may vary in type and form" (p.

217). Memos can include code notes, theoretical notes, diagrams, operational

notes, or varieties of these (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Throughout the research

process, I used memos to help in my reflection. I found that using memos

assisted me in the process of reflexivity by recording my progress, thoughts,

feelings, perceptions, and direction of the research and of myself (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998). The use of memos also provided me with a record or timeline that

I could utilize in constant comparison of the data.

To understand the coding procedures, it is important to understand the

foundational purposes of grounded theory. The goals of grounded theory are to

build rather than test theory, to provide researchers with analytic tools for

handling masses of raw data, to help the analysts to consider alternative

meanings of phenomena, and to identify, develop, and relate the concepts that

are the building blocks of the developing theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) use three types of coding throughout the data

analysis in grounded theory: open, axial, and selective coding. In open coding,

the researcher develops concepts that convey the meaning of the words,

thoughts, and phrases from the raw data, and begins to develop the concepts

into abstract categories. This involves reviewing the data within the transcripts by

examining words and phrases used by the participants in the interviews to

develop theory about the phenomenon being studied. This data then generates

the concepts and categories that eventually compose the themes for an

emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As I reviewed the data from each

interview, these concepts began to emerge and were identified throughout each

interview. The constant comparison of concepts occurred as I transcribed each

interview; the process of transcribing all of the interviews personally allowed me

to become intimate with the data, knowing it well and being able to make

constant comparisons between the data sets throughout the entire first stage of

coding. In this stage, I found that I was able to identify concepts and categories

that conveyed similar meanings, although I often initially labeled these concepts

and categories with different identifiers. The process of constant comparison

highlighted the different concept labels and the similarities in the concepts.

Axial coding includes the continued development of the properties and

dimensions of the developing categories from the process of open coding. Axial

coding includes identifying any conditions, actions, interactions, and

consequences associated with a category and looking for a sign or signs as to

how categories relate to one another.   The constant comparison of concepts and

categories allowed the relationships between different categories to begin to

emerge from the data.

Selective coding is the stage where a "central category" is selected from

existing categories and should "account for considerable variation with

categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). During selective coding, theoretical

saturation, the non-emergence of any new properties, dimensions, or

relationships, is reached. Initially I had hoped to pursue the research process by

continuing interviews with participants until theoretical saturation was reached.

However, it became clear as I discussed the research process with my

committee that reaching theoretical saturation could be a challenge for several

reasons:

1. Due to the nature of the research topic, participants may be

   reluctant to come forward.

2. Lack of funding created challenges around participant recruitment,

   such as advertising, the ability to provide potential honorariums to

   participants and the ability to pursue the research for an extended

   period of time without funding for my own time and for research

   materials.

3. A deadline for completion of the Master's Thesis by a target date

   made ongoing recruitment unobtainable.

As a result of these limitations the goal of theoretical saturation became

unobtainable. To compensate for this and to increase the credibility and validity

of the research findings, outside member checking was incorporated into the

research process. This is discussed more under the Validity heading later within

this chapter. The incorporation of this helped to strengthen the design of the

research process.

Participant Recruitment

      Participants within the study were required to meet certain criteria to

participate within the research. Often survivors of a gay bashing are perceived to

be gay by their attackers, but in reality are heterosexual. As the research is

specific to the issue of exploring the impact of gay bashing on gay men, it is thus important for the participants to self identify as gay men, not just as men that have experienced homophobic violence. Thus, participants were limited to men that self identify as gay. Within this research, all six of the men interviewed identified as either gay or homosexual, with one stating that he must have been bisexual at one point, as he had been in a heterosexual marriage, although he now identifies as gay. Participants did not have to identify as out. In fact, one man was not out at the time he was experiencing homophobic harassment. A second man that was able to complete the study was also not out at the time of his experiences.

Another requirement for eligibility revolved around length of time between their experiences and their interview. As this research explores how gay men have made sense of their experience and how it has affected them over time, a specific period of time needed to have existed between their experiences and their participation within this study. Eligibility was limited to gay man that had experienced a gay bashing within Manitoba six months previous or longer than the date of their interview within the study. Although this stipulation potentially eliminated men that may have more recently experienced a gay bashing, it will have allowed men to have had the opportunity to reflect for a specific period of time—six months or longer—on how the experience of being bashed has impacted their lives at various stages and times, how the men interpret the experience over time, and why they have made these interpretations. This

clause limiting eligibility was deemed important; while potentially losing some

valuable data, the elimination of men that have experienced a gay bashing within

less than six months also served to protect such men. Although potentially

willing, men that may have more recently experienced a bashing might be more

susceptible to secondary victimization and trauma by recounting their

experience. The passage of some time may allow for some healing to have

occurred and men may be in a safer and more stable place in their lives to share

their story. Although the theory of critical incident stress debriefing would

suggest that participating within this research might help these men, the six

month limitation was seen as necessary to allow for potential reflection and

integration of the experience within their daily lives. This gives the potential of

richer, thicker data on the men's experience and the effects it has had on them at

different points within their lives. While the research process may be therapeutic,

it was not designed to be therapy. Within the study, all six of the participants had

well over six months of time between their experiences and their interview. The

time between experiences shared and the interview process ranged from five

years prior to thirty years prior to the interview process.

All the men within the study were required to be 18 years of age and older

to participate within the study. This requirement allowed participants to consent

to the study on their own, not forcing them to have to reveal participation to

anyone in the process of gaining consent to participate. While a limiting factor to

the study, potentially losing the experiences and stories of younger gay men that

have been bashed, this stipulation protected participant's privacy around

disclosing their sexual orientation or experience to a parent or guardian that

might not be aware of either of these aspects of the individual's life. Throughout

the entire process, the research design was implemented in such a manner to

protect men from being outed through the process of participating within the

research. This is discussed in more detail within the *Ethics* chapter.

Due to time constraints on the research as partial requirement of a

Master's of Social Work degree and a lack of funding for the research,

recruitment was limited to between six and ten participants for the study. A total

of seven men came forward to participate, with six men actually interviewed.

One man was not able to participate and withdrew from the study due to family

illness that occurred around the time he was going to be interviewed. In addition

to these seven men, three other individuals contacted me with information

around men that they knew who had been gay bashed, however none of these

three contacted the interviewer to arrange an interview. In addition to these ten

individuals, the stories of numerous men who had been gay bashed were

recanted to me in conversations when people inquired about the topic of my

thesis research.

Participants for the study were recruited through a variety of ways.

Recruitment happened in two phases. Within the first phase, posters were

placed in a variety of places where they would be visible to gay men. With

permission, this included the Rainbow Resource Centre, Winnipeg's LGBTTQ*

resource centre, at university student group offices (Rainbow Pride Mosaic at the

University of Manitoba and at the LGBT* Collective at the University of

Winnipeg), at several gay clubs in Winnipeg (Desire, Gio's and Club 200), at the

two gay bathhouses in Winnipeg (Adonis Spa and Aquarius Spa), and at gay

positive organizations such as Nine Circles Community Health Centre, Augustine

United Church, and Klinic Community Health Centre. A copy of the poster is

included in the appendices (Appendix 2).

Utilizing email in the second phase of recruitment, the recruitment poster

was sent to email list serves through organizations and groups (Rainbow

Resource Centre membership, the Rainbow Pride Mosaic membership, and the

LGBT* Collective membership). The email request highlighted for participants to

apply via telephone or to respond to my own email address to participate within

the research, not to hit reply in response as the response could potentially be

returned to the group or individual the email was forwarded from, not the

researcher. This information was highlighted to protect someone from

accidentally disclosing information they may not want others to know about. An

ad was also placed within Outwords Magazine as well as in the Rainbow News,

the electronic newsletter for the Rainbow Resource Centre, in the second phase

of recruitment. The same ad was also placed on Facebook, a web-based social

networking sight. A copy of the ad is included in the appendices (Appendix 3).

Recruitment of the seven men came through a variety of the methods.

Two participants heard of the study through Nine Circles Community Health

Centre, two participants heard about the study through Facebook, one participant

heard about the study through the Rainbow Resource Centre, one participant

heard about the study through the advertisement in Outwords Inc., and one

participant heard about the study through a poster at Club 200. Of the three

individuals that contacted me to potentially refer an individual to the study, two

individuals heard about the study through the advertisement on Facebook and

one heard about the study through a poster at Augustine United Church in

Winnipeg, MB.

A limitation of the recruitment approach is that respondents would most

likely be out gay men, as closeted gay men would not necessarily access any of

the places where the study was posted, would not necessarily be involved with

any of the groups that information on the study was emailed to, or would not

necessarily read Outwords Inc. All seven of the men that contacted me were in

fact out gay men. In addition, the three men that were to be referred to the study

were also identified as out gay men by the individuals referring them.

Another limitation of the recruitment approach in this study is that the men

that responded would all be literate and potentially have computer access and

computer usage skills. Such was the case with all seven of the men that

contacted me to participate.

It was unsure how many men would come forward and participate within

this research, as there had been no similar study conducted in Winnipeg, MB or

almost anywhere else for that matter. As was identified in Janoff's (2005)

research, Winnipeg is home to high levels of homophobic violence, so the

potential for many people to come forward existed. It was for this reason that

recruitment was done in two phases. Had there been was a large number of

contacts regarding participation from the first phase of recruitment, the second

phase may not have been needed.   However, with each phase lasting for one

month, both phases of recruitment were utilized. Recruitment was initially

planned for a two month period, but was extended to a three month period.

As the researcher, challenges in recruitment appeared related to the

research topic itself. In informal discussions at various times and locations, over

and over I heard stories about people that knew of men that had been gay

bashed. The stories shared ranged from recent events to events that had

happened years previous. I invited all of the individuals that shared these stories

to invite the men that they knew to participate and gave them my contact

information. None of these resulted in any participants to the study. Three

individuals that saw various recruitment posters or ads did contact me to see if

they could refer individuals to the study and all three were invited to do such.

Follow up contact with these three individuals revealed that they had spoken to

the men that they knew and informed them of the study; however none of the

men wanted to participate. All individuals that spoke to me were informed that I

myself was a gay man and that I had also experienced a gay bashing, however

this did not appear to make any difference in the three referral situations. The

same information about the researcher was relayed in informal discussions with

people about the situation. Again, no referrals came out of this process. So

notwithstanding recent research (Janoff, 2005) and personal anecdotal evidence

of high levels of homophobic violence occurring within the city where the

research was being conducted, limited participants came forward about the

issue, despite as one participant stated, "this type of thing happens commonly . .

. it's just the type of thing that happens to queer people or minorities a lot". As

such a thing that happens commonly, perhaps homophobic violence and

harassment is not something out of the ordinary for gay men, but in fact a part of

the ordinary. The normalizing of such events might contribute to why people do

not come forward to talk about it—it's just a part of being gay, what's to discuss?

Another limitation to the research study and recruitment was the lack of

funding. I was only able to run the advertisement in Outwords Inc. for two

consecutive months, due to the cost. In addition, I was unable to provide any

sort of honorarium; with funding, advertising for the study could have run longer

and could have offered an honorarium, which might have enticed some

individuals. Of the six men that were interviewed, one did inquire if there was

any honorarium for participation. When informed there was not, he stated he

was still willing and glad to participate in the research.

Interview Process

The interview process began with the initial contact from participants.

During this first conversation, mutually agreed upon arrangements were made for

a time and a place for interviews to take place. One of the concerns highlighted

by my committee was the issue of the researcher's safety. A study asking

people that have been gay-bashed has the potential to attract gay-bashers as

false respondents with the intent of committing a gay-bashing to myself. To

provide some safety, interviews were scheduled to take place in public locations,

such as the Men's Resource Centre and the Rainbow Resource Centre. Three

of the interviews were conducted at the Men's Resource Centre, one interview

was conducted at the participant's place of employment, and two interviews were

conducted in mutually agreed upon public places.

For safety considerations, a third party was made aware of all research

interviews dates, times and locations. It was agreed that I would contact the third

party after all interviews, within at least two hours of the scheduled start time of

the interview. If no contact was made, the third party would attend to the place of

the interview to check on my safety. All interviews were conducted in less than

two hours and calls were placed to the third party, making attendance by this

person to the interview location unnecessary. Had interviews been longer than

two hours, I would have placed a call to the third party to inform them that the

interview was running late, thus indicating all was fine and there were no safety

concerns.

Upon meeting, participants were given a copy of the Informed Consent

Release Form (Appendix 4). The consent form had previously been approved by

the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board as part

of the research approval process. The form was reviewed with participants

verbally and they were given two copies to sign. One copy was kept by the

researcher and the second copy was given to participants for their own records.

The consent form contained information about the study, contact information for

myself, contact information for my advisor and contact information for the Human

Ethics Secretariat at the University of Manitoba. During this time, participants

were made aware that the interview would be recorded and security protocols

around interview data were reviewed. These security protocols are discussed in

more detail in the *Ethics* chapter. The importance of confidentiality was reviewed

with participants at this time. This is discussed in more detail within the *Ethics*

chapter. In addition to recording the interviews, field notes were also taken

during the interview, which allowed myself as the interviewer to act also as a

participant observer, noting body language, gestures, facial expressions and

reactions—aspects that the audio recording of the interview did not necessarily

pick up. This helped to insure more accurate and meaningful data was obtained

in the process of the interview.

Interviews began with an introduction of myself to the participant after

reviewing and signing forms. As a gay man that has experienced a gay bashing,

I disclosed my own experience to participants. This knowledge was shared to

reduce the power imbalance between researcher and participant and to inform

the participant of where I am coming from in conducting this research, which fits

well with an AOP approach. This knowledge was given to help encourage

participants to share and disclose more of their experience, knowing they are

speaking with someone that is a safe person—someone who would have a better

understanding of what it means to be gay and what it means to be bashed. I

believe that having participants who were informed of my own experience helped

to create an atmosphere of safety and trust during the interview. Data was

collected through the use of questions within a semi-structured interview. The

goal of using a semi-structured approach is to be able to "better understand what

is going on for another person or another group of people" (Strega, 2005, p.1)

and this approach allowed for this to occur. A semi-structured interview format

also allowed for flexibility in the interview. Using an interview guide, participants

were asked questions about their experience that allowed the participant to tell

their story in a meaningful way. The benefit of using a semi-structured interview

is that this approach allows for room to move off of the interview guide. This

allowed the interviewer to explore and to probe for more detail in response to

answers that were shared by participants. Having trust of the researcher and an

understanding of why I was doing this research allowed me to explore and follow

up with comments made in the interview and allowed participants to feel

comfortable with this process. A copy of the interview guide is attached in the

appendices (Appendix 5). Participants were informed that they had the right to

refuse to answer any question they were not comfortable with and that

interviewing would be stopped at any time they requested.

Discussing an issue such as a gay bashing or homophobic violence or harassment had the potential to cause distress for participants during the process. Participants were informed that as a social worker, my primary professional role is as a therapist and that they were welcome to discuss their discomfort at any time during or after the interview process and that I would let them know about places that they could access counselling resources if they so desired. Throughout the interview process, as a participant observer conducting the research and as a social worker/counsellor, I was able to monitor body language, tone, facial expressions and gestures to see if any discomfort or unease was occurring for participants. At any sign of these, I would have then checked in with the participant to see how they are feeling and if they are needing a break, would like to stop, or would like to continue. This fits well with an AOP approach, providing the participant the control of the interview process. Two of the participants did become emotional at times during the interview, but their displayed emotions fit the context of the story details they were telling at the time. At these moments I checked in with both participants, who stated they were okay and wished to continue the interview.

At the conclusion of all interviews, participants were thanked for their contributions and reminded as per the Informed Consent Form that if they desired, participants could contact me for a follow up interview. As stated in the Informed Consent Form, "A second follow-up interview will occur with men at their request to review the research and discuss my interpretations of the

interview and of the research, to see if I have accurately captured what

participants are trying to share through the interview and to solicit feedback from

participants about these interpretations. The second follow up interview would

take place approximately three to four months after the initial interview."

Although reminded of this opportunity, none of the six men that were interviewed

contacted the researcher to review the research or schedule a second interview,

although email correspondence including additional interview data was received

from one participant shortly after his interview. Participants were also given a

copy of the *Counselling Resources List for Participants* (Appendix 6) that had

been approved by both my committee and the University of Manitoba

Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. This resource list was verbally

reviewed with each participant.

     At the completion of all interviews, the taped interviews were transferred

from the electronic recorder to a computer file, which was enclosed in a

password protected file. The interview itself was also encrypted, requiring a

password to open. Interviews were then erased off of the electronic recorder. All

recordings and transcripts are currently being stored in a locked filing cabinet in a

locked location, approved of by both my advisor and the University of Manitoba

Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. Data will be kept for a one year

period, as determined by my committee, after the research has been completed,

presented and defended as partial requirement of the Master's Degree program

in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. After this time period,

data will be destroyed, with the encrypted digital recordings of interviews being erased, and transcripts and consent forms being shredded and destroyed.

All interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The process of completing my own transcribing was invaluable in providing me with a familiarity and intimacy with the interview data that I would not have gained had an outside research transcriber been utilized.

Validity

Evaluation and assessment was built into the methods and methodology design of the research. The process of evaluation and assessment of the research insures that the theories that emerge truly are grounded within the data collected in the research process. Emerging concepts and categories were developed through the coding of the data that arose from the interviews.

Participants were given the invitation of a second interview if so desired, to review transcribed interviews or discuss the research data and themes emerging from the data. This was built into the research design as a form of member checking to strengthen credibility of the research data and findings. Conducting a series of interviews increases credibility within the research. Credibility is demonstrated "when informants, and also readers who have had the human experience . . . recognize the researcher's described experiences as their own" (Beck, 1993, p. 264 in Chivitti and Piran, 2003). Soliciting feedback can be used as a method of member checking with participants, to insure that the story,

concepts, themes and ideas the researcher has identified are accurate and reflective of the participant's experiences. This process increases credibility within the research. However, none of the participants chose to conduct a follow-up interview, although email correspondence including additional interview data was received from one participant shortly after his interview.

Within the original design of this research process, the concept of theoretical saturation was proposed. Within the research process, theoretical saturation occurs when the researcher has analyzed the data and is not seeing the emergence of any new properties, dimensions, or relationships. This strengthens the credibility of the research and findings. However, my committee felt that time constraints in completing the research, combined with a lack of funding for the research, worked against reaching theoretical saturation. For this reason, outside member checking was built into the research process to increase credibility.

An outside committee of individuals with knowledge, experience and expertise working within the GLBTTQ* communities was created for the purpose of member checking the themes arising out of the data. The members were presented to my thesis advisor for approval prior to being asked to sit on the outside committee. This outside member review process was designed to provide credibility to the emerging theory as one construct of trustworthiness. An outside member review "keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about the methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher with the

opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings" (Creswell, 1998, p. 202).

Once data and themes were presented to the outside committee, it was then presented to my thesis committee prior to writing the findings of the research. This was done again to strengthen credibility by completing member checking with my thesis committee, who all have knowledge and experience in working with the LGBTTQ* communities.

A follow-up stage of member checking has the potential to occur once the research has been completed. If an option, through presentations at appropriate conferences, such as Bent on Change, Egale, the World Outgames Human Rights Conference or similar conferences, the research can be both member checked and disseminated back to the community by peer review and can be utilized by the community for social justice change.

CHAPTER FIVE: ETHICS

Ethical Considerations

When working with individuals it is important to consider the whole

individual, not simply the parts that make up the individual. Although this

research is focused on gay men's experience of a gay bashing or homophobic

violence and harassment, there is more to the participants than gender and

sexual orientation. Issues relating to class, physical health, mental health,

religion, and racism were all present in the stories that were shared by the men in

this study. An AOP approach works with and considers the whole individual

rather than the pieces of their identity that combined together to create the

person. Brown (1998) states that the effects of multiple oppressions existing

together in complex relationships are not experienced separately and as issues

are explored, these relationships become more apparent (as cited in Bayliss,

2000). In discussing the many social identities that individuals have, Sakamoto

and Pitner (2005) state that "[h]ow we *position* [sic] ourselves within these

various identity groups affects the way we perceive ourselves and others. These

multiple identities also accompany statuses. We are privileged by some

identities, yet oppressed by others" (p. 442). Sakamoto and Pitner (2005) talk

about using a one-down position as a social worker, meaning that "the social

worker recognizes the power differentials in the service-provider/service-user

relationship. Thus, the social worker actively becomes a naïve investigator,

making the service user the narrator of his or her own experiences . . . this requires the social worker's suspending preformed judgements and listening to how their service users describe their own situation" (p. 443). The AOP approach thus fits well as a researcher working with members of a marginalized group. While recognizing that one aspect of the individual (sexual orientation) can cause marginalization, I entered into the research allowing the participants to tell their own story while aware of my own experiences. A sense of critical awareness around my own experiences allowed me to meet with individuals without pre-conceived notions of who participants are and what impact their stories have had upon their lives. Awareness to power dynamics, with myself as the interviewer/researcher asking the questions was an important consideration in how questions would be asked. The goal of minimizing the power differential as best as possible between me and participants was achieved by sharing my own history and aspects of my own identity as a gay man with participants.

In working with an issue such as gay bashing and with gay men, there were several important ethical considerations that needed to be addressed. In no particular order, these are:

- Level of Outness/Closetedness

- Sexual and Gender Identification

- Physical Safety

- Re-traumatization through participation

- Confidentiality

Whether an individual is out (and to what level) or closeted (and to what level) were important factors that needed to be considered in the design of the research study. The process of coming out comes with many risks, which were identified within the *Language* and *Literature Review* sections of the *Rationale and Research Context Chapter*. To protect identity of participants against being outed through participation in this study, several safeguards were built into the research design. Participants were all assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. This protocol also speaks to protecting the participant's confidentiality in regards to being able to be identified by name within the study. Due to the sensitive nature of the issue, confidentiality of the participants was of the highest priority throughout the research process. Potential fear of being outed was reduced by assuring all participants of all the conditions of confidentiality and the importance that is placed on this. Participants were all informed that all interviews would be kept confidential and that all recordings and transcripts would be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked location, to which only I and my thesis committee would have access and knowledge of the location.

As this study is specifically examining the experiences of gay men that have experienced a gay bashing or homophobic violence/harassment, two aspects of identity need to be present: sexual orientation and gender. To be eligible, all participants had to self identify as either gay or homosexual and to identify as male. The issue regarding gender was not fully explored as all participants did identify as male and were biologically male. Trans-men also

experience levels of homophobia and violence and theoretically might have contacted the researcher to participate. Who defines male? Is it based on biology, societal constructions of masculinity or internal gender identification? This was an area that I did not fully define within my research design, however it did not become an issue as all participants were biologically male. However, there are ethical considerations around participation and the definition of male that I failed to consider.

Sexual identity was specifically restricted to men that identify as gay or homosexual, as the research interest comes out of my own experiences as a gay man that was gay bashed. Potential data could have been lost through restricting the study to only gay men, as many other men with many other identifications have also experienced gay bashing and homophobic violence/harassment, regardless of their sexual identification. However, as this is an area in which little research has been invested, this study adds to a small knowledge base and thus increases that. Future research might explore the impact of homophobic violence/harassment on men, regardless of sexual orientation. As well, future research could include and compare the experiences of men and homophobic violence/harassment, based on different definitions of male.

The issue of safety for the researcher was an ethical concern that was brought up by my advisor and to my thesis committee. It is not unheard of for 'gay baiting' to occur in Winnipeg. Gay baiting is the term used when individuals

hoping to bash a gay man pose as gay to pick up or gain the individual's trust,

then bash him. The concern was that a study asking for people that have been

gay-bashed to come forward had the potential to attract gay-bashers as false

respondents with the intent of committing a gay-bashing to myself. To provide

some safety, interviews were scheduled to take place in mutually agreed upon

public locations and a third party was informed of interview times and locations,

with the directive to attend to the interview location if they had not heard from

myself, the researcher, within two hours.

There is a minimal risk of re-traumatizing individuals by asking them to

share their story. Therefore, it is the researcher's ethical responsibility to reduce

this minimal risk. To insure that risk was reduced, several ethical considerations

were built into the study at different levels—prior to data collection, during data

collection, and post data collection.

Prior to data collection, the study was obligated to meet the requirements

of and to receive approval from the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology

Research Ethics Board. For ethical reasons, the study was only open to men

age eighteen or over. This age requirement of eighteen reduced risk around

potential outing to parents or guardians when obtaining consent from

participants, as individuals under the age of eighteen would have been required

to have their parent's or guardian's consent. A time period of at least six months

since the bashing experience was needed to have passed for men to be eligible

to participate within the study. This time requirement between a

bashing/homophobic violence or harassment and participation within the study

was implemented to potentially reduce the risk of harm of repeat victimization or

re-traumatizing participants by asking them to relive and retell their experiences.

Men were given the option of several location choices for the interview to take

place, to insure participant's comfort levels and confidentiality. For those that

might not have felt comfortable being seen with the researcher for reasons of

confidentiality or fear of being outed, telephone interviews were an option for

participants, although this option was never elected by any participants.

Participants were informed that they had the right to refuse to answer any

question they were not comfortable with and that interviewing would be stopped

at any time they requested. Permission to tape was received and protocols

around both the recordings and transcripts were explained to all participants.

Throughout the interview process, as a participant observer and as a social

worker/counsellor, I was able to monitor body language, tone, facial expressions

and gestures to see if any discomfort or unease was occurring for participants.

At any sign of these, I paused the interview process to check in with the

participant to see how they were feeling and if they needed a break, would like to

stop, or would like to continue.

As the primary researcher, it was both ethical and necessary for me to be

able to keep my role as a researcher and my occupation as a social

worker/counsellor separate. Providing counselling while engaged in a research

relationship might have had the potential to blur boundaries, confuse roles and to

elicit information that might not have been shared otherwise. However, as a social worker, a counsellor and a gay man that has been gay bashed, it would also be unethical to ignore the emotional needs of a participant that needed some sort of support as a result of the research process. To keep the roles of researcher and social worker separate, it was agreed with my thesis advisor that immediate discomfort or crisis displayed by participants would be explored and immediate support would be provided to participants. Participants would then be made aware of other resources where they would be able to access counselling services.

During data collection, participants had the study and its purpose explained to them. Participants were asked to sign two copies of the consent form to participate, which had previously been approved by the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. The consent form discussed the purpose of the study, confidentiality, rights of the participant and the obligations of myself as the researcher. A copy was kept by the researcher and one was provided to the participants, so that they had a record of what they had agreed to.

Participants were informed prior to the interview, both verbally and on the consent form, that there were certain times when confidentiality could not be honored. These times included any disclosure of child welfare concerns, any threat of suicide or self-harming behaviour that might have placed the participant's life at risk and the participant was unable to safety plan and contract

with myself, or any threat or risk to a third party and the participant was unable to

safety plan and contract with myself.

Proposal Process

Prior to the research process beginning, the proposal and design of the

research was submitted to my advisor for feedback and critique. After

completing changes, the proposal then went forward to my thesis committee,

comprised of three individuals and my advisor. The proposal and research

design was presented to the committee and discussion was held on the research

design and process. Recommendations from the committee were then

incorporated into the proposal, which was then forwarded on to my advisor and

to the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board in

June of 2007.

Changes were requested from the University of Manitoba

Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board around language and clarification/

solidification of the separation of the roles of researcher and counsellor by

myself. After discussion with my advisor, changes were made and the proposal

was re-submitted to the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research

Ethics Board. Approval was received from the board in September of 2007.

Sensitivity

An important ethical consideration is sensitivity of the researcher while conducting the research. As previously discussed, this was a concern to the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board in regards to the separation of roles for myself as the researcher doing my thesis research and my occupation and training as a social worker and counsellor.

As a gay man that has survived a gay bashing, I come into this research with this experience, which provides me with some insight and awareness into the potential effects that a gay bashing can have. While needing to suspend my own experiences as best as possible throughout the data analysis phase of the research, my experiences were important in guiding my behaviour and interactions with participants in the data collection stage of interviewing.

While interviewing participants, I was able to utilize my training as a social worker to respond when participants became emotional while being interviewed. This occurred in two of the six interviews. Both times I was able to respond in supportive mannerisms to participants, by validating their statements, offering tissue, and checking in with their feelings about the interview process. As mentioned, I felt it both important and necessary to share with participants that I am also a gay man and that I had also been gay bashed. In reflecting on the interviews, I felt that providing this information to participants helped to level the balance of power between us, from that of a researcher and subject, to that of two men that had both been gay bashed and were talking openly about the

event. The use of a semi-structured interview guide allowed me to be sensitive

to their needs, allowed me to ask questions and follow up on statements in a way

that a rigidly structured interview guide would not have allowed.

Research In Action

While conducting the research in action, there were personal challenges

to the separation of the roles of researcher and that of social worker/counsellor

that I was able to observe. A large piece of my professional identity is that of

being a social worker, being a helper, and being a counsellor. To be in the role

of researcher, which many would believe is impartial, neutral and unbiased, and

to hear the stories of men that have experienced gay bashing, homophobic

violence and harassment challenged me, moved me and created conflict in me.

Although I was not able to respond in the level of empathy and compassion that I

would as a counsellor, the research design and the AOP lens allowed me to

respond in ways that still fit with my values as a human being, a social worker

and a researcher. As mentioned previously, the implementation of a semi-

structured interview guide gave me the flexibility to respond and to engage with

clients about their experiences, rather than just gather information and data. The

development of a resource tool in the *Counselling Resources List for Participants*

gave me a concrete resource to offer participants in the moment.

Throughout the data analysis phase, always the potential for researcher

bias to creep into the results exists, no matter what the research or who the

researcher. The safeguards built into the research design worked to mitigate this

from occurring. These ranged from providing participants with the opportunity to

schedule a follow up interview to review transcripts and results, to member

checking with my external committee prior to completing the data analysis, all

ensured validity and credibility of the results. The concept of reflexivity kept the

work I was doing transparent and created a trail that could be logically followed in

an emotional working environment.

CHAPTER SIX: PARTICIPANTS

In the months of October, November and December of 2007 I was contacted by a total of seven men that expressed interest in participating within this research study. After initial discussion to insure eligibility (participants self identified as gay, male, over eighteen, and had experienced a gay bashing, homophobic harassment or violence), all seven were deemed eligible to participate. However, one individual ended up withdrawing from the study due to personal circumstances that arose. Rescheduling was not able to occur for the individual, leaving a total of six men that participated within the study.

The men all contacted me directly as a result of various strategies used within the participant requirement. While the men have similarities in identity— identification as gay men, there is also a huge amount of diversity within this sample. Participants ranged in age from 27 to 48 years of age. Four of the men self-identified as Caucasian, one as Black and one as Aboriginal. Different backgrounds in terms of education, physical and mental health, employment and support systems/familial support came forward as the men shared their experiences and reflections.

Following are brief biographies of who these men are and a mere snapshot of their experiences as gay men who have personally experienced homophobia within their lives as a result of their sexual orientation and identification.

Biography: Kevin

At the time of being interviewed, Kevin was a gay male in his forties, born in Eastern Canada but raised in Northern Manitoba, now living in Winnipeg for many years. Kevin stated that he had been out since he was 22, the age when he came to Winnipeg. In the late nineties, Kevin was diagnosed as HIV+. Kevin is a member of a visible minority and identifies himself as "black", adopted as an infant into a white family. When interviewed, Kevin was unemployed. He was last employed approximately two years previous to his interview. Kevin did not graduate from high school. At the time of his bashing, Kevin was employed. He ended up missing time from his job to recover from his bashing injuries. He stated his employer at the time was quite understanding and Kevin had a job to come back to once healed. Over the previous twenty years Kevin had had odd jobs, but nothing long term. At times Kevin had worked as a gay escort. When interviewed, Kevin was in a relationship, seeing someone for almost a year. At the time of the interview, Kevin was on social assistance, living in a supportive housing situation.

Kevin described his adoptive family as "fucked", experiencing different levels of racism from his father, whom he stated was an alcoholic. Kevin shared stories of his father demeaning him, calling him by racist terms and telling him that he "fucked with the worth of the house because [he] was black". He stated his father said that the presence of a black child in the home decreased the property value. Kevin described his adoptive mother as supportive and spoke of

wanting to protect her, not discussing his bashing with her when it happened as he "didn't want her to worry". Kevin left his home up north in his early twenties, when he realized he was gay, as "you can't be gay up north. You can be a lesbian, but you can't be a homosexual." Both of Kevin's adoptive parents have passed away. He stated that he no longer has any family.

Kevin describes his support system as consisting of a "few friends". He took time to clearly differentiate the difference between people that he sees as friends and those that he sees as "associates", individuals that he doesn't trust as a result of betrayals about his HIV status. Although he had made contact with his biological family, he stated that he finds it difficult to relate to them. He shared that his biological family immigrated to the United States and call each other "niggers", stating that they told him, "that's how we talk down here". Although he stated that he understands why they use the term with each other (as an identity label and a way to mark community) he doesn't relate to it, as he "grew up in a white world, with white friends and Aboriginal friends. And I never met any other black people until I moved to Winnipeg." He described moving to Winnipeg and searching for a black community, only to be told that there was no black community in Winnipeg and if he wanted to live in a black community he would have to move to Montreal or Toronto. Kevin identified a primary support as one of the local community health centres in Winnipeg.

Kevin was physically gay bashed in the summer of 1997. His incident took place during the day around Noon. At the time of his bashing, Kevin stated

that he was behind the Granite Curling Club, cruising for sex. The path area

behind the Granite Curling Club, alongside the Assiniboine River, is known to be

an area where men will cruise, looking for sex with other men. This is the same

area where Gordon Kuhtey, a gay man, was gay bashed and thrown in the

Assiniboine River to drown in August of 1991. Kevin shared that at the time he

was cruising, he felt uneasy but dismissed the feeling. Upon meeting another

man, they began to kiss; the other man began sucking on his neck and suddenly

pulled out a knife and stabbed Kevin in the neck. At this point the attacker ran off

leaving Kevin on the ground. Kevin then got up and began to head up off the

bike paths, when he stumbled into another man carrying a baseball bat. Kevin

feared he was about to get bashed again, stating "All I could see was a baseball

bat in his hand and I'm thinking no, one bashing is enough," but the second man

merely said to him, "It looks like you need to go to the hospital," and left him

alone. Kevin stated he was sure this second man was also a basher, but

because he was bleeding the man didn't attack him. Kevin then went to a

friend's apartment, buzzed him and told him what happened. His friend got

Kevin to the hospital, where he was treated and hospitalized due to a loss of

blood. Kevin ended up missing work as a result of his bashing and received

some compensation for clothes and missed wages through a victim's

compensation fund.

The police were contact by the hospital and became involved in the

situation. Kevin was able to identify who his attacker was and charges were laid,

with the case going to court. However, Kevin stated that the police were unable to get a clear fingerprint off the knife and his attacker lied in court and got off, as it ended up being Kevin's word against his attacker's word with no other evidence. Kevin stated that the event affected his perception of the policing and justice system: "I thought it was fucked. There is no justice, there's no justice system. Unless you've got lots of money and have a really good lawyer there isn't any." Kevin shared that he finds himself more fearful of strangers. One of the hard things for Kevin was the lack of resources and supports. He knew of no counsellors or formal supports, and at the time of his bashing none were identified to him. "But there was times that I couldn't even talk about it without starting to cry . . . Like I might of gone and talked to a counsellor but I didn't know where to go or who to talk to, to find one, no one told me about that."

Biography—Rick

Rick is a gay male in his forties who has been living in Winnipeg the majority of his life. Rick describes himself as being out as a gay man "for as long as I have known, since I was thirteen, when I first came out." To Rick, being out means "being comfortable with myself. I don't advertise it as much as I used too. I'm open if I'm asked, you know, I say yes. If they don't ask, I don't tell." Rick is Aboriginal and at the time of the interview had just recently come out of a long term relationship. Rick was adopted as an infant and described his adoptive

family as Christian and extremely homophobic. At the time of the interview, Rick

was a full time student.

Rick shared that he is not close to his adopted family. He is also in

contact with his biological family. He does not describe his biological or adoptive

family as supportive. Rick has been told repeatedly by his adopted family that he

is going to hell because he is gay. Rick described his support system as

consisting of his former partner, friends, and school. He stated that two primary

supports for him are his advisor at the university and a psych-health nurse at the

St. Boniface Hospital that he saw for counselling.

Rick was gay bashed in July of 2000. His bashing took place near

Osborne Village, an area near downtown Winnipeg. At the time, Rick and a

friend had left a gay bar and had walked to the area to meet a friend. Rick was

waiting outside the building for his friend who had run inside. Three "huge white

guys" were also waiting outside of the building and began making racist and

homophobic comments to Rick. On discussing how things escalated, Rick

stated, "The way I was dressed, part of that was that I always wore short shorts

when I went out to the club, so you know it was pretty obvious [that he was gay]

and things just escalated, you know, so fast, [long pause] yeah, it happened so

fast." The men verbally harassed Rick for about a minute with racist and

homophobic comments before the incident turned physically violent. In

describing what happened, Rick stated, "I was scared, it terrified me, you know,

and I fought back as much as I could but there was just three huge white guys

and I just had no control, you know, around protecting myself . . . they had

cracked the top of my left eye, it's still damaged, and broke my nose, cracked my

arm.   I had three cracked ribs, just a lot of cuts, a lot of bruising.   I blacked out, I

guess for about ten minutes maybe longer actually.   When they kicked me in the

eye I felt I felt something crack. I didn't know if it was my brain or if it was my

skull or if it was just my eye so, ummm it was about ten minutes or longer, I was

just blacked out, and then after that then I came to."

     After the attack, Rick described going into a deep depression, with the

bashing changing how he viewed himself and lowering his self esteem as a gay

man. He shared that he got shingles for the first time in his life and began

suffering from anxiety, finding himself fearful of men and unable to take public

transportation. Rick stated that he coped by isolating himself from people,

drinking and attempting suicide twice. During the first few years after his

bashing, he found his ability to work affected and ended up leaving his job that

he had been at for several years. His job at that time required him to take people

he was working with on the bus and Rick found himself unable to do this.

"Before that [the bashing] I would have gladly taken the bus there and the bus to

home and I would have been fine with that but it just changed it all for me. So I

didn't quit, I just gave it up. We had a discussion and I just told them that I

couldn't take it anymore, I couldn't handle it, that things were just getting out of

control for me." Rick stated his employer was understanding about the situation,

not listing that he had quit on his separation slip so that he would be eligible for

unemployment benefits. In his next job, Rick found himself working with a

colleague that was quite homophobic, making comments to him and about him at

work. He shared that it impacted his ability to stay in the job and has changed

his views on being out at work. "It was just such a struggle for a whole year you

know, working with comments and guys like that, so I quit and they had a

meeting and I went in. I talked, and he wasn't saying anything, you know, so I

just said look, you know, forget it, this isn't going anywhere and right now I have

no interest in working here, so that's how I ended it. So with coworkers it has

changed a lot, comments they made, especially derogatory comments, I'd pick

up on things you know, they didn't think I would, I'd pick up on things and you

know, basically I decided I'm never going to be friends with that person. So now I

don't tell a lot of my coworkers about myself."

Biography—Dan

At the time of being interviewed, Dan was, a gay white male in his forties.

Dan states that he is out and has been out since he was a young teenager. Dan

grew up in a small town in rural Manitoba and as a high school student, moved to

Nova Scotia to live with his grandparents. This move was orchestrated to

escape the violence and harassment that Dan continually experienced as a gay

student in a small town and to help keep Dan in school. Dan stated that as a

result of the harassment, he would often skip school and was failing as a result.

Dan moved back to Manitoba after completing high school. A few years prior to

the interview, Dan returned to school and was a student at a local community

college in Winnipeg, completing a program and graduating as an adult in his

early forties. Dan stated that "being out is just being myself, being open to

acknowledging who I am to other people, that I may be in a relationship with

someone of the same sex. It also includes culture, music. I don't define it as just

being about my sexual relationships." Dan shared that he suffers from a mental

illness but is managing very well with support from a mental health worker. At

the time of the interview, Dan was employed full time for just over seven months

and shared that he was in a long distance relationship for coming up to three

years.

Dan stated that his support system had recently changed. As his mental

health improved, he found himself able to let go of some of the formal supports in

his life (counsellors, mental health workers) and to be able to rely more on

informal supports, such as a group of four immediate friends. He shared that his

family is not supportive. He is not close to his sister and does not speak with her.

He stated he and his dad are not close, with his dad being ashamed of him,

wishing he could be more manly and masculine, comparing him to other such

men. Dan described how his father would out him and he'd experience

homophobia as a result. "Well, it didn't help that my father screamed it from the

rooftops about having a fucking faggot for a son. And he did that in front of a

number of people in public places." Dan's mom is caring, but also not accepting

of his homosexuality. He did not identify his family as any part of his support

system.

Dan shared several incidences of being gay bashed, from the first

experience he remembers at age fourteen by schoolmates, to harassment from

schoolmates during school hours, other bashings from school mates throughout

high school, harassment from his family, to violence and harassment on the job

in rural Manitoba. Throughout his school years, Dan recalled many incidents of

gay bashing at the hands of fellow students, usually two or three other boys

inflicting the violence. "A number of them happen to me when I was a teenager.

Living in a small town, I came out of the closet screaming. And it didn't help me at

all. So, the guys in school would beat me up a lot . . . usually between two or

three guys beating me up." Dan's family moved him from their small town in

Manitoba to Nova Scotia, where Dan lived with his grandparents. The plan was

that a fresh start for Dan would allow him to escape the homophobia he had

been experiencing at his school, thus increasing his attendance and grades.

However, Dan again experienced homophobia through harassment and violence

at his new school in Nova Scotia and found himself extremely isolated. On

weekends, his grandparents would take him out of the city to a small cottage in

the country as an attempt to keep him safe and to control Dan's behaviour by

keeping him away from others. Several suicide attempts occurred and Dan

coped by drinking, using drugs and self harming. Using casual sex also became

a coping strategy for Dan and he began having sex with men, again skipping

school and cruising.

Biography—Todd

Todd found out about this research through a poster at Club 200 in

September of 2007. As I was putting the poster up, he came over and began a

conversation, asking what the poster was about. When I informed him that I was

doing research around the experience of being gay bashed, Todd shared that he

had been gay bashed and that it had been an awful experience with the hospital

and the police and the gay community, but that he was over the experience and

did not want to talk about. We continued chatting and he wished me luck with my

research. I encouraged him to call me if he changed his mind and wished to

participate, but he was adamant that he did not want to participate, strongly

stating that he would not be calling as he didn't want to open up his experience

again.

I bumped into Todd in November 2007 as I was on the way to interview

another participant. He stopped me in a hallway, stating, "Hey, you're the gay

bashing guy!" As I cringed at this description of who I was, I stopped and began

a conversation with Todd. I didn't immediately recognize him and he reminded

me of our conversation at Club 200. Todd asked how the research was going

and shared that he had been giving the idea of calling me a lot of thought, but

that he still wasn't sure if he wanted to participate. I checked if he had my number and we chatted briefly for a few more minutes.

Todd contacted me in mid-December to schedule our interview. At the time of his interview, Todd was a gay white male in his late forties. Todd was out as a gay man and had been out since the mid eighties. He had previously been married and has a child that he was not in contact with. Todd left his marriage to be in a long term gay relationship that lasted for approximately eight years, until his partner was killed in an automobile accident. Todd had not been in a serious relationship since his partner died. Todd shared that he was HIV+ and had caught the HIV virus from his partner. Todd talked openly about his health and when he was diagnosed, sharing stories of being stigmatized by his family, the medical community, the gay community and by former friends. Todd talked at length about his HIV diagnosis, sharing how he was informed over the phone by his doctor that he was HIV+, who then hung up and gave him no resources or information on HIV. At our meeting, I brought up our past two encounters and reflected how Todd had moved from being rigidly opposed to participating in the project at our first meeting, to finding himself thinking about the research project and unsure around participating at our second meeting, to our third meeting, the actual interview. I asked Todd what had changed his mind from our initial encounter four months earlier. Todd shared that at the time of the interview (late December of 2007) he was dying from AIDS. He shared that he had decided about a year previous to the interview to go off of his HIV medication, as he was

tired of living with the constant side effects that came along with it. Regarding

the change about participating in the research, Todd shared the following with

me. "I find myself as I'm, as I'm nearing the duration of my life, I find that there's

things that, there's things that I need to put out there. That's what changed my

mind, my health. I thought, if I pass away nobody else is ever going to relay my

situation or anything, or anything. If I die without telling you, nobody will ever

really know what happened to me, it'll just go to my grave with me. And I have

to, I have to tell somebody, so I needed to give it to you, I guess, because I can't

tell my family. So for me it was important to, while I still had an opportunity, to be

breathing this air, maybe it's to make peace, like inner peace or something, that

could be. This was a way to do that." I found out that Todd passed away in the

summer of 2008.

During his interview, Todd shared that he was not close to his family,

whom he described as "homophobic". Although still in contact with some

members of his biological family, he shared stories of them blaming him for

having HIV and deserving it, for being a gay man. He shared that his family "told

me that I was a sinner, that I was a faggot who was going to get AIDS and was

going to hell." Todd shared that he had held hope that his family would come

around, although inside he knew they wouldn't. He described his support system

as a local community health centre, the Executive Director at a transitional home

for persons living with AIDS, and some friends. He shared that he has not found

the gay community to be a large support, mainly around his status as an HIV+

gay man.

At the time of his interview, Todd had his own apartment but was finding

living on his own too difficult and was staying with a friend while he figured out

his living situation. At this time he was unemployed and on social assistance, but

also doing odd jobs caretaking in his building. Todd is a graduate of the

University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Architecture, specializing in interior

design but never pursued a career in this direction, due to personal

circumstances and health.

Todd was violently gay bashed in the summer of 1987 while walking home

late one evening. He shared that he was coming home from Osborne Village (an

area of Winnipeg) and was walking up Mostyn towards Balmoral. Realizing he

was near the Granite Curling Club, a cruising area that he had heard about

negative gay bashing incidences, Todd crossed over to the other side of the

street, closest to Great West Life. As he was walking, he was confronted by four

men that came out of the bushes and demanded money. Todd stated that he

didn't have any money. The men then began verbally harassing him, saying that

this was an area for faggots and that there was a faggot right in front of them.

Todd stated that the incident then turned violent, with the four men physically

assaulting him: "And they just absolutely cleaned my clock on me. I fought back

as much as I could but one guy was holding me from behind around my neck and

I was trying to kick this other guy and I elbowed the one behind me and I was

fighting really hard. All I remember is that I saw something shiny and this guy came towards me and I felt this pain.   But it wasn't like, I don't know, it wasn't very [pause] , it was just a very dull pain, I don't know I'd never been stabbed before so, and then they, ummm, when I fell to the ground they kicked me really, really bad, like contusions, and like to the kidneys really, really bad , like there was blood in my urine for about three weeks and, I had ten stitches in my top lip and eight in my bottom and I had a hairline fracture on both cheekbones by the time they were done. And when I went to get up that's when I realized there was all this blood on my body, that I'd been stabbed." Todd attended to the hospital and was treated for his injuries. He also reported the incident to the police over the telephone, but was not immediately contacted by the police. When an officer arrived to interview Todd over a month later, he stated to Todd that for someone that was assaulted, "you don't look any worse for wear".

Todd shared that after the gay bashing, he found himself isolating himself and become scared, anxious and paranoid. Todd had never been diagnosed with any mental health problems but began to "fall apart". Todd ended up being hospitalized for his mental health and was later diagnosed as Bi-Polar. During the interview, Todd wondered if his Bi-Polar diagnosis was related to his gay bashing. "No one else in my family has it. I often wonder, I often thought to myself, is it because of the trauma to my head? Is it because of the severe, like anxiety and stress levels, from being attacked and just being so fearful, that maybe, it just started something up in my brain? I don't know."

<u>Biography—Jeff</u>

At the time of Jeff's interview, Jeff was 27 years old and self identified as a

gay, out, white male. Jeff is a university graduate and currently lives on his own.

Jeff was raised in Winnipeg but left the Province of Manitoba. He relocated to

Winnipeg a few years previous to the interview and is currently practicing law. At

the time we spoke, Jeff was in a new relationship. Jeff heard about the research

study through the advertisement/poster that was listed on Facebook and

contacted me directly through Facebook.

Jeff described himself as out. When asked what it meant to be out to him,

Jeff shared the following:

> **I don't feel that I have a lot of internalized homophobia. Maybe we all do to a certain extent and maybe I do, too. Out. What does it mean to me—it means I'm comfortable, ah, being with a boyfriend in public or taking a public stand in favour of queer rights and stuff like that, happily speaking at an event like pride or in favour of same sex marriage and so on. But, and this is just sort of my personal style, I also accept that sexuality is not necessarily something that I always wear because I think that there is an inherently private aspect to it. So, so I think you'll find that I rarely, in a microphone, say that I'm gay, but I don't hide that fact. I'd be more likely to say, "My boyfriend" than, "I'm gay", if you're following me.**

Jeff identified his family as one of his major supports. Jeff's family

consists of his parents (mother and father) and three siblings. He stated that he

is out to his family, whom are all very accepting of him as a gay man. He

identified his friends as another major part of his support system. Jeff shared

that he is also a member of various organizations that he would label as a part of

his support system and shared that in the past as he was going through the coming out process, he accessed a mental health professional for support throughout that period of his life.

Jeff shared two incidences of homophobic harassment in his life and stated that he was sure that there were many more, but that these two incidences were the ones that came to mind for him when he read about this research study.   Jeff described both incidences as "verbal harassment" and both as occurring in the summer of 2002. Jeff shared that both incidences revolved around he and his boyfriend of two years at the time; in both of the incidences they had been holding hands.

In the first incidence, Jeff and his boyfriend were holding hands, walking down Portage Avenue. Jeff described the incident as follows: "Quite literally my boyfriend and I were walking hand in hand on Portage Avenue across from the lights and roughly in front of Elim Chapel, a man sort of looked at us, stopped, made a point of talking to us, and then said to us, "Roast in Hell, Sodomites!"

The second incident Jeff shared as follows: "We were walking towards Main Street there and a truck passed by and there were a couple of guys in it. Call them late teenagers or twenty-something's, something like that, and they said, "What are you, sailors?" and I know both of us, laughed, that was our sort of reaction. But, those are two incidences that immediately come to mind.   If you wanted me to think about it, I'm sure I could find others . . . since then I've also had the things yelled at me out of car windows, as people are driving by."

Jeff shared that one of the things he found helpful was talking about the

incidences with his then boyfriend. Discussing what had happened helped him

and his then boyfriend understand the incidences, but also made them reflect on

their actions and behaviours, i.e. hand holding.

> **I mean that I think that we had some conversations and we continued to show affection in public together, you know, whether it was a quick kiss or whether it was holding hands or so on. Yeah I guess it makes you think twice before doing it . . . Well, I found his response actually to be quite calming. He didn't really obviously respond to it. I was actually more agitated by the sodomite comment more than him. I think that maybe because of his religious upbringing, he was just more used to it than I was. I hadn't really experienced that kind of, nasty incidences of homophobia. So, so maybe he was a bit of a calming influence . . . , I think that because there were some one else involved both times that made it different and easier to talk about, Not something that I had experienced but something that we had experienced verses with other stressors, you know, that is just me that is dealing with it so that it's internalized and it's all in just my thoughts all the time and it's all just inside. There was less of that this time.**

Jeff also discussed his experiences with friends. He shared their reactions to his experiences as follows:

> **Jeff: I don't think I had any strong reactions from friends.   I mean these aren't terribly surprising events. I mean, this type of thing happens commonly. Which I think is why it didn't even occur to me to report it; it's just the type of thing that happened to queer people or minorities a lot.**
>
> **Chad: It almost becomes "the normal"?**
>
> **Jeff: To some extent it is normal. You know. I know plenty of people who hesitate to hold hands in public, probably for these very reasons, you then become a target. So, what was the question again?**
>
> **Chad: How did your friends react?**

Jeff: How did they react? Yeah I don't think there was a big reaction. This is probably an answer to another question , but deep down it probably has made me think about holding hands in public and just you know, a reminder that you do become a target when you do things like that. You choose your moments more carefully.

Jeff shared that his events have helped him understand what his friends have experienced. "Deep down maybe it's helped me on some level to understand what others have gone through more. I haven't experienced a lot of direct homophobia in my life. I've been quite lucky. I've certainly experienced it second-hand by listening to friends and so on, you know, and that's given me definitely a little bit of a better understanding of what some people, whether its gay or lesbian or whatever, sometimes have to go through."

Biography—Matt

At the time of his interview, Matt was in his mid thirties. Matt identifies as a gay, out, white male. Matt grew up in a small town in rural Manitoba. After high school graduation, Matt had attended university and received his Bachelor of Education. Matt was then employed as a teacher in various schools in rural Manitoba for approximately eleven years. A few years ago Matt left the teaching occupation. When interviewed, Matt was working in community development in a local community health centre and had been in this position for a few years. When Matt left his career as a teacher, he moved to Winnipeg and came out as a gay man. Matt described being out as follows: "I think for me it means finally

accepting who I am, and living the life that my body was designed for. Not trying

to live a life of other people's expectations."

At the time of his interview, Matt was living with two roommates, also out

gay men. Matt is currently in a two year relationship. Matt described his support

network as existing of some formal supports, his family and a large circle of

friends. After moving to Winnipeg, Matt was seeing a psychologist. One of the

issues they explored was Matt's coming out process and experiences. Matt

stated that the psychologist was helpful in exploring all the negative aspects and

stereotypes Matt had internalized and helped him realized what it meant to be

gay and who he truly was.

Matt shared that his family is a part of his support system. He describes

himself and his mother as close. Matt stated that although he and his dad have

never been close, since Matt had come out they've become closer.

> **My mother and I were always close. My father and I, for more than
> just the sexuality issues, have never been that close. And yet it sort
> of ironic that now that I'm in a relationship, my father and I are
> probably closer than we've ever been. We get along really well. I
> don't know if it's that my partner is smoothing things over or what.
> My mother, I think, more that because of her strong Catholic
> background, has really struggled with it for the first while and I
> basically put it on the line, "Okay you choose, is it me or is it your
> beliefs? You've known me for 30 some years, and I'm not changing."
> Then just by laying it on a line like that, she stopped looking at what
> her beliefs told her to believe and realized that I'm still the same
> person.**

Matt shared that friends are a big part of his support system and that this

includes many straight friends from his previous life in small town Manitoba as

well as the many gay friends he now has. He shared that some of his friends

surprised him, that with some education and knowing who he was, his being gay

and coming out was a small stepping stone in rebuilding friendships from his life

in the closet. "I'm actually very shocked at some of the people [that] will have the

most redneck attitudes and are still there with me. It's taken a lot of sit downs

and talks, but they've had no problem with it right off the bat and I was like, wow,

and then there's people that I thought were more open minded, but that while

they were open minded verbally, pardon my language, they've got their head up

their ass once it's actually put in their face."

Matt described his experiences as more of a lifetime of exposure to

homophobia than a single incidence, and Matt shared stories of growing up gay

in a small Catholic town. Matt stated that people that he trusted, liked and

admired would share homophobic comments and views with others and himself.

Matt became a witness to homophobia and began to internalize all the beliefs

and stereotypes he was being exposed to.

> **It wasn't so much physical as it was subtle and mental throughout, I
> would say, the last ten years in the process of attempting to come
> out and seeing very homophobic attitudes . . . I come from a small
> town where it's rural , very strong catholic background, not the right
> thing to do . Myself coming from a strong catholic background ,
> expected to carry on the family name, have kids, do the right thing --
> always the subtleties of how being gay isn't right , it's immoral , blah,
> blah, blah . So their comments leads in the beating myself up
> internally, watching other people in scenarios where they were out
> and seeing how the community just basically railroaded them out of
> town. One United Church minister that came out that she was a
> lesbian broke the town into two fighting teams. Another teacher, I
> was a teacher at the time, was openly gay when he came to our
> community and suddenly there were all sorts of accusations that he
> was a pedophile, because he was gay . Basically these types of
> things definitely lead to the negative internalization of being gay and**

not dealing with my own personal feelings, emotions, etc. . . It seemed like every time that I was about to come out , there would be another major issue that would sort of makes you just think hell no this ain't the time to come out.

Matt shared that the result of internalizing the negative stereotypes and homophobic comments and experiences he was witness to, affected his mental health. "It just basically all took a mental toll on me and I left teaching basically on the edge of a nervous breakdown. School was out on June 30th and I was in the city on July 1st, totally just restarting a life over again. I worked with Manitoba Teachers disability, where my doctor put me on stress leave and Manitoba Teachers disability led me through to psychological help as well, and since then it's been nothing but a smooth road and much more self realization." Matt stated that to him there was a clear link between the homophobia he'd been experiencing and his poor mental health, leading to his decision to leave teaching. "It was just to the point even though there wasn't anything physical towards me or verbal towards me directly, I internalized it because I could see that I was going to be in the same boat as Mr. X, the other teacher."

Matt found talking with others and realizing he wasn't alone, that others had gone through experiences similar to his in other small towns, to be beneficial. He stated it helped him understand that these experiences weren't just about him, and that he wasn't alone in his experiences of homophobia and his journey of coming to terms with being gay and coming out.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DATA ANALYSIS

<u>Data Analysis</u>

As discussed and reviewed in Chapter Four—Methods & Procedures, the

data was analyzed using grounded theory techniques of constant comparison. A

large number of concepts began to emerge within the initial process of open

coding. As I continued to work through the data and organize the initial coded

data, the categories and concepts began to become more fully developed with

properties and dimensions linking categories. The themes of the research then

began to come forward out of the data. Selective coding in the final stage of data

analysis helped me to focus on the development of the story line that had

emerged from the research.

The process of member checking provided me with the opportunity to

review the data and themes with community members that are familiar with the

experiences I was exploring and validate the findings of the research. The

discussions that were held about the narratives, the themes that arose from

these and the implications for the research were invaluable. My external

committee was able to look at the narratives, data and themes and understand

the processes that gay men that have experienced different forms of homophobia

both survive through and respond to. The external committee was also able to

provide insights into the data in terms of additional themes that they identified

within my research (Appendices 7:1, 7:2, & 7:3). This committee was also

instrumental in discussing the development and dissemination of an Executive

Summary of the research that could be distributed to the LGBTTQ* community,

to social service agencies, to educators and school systems, and to police and

health care providers.

Out of the themes that arose from the data came the following question:

"How do various types of homophobia experienced by gay men affect them and

what is the process that occurs:

a) within their own personal lives

b) in understanding and viewing their place in society, and

c) in how they combat homophobia?"

An understanding of the data as a storyline helped me to structure the

themes into both a linear timeline in understanding their inter-connectedness, as

well as a flow chart, documenting the connections between the themes

themselves.

<u>Themes</u>

Out of the data analysis there initially emerged a total of six distinct

themes, with an additional two themes that became apparent through discussion

with my member checking committee (Appendices 7:1, 7:2, & 7:3). The themes

identified were:

1. Personal Experiences of Homophobia

2. Fighting Back

3. Heteronormativity

4. Identity and Identity Change

5. Reaching Out—Disclosure and Support

6. Creating Change

In the presentation and discussion that followed of the six themes that I

had identified with my external member checking committee, two more themes

were identified that were embedded within all of the themes and interconnected

them, like a thread woven throughout the data. As we discussed my findings and

the narratives of people's experiences, my external committee commented on

and were able to highlight these connections within the data. The following two

themes emerged from the member checking process:

7. Isolation

8. Power, Powerlessness, and Privilege

Within this discussion, I will present the themes in the order listed above, save for

the theme of Creating Change, which will be discussed at the end of the chapter,

as it captures "the now" of the men's lives and their hopes for the future. Thus, it

fits at the end of the storyline.

Theme: Personal Experiences of Homophobia

All six of the men within the study had experienced different forms of

homophobia. As the interpretation of gay bashing was left open for participants

to interpret their own experiences of homophobia as gay bashing versus limiting

the definition to physical violence, I was not surprised that some of the

participants shared histories and experiences of homophobia that were specific

to homophobic verbal harassment or the exposure to homophobic verbal

harassment. Incidences of physical violence inflicted bodily by others was also

shared, as was violence with a weapon.

Homophobia is a Common Occurrence

Of the six participants, five shared more than one experience of

homophobia when interviewed, although all five focused on a specific incident

that they recalled within their lives. Although the sixth individual did not share

beyond the one experience he talked about, within that experience itself was

more than one incident of homophobia. Homophobia is not an isolated

experience that happens only once or twice. In fact, the repeated experiences of

homophobia become to be accepted as normal. When asked Jeff how his

friends responded to his incidences of verbal homophobia, we had the following

discussion:

> **Jeff: I don't think I had any strong reactions from friends.   I mean these aren't terribly surprising events. I mean, this type of thing happens commonly [long pause] which I think is why it didn't even occur to me to report it; it's just the type of thing [verbal homophobia and harassment] that happens to queer people or minorities a lot.**
>
> **Chad: It almost becomes "the normal".**
>
> **Jeff: To some extent it is normal. You know. I know plenty of people who hesitate to hold hands in public   probably for these very reasons, you then become a target.**

The concept of homophobia and violence, be it verbal or physical, becoming a normal part of the gay male experience was expressed by the other participants as well. Jeff stated, "I haven't experienced a lot of direct homophobia in my life. I've been quite lucky. I've certainly experienced it second-hand by listening to friends and so on , you know, and that's given me definitely a little bit of a better understanding of what some people, whether its gay or lesbian or whatever, sometimes have to go through." Todd shared that as he began to recover he began to hear of other people's experiences that were very similar to his own, in both the bashing and his reactions to it. "I guess eventually when I started coming back out into the community and I started to hear about other people that had been hurt, because you feel like you're the only one and even though you're not, because that had happened to you, you feel like you're all alone. It was good for me to hear that other people that I knew had had problems like this." During Rick's interview, I inquired if he had ever met anyone else that had been gay bashed. Rick took a second before replying that he was trying to remember the details, but that he had met other gay men that had been gay bashed. Dan shared an incident that had happened in the town he was from. "There was a guy that came to visit his boyfriend. He got beat up outside the bar and the cops, I mean everyone knew it was a gay bash, and the cops totally ignored it. "You're a stranger in town. You don't know what you're doing. You must have provoked it," and the town is so very homophobic. . ." Dan described his life as a teenager in school as follows: "It was a basic thing, go to school, and be in class with these

people, and act like nothing happened and that I'm OK, and you just keep

beating on me, and I just keep coming back . . . The harassment in class.

Teachers wouldn't do anything. I mean, they would walk up to me and put gobs

of gum in my hair and punched me in the face and teachers just sat there while it

happened."

Multiple Attackers—Usually Male

Five of the six participants experienced homophobia from more than one

person at a time. The sixth person, although assaulted by a lone individual,

encountered a second individual carrying a bat that he identified as a gay basher

as he was leaving the scene of his assault and seeking help.

Attackers were all identified as male by the participants, with the exception

being in Matt's narrative. Matt experienced verbal harassment from both men

and women in the town that he grew up in. Most attackers were strangers to the

men, with the exceptions being Matt and Dan, who both experienced verbal

homophobia from the people in their home towns. Dan also experienced physical

violence from schoolmates and later co-workers in his town.

Physical Violence

Three of the six men interviewed experienced physical violence from their

attackers, being assaulted and injured at the hands of their assailants. The

incidences shared by Rick, Dan and Todd involved being kicked, punched, and

hit on various places on their bodies. All three of the physical attacks also

included verbal homophobic attacks on the individuals just prior to the physical

violence occurring and throughout the attacks. Todd was also stabbed with a knife, in addition to being beaten by his attackers as part of his attack. A fourth participant, Kevin, also experienced physical violence, but did not experience any direct physical violence from his attacker in the form of any beating and was attacked by his assailant who used only a knife to attack Kevin. As Kevin was leaving the scene of his attack, he encountered another individual he identified as another gay basher, this man walking through a wooded gay cruising area carrying a bat.

The levels of physical violence experienced by the men were quite extreme. All four of the men that experienced physical violence had bodily injuries, with three of the four requiring medical intervention. Rick described the violence he experienced as follows:

> **They had cracked the top of my left eye, it's still damaged, and broke my nose, cracked my arm. I had three cracked ribs, just a lot of cuts, a lot of bruising. I blacked out, I guess for about ten minutes maybe longer actually. When they kicked me in the eye I felt I felt something crack. I didn't know if it was my brain or if it was my skull or if it was just my eye so, ummm, it was about ten minutes or longer, I was just blacked out, and then after that then I came to.**

Todd described what happened to him that night that he was attacked.

> **I fought back as much as I could but one guy was holding me from behind around my neck and I was trying to kick this other guy and I elbowed the one behind me and I was fighting really hard. All I remember is that I saw something shiny and this guy came towards me and I felt this pain. But it wasn't like, I don't know, it wasn't very [pause] , it was just a very dull pain, I don't know I'd never been stabbed before so, and then they, ummm, when I fell to the ground they kicked me really, really bad, like contusions, and like to the kidneys really, really bad , like there was blood in my urine for about three weeks and, I had ten stitches in my top lip and eight in my**

bottom and I had a hairline fracture on both cheekbones By the time they were done. And when I went to get up that's when I realized there was all this blood on my body, that I'd been stabbed . . . the stab wound that took a couple of months for, I mean you can't sit up, I don't know if you've ever been stabbed, but you can't sit up because your whole inside has been torn up because its muscle . I mean you can't just sit up like this, you can't [coughs], you can't just cough. I had to roll out of bed and get on my knees to get up.   And I do that for, well probably about three months I guess. And then it was a little bit better but I mean the scars still there, it's always there, it's a painful reminder . . . I had a lot of damage. They had hit me in the head here and my ear drum was, it wasn't broken, but it was, for a while there I had trouble walking because my equilibrium, my whole balance was off. It was a nightmare.

Dan shared that he was repeatedly beaten up to the point of bruising on his way

to or from school by classmates.

Verbal Harassment

All six of the narratives included verbal harassment as part of the

homophobia experienced by the men in the study. Participants commented on

the level of the verbal homophobic harassment as extremely intense. Rick

shared the following:

Most of the comments were like, fag Indian, it was a combination of, of my background and thinking that I was gay, so was mostly around that . . . The physical part was like, you know, again like it happened so fast it just, you know, the verbal part lasted for like maybe a minute and after that they just started attacking me and continued just verbally attacking at the same time, so it didn't take long.

Todd talked about the verbal harassment that precluded and continued on

through the physical violence he experienced:

Todd: And they were demanding money and I said I didn't have any, I had some money but I just said I didn't have any. And that's   when it started and of course it was, "There's faggots around there and

there's a faggot around here." By that way it became evident that it was a gay motivated related thing, that it was a homophobic thing. And they just absolutely cleaned my clock on me . . . I really thought that they're going to kill me for sure. The thing that, the thing that I remember the most, the anger. The anger that they had towards me! And I'm thinking, "I don't even know you people!" Like what did I do that you hate me this much? Yeah, like the hate. You fucking faggot, you fucking, I'm going to [long pause] Just unbelievable. And the velocity! At which they were pounding me. It was like I had just killed their best friend or their mother or something, it was unbelievable, like every blow was just so, like, blunt and, and, hurt. I, I just couldn't believe that the anger. I remember thinking, like, they're not going to stop, because like they were all taking turns, kicking me and punching me and dragging me.

Chad: It sounds like you thought you were going to die at the time.

Todd: Oh yeah! For sure I did. For sure. I was very, I mean at one point I just rolled myself up into a fetal position and they were just like, kicking away. There was nothing else I could do, honestly. But I just remember the anger in their voices, the anger. Anger like I've never seen or heard. Really bad.

Jeff commented on two experiences of verbal harassment that he shared while

being interviewed:

Those are two incidences that immediately come to mind. If you wanted me to think about it, I'm sure I could find others. I actually, right now I think that, I don't remember them as clearly , probably because these were some of the first ones but I'm sure that since then I've also had the things yelled at me out of car windows, as people are driving by , I'm sure of it . . . yeah, the first one, the roast in hell Sodomites, was, that one was more violent in the way that he said it. There was definitely hatred in his face and in his body and his language and so on. The sailors, I mean, sure it's homophobic, but it's comical in some ways. But the first one was actually, the man, definitely, he was angry. And I think that's why I responded, you know, more defensively, and, you know, physically placing myself between my boyfriend and him. Yeah. [Long pause] It wasn't a pleasant experience but, obviously it wasn't as bad as some people have experienced.

Intent to Inflict Homophobia

All of the six men involved in the research experienced homophobia

directly, in either being physically or verbally attacked. Five of the six men had

the homophobia directed at them intentionally. This involved direct physical

attacks or homophobic comments directed specifically at them. The sixth

individual, Matt, experienced unintentional (towards him)/indirect homophobia.

As a gay man that was not out at the time, Matt became an observer to

homophobia directed toward other gay men and lesbians within his home town.

Matt was often witness to these individuals' experiences of homophobia or often

Matt became the unwilling recipient of homophobic comments made about other

gay or lesbian individuals in conversations with individuals. Matt described the

people that he observed inflicting homophobic comments as "a wide variety, like

a lot of people that I would have considered friends at the time that were very

vocal, friends and family involved in the church."

Theme: Fighting Back

All of the men in the study fought back against the homophobia that they

experienced, in various ways. The theme of fighting back was prevalent

throughout the narratives and came forward in three distinct ways.

Verbally

The men responded verbally to the homophobic harassment in various

ways. Yelling at their attackers was an immediate verbal response in fighting

back and not just submitting to the violence/harassment being directed towards them. Jeff shared, "I can't remember exactly what I said right now, but it [the homophobic comment] was enough to get my blood going and want to respond. I wasn't going to just take it."

The men also responded verbally to their attacks in other ways. Kevin went to court and testified, but in the end his attacker was released when there was no direct evidence to link him to the bashing. In response to his attack, Kevin wrote on the wall of the Granite Curling Club and put up posters in the cruising area around the Granite, describing his assailant and warning other men that were cruising. Jeff shared that he talked about the events he experienced with other people in the gay community, having discussions about these events occurring. Jeff went and researched the church in the immediate area where he and his partner were verbally attacked, wanting to know about the religious beliefs of the church where he believed his attacker had come from. Matt ended up leaving his job and leaving the closet, coming out and now in his new career, speaking out about homophobia and its impact on sexual minority individuals. Rick shared that as a social work student he does anti-homophobia work in his workplaces. Todd went on to become a drag queen despite the physical severity of his attack and the ongoing mental health effects it created for him. Jeff found his experiences motivated him, stating, "It made me, it didn't make me shy away, almost the opposite . . . things like this still make me feel like I want to defend certain things and defend certain people. So if I see on one being targeted on

the sidewalk in some way, I'm probably more likely to intervene because of things

like this." Many of these actions cross over into the theme of *Creating Change*,

but are also directly about the men fighting back against their attackers and

against homophobia.

Physically

All of the men that experienced physical violence fought back or attempted

to protect themselves throughout their attack. Again, this was shared as

something that they needed to do, to fight back rather than just submit to the

violence being directed at them. Rick shared that despite his fears and being

obviously outnumbered, he still fought back. "Well you know, I was scared, it

terrified me, you know, and I fought back as much as I could but there was just

three huge white guys and I just had no control, you know, around protecting

myself." As previously cited, Todd shared a similar experience in being

outnumbered, but refusing to just accept the violence being directed at him as he

also "fought back as much as I could".

Jeff, although he didn't experience physical violence, prepared for it by

assuming a stance to protect his boyfriend in case physical violence did ensue.

"And I think that's why responded, you know, more defensively, and, you know,

physically placing myself between my boyfriend and him."

Responsiveness

In addition to fighting back against their attackers in both physical and verbal methods, the men also talked about fighting back in ways that were about a personal responsiveness to the violence and homophobia they experienced.

Dan used sex as a revenge weapon to fight back against the boys that attacked him. He shared that after he was beaten up, he would often go and pick up male family members of the boys that had beaten him up and attempt to entice them into having sex with him. Although Dan didn't share this information with the boys that attacked him, he described it as a way of getting revenge against his attackers.

Jeff shared that he and his partner had discussions about the verbal comments that were directed at them. In terms of fighting back in a way that responded to the harassment that they had experienced, Jeff's partner went out and bought a sailor suit for himself and Jeff, a method of reclaiming what was meant to be a homophobic attack about stereotypes. Jeff talked about the situation as follows:

> **Chad: What did do guys do afterwards?**
>
> **Jeff: I know we talked about it. The second one I know we definitely laughed about it that was sort of our way of reacting to it. Its interesting how it gets sort of, internalized, I mean Tim later at a second-hand store later bought the sailor suits so I don't know. [Laughs] So it's interesting than whether or not we actually turn into the roles that are expected of us.**

Jeff also talked about how the event mobilized him in responding to

homophobia, strengthening his beliefs in fighting for same sex rights, as well as

the rights of marginalized individuals.

> **Jeff: [pause] Well in both cases it made me more protective of what I considered to be our right to hold hands and stuff like that. It made me, it didn't make me shy away, almost the opposite . . . things like this still make me feel like I want to defend certain things and defend certain people. So if I see someone being targeted on the sidewalk in some way, I'm probably more likely to intervene because of things like this.**

Matt shared how he is now employed in a position in which he often does

anti-homophobia work and is out in his workplace and with the individuals that he

works with. He shared many instances of how he has challenged homophobia

when it now presents itself in his life, versus times in the past when he struggled

with his own sexuality and internalized much of the negativity and homophobia

he was exposed to.

> **Matt: And accepted in the workforce, accepted socially, etc. that was very positive. So yeah, working with MTS disability, working with psychologist, basically identifying all the things that I was internalizing and holding in, to the point now that part of my old personality has shown up again. I've always been known for being outspoken and if anything , even my job , which is working with MSM, men who have sex with men , and, my big mouth [laugh] is playing a big role in it , try to help people not go through what I went through .**

Matt shared one incidence in accessing health care and going in for an

operation, in which he experienced homophobia, and his response to it:

> **I had to go for a procedure last year and had to go see a specialist. Just before they are about to put me under all of sudden I get some smart ass comment about being homosexual at which point I stood up off the table and preceded to rip a strip off of him, my big mouth**

and action [Laugh].   And the whole O.R. team are standing there with their mouths open as I'm proceeding with all sorts of a livid words and I told him I came here for his professional opinion not his biased head up his ass. At which point I went back to my family doctor and he said I was the second client of this that identified with this and encouraged me to take it on to the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Todd shared about his experiences of being a drag queen and how "this big strong macho guy can get all dolled up and throw on some heels and challenge everyone's ideas about who does drag", despite having experienced a horrible physical gay bashing that occurred based on the perception he was gay by his attackers.

The ways in which the men responded to the homophobia in their lives crosses over with the theme of creating change, but is also different in that it was a primary response to homophobia per se versus an idea or action deliberately chosen to create change, which does come out of their actions.

Theme: Heteronormativity

The term heteronormativity refers to ideas or belief systems that heterosexuality is the normative way of living and being (Warner, 1993). Heteronormativity is similar to the concept of heterosexism in seeing homosexuality as inferior than heterosexuality, but also differs in that the concept of heteronormativity views the world itself and the social constructs and societies of the world as heterosexual, with this being normal or the norm, no other way of existing. The difference is slight, but I see that heteronormativity leaves out the

possibility that other ways of living or being in the world exist, whereas

heterosexism is a bias or preference towards heterosexuality in society, allowing

for other ways of living and being. Thus, the use of violence can be associated

with heteronormativity and homophobia more so than with heterosexism. For the

participants in the research, the world itself was a heterosexual and

heteronormative place. Time, space, language and beliefs are developed and

used to support heteronormativity. When the participants did not live up to or

meet the standards required in a heteronormative world, they experienced

homophobia.

Use of Time and Space

Participants were asked what they were doing just prior to their gay

bashings or experiences of homophobic harassment. The answer given by all of

the participants can be summed up as "living their lives".

Rick describes what he was doing just prior to his attack as follows: "I had

left Club 200 and my friend and I were going to a party, and I went with a friend

of mine who was going to get some pot and I was standing outside, waiting to

walk through the back of the building and there were three guys standing there.

The way I was dressed, part of that was that I always wore short shorts when I

went out to the club, so you know it was pretty obvious [that I was gay] and

things just escalated, you know, so fast [long pause] yet it happened so fast."

Matt described living his life and repeatedly experiencing homophobia directed at

others while doing so.

Chad: so at this time you weren't visibly out to people, you're listening to all of this stuff [homophobic comments] going on at the church and with your [out gay] colleague and seeing how people were reacting and it basically just kept you in the closet?

Matt: It seemed like every time that I was about to come out, there would be another major issue that would sort of make you just [think], "Hell no this ain't the time to come out!"

Dan described ongoing violence for years at the hands of his

schoolmates, throughout junior high: "I couldn't stand leaving my parents' house

because the walk to school , I get beaten up, I get beaten up at school, on the

way home from school , when I'd go out by night by myself , whatever." I asked

Dan to share about what was happening at this time for him:

Chad: So at the time how many people were involved in inflicting that?

Dan: Usually between two or three guys beating me up.

Chad: And what were you doing prior to them beating you up?

Dan: Ummm, usually walking home from school. I'd walk along the river a lot just for down time. I'd run into some of them and . . . [long pause]

Chad: So just going home, and, unprovoking, doing nothing?

Dan: Just existing, and being myself.

Dan shared about how the bashing affects how he behaves in

heteronormative spaces, having learned and internalized the lessons given to

him through homophobic violence.

Dan: I have a hard time with intimacy. I don't like to touch, I don't like to hold hands, I hate cuddling. I had met somebody about a year ago and he's a cuddler, a toucher, and I was like, "Okay, enough, move away, there's enough room on the bed for you to move 3ft. away" and he was like "What is wrong with you?" I don't like to be touched.

In public he wanted to hold hands and I was like, "Are you nuts? Do you want to get ourselves beaten up? We don't touch in public, keep 3ft. away." He had a hard time with that that and it kind of ended because, just, I couldn't do what he wanted. He wanted it to be us, totally out. At the [gay] clubs? Hold hands, no problem, we're in a safe place, but on the street? Are you nuts?

Todd described what happened just prior to his violent attack and shared

what he was doing: "And as I was walking, [pause] before I even saw anybody

as I was getting closer to the Granite Curling Club I had remembered that people,

you know, there was a lot of problems like behind there and stuff with people

around there, you know, with cruising and stuff, so I cross the street . . . "

Jeff shared what happened to him on two occasions as he walked holding

hands with his boyfriend. "

Jeff: Quite literally my boyfriend and I were walking hand in hand on Portage Avenue across from the lights and roughly in front of Elim Chapel, a man sort of looked at us, stopped, made a point of talking to us, and said, "Roast in hell sodomites!" . . . The second incident happen at the forks, where there's the road that branches off and goes on to main street by the Earl's [restaurant], right at that the T intersection there where you're surrounded by the Forks [National Historical Site in Winnipeg] parking lots. We were walking towards Main Street there and a truck passed by and there were a couple of guys in it. Call them late teenagers or twenty somethings, something like that, and they said, "What are you sailors?"

In both cases we were just walking, where we were walking to, you know, just sort of, generally going about our lives but we chose to do it hand in hand. And so because of that then, we were targeted and sort of, fair game for some sort of comment. Had we not been hand in hand we might not have had the same thing, certainly not the first one. I don't know about the second one.

At the time of his knifing, Kevin was out cruising in a gay area and had

picked up another man. As they started to engage in sexual behaviour, the man

stabbed Kevin and ran, leaving him bleeding in a wooded area. As Kevin makes his way back to a more public area and to safety, he encounters what he describes as another gay basher, this time with a bat.

In the first five incidences, the men were living their lives. This did not involve anything that necessarily marks them as gay, minus Jeff holding hands with his partners. However, in all of these situations, the men are in public space, heteronormative space, and are viewed as not living up to the requirements of heteronormativity. For merely being themselves—gay—which challenges ideas and beliefs around masculinity and being male in a heteronormative world, the first five men experience violence. The violence can be seen as a way of enforcing the heteronormativity.

Both Todd and Kevin were bashed near the Granite Curling Club, a gay cruising area. Todd described leaving the area, crossing the street so he was moving out of the gay area, into the more public and straight area, so as not to be perceived as gay. Despite these precautions, he was still seen as being gay and violating a heteronormative space and was bashed. Kevin, actively cruising for sex with another man in a gay area, was bashed by first one individual and then encounters a second basher, two individuals who have infiltrated the gay space to inflict violence and teach gay men a lesson about the consequences for actively being gay in a gay cruising space. Todd shared about a later incident in his life in 1991, being back in the same space near the Granite Curling Club early one morning and hearing a gay bashing occur:

Todd: Well I'm coming right up so when he walked up I heard his car leave and then I heard this, people yelling, like, "We're gonna kick some faggot and we're going to do this or do that". I heard the screaming, but I couldn't see anything. All I can do is hear. And I was frozen down there, I couldn't move at all. I remember this person screaming and then the screaming stopped and that it sounded like they were coming towards my direction. So I ran like crazy up through these bushes up to the top and I got into my car and I tore out of the parking lot like a crazy person . . . I guess they had, they didn't beat him to death but they beat him severely and then they stood on his head at the shoreline and drowned him and I didn't see it happen but I, I heard it all and it was really, oh my god it was . . . I wish I could have helped, that was something I, I mean there was obviously more than four people or more, I mean I couldn't, I'm no hero, so when I ran up and I tore out of the parking lot to leave.

Ultimately, how all the men were using time and space was about being themselves as gay men, which was not an allowed use of heteronormative time and space. When not engaging in anything "gay" (waiting for a friend, going to school, going to work) the men were perceived to be gay in a heteronormative space and were bashed. When engaging in something "gay" (being in or near a gay cruising ground) the men were bashed for what they were doing or perceived to be doing (cruising for gay sex) in a space that can be seen as gay (gay cruising ground). The area is then cleansed of the activity through violence, an attempt to revert it back to a heteronormative space by teaching gay men what will happen to them if they attempt such behaviour in this space.

Messages Delivered

Dan shared his thoughts on why he hasn't told many people about his experiences, based on past reactions.

Dan: Right . . . I haven't told a lot of people that I've been bashed. Their attitude is that, "Well, It happens to every gay man".

This normalization of gay bashing through victim blaming was expressed by other participants. They talked about sharing their experiences with others in the gay community and hearing about how homophobia and gay bashing is just something that we have to put up with. While hearing that others went through this was "helpful" to the participants in them not being alone in their experience, it also created a sense of a ritual, an event that all queer people have to experience. A sense of sad acceptance was present when the men spoke of this.

Statements used and messages delivered during attacks by the attackers work to reinforce heteronormativity. Messages delivered to the men include stereotypes and negative associations of gay men. These include references to pedophiles, stereotypes of sailors as gay, and messages delivered to demonstrate the hatred the attackers felt towards the men ("fucking faggots", "Roast in Hell, Sodomites", "fag Indian", "fudge packer", "Faggots should be dead"). As mentioned under the theme of *Personal Experiences of Homophobia*, verbal harassment was often a lead up and came prior to physical violence. These messages and how they are delivered reinforce the view of the attackers towards the men they are assaulting about gay men's right to be in the space and who gay men are as individuals.

Victim Blaming and Internalized Responsibility

The reinforcement of heteronormativity was often done by the men

attacked themselves or by individuals within their lives that they would have

identified as supports.

The internalization of the messages given and self blame was put forward

by the men that participated in the research process. Participants discussed

ideas around what they did to bring on the violence and thus, how they were

somehow or somewhat responsible for the incidences that happened to them, or

questioned what they could have done differently. As cited earlier, Rick stated

that he doesn't "advertise" that he is gay anymore by how he dresses.

> **Jeff: You know, I know plenty of people who hesitate to hold hands in public, probably for these very reasons, you then become a target . . . This is probably an answer to another question , but deep down it probably has made me think about holding hands and public and just you know, a reminder that you do become a target when you do things like that. You choose your moments more carefully . . . It hasn't made me petrified to do it, I'll still do it. But it has heightened my awareness of homophobia, you know, some of the risks of being truly openly gay.**

> **Dan: I thought he was right. Since it was some of his brothers beating me up. I felt that he was accurate and that being so obvious, well, I couldn't stop being who I am . . . It's hard when you are being a stereotype – looking, gay, sounding gay.**

> **Kevin: Well I was walking, it was about this time [current time was noon] and, like I heard something and I turned around but there was nobody there. I think there was something telling me not to keep on going and in my stomach it said don't go any further, but stupid me, I went further . . . I don't know, I should have just went with those feelings I had but I didn't.**

Chad: it sounds like you kind of beat yourself up a bit; you were kind of hard on yourself for not trusting your feelings at the time of the bashing?

Kevin: yeah exactly.

Todd: I mean it's, unprovoked. I'm not a person that, I don't provoke people, I never have. And, I mean it leaves you asking questions to yourself. Like why did this happen? What did I do? Was there anything I could have done differently?

When asked if there was anything else Todd wanted to share at the end of

his interview, he shared about what he had discovered and learned.

Todd: I think, [pause] I think the only thing that I would share about it is that [pause] is that I think that in a positive sense if anything positive could possibly come out of this, out of a gay bashing, is that I've learned, I have learned some valuable lessons. I have learned to be much more aware of my surroundings. I've learned to conduct myself in a different matter. I was so cavalier. So if anything it was a teaching tool for me. A painful one [laughs] and an emotionally, roller-coaster ride of one, but. But I've always been a person that was raised to try and find the good things in life, to try and find the positive things. Even in times of disaster and tragedy. If there's anything I could find, in closing, if there's anything that I can find, it's that. That I did become a lot more knowledgeable. About what I do and who I'm with. And who I'm not with in times when I'm alone. To be careful.

Victim blaming often occurred from individuals within the men's lives and

from various support systems the men had or became involved in, such as the

police, the medical community, the gay community, family and friends. Police

involvement was negative, with blame being placed on the victim by police. Dan

talked about his knowledge of the police.

Chad: How come you decided not to report?

Dan: Because people I knew had reported and nothing happened.

Chad: So you're belief was, if I report what's the sense? Because you'd seen other people tell and nothing had happened?

Dan: Yes. There was a guy that came to visit his boyfriend. He got beat up outside the bar and the cops, I mean everyone knew it was a gay bash, and the cops totally ignored it. "You're a stranger in town. You don't know what you're doing. You must have provoked it, " and the town is very homophobic so . . .

Chad: It sounds almost like the responsibility was put on to the gay person to not get the bashed?

During his interview, Todd shared about his interactions with police and

the messages that were given to him from the officers he spoke with.

Todd: I mean, people used to say, they used to say, I can remember when it was, I had an officer once say, it wasn't that same officer, it was one of them that came to Happenings that time, asking what I was doing around there, and he said, "You boys should know better. You boys should know better than to be hanging around places like that." And then he kept saying that to me. And I thought, "Yeah, you boys." You boys. Can walk down the street anymore? I mean, what? I shouldn't be on Osborne any more, I shouldn't be on Mostyn anymore. Basically what? I should just be on an island where we can all just get AIDS and kill each other? I mean, like, they make you feel so, so inferior . . . well, like I had said, like with the police not showing up, coming almost a month after the incident and then the ones at Happenings saying, you know, boys like you should know better, you should be hanging around places like that.

Rick shared about how his partner questioned him and blamed him for the

violent attack on him. "The comments were "what were you doing walking down

there at that time of night" and I thought like it was 9:00, like it wasn't like it was

two o'clock in the morning or anything like that." Rick also shared about his

beliefs and experiences with police.

Rick: I would not go to the Police for anything. Even when the police came and took the pictures I would not let them do it unless somebody was with me. It just shows how much I trusted them, even the Police. And now that I'm in social work, and I work in community mental health, I hear horror stories from clients about doctors and police all the time. I don't disclose my stuff. But it sounds awfully similar some of the responses that I've heard."

Rick shared of his experience with his lawyer and how he was made to feel guilty because he felt he couldn't testify. Rick's lawyer attempted to put the responsibility on him for ensuring that his attackers did not attack anyone else, despite Rick stating that there was no way he could go to court and see his attackers again, due to stress and trauma. "[M]y lawyer stated that time was being prolonged so that all charges would eventually be dismissed. Which, eventually happened. He even tried the "they will hurt or kill someone else if you don't [testify]."

Kevin disclosed to his friends what had happened, to discover that his friends held him responsible as he'd been out cruising, so what did he expect?

Chad: Who did you tell about what happened?

Kevin: I told my friends

Chad: How did they react?

Kevin: Well they couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. You know how people always switch stories around? [Shakes head] They blamed me.

The violence Kevin experienced, according to his friends, appears to have been his own fault, as if you are going to go cruising for gay sex, then you should expect to be stabbed.

Victim blaming by others or the internalization of blame by the individual themselves supports and props up heteronormativity, for it is the victim's fault the homophobia and violence happened and the responsibility lies in them to change, prevent it and fit in or "pass", a term used to describe homosexuals that are able to "pass" as heterosexuals, never being suspected of their true sexual identity.

Theme: Identity and Identity Change

Experiencing homophobia, be it verbal hatred or violent physical attack, had an effect on all of the participant's identities as gay men and identity changes arose out of these experiences. Elements of identity affected were the awareness of a homophobic world, being out as a gay man, mental health issues, racism, behaviour changes in the individuals, and the impacts of the experience on relationships.

Out Identity

All of the men in the study currently identify as out. At the time of their experiences, five of the men were out and one was closeted. The men in the study all shared that one area impacted by their experiences was the issue of coming out. Men that still consider themselves as out, no longer "came out" as frequently or as openly as before. Being out in the workplace changed when employment changed. This meant not coming out at all, coming out only when asked, or being more discrete or careful about who they came out to.

The men also discussed minimizing or downplaying their sexuality, sharing that heterosexual co-workers don't talk about being heterosexual, so why did they need to talk about being gay or come out to their co-workers? While it may be true that their straight colleagues do not come out as straight, in a heteronormative world you wouldn't have to, for everyone is heterosexual.

Matt: Okay there is some of my old life and still going to stay with me, and these people are comfortable with it, then all of a sudden about six months later, coming to a new realization and a mind set as well. They don't go around telling me who they slept with, whether they're straight or not , I don't need to go around telling them I'm gay or not. If they are brave enough to ask yes I'll be brave enough to answer them. Living my life for who I am and if they wanna find out, well they can ask.

Jeff: I don't feel that I have a lot of internalized homophobia. Maybe we all do to a certain extent and maybe I do too. Out. What does it mean to me -- it means I'm comfortable, a, being with a boyfriend in public or taking a public stand in favour of queer rights and stuff like that, happily speaking at an event like pride or in favour of same sex marriage and so on . But, and this is just sort of my personal style, I also accept that sexuality is not necessarily something that I always wear because I think that there is an inherently private aspect to it. So, so I think you'll find that I rarely, in a microphone, say that I'm gay, but I don't hide that fact. I'd be more likely to say, "My boyfriend" then I'm gay, if you're following me.

Rick shared the following as his definition of being out and how that has changed since being bashed. "I guess, you know being comfortable with myself. [Long pause] I don't advertise as much as I used to. I'm open if I'm asked, you know, I say yes. If they don't ask I don't tell." Rick also shared about things that have changed for him. "I stopped going to clubs, I stop socializing. I completely stopped hanging around with my gay friends. Still don't hang around with them.

I change the way I dressed. So like a lot of things have happened since then.

I'm very self conscious of, you know, work, and, yeah just like all of that, you

know, like a total change of my whole life."

Awareness

The men all discussed a heightened sense of awareness for themselves

as gay men living in a homophobic and heteronormative world. Tuning in to loud

noises, crashes, sounds, and having a sense of people in the immediate vicinity

was shared by the participants. A sense of hyper-vigilance seems to exist for the

men, an awareness to surroundings and a particularly acute ability to tune into

homophobic comments or conversations.

Jeff shared how his incidences have increased his own sense of

awareness around holding hands.

> **Jeff: This is probably an answer to another question , but deep down
> it probably has made me think about holding hands and public and
> just you know, a reminder that you do become a target when you do
> things like that. You choose your moments more carefully . . . Yeah.
> It hasn't made me petrified to do it, I'll still do it [hold hands]. But it
> has heightened my awareness of homophobia. You know, some of
> the risks of being truly openly gay . . . I don't think that an outsider
> would have noticed any change in the relationship. I mean that I
> think that we had some conversations and we continued to show
> affection in public together, you know, whether it was a quick kiss or
> whether it was holding hands or so on. Yeah I guess it makes you
> think twice before doing it.**

Todd discussed his awareness to surroundings and how the gay bashing

has affected him.

> **Todd: Sometimes I'll . . . not all the time, you'll see something on
> television or you'll hear something, you'll be out and like I'll hear
> someone yelling and all of a sudden it will all just come back. And**

you think maybe that's, Maybe that's for me. Maybe they're coming to get me. And I mean half the time they're not. Whenever I'm out with somebody, like one of my friends they're always, "like what's wrong?" . . . But for a full recovery when something that traumatic happens to a person, I mean at least for me, I don't think you ever fully recover. It's always gonna be there, it's always gonna. I mean even today if I'm walking down the street and when I hear someone yelling or something behind me I'm thinking, or even if it's across the street I'm thinking , "Now what? Now what's going to happen?" You always can think the worst, and even though that may not be the case, they might just be drunk and whatever, yelling at each other, but there's always that, that thing in the back of your head that says [pause]

Chad: Here we go again.

Todd: Yeah. Exactly. I mean it's good to be aware of your surroundings but there's also such a thing as being over paranoid. More that to the point that you don't even enjoy yourself any more, so then what's the point?

Todd shared openly about how the gay bashing has changed and affected

his ability to trust and has put him on alert.

Todd: I had a lot of trouble trusting people and when that incident happened over there [his gay bashing] that just pushed everything right through the roof. It's caused a lot of problems. I mean even today when people come up to me which has nothing to do with violence, but they'll come up to me and they'll say, "Oh I'll buy you a drink." I always think to myself there's gotta be something, there's gotta be a catch, and you shouldn't think that way but I do. I do. There's people walking down the street yelling and I think, what does that mean? You right away, you're right away take it, the negative, it's hard, I've never been a negative person , but it did, make me somewhat negative, this assault. It did. It made me look at people and judge people I'd never been a person that would judge people but you know you're walking, and you say all look at those guys in that gang, there probably going to kick my ass. You know, like right away. I mean it could just be some kid, some skateboarder kid, but you know, and it makes you feel like, I don't know if it did, it changed my personality, it changed my whole outlook on how I perceive things, in this world, and it makes me sad that it did that because I

didn't think that anything would be able to do that to me but it did, with something like that you know it's, it's [pause], it's hard.

Rick shared similar experiences, waiting for the next event, waiting for the next attack to occur, finding himself tuning in to homophobic language more than prior to his attack and noticing the effects of being gay on his job.

Rick: Yeah. I'm always prepared for something , you know, a shot is going to come from the side that I'm not expecting , that way of thinking I guess . . . So with coworkers it had changed a lot , comments they made , especially derogatory comments , I'd pick up on things you know , they didn't think I would , I'd pick up on things and you know, basically I decided I'm never going to be friends with that person .

Rick: Again I'm really conscious about how they talk. I still get men, you know, giving me that odd look, having a couple of clients that don't want to work with me, because, they said I was gay. So things like that.

Mental Health

Mental health as part of identity was named by all of the participants in the study. Descriptor words like paranoid, fear, anxiety, panic, isolation and suicide came up repeatedly in the interviews.

Todd spoke about his diagnosis of Bi-Polar showing up after his bashing and some of the effects that this had on his life.

Todd: I wouldn't go anywhere. It was really bad. Which then probably compounded with my bipolar that I didn't know that I had, which is really bad, because, I don't know if you know anything about bipolar, if you have bipolar you won't know it. Everyone around you will. And all of a sudden this person that was conducting himself in one set way, starts doing things that are completely uncharacteristic of them, uncharacteristic. Saying things, obnoxious comments, doing silly things, I mean, there's really bad extremes. I mean for me, it was bad, because of course nobody could, [pause] nobody could help me with that. Of course

because they were, more than AIDS, more than anything on earth, people are afraid of mental illness. Of course all my friends said that it was very difficult to watch me fall apart. It might have been even triggered by this particular gay bashing, I don't know. I've no idea. It might very well have been, because it is a chemical imbalance. No one else in my family has it. I often wonder, I often thought to myself, is it because of the trauma to my head? Is it because of the severe, like anxiety and stress levels, from being attacked and just being so fearful , that maybe, it just started something up in my brain? I don't know.

Chad: It sounds like some of the behaviours and stuff associated with bipolar wasn't there before the gay bashing.

Todd: Well no! I mean I may have had it but there was no proof of that. But, I mean things started getting really crazy. I started getting really paranoid. And later that's when I found out that I had this bipolar, but by that time I was so at the bottom. I mean, the emergency psychiatrist is still my psychiatrist now. But he said he had never seen such a worst case. I mean I couldn't even, he couldn't conduct an interview because I couldn't put two words together. I couldn't concentrate I couldn't do anything I was just completely gone. He said that people who usually come to see me like that usually end up in a home and never recover, so he was quite surprised at the recovery that I did although it did take almost a year. But, I do have to wonder if that had anything to do with it, that severe slam in my head. And stuff.

Todd also shared about how the bashing affected his ability to take public

transportation or be in close proximity with people, bringing on anxiety.

Todd: I mean for the most part at least I can go out now, I can go outside, I can ride a bus now. For the longest time I couldn't ride a bus because I was too close to people

Chad: So kind of being in really close proximity around a lot of people was hard?

Todd: Yeah. Absolutely! Yeah. I found I couldn't, I guess, I guess, I guess it was some form of the anxiety. I felt like I couldn't breathe I felt like I was hyperventilating. I felt like I just had to leave like I just had to get away. So. I did lock myself up in my, in my home, I mean for the longest time, I didn't go anywhere

Matt talked about the cumulative effects of being in the closet and

repeatedly witnessing first hand homophobia directed at his colleagues and

others that lived in his town.

> **Matt: It just basically all took a mental toll on me and I left teaching basically on the edge of a nervous breakdown.**
>
> **Chad: So it sounds like for you there is a clear link between the homophobia that you experienced and witnessed and your own health and your career and why you left?**
>
> **Matt: Yeah it was just to the point that even though it wasn't anything physical towards me or verbal towards me directly, I internalized it because I could see that I was going to be in the same boat as Mr. X, the other teacher [who was openly out and gay].**

Jeff talked about experiencing feelings of anxiety and fear, although his

was not constant the way other participants described their own similar feelings.

This could be due to Jeff's experiences being limited to short, verbal encounters

with homophobia, however the same feelings arise as in the other participants,

just not at the same intensity. Jeff stated, "The events were stressful. So I

guess, when I think about them, unpleasantness and they do create, on some

level they do create some anxiety and fear."

Kevin shared a story during the interview about a time when he was

working as an escort after his attack. He described feelings of anxiousness and

fear that had not existed in the past when he was escorting.

> **Kevin: I was walking into this guy's house and he's in the bedroom straight there. And I'm like, whoa, slowdown. Like, anything to drink anything to smoke? You know? And I'm thinking, in this big house, like what if there's somebody in the closet with an axe? You know?**
>
> **Chad: You don't know.**

Kevin: Yeah. But I just did that trick and got the Hell out of there. You know?

Todd talked about his feelings of suicide after the bashing, wishing that he

was dead rather than having to live with what he had been through.

Todd: It's hard. It's hard living with all these things. You know what, you have all these things in your mind, all these things, the sexual assault when I was little and then the bashing and the things that ever happened you know, the way people have reacted. The paranoia from people, the anxiety.   I mean, I don't know how I've lasted this long, I really don't, to tell you the honest truth, mentally or physically why, if I had been any less of a person, weaker, if I know that I would have done something drastic, I would have ended it, you know suicide or something.

Todd: I mean, for me it was just, I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. I remember lying on my bed and being in so much pain and thinking that I wish I could just close my eyes and just not even wake up. It was that bad.

Rick shared a similar story, opening up about feeling suicidal after his bashing.

Rick: It was a really long process.   I attempted suicide twice; I got shingles for the first time. I didn't even know what they were until I got them, so just, you know, on top of everything else, completely devastated. I kept myself in, you know it took at least three or four years, you know. I wouldn't take the bus, in fact I didn't take the bus for about two and a half years.

Dan also expressed feelings of suicide as a result of the constant violence and

gay bashing he experienced as a teenager and how it had affected him.

Dan: I'd usually go to self hurting, or alcohol or drugs. A lot of suicide attempts even in past stressful times. My automatic thinking was "I'm wrong, I'm not right, there something wrong with me, I should die."

Throughout all of the narratives, descriptors and identifiers of mental

health or mental health issues are present. While some formal diagnosis occurs,

most of the presenting issues appear directly connected to the incidences

shared, with even the formal diagnosis of Bi-Polar being connected by Todd to his extremely violent gay bashing.

Racism

Two of the six participants experienced racism as a part of their gay bashing. Not surprising, the only two that did experience it were Kevin, who identifies as Black, and Rick, who identifies as Aboriginal. The other four participants in the research all identify as and look Caucasian. Both Rick and Kevin spoke of their identities as men of colour as important to them and both were attacked with these identity markers in their gay bashings and afterwards in their search for support. That racism was present in the two situations where we might have expected it seems to strengthen the fact that racism, like homophobia, is unfortunately alive and well. Both of the men spoke of various racial slurs directed towards them, by attackers as well as by individuals that should have been supports (medical community, police, and in Kevin's story, his family).

Behaviour Changes

In terms of identity, the men in the study spoke of different behaviour changes that occurred after the bashing. These behaviour changes were significant in restructuring the ways in which they lived their lives, thus affecting their identity as gay men, as friends, as partners, and as employees.

Rick spoke about making changes that presented as a process in somewhat reducing or losing his gay identity. He talked of changing his friends,

no longer hanging out with his gay clubbing friends, only hanging out with straight

friends. He also spoke about changing the way he talked in disclosing his status

as a gay man, the way he dressed, and the way he acted.

Rick: Umm, I guessed just that it took such a long time to get out. I stopped going to clubs, I stop socializing. I completely stopped hanging around with my gay friends. Still don't hang around with them. I change the way I dressed. So like a lot of things have happened since then.   I'm very self conscious of, you know, work, and, yeah just like all of that, you know, like a total change of my whole life.

Chad: How you dress, who you hang out with, where you go . . .

Rick: Yeah just like my whole life changed in a short period of time

Chad: How did the bashing affect your relationship with your friends? You talked a little bit about that already.

Rick: Well, I don't hang around with them. [pause] I don't miss it so, [pause] I don't miss it. For me it's not an issue.

Rick shared that he found it hard to take public transportation after the

bashing, something that Todd also expressed. For Rick, this affected his ability

to do his job.

Rick: Well, I worked with New Directions, and they gave me I think it was close to three months that they gave me off. I went back and stayed for maybe three or four more months and you know, gave it up , because I had to take a bus with clients because I was working one on one with clients and part of the job of showing them things like how to take the bus , get home, so that didn't work with me , so.

Chad: So something you used to be able to do in your job . . .

Rick: Yeah.

Chad: You weren't able to do anymore.

Rick: Yeah, before that I would have gladly taken the bus there and the bus to home and I would have been fine with that but it just

changed it all for me. So I didn't quit, I just gave it up. We had a discussion and I just told them that I couldn't take it anymore , I couldn't handle it , that things were just getting out of control for me . That was fine, they were really good, 'cause when they were giving me my separation slip they didn't put them quit so they're really good on the part. Shortly after I got a job at Ma Mawi, for I guess about three years. I wouldn't do the evening programs, any kind of programs I did had to be during the day. Still to this day I'm seldom out late at night unless I'm with friends, you'll never see me walking around at like 10:00 at night.

Todd also shared that his gay bashing affected his ability to be around a lot of people at any given time and that like Rick, he also was unable to take public transportation for a long time. As previously cited, he shared that being in close proximity to people caused him anxiety and panic, making him hyperventilate and unable to breath.

Behaviour changes in the ability to be around groups of people, strangers, and unknown men were present throughout the narratives. These behaviour changes in the men affected identity in terms of isolating them, which also appears as a separate theme, and for some, changing their support systems.

Kevin talked about his cruising behaviour and what has changed. He shared that he initially found it hard to go back out cruising and finds himself worried about who he is picking up, a change from before his bashing. In the past, he would cruise in the dark, however after his accident he no longer cruises at night, finding it "too dark" and "too scary".

Rick also shared challenges around going out in the evening, stating that he is rarely out past 10 p.m. now, a change in his behaviour and that if he is out in the evening, he is never out alone, also a change. Todd echoed the same

behaviour changes in his narrative, sharing that, "You have to make, you have to

make good decisions. In life. I think it made me wiser to that. That I should take

a little more care and not just necessarily jump into something, but first to look at

it at all angles, the pros and the cons, what's it all about. I mean, Osborne village

at night anymore, I won't.   I mean I just won't. I mean I don't know if there's gay

bashing still going on over there, but I do know that there's a lot of scary people."

As previously mentioned under the sub-heading of *Being Out/Out Identity,*

changes appeared in the men's behaviour around coming out or identifying

themselves as gay to strangers and colleagues. All of the changes that we see

related to *Mental Health* also result in behaviour changes, crossover in these two

categories within the same theme of *Identity and Identity Change*.

Relationship Impacts

Participants experienced challenges and changes in the various

relationships in their lives. A frequent challenge for the men became physical

intimacy in relationships. On the lower end of the spectrum would be Jeff and

Kevin. Jeff talked about new considerations around hand holding in public and

although he still does this, the environment is considered. Kevin talked about

challenges that did not previously exist when he worked as an escort—now

worrying that he could be attacked when out on a call.

Rick, Todd, and Dan shared similar challenges and were the three men

that also experienced severe physical violence as part of their gay bashings.

Challenges with intimacy included being held, hugging, intimate touching, sexual

interest overall and public displays of affection, such as holding hands or kissing.

Rick shared that, "In sex, yeah, like you know the intimacy for me has changed,

it's just [pause] I'm not, it just doesn't interest me now." He stated that he also

doesn't enjoy any sort of intimate touch, openly stating, "I don't like hugging. I

don't like being touched."

Todd shared that for him, intimacy can become a trigger to his past events

and while he can be intimate, he can't be held down as it brings him back to the

memories of his gay bashing.

> **Todd: I never had, although I can't be held down. If someone's joking or wrestling or something and trying to hold me down, because of that, because of that gay bashing thing when I couldn't move, because one was kneeling on me well one was kicking me and so on and so forth, I can't be held , I go absolutely crazy if someone holds me down . I can't be, detained, if I can't move.**

> **Chad: sounds like it triggers it in you?**

> **Todd: I go crazy I can't breathe. So, I guess that, that's probably how, that affected me. In that manner, so.**

Dan also shared similar experiences and challenges around intimacy and

touch. He discussed challenges of being open or being perceived as gay in

public or heteronormative spaces and how that has affected relationships.

> **Dan: I have a hard time with intimacy. I don't like to touch, I don't like to hold hands, I hate cuddling. I had met somebody about a year ago and he's a cuddler, toucher, and I was like, "Okay, enough, move away, there's enough room on the bed for you to move 3ft. away" and he was like "What is wrong with you?" I don't like to be touched. In public he wanted to hold hands and I was like, "Are you nuts? Do you want to get ourselves beaten up? We don't touch in public, keep 3ft. away." He had a hard time with that that and it kind of ended because, just, I couldn't do what he wanted. He wanted it to be us,**

totally out, at the club's, hold hands, no problem, we're in a safe place, but on the street? Are you nuts?

Matt did not express similar challenges as the other five men that were interviewed. Interestingly, Matt was the person who experienced the homophobia indirectly and while closeted, versus experiencing directed homophobia towards himself while closeted. Although Matt shared experiences of homophobia after coming out, these have been verbal incidents and have seemingly not had a direct affect on him. It is important to point out that Matt has also created an environment in his life that is quite far from heteronormative—his friends are a mixture of gay and straight, with the straight friends being gay positive. His workplace is quite diverse and open; his job involves doing outreach to the GLBTTQ* community and to sex trade workers, creating a very open and accepting workplace where he is able to be openly out and is accepted by colleagues versus his former life as a closeted teacher.

As mentioned previously, workplace relationships were challenged for many of the participants. Matt, Todd and Rick ended up leaving jobs due to their gay bashings and experiences of homophobia. Kevin found new challenges and fears in his role as a male escort. Dan ended up missing many of his school classes due to safety and avoidance because of the constant physical violence and beatings from his classmates. He also experienced verbal harassment as an adult student, but talked about having a better support system to deal with this, although he ended up failing that class (the only class he failed as an adult student).

Jeff has not experienced any homophobia in the workplace, but shared

that while he is out, he is quite discrete about his private life and sexuality at

work. Jeff stated, "I don't necessarily wear my sexuality, sort of as, you know,

sort of as a tie at work. People come to know me, as, they'll know me and

become more friendly and then they'll know more about my private life as

opposed to my profession life. When I'm at work, it's work first, personal life

second." This division between work life and personal life, between selective

closetedness and being out could serve to protect Jeff against homophobia at

work. However, it could also be a response to homophobia.

Participants shared challenges in friendships that ended due to lack of

support, victim blaming and conscious decisions to end certain friendships. As

well, the men discussed having fear around male strangers, not knowing who

they were or how they might act, with the potential for homophobic violence with

every new male stranger.

Theme: Reaching Out—Disclosure and Support

The theme of Reaching Out—Disclosure and Support conceptualizes

participant's experiences in decision making around disclosing about their gay

bashings. The theme incorporates the coping methods the men used for dealing

with the fallout of the bashing and homophobia, their experiences of accessing

support, the concept of concrete tasks and concrete supports as helpful,

exploring the idea of shared experiences in the gay community. It also includes

the men's occurrences of re-experiencing homophobia when they reached out for

support.

Disclosure Decisions

Disclosure decisions were based around a number of variables. The

following chart illustrated the process used by the men in making decisions to

disclose or reach out for support after their experiences.

Making Disclosure Decisions Process

```
                        ┌──────────────┐
                        │   Making     │
              ┌─────────│  Disclosure  │─────────┐
              │         └──────────────┘         │
        ┌──────────┐                        ┌──────────┐
        │ Control  │                        │No Control│
        └──────────┘                        └──────────┘
         │        │                          │        │
   ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐          ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
   │Supportive/│ │   Not    │          │  Trust   │ │ Distrust │
   │  Trust   │ │Supportive│          └──────────┘ └──────────┘
   └──────────┘ └──────────┘               │            │
    │       │        │                 ┌────────┐  ┌────────┐
┌───────┐┌───────┐┌────────┐          │ Reach  │  │  Shut  │
│Protect││ Reach ││ Remain │          │  Out   │  │  Down  │
│       ││  Out  ││ Silent │          └────────┘  └────────┘
└───────┘└───────┘└────────┘
```
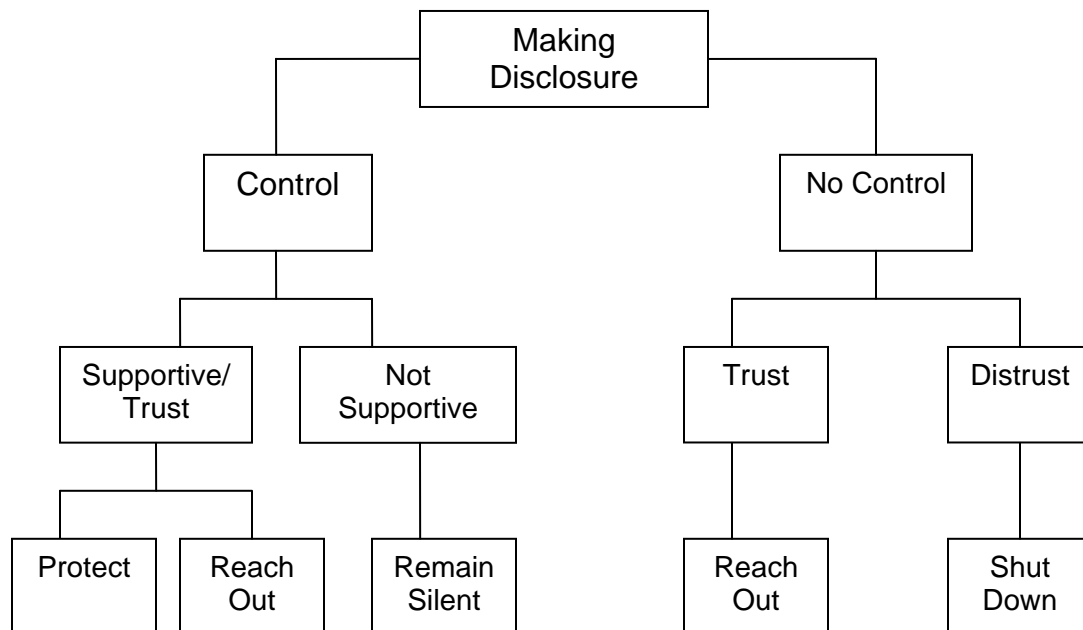
If the men had control over the decision to disclose, was the first variable.

Control was whether they willingly chose to disclose about the incident or if this

choice was made for them. For the men that required medical care, most of

them chose this on their own; for Rick, a bystander who witnessed the attack

called an ambulance and Rick was taken to hospital—in this case he did not

have control over becoming involved with the medical system. In all of the

situations where police were involved, the men did not have control over the

decision, as police became involved through the medical system.

If men had control over their decision to disclose, the next variable was

whether they thought the person or system was supportive or a system or

individual they could trust. This included family, friends, counsellors and medical

staff. If they deemed that there was not support or would not be support present,

men remained silent about what happened. An example of this was Todd, who

chose not to disclose to his family about what had happened to him, as his family

was homophobic and un-accepting of him as a gay man. If they deemed there

was support or there would be support present or that they could trust an

individual or system, the next decision was to reach out and access support. In

the cases of family, friends or personal supports, a decision to remain silent

about what had happened was the other option, in order to protect their supports.

An example of this would be Jeff and Kevin, who both deemed that their mothers

were supportive and that they could have reached out to them for support, but

did not disclose about their gay bashings in order to protect or shield their

mothers from pain and worry about their sons. Jeff also deemed that friends

would be supportive and did reach out and disclose what had happened to him

and his boyfriend, accessing support from his friends in the gay community.

If men did not have control over their disclosure, the next variable for them was to decide if they trusted or did not trust the person or support system they were involved with. An example of this would be Todd, who decided he did trust the police and cooperated with them (reaching out) in disclosing what had happened. The opposite was Rick, who did not trust the police and did not cooperate with them. It is important to note that the men also sometimes regretted their decision, perhaps made the wrong determination to trust or distrust. Todd, who initially cooperated with the police, later regretted it, being treated poorly and being victim blamed by the police for being a gay man and being where he was, which was nothing more than walking home. Rick also became involved with the medical system, after being hospitalized for suicide attempts. In this situation, he had no control. He was forced to participate in a day program and counselling, again no control. Rick shared that he did not trust the psychiatrist, especially after the psychiatrist fell asleep during one of their sessions. Rick was thus not open to working with the psychiatrist and shut down rather than willingly shared. However, Rick did trust the psychiatric nurse that was also assigned to him and requested that the psychiatrist not be present for counselling sessions, but only when some sort of medication change was necessary and the psychiatrist needed to be consulted. Based on his decision of trust towards the psychiatric nurse, he was open with her (reaching out) and had still maintained a therapeutic relationship with her up to the point of the interview.

<u>Coping Methods</u>

Various coping methods were used by the men that were interviewed, some healthy, some not so healthy. Unhealthy methods included isolation, drugs, alcohol and using sex to cope. Healthier methods included accessing support through friends, counselling, reading, exercise, music, baths.

For Matt, coping was initially staying in the closet before he came out. He shared that, "It seemed like every time that I was about to come out, there would be another major issue that would sort of makes [sic] you just [think] hell no this ain't [sic] the time to come out." Later, as the pressure became unbearable and Matt found himself approaching a nervous breakdown, coping meant coming out of the closet. This process for him included accessing support through a psychologist who was very gay positive and helped him through the process of coming out.

The use of *Isolation* as a coping method for all of the men, and the aspects of self isolating to cope are discussed and included under the separate theme *Isolation*.

Drugs, alcohol and sex were also used as coping methods by participants, a way to self medicate and to feel good. Rick shared about his experiences with alcohol and drugs as a way to cope.

> **Chad: How did you cope after the bashing?**
>
> **Rick: Well first off I self medicated of course I drank more and you know, more than I did before. I started taking prescription drugs, the doctor was giving me them, you know, for all kinds of reasons. And then I took an overdose -- it wasn't lethal -- and ended up in the**

hospital for maybe five or six hours. Yeah, basically I just self medicated and stayed angry at everybody, you know, I felt happier when I was you know, medicating, happier. Yeah and just the isolation and everything, things like that, I couldn't take, pretty much. For me self medicating was just coping.

Chad: How was this different from in the past when you had stress or trauma in your life before the bashing and how you coped then?

Rick: The prescription drugs and the alcohol, that was different. It was so easy to get lost in self medicating, you know, drinking, and drinking while taking the medication. You can get lost forever, but you don't, you wake up in the morning and you feel even worse. I mean you get lost for a certain period of time and you know, you think you're happy for a short period of time.

Chad: It's like a short vacation away from your trauma.

Rick: Yeah! Exactly! I like being here and I like feeling like this and if this is what it's gonna take then I'll do it again.

In his interview, Dan shared the various ways that he initially coped with the ongoing abuse and violence that he experienced from his classmates. Self harming behaviours and sex were used. Dan also retaliated and threatened violence against those that were bashing him, similar to the stories reported about children and teenagers being bullied or feeling ostracized and using violence as revenge.

Chad: Missing school, that was about safety, fear?

Dan: That was about me cruising. I get beaten up at school so then I go out and cruise. And if I didn't wanna [sic] go to school I would just go out and cruise. I was using sex to deal with stuff which isn't really a healthy way to deal with it.

Chad: Sort of a self medicating way, this makes me feel bad, but if I go out and have sex I feel good?

Dan: Exactly—not a good way to deal with things though.

Chad: Okay. How did you cope after the bashing? Sounds like you've talked a little bit about that in terms of using sex as coping method? And any other coping mechanisms that you used at the time?

Dan: Also, basically trying to hurt myself. Or hurt others. I had plans to hurt others. I actually attempted that once, I pulled a rifle out on some people who'd bashed me. I didn't have any ammo but damn were they scared [laughs]. I started pointing the gun around and stuff, I got in trouble for that. I don't understand why [sarcasm, laughs].

Dan also shared about how sex was used as a way of coping by another student

in his school as a form of protection.

Dan: You know, it should have been handled differently; it should have been handled differently in school period. I wasn't the only gay guy in school, there was another out gay guy, but he didn't get beat up because he gave a lot of them blow jobs, and I wasn't willing to do that.

Chad: So this other guy was using sex as a way to protect himself?

Dan: Yes.

Chad: And you weren't doing that so they were beating you up?

Dan: Yes

Todd shared what was helpful and not helpful for him in terms of coping.

Chad: what was helpful for you in coming back and being able to function?

Todd: You know, just being able to, you know a lot of my friends they pushed and they pushed, you know just trying to get me to come out, trying to do more, more constructive things like, with my time, like go to movies and go swimming and stuff like that and go for walks and go rollerblading and stuff like that and go to the beach. Where things were, I wouldn't have even bothered because I was just, I just had not really any desire and it wasn't counselling for me , because I felt that, I felt that with my sexual abuse, I took the man to court eighteen years after the incident, everyone told me I was mental, but I won. But he only got five years, but five years

concurrent no parole. So, it, it was all right he got something. It would have been more but they didn't have buggery then, it was only sexual assault. But everybody told me, they all told me, and I felt like I'd been lied to, because they all told me, you know what? You need to go to counselling. You need to go to counselling and you need to talk about it. And once you talk about it and taken him to court, you're gonna have closure. And I believe them. So what I did is I went after him to court, and I went to counselling. And I thought my self, this didn't fix anything. It never fixed a damn thing. All it did was make me think in great detail about what happened. And it was the same thing when I talk to that police officer. It just made me recant it in detail. But, I think, if sometimes I think it's not best to relive it, because when you think about it, that person goes away for five years, but he got five years, I'm the one with a life sentence. It's the same with a bashing, they got away, nothing happened to them. I couldn't identify them, so who, who, who has to pay the price? I have to pay the price; I have to pay the price for somebody who attacked me that, it makes me angry. You know? My life was turned upside down and put through a knot hole backwards because some idiots decide to beat the crap out of me and what did I do? You have to ask yourself, what did I do? But you know what? You suffer. You'll suffer as payback. Not as much as when it first happened but believe me, it's still there. You know? It's still there and it never goes away. It just, it just goes on the back burner for a while.

Chad: What did you find was helpful for you in terms of coping?

Todd: Well, I immersed myself in reading and music and stuff. Just relaxation and things, you know, a hot bath. That was good. And good friends that I had, that, that were available any time that I needed them. You know that I could call any time if I had a nightmare. You know they come over. Those kinds of things, that help make hope. And I never went to any groups for therapy or anything like that, but I guess eventually when I started coming back out into the community and I started to hear about other people that had been hurt, because you feel like you're the only one and even though you're not, because that had happened to you, you feel like you're all alone. It was good for me to hear that other people that I knew had had problems like this. And talking to them and sort of bouncing things off of each other was helpful for me as well. You know?

Chad: Almost sort of informal counselling, informal groups around the stuff with people that had gone through these things was good for you?

Todd: Yes. Yes exactly. But you know, no pointing fingers, just, you know, casual talking together, no blaming.

Todd's experience of formal counselling was not a positive or helpful experience for him. As he stated, reliving the event isn't necessarily helpful for everyone. However, for some of the men, accessing support through a counsellor, developing a therapeutic relationship and exploring the trauma was a helpful process. Of the five men that accessed formal counselling, four of them did find the experience beneficial.

Shared Experiences

Todd discussed the helpfulness of hearing about similar or shared experiences of other gay men in the community. This was common throughout all of the men's narratives, to discover that they were not alone. This did not mean group therapy or a similar formal process, but often came when the men felt able to trust and reach out to friends or other individuals in the LGBTTQ* community, as demonstrated in the *Making Disclosure Decisions* diagram. The men talked about the helpfulness of hearing that they were not alone, that others had been through similar experiences. It also provided informal opportunities to explore how others dealt with and coped with similar situations, providing the men with opportunities and ideas for additional ways of accessing support. One of the negatives of discovering shared experiences with other gay men was the normalizing effect that this discovery had, that being subjected to homophobia

and gay bashing is just something that all queer individuals are destined to experience.

<u>*Concrete and Helpful*</u>

Concrete supports were identified as helpful by the men. While emotional supports were listed as beneficial, the men also talked about the helpfulness of rides, of food, assistance with tasks and chores that seemed overwhelming, income replacement for time lost at work, replacement of clothes damaged in attacks. Being on call was important to the men attacked, knowing there was someone they could call at any time of the day or night to talk if they needed or for assistance with a task or chore. Being taken out for lunch or dinner, engaged in activities such as walks, movies or going for coffee were identified as helpful moments for the men.

<u>*Re-Experiencing Homophobia*</u>

Often when disclosing or attempting to access support, the men were forced to re-experience homophobia. It was often presented in reactions from individuals towards the men—victim blaming, disbelief of the event, questioning motives, or reactions to the men themselves as gay men. The men also shared the challenges of "trigger moments", hearing something homophobic, being in the place they were bashed or a similar place, seeing someone that reminded them of an attacker, that would bring the event flooding back to them.

Homophobia was re-experienced by all the men that received medical attention and by all the men that had police involvement in their bashing

occurrences. This ranged from lack of acknowledgment by medical staff to the

incident as a hate crime and gay bashing, the psychiatrist falling asleep during a

counselling session, lack of reaction or discipline by teachers to homophobic

violence or harassment, to a lack of information in counsellors, medical staff and

police about the GLBTTQ* community, resources, referrals or supports. None of

the men were ever given the names of counsellors, agencies or supports specific

to the GLBTTQ* community, even when the men themselves acknowledged that

they were gay and had been gay bashed.

Theme: Isolation

All of the men interviewed talked about isolation in various ways. Matt

talked about the isolation that he felt as a closeted gay man in a small town,

feeling like there was no one that he could tell, no one that he could come out to,

feeling completely alone. Kevin talked about feeling alone, having no one to talk

to about his experiences, being forced to deal with things alone and cry on his

own with no one to talk with. Dan expressed similar feelings, discussing how the

people he thought were his friends would do nothing to help him and as a result,

he found himself pulling away from these so-called friends, self isolating.

Rick expressed similar experiences, dropping the friends that were "gay"

and not hanging out with them any longer. Rick also talked about self isolating

as a coping method, not having anyone around meant not having to talk about

things, not having to explain anything or deal with anything. However, Rick

expressed that this isolation also made it that much harder to come back to his

life.

Rick and Todd both expressed long periods of isolation, of feeling that

they couldn't leave their homes.

> **Rick: Probably the most difficult was actually getting out. I would
> shut myself in for like to three weeks at a time. And this lasted for
> about a year. I think that was the biggest challenge for me just
> getting out. I still, I don't talk about a lot, to anybody.**

> **Todd: But I mean for that time, I couldn't, I couldn't go out I couldn't
> be out. I couldn't go out in the daytime. I was cancelling doctors'
> appointments, I wouldn't answer the phone. Because I was worried
> about what was going to be, because they had taken my ID, when
> they attacked me. So I did nothing, I was afraid to answer the phone
> in case it was somebody that had attacked me. It became really,
> really, really bad. I became, like a prisoner in my own home. That
> was, that was the most difficult . . . . I felt like I was a prisoner, like I
> couldn't do anything like I couldn't go anywhere. In the daytime I
> could go out but I couldn't go anywhere in the evening so my life, my
> whole life had just changed for me. I mean I still think about it
> sometimes . . . It was at least two years. Actually. I mean, yeah, I
> wouldn't go out. [Laughs] I wouldn't go anywhere. It was really bad.**

Thus, isolation was often used as a coping method, to keep people away

so that the men did not have to constantly explain or talk about their experiences.

However, the events themselves also became isolating, creating a fear of leaving

the home, a fear of public transportation, a fear of the public, so that individuals

became trapped in their homes, too scared to leave because something could

happen.

<u>Theme: Power, Powerlessness, and Privilege</u>

Within her book, *Becoming An Ally*, Anne Bishop (2002) speaks of the role

of power in maintaining and propping up oppression. Bishop explores the work

of Starhawk and her understanding of the three types of power that exist—

power-over, power-within, and power-with. These understandings of power and

how it is used fit well with the AOP theoretical framework that this research was

approached with.

Power-over is exactly as it sounds—it is the power of one person or group

of people over another. Bishop (2002) describes it as "domination or force" (p.

30). This is the power that plays out in gay bashing, using force, manipulation,

punishment, degradation and violence to subjugate a person (gay man) or a

group of people (LGBTTQ* individuals) by another person or a group of people

(heteronormative society). Power-over is the power that plays throughout all of

the narratives and is at work in this research when the men tell their stories of

being violated, of being beaten, humiliated, punished and made to learn lessons

about heteronormativity and homophobia.

We can see the concept of power-over at play in many aspects of the

men's stories. Throughout the violence, we see groups of individuals attacking,

humiliating and punishing gay men through homophobic violence. Power-over

has strength in numbers. A group of bashers has power-over one gay man when

they decide to bash. We also see power-over at play when weapons are used

against the men. One person with a knife or a bat has power-over a defenceless

person. The use of a weapon increases the power of the basher.

The language used by the bashers also demonstrates power-over. Words

like "fucking faggot", "Indian fag", "sodomite", "pedophile", "fudge packer" and

other descriptors used by the bashers humiliate and denigrate the men, sending

the message that they are worth less than those bashing them. Racism is

invoked for both Kevin and Rick, letting them know that being men of color

means they are worth less than white skinned individuals.

The level of violence inflicted against the men in the physical bashing

cases speaks to punishing. As I spoke of in the theme of Heteronormativity, the

bashings are about men being themselves (gay) in heteronormative spaces,

which is not allowed. The extreme physical violence re-teaches the men lessons

that they've learned. As we see through the narratives of the men, many of them

no longer go out or hang out in the places where they were bashed. Style of

clothing changed for Rick, he no longer dresses "so obvious"; Dan also tries not

to be "so obvious" and "a walking stereotype". He doesn't hold hands in public—

ever. Jeff still does hold hands in public, but consciously thinks about it, being

aware of where he is and who is around. Both Rick and Todd no longer go near

the areas where they were beaten. Kevin still cruises, but not at night anymore.

Matt stayed in the closet and had to leave his home and his job to be able to

come out. Lessons were taught by those with power-over and learned by all of

the men.

Bishop (2002) describes power-within as "one's own centredness, one's grounding in one's beliefs, wisdom, knowledge, skills, culture, and community." (p. 30). Power-within gives us the ability to create change, to influence others in change, and the ability to take action to move forward in the cause based on our own clarity and intentions. Within the following theme, *Creating Change*, we see the resiliency of the men in this study shine through, coming from power-within. Throughout a process of humiliation, they are able to rise forward and not only recover, but work to create change, resilient to the effects of the violence inflicted upon them. Bishop (2002) also discussed the concept of power-with, "power exercised co-operatively among equals" (p. 30). Power-with allows us to share power, to use our influence and take action while uniting others in the cause. Power-with arises from the shared knowledge and experience; from the community working in solidarity to create change and cooperating together to effectively achieve this. Power-with shines through in the achievements of the men working with community, sharing their knowledge and power. We see their resiliency excel through their ability to share power within their community to effectively create change. In the Creating Change theme, examples of power-within and power-with are shared as the achievements of the men are explored.

Privilege

Privilege is connected to power; privilege can be used for power-over, power-with, or for power-within. Privilege is the about rights that some have and others do not, often based on attributes such as skin color, culture, ability, gender

and sexual orientation, to name a few. Often, we are not even aware of the

privilege that we hold and we use it every day unconsciously in the choices that

we make, in how we interact with people, and in our expectations of the world.

However, privilege is often made visible when we lose it. Privilege is also visible

to those that have not had it but have seen the privilege that others hold and

have experienced power-over. Throughout the study, we are able to see how

privilege is used in power-over by the bashers and individuals that inflict

homophobic violence and harassment on the participants. The right to feel safe,

to feel welcome, and to be yourself openly are not in fact rights, but privileges, for

in this research we see that some people have them (the bashers) and some

people don't (gay men). We see racism come forward in power-over, showing

the privilege of white skin. We see homophobia and heteronormativity in the

verbal bashings, the physical bashings, and in the personal attacks on the spirits

of the men in this study, demonstrating the privilege of heterosexuality.

Resiliency, power-within and power-with are demonstrated by the commitment

and sharing of the men that came forward to participate in this research process.

Rick shares that although he doesn't talk about his gay bashing a lot, the

description of the research on the recruitment poster makes him think that

perhaps he should come forward and share his experiences. Rick states, "Thank

you for giving me the opportunity to share some of my story . . . You're a lot

braver than I am. Or, better put, at making change." However, just in the act of

sharing his story and adding to the depth of this research, Rick uses his own

power to affect change. Todd is able to come back from a violent physical

bashing that affects his mental health and go on to become an ambassador to

the Winnipeg GLBTTQ* community through his work as a drag queen. Todd, the

first time I met him while putting up a poster for this study, was adamant he was

not going to participate. He briefly shared about his gay bashing and the affects

and told me he wanted nothing to do with the study though, not wanting to re-

open old wounds. Three months later I received a call from Todd, requesting an

interview. Todd shares his reasons for participating: to help him deal with the

past because his health is failing and he is dying from AIDS. Todd shared that if

he didn't tell me what happened, nobody would ever really know the truth, so he

was handing his story, his experience, over to me so that he was not alone in

knowing and others could know. In doing so, Todd hoped this would help him

find some peace. In his words, "This was a way to do that."

In participating, Todd is doing more than sharing his story, as are all of the

other men. They are contributing their stories, their experiences, their wisdom

that has come from their resiliency, and adding to the knowledge that exists.

Theme: Creating Change

Despite all of the experiences of homophobia, harassment and violence

that the men in the study have survived through, the resiliency of the men is

apparent as they continue to move forward in their lives. Within those lives, they

work to make the world a better place. Within the interviews, the men were

asked for their ideas around change, how to challenge homophobia and how

homophobic violence can be ended. What arose out of the interviews beyond

the ideas the men had around creating change was what the men are currently

doing within their lives to create change, challenge homophobia and how their

actions are working to end homophobic violence.

Active Change

Within their lives, all of the men are currently doing things that create

change and work towards dismantling homophobia and change the world to be a

more inclusive and diverse place.

Within their jobs, both Rick and Matt do anti-homophobia work,

challenging ideas about masculinity, sexuality and gender beliefs. As an

outreach worker, Matt works with to educate around safe sex and self respect.

As a current social services worker and a future social worker, Rick is

incorporating anti-homophobia work into his job while working with clients and in

presentations. Rick was modest about the ability to make a difference that he

had. When asked if his gay bashing had something to do with going into social

work, Rick and I had the following exchange:

> **Chad: Do you think going into social work had anything to do with
> your gay bashing?**
>
> **Rick: Yeah.**
>
> **Chad: OK, so as a social worker you're someone that will be
> creating change?**
>
> **Rick: Yeah, I would never admit to that, though.**
>
> **Chad: [Laughs] But since I asked you, you will?**

Rick: Yeah, yeah I will. Definitely.

As a lawyer, Jeff has been active in the fight for same sex rights and continues to be an advocate for the LGBTTQ* community. Jeff was involved with the fight for same sex marriage and is active in politics and the fight for human rights.

Dan has volunteered for several queer positive organizations and continues to do so, working to make the LGBTTQ* community in Winnipeg a positive and healthy place. He provides valuable services through peer counselling and speaking out about issues and concerns in the GLBTTQ* community.

Kevin discussed his response to his gay bashing and attack as an attempt to create a safer environment for other men cruising. In an undertaking of activism, Kevin made signs describing his gay basher and wrote warnings about him on the Granite Curling Club wall after going to court failed and his basher got off.

> **Kevin: Well I had to do something. I told people . . . I put the word out. I even wrote it on the wall at the Granite Curling Club.**
>
> **Chad: So you went out there and made sure that other people that were cruising knew, so you tried to make it a little bit safer for other people?**
>
> **Kevin: Yeah.**

Within his interview, Todd was similar to Rick in modesty about his ability to affect change and did not identify anything that he did as an act that created change in the world, challenged homophobia or made the world a safer place.

**Chad: For you Todd, did it motivate you to create change or to try
and change something around homophobia or gay bashing?**

**Todd: No, no it didn't. I mean I was just one voice. For me I think
that unless a lot of people get together, and I don't know if it would
ever be possible, but a lot of people have to get together, like a great
deal of people sort of like petitions, have to get together to be able to
change that view, you know government or the people, or that people
in legal or authority, like the police for the judges, those things. One
voice can never do it.**

Although Todd did not identify anything that he did as work towards creating

change, I couldn't help notice the many things that he shared and spoke about in

our interview that did work towards creating change. Todd shared about being a

drag queen, about challenging people's ideas on what kind of gay guy does drag.

Todd could be described visibly as a traditionally masculine male, strong,

athletic, and not effeminate. As a more masculine gay man doing drag, he still

created a very feminine persona and challenged ideas around gayness and

masculinity. Todd spoke about doing drag shows out of the bar, out of the gay

safety zone, and out in the larger community, on the University of Manitoba and

on the University of Winnipeg campuses. He shared about being chosen to

represent various bars in the city and how he took his role as an ambassador in

the gay community seriously. He spoke about being welcoming to new people at

the bars that looked uncomfortable in his ambassador role, trying to put people at

ease if they were just in the process of coming out and at the gay bar for the first

time. All of this work around gender, around creating a welcoming atmosphere in

the gay community and promoting self respect in the community through his work

was about creating change, despite his statement that one voice can never do it.

After his passing, I couldn't help but notice and be moved with the many tributes,

reflections and memories shared about Todd in the gay community and the

change that he did make in the world.

Ideas on Change

All of the men shared similar ideas on how to create change in the future

that would work to end homophobia and gay bashing. Three common ideas

were shared by the men: Anti-homophobia education for all people, anti-

homophobia education within the school systems, and change through openness

and the acceptance of diversity promoted within the family.

The men spoke of various ways in which anti-homophobia work and

education could be provided for all people. Normalization of same sex

relationships and of homosexuality through the inclusion of gay couples and

individuals in the media and popular culture was put forth. One man spoke about

how the power of media and television is able to create change and openness in

a small town where GLBTTQ* individuals may be too afraid to come out. The

power of a favourite television show was discussed. With positive portrayals on

soap operas and in television shows, small town citizens gain exposure to people

that they come to know and love, who just happen to be gay. The men spoke

about the importance of not promoting stereotypes, but of showing diverse

GLBTTQ* people living normal lives instead of "effeminate gays with lisps getting

all dramatic". The importance of debunking stereotypes about gays was brought

up repeatedly—that gays are not child molesters, that gays do not all have AIDS

and are not responsible for the spread of AIDS, that gay men are not effeminate and perverts. The importance of getting the message across that all gay men DO NOT want to have sex with every man they see was repeatedly shared. The creation of educational materials for people to read that were accessible to all individuals was shared, again debunking myths and stereotypes. These materials could be available in wait rooms in hospitals, in doctor's offices, and on bulletin boards or in places with other brochures or posters.

The importance of providing education within the school system around homosexuality and LBGTTQ* people was put forth as a strategy for creating awareness, openness and acceptance for diversity. The creation of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA's) was put forth as a strategy for normalizing GLBTTQ* issues and people in the school systems. Starting at a young age and normalizing LGBTTQ* people and same sex couples was put forth, with the notion put out that the younger someone is when they learn openness, the more likely it will stick and that they will pass on these lessons to their own children. Jeff shared his thoughts on the education system and creating change:

> **I'm quite supportive of things being done at the school level to create respect and tolerance and I think that generally Canada and education system are moving in generally the right direction. I can see a lot more of acceptance in teenagers now than maybe when I was in junior high and stuff like that. We've still got a road to travel but we've seen some positive steps and some positive results in terms of violence, there are other people that can probably tell you better than I can ways to reduce violence, but in general as a society we been doing things that have been, like zero tolerance and creating policies around reporting, you know, in schools and stuff like that, gay straight alliances, Allies and people that won't put up with that kind of shit. Yeah.**

Rick shared that he thought a powerful strategy would be to have people that have experienced gay bashings and homophobic violence to go to schools and talk about their experiences. "I think getting people out that have been attacked and getting them to talk about it, I think it might be a challenge for the person themselves, you know, like myself, but I think it would be great. You don't know what's going on if you don't see or hear about it. And gay bashing, you don't see it and you don't hear about it . . . Yeah, just in the educational thing, starting young and educating parents, getting people out there that have been gave bashed and talking about it, you know, if they're comfortable enough and not afraid to open themselves up."

Creating change starts within the family. Although the men identified the family as a starting place, they did not name specific ideas on working with families. However, all of the ideas that they did put forth cross over into the category of creating change in the family. Education in children today creates a more tolerant, open and accepting society tomorrow. Today's children are tomorrow's parents. The use of media and popular culture to normalize gay individuals and issues like same sex marriage work to create an open and accepting culture, teaching adults of today by unlearning lessons of hatred and discrimination of their past and upbringings. The creation of laws and policies in society affects all individuals in Canada, families included.

<u>CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS</u>

<u>Discussion</u>

The experience of being gay bashed has profound effects on all aspects of a gay man's life. Whether the bashing is ongoing verbal harassment or a violent physical attack, the effects of homophobia *can* be the same. Cumulative, ongoing verbal harassment has the potential to be as damaging emotionally and to one's mental health as a physical bashing. In the two cases of verbal harassment that were a part of this study, the individual that was out and had and a positive image of himself, with a strong support system in place was much better at handling and dealing with the effects of verbal homophobia. He describes random incidences; however these incidences let him know his place in the world. The discussion of power-over is seen through this—he is reminded of his worth and role as a gay man and must consciously think before he acts in terms of showing affection to his partner. Although he still does this and fights for his right to do this, he evaluates the situation first and makes conscious choices to hold hands or not, to give a quick kiss or not. His ability to fight back and to create change is about his power-within. In the other case of verbal harassment and homophobia, the individual was quite closeted, isolated in a rural town with no strong support system in place for him as a gay man.

Within this research, the physical bashing tended to have longer term effects and to have a quicker impact on all aspects of an out gay man's life.

What my study discovered was that despite having a good support system in place, despite being out and being comfortable with who they were, the gay men that experienced physical bashings had ongoing trauma that lasted for years. Diagnosis of mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety were common; one individual was given a diagnosis of being Bi-Polar. Examining the descriptions that the men gave of their trauma, with the use of such phrases such as "triggers", "false recovery", "flashback", "nightmares", "always on pins and needles", "heightened awareness", and "hyper-vigilant" combined with such mental health states as depression and anxiety sound not unsurprisingly like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is "a natural reaction to an abnormal experience that is beyond normal human experience, causing clinically significant distress and impairment" (Mind, 2007, as cited in MacDonald, P., 2008, p. 31). Chronic PTSD is a category of PTSD in which symptoms last for 3 months or more (MacDonald, 2008). MacDonald (2008) states that symptoms of PTSD may include "reliving the experience; initial emotional numbness, then distress and changes in behaviour; vivid flashbacks (as if the trauma is happening again); intrusive thoughts and images; nightmares; intense distress at real or symbolic reminders of the trauma; avoiding memories; keeping busy; avoiding reminders of the trauma; repressing memories; feeling detached, cut off and emotionally numb; being unable to express affection; feeling there is no point in planning for the future; being easily aroused; disturbed sleep; irritability and aggressive behaviour; a lack of concentration; extreme alertness; panic

responses to anything to do with the trauma; being easily startled" (p. 32).

MacDonald (2008) states that a violent, personal assault is one of the categories

for the likely development of PTSD in individuals. Physical gay bashings fall

under this descriptor. Wohlfarth, Winkel and van den Brink (2002) found that the

victims of violent crimes experienced the results of a violent crime as worse than

was initially expected by the victim, and that the victims that blamed themselves

for the event were at higher risks for the development of PTSD. Of the men that I

interviewed that experienced physical bashings, the experiences were violent,

the effects went on longer than individuals expected and had ongoing effects on

their mental health, and the men were blamed by others for their bashing, with

most also holding themselves responsible by how they were dressed, where they

were at a time of day or night, who they were with or how they somehow

appeared gay, thus making themselves a target. Without doing a complete

clinical diagnosis, from the narratives and descriptions that the men gave, it

would seem that Chronic PTSD was present for those that experienced physical

bashings. "Undiagnosed or untreated PTSD can involve symptoms that last a

lifetime, impairing health, damaging relationships and preventing sufferers from

achieving their potential" (Kinchin, D, 2005 as cited in MacDonald, 2008, p. 32).

Wohlfarth, Winkel, and van den Brink (2002) also found that only 25% of

PTSD cases received any kind of emotional support from a victim assistance

organization. Within the research study I completed, none of the men received

any referrals for counselling from police or medical systems, and no referrals to

GLBTTQ* organizations or resources were given. "Survivors who fail to get help

frequently develop other responses to trauma, such as alcohol or drug abuse and

violence" (Mind, 2007, as cited in MacDonald, 2008, p. 33). These were coping

methods, among others, that became present for the men that were physically

bashed. If individuals were provided with proper support and treatment for PTSD

after a bashing, the use of such coping methods might have been reduced.

Resiliency shines through in the narratives of the men, specifically in the

theme of creating change. That the human being is able to survive horrific

trauma and still thrive is nothing short of remarkable. Creating change in the

world was something that each of the men did in their own ways based on their

own skills and abilities. Reminding men of their strengths, of these skills and

abilities is critical. Having someone believe you and believe in you can be helpful.

Victim blaming is never helpful. That the men in this study were able to create

change despite being held responsible for their bashings and experiences

speaks to the extraordinary strength that they all hold.

Recommendations: Learning From Participant's Experiences

From this research, it is important that change does come. The men in

this study came forward with their experiences in the hope that it would help

someone else. What we can learn from these men must be passed on. The

knowledge will be shared via a copy of this thesis being given to the Rainbow

Resource Centre in Winnipeg and an executive summary of the thesis developed

for distribution throughout Winnipeg's school systems, to various LGBTTQ*

positive organizations in Winnipeg, to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority,

and to the Winnipeg Police Service.

The importance of connecting with others and developing a sense of

understanding was identified by all the men. Whether this be in a clinical

therapeutic relationship or more informally through the gay community with other

survivors of gay bashing, being able to speak openly and have understanding

and comprehension of the traumatic events of a gay bashing and homophobia

was necessary for the men to be able to move forward in their lives. From an

AOP approach, the importance of connecting with others and feeling welcome

and heard also fits with the concepts of power-within and power-with. If we are

to be able to provide the space for men to be able to tell their stories, to have

feedback, to hear of how others have coped, survived and recovered, we must

then utilize an AOP approach to be able to create this space.

The importance of concrete support through tasks and assistance cannot

be underestimated. The men within this study found concrete supports, through

rides, assistance with tasks such as grocery shopping or paying bills, making

dinner, assisting with cleaning, or providing opportunities to go out and get out

with others as valuable. This is information that can and should be shared with

partners, families, friends and supports of the survivors of gay bashings. How to

help goes beyond the therapeutic and sometimes involves the mundane, which

can seem overwhelming to men that have been bashed.

Service providers need to be able to create a sense of trust. As was

shown in Chapter Seven under the theme of *Reaching Out—Disclosure and*

Support, whether an individual has control or does not have control over

becoming involved with supports or systems, their decisions to disclose and open

up about what happened is based on their perceptions of trust or support being

real. Service providers will have a very short time in which they can create trust

levels with an individual that has been bashed. Understanding how the decision

to disclose is arrived at and being able to demonstrate that genuine support will

be available is critical to the disclosure happening, thus creating the opportunity

for a better response from the service provider. The use of neutral language in

the taking of a social history, such a partner versus wife or girlfriend, sends a

message to gay men. Better yet, the use of inclusive language in a non-

judgmental and accepting manner sends an even stronger message, e.g., "Do

you have someone that you care about? A wife or husband, a boyfriend or

girlfriend as a partner?" Showing and demonstrating that a person is trustworthy,

is open to hearing about the experience of a gay man that has been bashed is

critical. Through the use of gay positive markers, such as gay positive posters,

inclusive messages on a bulletin board, brochures on same sex issues, a copy of

a GLBTTQ* newspaper or magazine in a waiting room or on a desk, sends a

strong message. Demonstrating that you are an ally, however, is more than just

room furnishings. Being truly open to hearing the person's story and experiences

in a non-judgemental manner must also be present. Being able to provide gay

positive resources and referrals and knowing these or how to access them

quickly is important and sends a message that the service provider is

knowledgeable and values the importance of gay and gay positive organizations

and individuals.

Recommendations: Systems Change

Systems Change—Social Work

For social workers, the education and knowledge necessary to feel

comfortable in identifying yourself as an ally is not necessarily present in the

curriculum of a social work education. Social work students may or may not

receive training or information about LGBTTQ* issues and individuals within their

education, based on practicum or placement setting, course selection, the

instructor teaching the course, availability of courses being offered, or the

inclusion of the material at appropriate times in generalist or topic-specific

courses. LGBTTQ* issues are relevant to child welfare, to family violence, to

mental health, to family systems, and the list goes on. However, whether an

LGBTTQ* aspect is included in these courses is varied.

The 2005 Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of

Ethics states the first value of social work as

> **Respect for the Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons . . . social
> workers recognize and respect the diversity of Canadian society,
> taking into account the breadth of differences that exist among
> individuals, families, groups, and communities. Social workers
> uphold the human rights of individuals and groups as expressed in
> *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) and the United
> Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)" (p. 4).**

The second value of social work is the

> **Pursuit of social justice . . . Social workers promote social fairness
> and the equitable distribution of resources, and act to reduce
> barriers and expand choice for all persons, with special regard for
> those who are marginalized, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and/or have
> exceptional needs. Social workers oppose prejudice and
> discrimination against any person or group of persons, on any
> grounds, and specifically challenge views and actions that
> stereotype particular persons or groups (CASW, 2005, p. 5).**

The CASW Guidelines for Ethical Practice (2005) states under Ethical

Responsibilities to Clients, 1.1 Priority of Clients' Interests, 1.1.2 "Social workers

do not discriminate against any person on the basis of age, abilities, ethnic

background, gender, language, marital status, national ancestry, political

affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status" (p. 3). I

would state that social work faculty and students need to advocate for the

inclusion of LGBTTQ* material in their training and education. Social workers are

expected to uphold values and demonstrate respectful and inclusive behaviours

towards LGBTTQ* individuals but are not necessarily provided the training or

skills in which to be able to do so. The Canadian Association for Social Work

Education (CASWE) states in Section 1:4:2 of the Standards for Accreditation

(2007) that:

> **The school's objectives shall take into account ethnic, cultural and
> racial diversity in the Canadian population, and reflect the same in
> curriculum content, faculty composition, and student admission
> procedures. (Note: Diversity throughout this document refers to
> ethnic or linguistic origin, culture, race, colour, national origin,
> religion, age, physical status, gender, sexual orientation,
> socioeconomic status, and political orientation. (p. 4)**

CASWE (2007) also states within its Educational Policy Statements Section 1.4

> **With due regard to the mobility and diversity of Canadian society, all social work students shall be prepared with a transferable analysis of the multiple and intersecting bases of oppression. Diversity throughout this document refers to ethnic or linguistic origin, culture, race, colour, national origin, religion, age, disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and political orientation. (p. 4)**

At times, the education of social workers can approach the unethical in graduating and sending out social workers that do not have the skills or training necessary to work with GLBTTQ* individuals. This does not live up to the requirements of CASWE for preparation of social workers to practice or for the accreditation of social work curriculums. Recommendations are for the inclusion of mandatory courses at both the BSW and MSW levels in social work schools and faculties that provide future social workers with an understanding of sexual and gender minority individuals; an understanding of the complexities of discrimination, homophobia, heterosexism, and heteronormativity; an overview of general issues and concerns in the past and those issues currently facing these populations; training in community resources and referrals for future social workers. Such a course was recently developed by two social workers and has been offered twice as a fourth year elective course at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Social Work—*SWRK 4050: Sexual and Gender Minority Issues in Policy & Practice—An Inter-Disciplinary Approach*.

Systems Change—Medical and Healthcare

Based on the descriptors and symptoms of PTSD and looking at the

diagnoses that were given to the men (Depression and Anxiety, Bi-Polar), it

would seem that perhaps PTSD is being missed as a potentially correct

diagnosis. An incorrect diagnosis ends up leaving the men with little support or

proper response to their trauma. Prescriptions for anxiety, depression or

sleeplessness deal with symptoms but are not going to assist in the overall

functioning and recovery of the client if they are suffering from PTSD as a result

of being gay bashed. The exploration of circumstances and a clinical

assessment for PTSD should be occurring with ALL victims of violent crimes and

proper resources and referrals given.

Medical practitioners need more inclusive and developed curriculum in

their training as doctors. In 2004, 2005, and 2006 I participated in the only

clinical interviewing skills training that medical students at the University of

Manitoba receive. This is a three hour lecture slot in which all of the issues of

homophobia, heterosexism and discrimination towards LGBTTQ* individuals are

expected to be covered and the session explores how medical doctors can better

respond to and create a more welcoming for LGBTTQ* patients they might have.

It is ridiculous to believe that a three hour period (with a 20 minute break, no

less) can train doctors on the complexities of issues that transgender individuals

may face, never mind the health care concerns of gay men, lesbians, or bisexual

individuals. The attitude of many of the students that participated in the training was hostile and defensive.

Recommendations are for the inclusion of a comprehensive course as mandatory training for medical students. The previous course discussed, *SWRK 4050: Sexual and Gender Minority Issues in Policy & Practice—An Inter-Disciplinary Approach*, would be suitable and is already developed. Specific components could be added covering the health care needs of specific populations from the LGBTTQ* communities.

The Rainbow Resource Centre in Winnipeg, MB has developed a training program for health care practitioners—doctors, nurses, health care aides, and others in the healthcare field. The training workshop was developed out of the needs of the LGBTTQ* community through a needs assessment done in the mid 1990's. The Faculty of Medicine used to hire the Rainbow Resource Centre to facilitate and conduct the training with first year medical students, but this practice lasted only for a few years. Currently, both the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba and the nursing programs at Red River Community College in Winnipeg, MB bring the Rainbow Resource Centre in to provide an abbreviated version of the two day Breaking Barriers workshop to nursing students. However, this is again incorporated by instructors that realize the importance of including such training in the curriculum. If the instructor changes, the inclusion of this training could cease. My recommendation is to solidify the relationship between the University and College nursing programs and the

Rainbow Resource Centre to ensure service training to future nurses or to again

offer the already developed course as part of the curriculum.

Systems Change—Policing

Within this study, none of the three men that had police contact involved

police voluntarily. Herek, Cogan, & Gillis (2002) found that only 38.4% of gay

men reported hate biased crimes to the police. None of the incidences of verbal

homophobia were reported to the Winnipeg Police Service or appropriate policing

service by the men I interviewed in this research. Herek, Cogan and Gillis (2002)

found that most LGB individuals did not report incidences of verbal harassment,

as "the latter are usually not criminal offenses and in many cases are probably

perceived by the target as too trivial to report" (p. 333).

Of the police involvement in the cases of the three men that I interviewed,

none of the three were satisfied by the way they were treated by the police or

with the outcomes of the police involvement. All three stated that they would not

involve police in the future or trust the police due to the ways in which they were

treated. "The explanation most commonly offered for the high rate of non-

reporting is victims' fear of what Berrill and Herek (1992) labeled *secondary*

victimization: discrimination and mistreatment by police authorities or negative

consequences as a result of having one's sexual orientation publicly revealed"

(as cited in Herek, Cogan, & Gillis, 2002, p. 332).

Herek, Cogan and Gillis (2002) found that in serious cases of victimization,

"Among victims of bias person crimes who did not report, 68% said that concerns

about the police played at least some role in their decision, compared to 18% of

victims of nonbias person crime." (p. 334). The men in this research would

appear to support the results of these previous studies. One of the reasons that

Herek, Cogan and Gillis (2002) found for victims not reporting was that "the

victim took some action on her or his own to avoid future incidents or to alleviate

the problems caused by the incident and consequently did not believe it was

necessary to involve the police" (p. 335).

In the past, I have done training with the Winnipeg Police Service in 2003

at the invitation of first year cadets doing a presentation to their peers on

LGBTTQ* issues that police need to be aware of and in 2004 specifically on the

issue of same sex relationship violence for the Domestic Violence Intervention

Unit. Apart from this, there has been no involvement of the Rainbow Resource

Centre or the LGBTTQ* community in the development or offering of any training

for police cadets. In the past, the Rainbow Resource Centre has offered to work

with the Winnipeg Police Service to develop such a training or to facilitate such a

training and was repeatedly told that there is no time in the training curriculum to

include this information for new police officers.

The Winnipeg Police Service has a Diversity Relations Officer who has

had little presence in the LGBTTQ* community. To be fair, the Diversity Officer is

expected to cover all communities and groups that fall under the category of

"diverse". However, if the Winnipeg Police Service is to improve its relationship

with the LGBTTQ* community and improve the delivery of service by its officers

towards this community, a relationship between the Rainbow Resource Centre,

the Diversity Relations officer, and the LGBTTQ* community must be better

developed. As previously stated in the Literature Review, Janoff (2005)

describes Winnipeg to be one of the most violent places and to have one of the

highest frequencies of homophobic violence and gay bashing, yet Dauvergne,

Scrim, & Brenna (2008) found no incidences of police reported hate crimes

motivated by sexual orientation for the City of Winnipeg in 2006.

Recommendations are that issues pertinent to the LGBTTQ* community

be included in police training. Officers need to be able to respond appropriately

to gay men that have been bashed; past practices of blaming the victim, whether

done intentionally or not, need to cease. If this is to happen, officers need to

have an understanding of the issues and the effects of homophobic violence on

gay men. Sensitivity training in an ultra-masculine profession needs to be

implemented. The creation of a work environment that would allow individuals to

be fully out as gay or lesbian needs to occur in the police force; once this occurs,

better recruitment of gay and lesbian officers needs to happen. Police need to

have a community presence if GLBTTQ* individuals and the Winnipeg Police are

to begin a relationship of mutual respect and trust. GLBTTQ* individuals will not

trust the police if the police do not show they can be trusted. A presence of the

police force at Winnipeg Gay Pride needs to occur. This past year (2008), the

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) were present at the Winnipeg Gay

Pride celebration, with a display and recruitment table. The two officers at the

table were lesbian and spoke openly of their experiences and encouraged

community members to apply. While acknowledging some homophobia still

exists, they stated that things are getting better in the RCMP. An assessment of

the changes made in the RCMP to create a more welcoming environment for gay

and lesbian officers could provide valuable information for the Winnipeg Police

Service and other policing services in Canada on how to implement systemic

changes.

Systems Change—School Systems

The cumulative effects of homophobia through verbal harassment on

individuals that are not out has strong implications for our school systems. Junior

high and high school are often times where young boys and men are beginning

to discover and make sense of their sexuality and their sexual orientation.

"Middle and secondary schools routinely are sites of harassment for students

who are gay or deviate from gender norms" (Smith, 1998, as cited in Herek,

Cogan & Gillis, 2002, p. 326). Being exposed to verbal harassment and ongoing

homophobia can have serious consequences on their mental health and well-

being. As was the case with the closeted gay man in this study, closeted gay

male youth may not have to even have the homophobia or harassment directed

at them, but merely be a passive witness to it and still feel the effects. We see

much more elevated rates of suicide in gay male youth and gay men (D'Augelli,

A.R., Hershberger, S.L., & Pilkington, S.W., 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2001;

Paul, J.P. et al, 2002), with many youth attempts happening before individuals

have come out (Garofolo, R., Wolf, C., Wissow, L.S., Woods, E.R., & Goodman,

E., 1999).

Recommendations for school systems are better practices in both dealing

with verbal homophobia and recognizing the implications that this can have for

students. Schools are responsible for the safety and well being of students. If

closeted gay students are being exposed to ongoing verbal homophobia and

harassment, schools need to be able to respond in a timely and respectful

manner that provides support to the student, education to the harasser, and

sends a message to the student community about acceptable behaviour and

practices. Schools need to become places where teachers are safe to be out,

providing positive role models for students. Guidance counsellors and school

social workers need to be free to be able to discuss issues relating to

homosexuality. Currently, Winnipeg School Division includes a mandatory one

day training that all division staff are required to attend around issues relating to

GLBTTQ* issues, language, and definitions. Such a training needs to be

imported and made mandatory by other school divisions. The creation,

development and support of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA's) within schools needs

to exist. GSA's are student groups that bring together students regardless of

sexual orientation, both GLBTTQ* and straight, to discuss and learn about issues

relating to the GLBTTQ* community and how to create a more welcoming and

safe atmosphere for all students, regardless of sexual orientation. To date, there

is a handful of high schools within Winnipeg that have such a group. A long

running successful model that could be transferred to other schools would be the

Multi-Diversity Action Group (MDAG) that has been running at Kelvin High

School by school social worker Karen Dana. Several resources for the

development of GSA's are available, such as the Gay-Straight Student Alliance

Handbook, developed by Canadian educator Kris Wells (2005), available for

order through the Canadian Teachers' Federation. An online search of "gay

straight alliance" provides a wealth of information about GSA's and their

implementation and development for success in schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

        The data that arose from this qualitative research project truly was rich

and thick. It was filled with context, description, meaning and value to both the

academic literature and to practice and policy in human and social service fields.

There are so many paths and ideas that could be pursued on their own as future

research out of this document. However, due to limitations of time and funding,

there was not the ability to walk these paths and see where they go.

        The concept of time and space as it relates to heteronormativity in the

lives of sexual and gender minority issues could be more fully explored. The

impact these ideas have on the lives of sexual and gender minority men would

add to the understanding of the impact of heteronormativity on people's lives.

The impact of both homophobic violence and PTSD on intimacy in relationships is an area rich for exploration. The men in this study identified strains within their intimate relationships as an outcome of their experiences of homophobia. Further investigation of this area is warranted.

The process in which disclosure decisions are made became clear through this research. Does this process fit with other experiences and is reaching out for support made with a similar decision making process? Further inquiry into this question would provide valuable insight into how the decision making process of both disclosure and reaching out for support fits with other experiences individuals face within their lives.

An exploration of the experiences of younger gay men versus older gay men might provide an understanding of differences that have arisen over generations. Are the experiences of younger gay men different than those of older gay men when faced with homophobic violence? Does the period of time that has passed for men since their experience of homophobic violence and harassment play a role for men of different ages? Does the length time that an individual has been out for affect the impact of homophobic violence? These research questions would provide data on different generations of gay men.

My research specifically explored the experiences of gay men that face homophobic violence. However, many men that do not live up to societal expectations of male gender roles and perceptions of masculinity experience homophobic violence. Does such violence impact men differently based on the

actual sexual orientation of the men attacked? Are there differences for straight

men as compared to gay men if the homophobia is verbal versus physical?

Does the theme of power, powerlessness and privilege exist in the narratives of

straight men that experience homophobic violence and harassment? Is identity

affected when straight men are perceived as gay and become victims of

homophobic violence? How do the experiences of trans men that face

homophobic violence compare to those of biological gay or straight men? Are

straight men or trans men faced with similar challenges in institutions and

systems such as hospitals, policing and with service providers? Does victim

blaming occur with straight men that experience homophobic violence to the

same extent that it occurs with gay men? These are questions that future

researchers could explore and contrast.

　　　Research into the roles of the supporter and the support network

specifically could be more fully explored. What challenges exist to individuals as

supports and to communities as supports? What would better help the

supporters and the community to deal with the impacts of homophobic violence?

How does violence against an individual affect the supportive person, community

or network? Does the theme of creating change arise in these individuals,

networks and communities and come forth in a similar manner as in gay men

who directly experience homophobic violence or harassment? These are areas

that could be explored in future research.

<u>Personal Impact</u>

Originally, this research was not going to be my thesis topic. This study started as a class assignment in a Qualitative Research class. The instructor, Professor Susan Strega, had a class assignment that consisted of the development of a thesis research proposal. Out of that assignment came this research. Professor Strega stated that she thought my initial proposal was strong and that I had made a compelling case for why this research was necessary. So began my journey.

I do not think I fully realized all that would happen from turning a class assignment into my actual thesis research. Encouraged first by Professor Strega and then by my advisor, Professor Kim Clare, as to the importance of conducting the research, I jumped in without fully considering the effects the research might have on myself. Reflecting back, I find it interesting that I made so many ethical considerations (and needed to, of course!) for the men that I would be interviewing who had been gay bashed, but as a survivor of my own gay bashing, gave such little thought to my own needs. The ideas around implementing safety concerns for me as the interviewer were not my own, but came from Professor Strega and Professor Clare. Although not initially considered by me, of course safety protocols for the interviewer needed to exist! As a social worker and as a gay man, I have had past stories disclosed to me about gay baiting—a term

given when a gay basher poses as a gay man to pick up another gay man and then bash him. Why had I not remembered these stories?

In doing the research, I was moved by the men that came forward and the bravery that they had. Although I myself was similar, as a gay man that had been bashed, I somehow believed that I had dealt with my past experiences, had put them away and was done with them. Hearing their stories moved me, saddened me, and inspired me, but I did not think they had affected me. Moving out of the interviewing stage and into the actual interview transcribing, I found myself immersed in violence, listening to the voices of the men tell their stories, listening to myself asking them questions about their bashing, when did it happen, how many people were involved, how bad were their injuries, what did their emotional recovery look like? Over and over tapes were played as I transcribed them, listening to these stories over and over I typed the transcriptions and then replayed them for accuracy. Almost nearing the end of this process the nightmares began. However, they were different than the nightmares I had years ago about my own gay bashing. Now, in these new nightmares, I found myself dreaming of my own gay bashing, but also the gay bashings I had been listening to over and over. Sometimes I dreamed of the men I interviewed being bashed, sometimes I dreamed of their story, but with myself in the role of the victim, living out their story in my nightmare. The dreams became mixtures of me and them, of my story and their stories, night after night, bashing after bashing. Below is an email to my advisor during this process:

From: **DC Smith**
Date: **Tuesday, February 12, 2008 11:36 PM**
To: **Kim Clare**
Subject: **Update**

Hi Kim,

I just wanted to give you an update on where I am at. I had hoped to be done all the transcribing by now but I had to take a break. I had finished the first five interviews and gone through them and I started to have some nightmares about gay bashing, my own experience but elements of the interviews mixed in. This went on for five nights, during which time I didn't touch anything as it sort of caught me off guard as I haven't had nightmares about my own experience in probably 10+ years. So, for the last 3 weeks I've been reflecting on this while avoiding the last interview, which is probably the most powerful of all the interviews. That being said, no nightmares for the last 3 weeks overall - a few but not every night, probably only 4 over the past 3 weeks. So, tonight I've started on the last interview having reflected a bit on this and talked with a friend about this. I think once I get through the transcribing it will be different, as I won't have to listen to the stories, I'll be looking at the words on paper and I think I'll be able to treat it as data versus people's experiences (how coldly clinical that sounds) which will be helpful for me. I'd been reflecting on different themes and things I'd been noticing, so I think my mindspace was so in the interviews and that's where the nightmares snuck up on me.

So . . . I will get this last interview done, going to go slowly with it.

Thanks for the patience.

- Chad

During the last interview, the nightmares did return as I again found myself immersed in another story of violence, tragedy, sadness and hope. And as I finished the transcribing, the nightmares ended. They haven't come back.

However, I think I'm open to the possibility that they can. And might. My advisor

responded with kindness and support. I was not surprised, for she is a pretty

amazing person.

In this research that I accidentally stumbled into through a course

assignment, I've come to have a deeper understanding of a horrible

phenomenon. The themes that arose out of the data sometimes surprised me

and at other times did not. I've come to fully appreciate the sadness of

homophobic violence and realize the extent at which it happens. I've come to

appreciate my own experience and my own strength in coming back as a young

gay man who shortly after being bashed came out. And I've come to a deeper

understanding of the lives of six men, through interviews captured on tape and

compared with each other. Six men all different from me, six men just like me.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | **OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES**
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

CTC Building
208 - 194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Fax (204) 269-7173
www.umanitoba.ca/research

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

14 September 2007

TO: **Dale C. A. Smith**   (Advisor K. Clare)
        Principal Investigator

FROM: **Bruce Tefft, Chair**
        Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: **Protocol #P2007:072**
        **"Making Sense of the Senseless: The Experience of Being Gay
        Bashed"**

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol, as revised, has received human ethics approval by the **Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval has been issued based on your agreement with the change(s) to your original protocol required by the PSREB. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Kathryn Bartmanovich, Research Grants & Contract Services (fax 261-0325), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.

- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

Bringing Research to Life

APPENDIX TWO

"Making Sense of the Senseless:
The Experience of Being Gay Bashed"

Research Study on Gay Bashing
Looking For Participants

Are you a gay man (18 years or over) that has ever experienced a gay bashing?

This study will explore the experiences of gay men that have been gay bashed and how the bashing has affected their lives and how they view the world as a result of their experiences.

A limited amount of participants will be interviewed once on their experiences, with a second interview available if requested by participants, to review the interview transcript and the researcher's interpretations. The initial interview will take between 1 to 2 hours.

This study is part of the requirements for the completion of a Master's Thesis in Social Work. The researcher is Chad Smith, a practicing social worker. Thesis Advisor to the project is Professor Kim Clare from the Faculty of Social Work.

For more information about this study, please contact Chad Smith at 956-9522 (confidential voicemail) or by email at smith2@cc.umanitoba.ca by **PRE-DETERMINED DATE**

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

GAY BASHING STUDY: 956-9522 (confidential Voice mail) or e-mail smith2@cc.umanitoba.ca

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APPENDIX THREE

Print & E-Mail Recruitment Ad:

<u>"Making Sense of the Senseless: The Experience of Being Gay Bashed"</u>

**Research Study on Gay Bashing
Looking For Participants**

**Are you a gay man (18 years or over) that has ever
experienced a gay bashing?**

This study will explore the experiences of gay men that have been gay bashed, how the bashing has affected their lives, and how they view the world as a result of their experiences.

A limited amount of participants will be interviewed once on their experiences, with a second interview available if requested by participants, to review the interview transcript and the researcher's interpretations. The initial interview will take between 1 to 2 hours.

This study is part of the requirements for the completion of a Master's Thesis in Social Work. The researcher is Chad Smith, a practicing social worker. Thesis Advisor to the project is Professor Kim Clare from the Faculty of Social Work.

For more information about this study, please contact Chad Smith at 956-9522 (confidential voicemail) or by email at <u>smith2@cc.umanitoba.ca</u> by **PRE-DETERMINED DATE**.

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

"Making Sense of the Senseless:
The Experience of Being Gay Bashed"
Research Study on Gay Bashing

Looking For Participants

Are you a gay man (18 years or over) that has ever experienced a gay-bashing?

This study will explore the experiences of gay men that have been gay bashed and how the bashing has affected their lives and how they view the world as a result of their experiences.

A limited number of participants will be interviewed one time around their experiences, with a second interview available if requested by participants. The initial interview will take between 1 to 2 hours.

This study is part of the requirements for the completion of a master's thesis in social work. The researcher is Chad Smith, a practising social worker. Thesis Advisor to the project is Professor Kim Clare from the Faculty of Social Work.

For more information about this study, please contact Chad Smith at 956-9522 (confidential voicemail) or by confidential email at smith2@cc.umanitoba.ca by **November 30th 2007**.

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

WWW.OUTWORDS.CA | 9

<u>APPENDIX FOUR</u>

Informed Consent Release Form

Research Project Title: Making Sense of the Senseless: The Experience of Being Gay Bashed

Researcher: D. Chad Smith

<u>**Thesis Advisor:**</u> Professor Kim Clare

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Thank you for your interest within this research. Through the process of interviewing gay men that have experienced a gay bashing, I will explore how these experiences affect gay men, how they make sense of what has happened to them, and how it has affected how they see the world.

Men that agree to participate will be interviewed once, with a second interview at participant's requests. The initial interview will take anywhere between one and two hours, depending on what participants wish to share in the interview. Throughout this process, participants can choose to not answer any questions that they are not comfortable with. Participants can stop the interview at any time or come back to questions if they are finding something particularly difficult to answer. As well, I will check in at various times through the interview to see how participants are doing and see if they are able to continue the interview.

A second follow-up interview will occur with men at their request to review the research and discuss my interpretations of the interview and of the research, to see if I have accurately captured what participants are trying to share through the interview and to solicit feedback from participants about these interpretations. The second follow up interview would take place approximately three to four months after the initial interview.

The process of retelling the experience of being gay bashed might be stressful to some people. For some people, this might risk re-traumatizing them through telling their story. As the researcher, I will monitor the interview for signs of distress and check in often with participants to see how they are doing. I will also provide all participants with a resource list of places where they can access counselling services if they felt this would be helpful to them.

All interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder. Only I, the researcher (D. Chad Smith), my advisor (Kim Clare) and if necessary, a hired transcriber will have access to the recorded interviews themselves. If a transcriber is used, they will agree to honor the confidentiality of all interviews. The recorded interviews will be transcribed, with all names and any personal identifiers modified to protect the confidentiality of all participants. Once the interviews are transcribed, all tapes and transcripts would be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked location,

of which only the researcher will have access to. Once the research is completed, the recorded interviews will be erased and the original transcribed interviews will be shredded.

There are certain times when confidentiality would not be honored. These times would include any disclosure of child welfare concerns, any threat of suicide or self-harming behaviour that may place the participant's life at risk and the participant is unable to safety plan and contract with myself, or any threat or risk to a third party and the participant is unable to safety plan and contract with myself.

All participants are welcome to a completed copy of the research. Please indicate if you are interested in receiving a completed copy by checking one of the following statements:

_____   I would like a copy of the completed research and give permission for
                        the researcher to contact me and deliver this once finished.

                        TELEPHONE NUMBER:_____

                        EMAIL ADDRESS:_____

_____   I am not interested in receiving a final copy of the research.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

_____

D. Chad Smith, Principal Researcher   Professor Kim Clare, Thesis Advisor
204-956-9522   204-668-8160

_____

This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

APPENDIX FIVE

Interview Outline

Introduction

The research being conducted for this thesis will be exploring gay men's experiences of

being gay bashed. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research and I hope to

make this experience as uncomplicated and as positive an experience as possible for

you. Sometimes it can be hard for people to talk about their experience, so we can go at

a pace that you are comfortable with and one that makes this interview process

respectful to you, your experiences and your feelings. Interviews can last anywhere

from one to two hours, depending on what you wish to share in the interview.

Throughout this process, you can choose to not answer any questions that you are not

comfortable with. As well, we can stop the interview at any time or come back to

questions if you are finding something particularly difficult. Discussing your experiences

can be challenging and taxing, so at any time you wish to break or stop, please let me

know. I'll also let you know about several resources and different places where you can

go to access support or counselling if this is something that you think might be helpful for

you. After our initial interview, I'd like to be in touch with you to forward your transcript

and my interpretations of the interview and of the research with you, to see if I have

accurately captured what you are trying to share through the interview and to solicit

feedback from you. If you have checked off that you are interested in receiving a copy of

the completed research once it is finished, I'll be in touch again to make sure that you

receive this. I would also like to let you know that any personal information that might

identify you will be changed, so that anyone reading the research would not be able to

identify you as a result of this reading. Again, thank you for taking the time to participate

within this research.

General Questions

Name?

Age?

Currently employed?

> *If yes*: What type of occupation & how long?

> *If no:* What was your last type of employment & for how long?

Current city/town/village of residence?

How long have you been residing within your current place of residence?

Are you currently in an intimate relationship?

> *If yes*: For how long have you been in your current relationship?

> *If no:* Were you previously in an intimate relationship?

>> *If yes:* When & for how long? Where there any other relationships before

> this   one, up to the time that you were gay bashed?

What does your support system look like (family, friends, formal supports)?

Were you out at the time of your bashing?

> *If yes:* For how long had you been out?

Are you out now?

What does "being out" mean to you and how do you define this?

Bashing Details

When did your gay bashing take place?

Where did it happen?

Please describe to me what happened.

How many people were involved in inflicting the bashing?

What were you doing prior to the bashing?

What did you do after the bashing?

Did you report to the police or RCMP?

> *If yes*: What helped you make this decision

> *If no:* What influenced you to make this decision?

Post-Bashing

What was the physical recovery like for you after the bashing?

What was your emotional recovery like for you after the bashing?

Who did you tell about what had happened?

What were their reactions?

How did these reactions impact you?

What has been the most stressful for you since the bashing?

What are some of the most difficult challenges you faced after the bashing?

Relationships

If participant was in an intimate relationship at the time of the bashing:

> How did the bashing affect your relationship?

> What was helpful from your partner?

> What was not helpful from you partner?

If participant was not in an intimate relationship at the time of the bashing:

Have you been in a relationship since the bashing?

How has being bashed affected you within intimate relationships or intimate

moments?

How did the bashing affect your relationship with friends?

How did the bashing affect your relationship with family?

How did the bashing affect your relationship with co-workers or colleagues?

School and Employment

Were you working or going to school at the time of your bashing?

How did the bashing affect this?

What has your employment history been since the bashing?

How was your attendance at [work or school] after the bashing?

How were your [grades or work performance] after the bashing?

How else do you see the bashing as affecting the area of [schooling or employment] for

you?

Coping and Stress

How did you cope after the bashing?

How did this change from past moments in your life when you've experienced stress or

trauma?

Has your relationship with people or your ability to have relationships with people

changed as a result of the bashing?

Strangers?

Friends?

Family?

Authority (police, boss, supervisor, professor, coach, etc.)?

Partners?

Lovers?

Co-workers or colleagues?

Support

What support have you found to be the most helpful?

Who do you access for support?

How often do you access support from your support system?

How did this change, either increase or decrease, after the bashing?

Was there anything or anyone that surprised you in accessing support?

> *If yes*: Can you tell me about that and what it was?

Creating Change

Has your bashing moved you to create change in any way in society?

Has your bashing moved you to create awareness or change around the issue of

homophobia?

Do you think something could be done to stop homophobic violence?

Who do you think should be doing something about homophobic violence?

What are your ideas about it?

Closing

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience being gay bashed

or how you think it might have affected you?

APPENDIX SIX

Counselling Resources List for Participants

Following is a list of various places where you can access support for yourself if you feel that talking more about your experience with a counsellor might be helpful.

Services For University of Manitoba Students

Student Counselling and Career Centre
Fort Garry Campus—474 University Centre
(204) 474-8592
*Services are free of charge

Student Counselling and Career Centre
Bannatyne Campus—S207 Basic Medical Science Building
(204) 789-3857; (204) 474-8592—Specify calling re services at the Bannatyne
location
*Services are free of charge

William Norrie Centre: Access Social Work Program
Contact Pat Hrabok at (204) 668-8160
*Services are free of charge

William Norrie Centre: Access Education Program
Contact Randy Kroeker at (204) 790-7211
*Services are free of charge

For University of Winnipeg Students

Counselling and Career Services
Basement of Graham Hall, 0GM06
(204) 786-9231
*Services are free of charge

For Red River Community College Students

Notre Dame Campus—D102
Contact Danna McDonald by calling (204) 632-3966
*Services are free of charge

Princess Street Campus—P210
Contact Evelyn Presley by calling 949-8375
*Services are free of charge

Main Street Campus—400-123 Main St.
Contact Heather McFayden by calling 945-8774

*Services are free of charge

Community Resources Open To All Men

Rainbow Resource Centre
1-222 Osborne Street South (Second Floor of Building)
Counselling Information: (204) 284-5315
Administration Line: (204) 474-0212
*Services are free of charge
*Building is *not* wheelchair accessible

Psychological Services Centre
Located at the University of Manitoba—Fort Garry Campus
101-115 Fletcher Argue
(204) 474-9222
*Services are free of charge

Men's Resource Centre
Second Floor—321 McDermot Avenue
Intake Line: (204) 956-9528
*Services are free of charge

Klinic Community Health Centre
Drop In Counselling: (204) 784-4067
*Services are free of charge

Klinic Crisis Line
24 Hour Telephone Counselling
(204) 786-8686
Toll Free: 1-888-322-3019
*Services are free of charge

The Family Centre
Located in Portage Place Mall
401-393 Portage Avenue
(204) 947-1401
* Services are on a sliding scale

Aurora Family Therapy Centre
Located in the University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue
Second Floor of Sparling Hall
Intake: (204) 786-9251
*Services are on a sliding scale

APPENDIX SEVEN-I

External Committee Feedback

September 22, 2008

External Committee Report for Chad Smith's Making Sense of the Senseless

Committee Member: Jeremy Buchner

Chad presented the collected data in a respectful manner which gave honor to the words and experiences his participants shared. The identified themes and the manner in which they were organized made sense and matched nicely with their shared experiences. The flow or "time line" approach to the sequence of the themes helped support the process his study participants went through. The connection of gender, heterosexism and racism had quite the curious connection for a number of his study participants. It may be interesting to further explore how these concepts inform each other or how they interplay. The concept of "heteronormativity" was much appreciated as it aided in making a complex issue much easier to understand. I personally appreciated the theme of creating change as it helped with the concept that all crises have impact on our lives and the manner in which we relate to others and the systems around us. Creating change gave some hope that through these troubling events, there is opportunity, small and large, to have impact on our communities. The fact that Chad saw the participation in his study as part of that change is very positive.

In summary, I feel that Chad has done an outstanding job in taking a complex web of issues and concepts and has unravelled them in a manner that is understandable to this committee member. I appreciated Chad's candor when asked about how his own experiences may have impacted on his study and furthermore the respectful manner in which Chad handled this important yet disturbing data. It is exciting to see that the more we understand the issues behind gay bashing, the more we are able to create our own change.

Congratulations!

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy Buchner B.S.W.

APPENDIX SEVEN-II

External Committee Feedback

RAINBOW RESOURCE CENTRE
SERVING MANITOBA'S GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDERED, AND TWO SPIRITED COMMUNITIES

September 24th, 2008

RE: Making Sense of the Senseless - External Review Committee Report for Chad Smith

Dear Kim,

The external review committee met with Chad Smith on September 17th to review his research regarding the experience of gay bashing among males in Winnipeg.

In my opinion, the preparation, organization and presentation of Chad's research was done in a very thorough and professional manner. I was impressed with Chad's ability to organize the data in a comprehensive and respectful manner which would easily allow for a true understanding of the key themes and subsequent outcomes.

The focus, objectives and findings were very clearly defined and presented, and Chad was able to easily and comprehensively respond to questions posed by the committee. I was also impressed with Chad's ability to field the challenges put forth by the committee members regarding the impact of his own gay bashing experience on the guiding process and the interpretation of the data. Chad handled the committee's inquiries in a very professional manner which satisfied this committee member of his ability to remain objective in both the interview process and in the compilation of the data collected.

Equally as important, Chad was very open and receptive to the feedback provided by the committee members. Specifically, the main suggestions put forth by the committee included the insertion of the theme *Isolation* which we felt was very relevant and important enough to be specifically included in the findings. The second suggestion was to include a section or key that helped define particular words or terms such as *heteronormativity* which may not be familiar to the reader. Finally, the committee agreed that the use of tables and graphs to outline the themes and findings were helpful, however, they would need to be more clearly laid out if they were to be used in the final submission.

In sum, it is my opinion that Chad has done an excellent job of taking a very sensitive and often overlooked topic and bringing much needed awareness and attention to it. His findings are comprehensive and his knowledge and understanding were clearly demonstrated.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelly Smith
Executive Director

APPENDIX SEVEN-III

External Committee Feedback

From: lisa passante
Date: Monday, October 06, 2008 11:34 AM
To: DC Smith
Cc: Kim Clare
Subject: Re: Feedback

Dear Chad,

Thank you so much for including me in your panel to review the findings of your research on men's experiences of being gay-bashed. The themes you identified resonated with me and my experiences of the topic.

That said, as a listener, there was one overarching theme that I heard as you were speaking which was not named as such... power. This would encompass power-over (the experience of being aggressed against), power-with (in finding allies, caring service providers, volunteering in the community) and power-within (personal and collective 'empowerment', mobilizing past the experience, sharing with others...).

As well, I also heard the themes of visibility and invisibility (i.e. being targeted for being perceived to be gay = visible) or not having one's experiences validated as homophobic violence due to the invisibility of gay people and the resounding silence regarding LGBTT that gets enforced in a culture rife with heterosexism and homophobia.

Finally, I know you shared with us very touching examples of the strength of character and spirit the participants shared with you. As a listener, these were resounding examples of resilience.

Thank you again for allowing me to be a listener. Your work is a very important contribution to the (lack of) research on gay-bashing from a qualitative perspective.

My apologies for taking so long to get this to you. I needed that Monday deadline, and I have just barely made it!

Regards, Lisa