ABSTRACT

Title of Document:                    Beyond "No/Homo": An Institutional Ethnographic Exploration of Teachers' Understandings of Gendered Harassment Policies

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This institutional ethnography explored how teachers who attended district-sponsored professional development workshop(s) on sexuality or gendered harassment came to understand their school district's gendered harassment policies. The goal of the project was to explore how teachers constructed and understood homophobic harassment, sexual harassment, and harassment for gender non-conformity, in order to examine their understandings of those policies and how they incorporated them into their daily work.

The study is an institutional ethnography in which I explored the interactions between organizational practices, policies, and the experiences of six health and physical education teachers. This sociological approach involves an explication of how complex human actions, in this case, teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies, are coordinated by various kinds of texts, policies, and

procedures. In particular, I investigated how standards-based accountability and its accompanying school practices coordinated the activities of health and physical education teachers and their understandings of their school district's gendered harassment policies. The social relations of standards-based accountability and physical education generated an empirical ground for the analysis of how gendered harassment policies in a school setting are organized. By inquiring into the activities of health and physical education teachers in a school setting, I explicated how these teachers' knowledge of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies is socially organized.

BEYOND "NO/HOMO": AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHIC
EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF GENDERED
HARASSMENT POLICIES


By


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Your teachers

Are all around you.

All that you perceive,

All that you experience,

All that is given to you

or taken from you,

All that you love or hate,

need or fear

Will teach you---

If you will learn.

Octavia Butler

Thank you to my friends. Your ongoing encouragement and probing questions over happy hours, lunches, and assorted gatherings bolstered my spirits and kept me in touch with reality.

Thank you to my family. You have shown me that the most radical and rewarding forms of activism begin at home. Mommy and Daddy, you are my role models. Thank you for your sacrifices and for always feeding my stomach, mind and soul. Eva, you will always be the sister I look up to and try to emulate. I admire you and the work you do every day. Thank you for all your jokes that help keep my ego in check. Shiloh, thank you for your sturdy shoulders through the years. I cannot imagine one step of this journey without your support.

Thank you to the students, faculty, staff and community members at my school who continue to be forces of inspiration in my work as an educator.

To everyone here named and unnamed, thank you for the reminders of how each of us can change someone else's life. Thank you for your generosity in nurturing my soul and my growth. Let's continue our work to make our world a more just and equitable one.

**Table of Contents**

List of Tables

Table 2.1 - Summary point of different perspectives in bullying literature
Table 3.1 - MAPS 2010-2011 Student Demographics
Table 3.2 - Participant Demographic Information
Table 3.3 - Data Collection Activities
Table 4.1 - Point of Contact Responsibilities
Table 4.2 -  Focus of the nine teaching dimensions of the Teaching and Learning
            Framework
Table 4.3 -  Trainings Attended
Table 5.1 - Summary of findings: Local understandings of gendered harassment
Table 5.2 - Summary of findings: Policy Texts

List of Figures

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.

-- Toni Morrison

**What's The Word?**

No homo.[1]  That's gay. Stop acting like a fag.  These are some of the phrases

young people hear as they encounter bullying, homophobic harassment  (Renold,

2002) and other forms of gendered harassment common to students' school

experiences (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2012; Haskell & Burtch, 2010; J.

Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010).  Just as Morrison's words in the

epigraph noted, these words and phrases do not just represent violence; they *are*

violence and limit the growth of both the speakers of the words and its intended

audience(s). National surveys indicate between 15 and 30 percent of students

experience bullying in their schools in the United States (Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum,

2009; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2005; Nansel et al., 2001) and up to 80 percent of

teenagers face some form of gender-based harassment before their high school

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**Footnotes**

[1] Similar to "pause," "no homo" is an urban/ hip-hop vernacular speakers use at the end of a sentence to offset any possible homosexual connotation or double-entendres that could be construed from the statement (Hill, 2009b; Randolph, 2008) .  For example, a student taking a difficult math course might say, "Mr. Smith is hard," and feel compelled to add "no homo" at the end of the sentence.  I share Hill's observation that "despite its intellectual and comedic richness… [the usage of 'no homo'] reinforce[s] the idea that gay and lesbian people are worthy of ridicule, shame and surveillance" (2009a).  While I do not expect researchers to document every homophobic phrase uttered in schools, the conspicuous absence of references to relatively popular hip hop slang in bullying and harassment research signals one way in which the current body of literature may not fully capture the experiences of particular youths.

graduation (American Association of University Women, 2011). These statistics underscore the prevalence of gendered harassment in schools.

Elizabeth Meyer (2006) links bullying, sexual harassment and anti-gay harassment together within the notion of "gendered harassment." Meyer unpacks the term by identifying the three major forms of gendered harassment: 1) homophobic harassment, 2) gender non-conforming harassment and 3) (hetero)sexual harassment. Homophobic harassment refers to direct or indirect acts that reinforce negative attitudes toward people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Examples of this type of behavior include using anti-gay insults such as "That's so gay" or "Don't be such a fag." Gender non-conformity harassment refers to instances in which students are harassed because of how they express their gender. For example, a boy is made fun of because he has long hair. (Hetero)sexual harassment includes behaviors that denigrate females through sexually abusive and aggressive language such as "bitch" and "slut" (Renold, 2002). While heterosexual harassment is often enacted by men against women as means to assert power, males can also experience (hetero)sexual harassment. In short, gendered harassment refers to a range of verbal, relational and physical behaviors that one person uses to police another person's gender expression[2] or gender identity[3] (Meyer, 2006).

While gendered harassment impacts all students in schools, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer[4] (LGBTQ[5]) students are more often harmed by

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[2] Gender expression refers to everything we do that communicates our sex/gender to others including our clothing, hair styles, mannerisms, or way of speaking.
[3] Gender identity refers to how people think of themselves and identify in terms of sex (man, woman, boy, girl). Gender identity is a psychological quality and is reported by the individual rather than observed or measured.
[4] I use the term "queer" in reference to individuals whose sexuality or gender identity challenges and transgresses the status quo.

words and acts that invoke gender and sexual boundaries. LGBTQ students are physically assaulted and sexually harassed more frequently than their non-LGTBQ peers (Fineran, 2002). Williams, Connolly, Pepler and Craig (2005) found that lesbian and gay youth experience higher levels of bullying and sexual harassment than their heterosexual peers. Findings from the 2009 National School Climate Survey (J. G. Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010) provide a glimpse into the hostile school climates LGBTQ youth encounter in schools.[6] Nearly three quarters (72.4 percent) of students surveyed reported hearing homophobic remarks often or frequently at schools. Eighty-four percent of LGBTQ youth encountered verbal harassment at school and slightly over 60 percent reported feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation.

This body of research also suggests many LGBTQ youth experience compromised mental health as a result of the gendered harassment they face. Compared to their peers, LGBTQ youth are more likely to report enhanced loneliness, high levels of risky behavior and stress such as depression, suicide ideation, and drug use (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Rivers & Noret, 2008). Students who are direct targets of homophobic harassment ultimately face lowered academic achievement, emotional harm, and self endangerment as long term effects (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Reis, 1999). Victimization by peers is also linked to increased fear and anxiety, illnesses, school absences, and suicidal ideation as well as low self-

[5] Other variations of this initialism include LGBTQI and LGBTQIA where the "I" refers to individuals who identify as intersex and the "A" refers to either individuals who identify as allies to the LGBTQI community or as individuals who identify as asexual. The terms LGBTQ/LGBTQI/LGBTQIA highlight the diversity of gender and sexual identity beyond "gay," "lesbian," and "bisexual".
[6] Much of the national data on the school experiences of LGBTQ youth are from the National School Climate Survey (NSCS). These biennial studies conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Educator Network (GLSEN) are some of the few national studies focusing on LGBTQ youth and the only ones in the nation to include transgender students.

esteem and depression (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Collectively, this body of research paints a bleak picture of LGBTQ youth's school experiences and illustrates how gendered harassment can create a hostile learning environment that undermines schools' attempts to create safe environments for students.

In the worst cases, gendered harassment can result in death. In many instances of suicides that result from persistent peer bullying and harassment, the young people who killed themselves either identified as gay or were perceived by their classmates to be gay. In 2010, thirteen year-old Asher Brown shot himself in the head after enduring constant harassment from classmates (O'Hare, 2010). Justin Aaberg, Billy Lucas and Seth Walsh, hung themselves after experiencing chronic harassment at their schools (Cloud, 2010). These incidents serve as reminders of how sexual orientation and gender identity remain important issues educators need to actively attend to and address in their schools. In recent years, both scholars and advocacy groups have pushed school districts to take action that ensures LGBTQ youth's safety in schools. In most instances this action often translates to local school districts developing or mandating disciplinary action for students who bully or harass their peers.

The prevalence of these well-intentioned policies piqued my curiosity. School districts expect teachers to enforce bullying and gendered harassment policies but we know surprisingly little about how teachers interpret and make sense of these policies. How do these policies compete with other school demands that compete for teachers' time and attention? I came into my research with three questions: How did teachers

4

come to understand their school district's gendered harassment policies? Does teachers' participation in district workshops and trainings shape their interpretations of gendered harassment policies? How do teachers incorporate these policies into their daily work? My broader research goal was to explore the various texts, discourse, and social relations that shape teachers' interpretations of their school districts' gendered harassment policies.

The study is an institutional ethnography in which I explored the interactions between organizational practices, policies, and the experiences of health and physical education teachers. This sociological approach involves an explication of how complex human action, in this case, teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies, are coordinated by various kinds of texts, policies, and procedures. In particular, I investigated how standards-based accountability and the accompanying neoliberal managerial practices coordinate the activities of health and physical education teachers and their understandings of their school district's gendered harassment policies. The social relations of standards-based accountability and physical education generated an empirical ground for the analysis of how gendered harassment policies in a school setting are organized. By inquiring into the activities of health and physical education teachers in a school setting, I explicated how these teachers' knowledge of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies is socially organized.

My desires to learn more about the processes that shape teachers' understandings of gendered harassment were prompted by my own experiences as a teacher in an urban, public high school. As a teacher, I heard both students and

colleagues use terms and phrases such as "dyke," "fag," and "no homo." While I would tell students those terms were inappropriate, I struggled to challenge homophobia, heterosexism, and sexism within and beyond the physical boundaries of my classroom. I did not struggle because I lacked knowledge about the topics; instead, my struggles centered around the disjuncture I felt in not knowing how to skillfully incorporate discussion of these topics into say, a lesson on mitosis or in the ten seconds I interacted with a student in the hallway. As a novice teacher, I saw no modeling of how those interactions could be diffused and addressed nor did my supervisors set the expectation that I should intervene with those incidents.

The silence around gendered harassment I recall now does not mean violence and peer victimization were not problems in our school. When my colleagues and I discussed school safety, our discussions focused primarily on responses to physical violence. How do we address gang conflict and keep unauthorized individuals and weapons out of our school? How do we keep physical fights from breaking out in the hallway and cafeteria? How do we keep students from setting fires inside of the school? This set of questions dominated our discussions on safety and muted another set of questions entirely.

Federal standards labeled my school community as one that was "chronically failing." As a teacher, I was aware of the various regulative mandates that spurred our school's goal to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). However, I was not aware if similar regulative policies demanded teachers address bullying and gendered harassment. As a member and co-chair of the school's behavioral management committee, my colleagues and I drafted rules for student behavior as well as

consequences for misbehavior.  I struggle to recall instances where we directly named or addressed issues of bullying or gendered harassment in our committee work. It was not until I stopped teaching and began my doctoral studies that I began to reflect on my experience and thought more deeply about my school's silence on gendered harassment. What features of my school context contributed to this silence?  How did these factors impact my response to gendered harassment?

My own identity as a queer Asian-American woman also grounds and shapes my desires to explore teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies.  I share this facet of my private life with you, the reader, because my identity and activism around LGBTQ issues undoubtedly impact and inform my understandings of gender, sexuality, and gendered harassment in and out of schools.   Discussions of gendered harassment interweave with the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality; my personal and social identities inevitably impacted my interactions with my study participants as well as the interpretations I draw from my data.  My subjectivities impact me in both conscious and unconscious ways, but more importantly, they link my academic and intellectual pursuits with my own lived experience.

**Background**

According to Loutzenheiser and Moore (2010), the findings of a report by the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth (1993) became the impetus behind current safe school policies and programs. After several high-profile shootings in the late 1990s, public concern around school violence prompted increased media and academic attention to bullying and harassment in the United

States.  Between 1997 and 2007, the number of publications on bullying and harassment in the U.S. increased by 200 percent (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009).  During this time, many researchers focused their empirical research on documenting the prevalence and impacts of bullying and harassment events (American Association of University Women, 2002; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2005; Gruber & Fineran, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2009; Nansel et al., 2001; Pellegrini & Long, 2002), the location in which those incidents occurred within schools (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999; Astor, Meyer, & Pitner, 2001), and  individual characteristics of bullies and victims (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005).

Developing alongside this largely student-centered research is a small but growing body of work that explicitly examines teacher response to gendered harassment (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009; Marshall, Varjas, Meyers, Graybill, & Skoczylas, 2009; Meyer, 2008, 2009; Yoon, 2004).  This line of research is rooted in a widely accepted belief that educators play critical roles in creating safe environments for all students and especially those who are targeted for gendered harassment.  Since students spend most of their school day with teachers, classroom teachers are front line respondents to bullying and harassment incidents.

A few studies reveal harassment flourishes in schools where staff do not actively monitor peer interactions and provide guidance on how peers can interact in more effective ways (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000; Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Stein, 1995).  Students report in surveys that they feel safer in schools where staff members actively intervene in instances of bullying and harassment (California Safe Schools Coalition, 2004; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2005).  Students who see teachers stop

negative comments based on sexual orientation are more likely to report less naming calling and higher levels of school safety (California Safe Schools Coalition, 2004; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2005). Unfortunately, national data indicate little adult intervention actually occurs when gendered harassment happens in school (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2005; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001; Kosciw et al., 2008; Kosciw et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2010). These studies on school staff response highlight staff confusion on identification and intervention in gendered harassment as well as staff normalizing gendered harassment as part of adolescent development.

This low level of adult intervention suggests these direct policies are not the only factors that influence local school staff response. Research on teachers' response to gendered harassment points to a constellation of competing interests and concerns that ultimately impacts teachers' (non)response to various forms of gendered harassment (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009; Hazler et al., 2001; Meyer, 2008; Reis, 1999; Somech & Optlatka, 2009). Both in-service and pre-service teachers have misconceptions of what behaviors constitute bullying and harassment, (Hazler et al., 2001; Reis, 1999) and difficulty distinguishing gendered harassment from playful teasing (Casella, 2001).

Teachers typically intervene when they perceive an event as "severe" (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009). Teachers and other adults are more likely to identify situations that involve physical threat or abuse as bullying (Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1993). The implications of such findings are twofold. First, teachers are likely to "misidentify physical confrontations as bullying when they are not, which leads to

misdiagnosis of situations and potentially inappropriate reactions" (Hazler et al., 2001, p. 141). Second, teachers are less likely to intervene in situations that involve social/emotional or verbal harm such as instances of homophobic teasing (Yoon & Kerber, 2003)

Anagnostopoulos et al. (2009) and Meyer (2009) examined the interpretive work teachers engage in as they determine if and how they will intervene in instances of gendered harassment. Acts of gendered harassment unfold very quickly, couched in the moment-to-moment interactions among and between students and faculty. These interactions are also "situated within webs of relationship, personal histories, school norms, and societal ideas about gender, sexuality, and power" (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009, p. 521). Teachers might choose not to intervene when they feel ambivalent about their professional responsibilities or when they view interventions as requiring them to step out of their boundaries (Somech & Optlatka, 2009). Thus, whether and how teachers intervene depends on their interpretations and understandings of gendered harassment.

Influencing factors on interpretations and understandings of gendered harassment include school policies, school norms, values as shared by administrators and the school community, and workload demands (Meyer, 2009; Swearer, Espelage et al., 2009). Individual attributes such as a teacher's personal life experience, teaching philosophies, ideological commitments as well as training can also impact teacher response to gendered harassment (Meyer, 2008; Yoon & Barton, 2008). Although the current body of work identifies mediating factors shaping teachers'

understandings of gendered harassment, we know little about how teachers understand and interpret gendered harassment policies.

**Statement of Problem**

While bullying behaviors are centuries old, rhetoric about safe schools and bullying increased in the U.S. after the 1999 Columbine school shooting. Since that time, the U.S. Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services departments have administered the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, providing more than $2.1 billion in federal funding to local educational, mental health, law enforcement, and juvenile justice partnerships. During the fall of 2010, a spate of teen suicides in the United States sparked another round of intense public attention on bullying.

Educators can play instrumental roles in creating safe environments for students who are targeted for gender harassment. Lack of social support can exacerbate the negative effects of harassment and bullying (Williams et al., 2005). Students report feeling safer in schools where staff members actively intervene in instances of bullying and harassment. Students who see teachers stop negative comments based on sexual orientation are more likely to report less naming calling and higher levels of school safety (California Safe Schools Coalitions, 2004). However, students report that teachers and administrators rarely or never intervene to stop homophobic harassment in schools. The lack of intervention by school leaders and teachers to such harassment represents a problem in K-12 schools in the U.S.

Scholars and practitioners recommend school districts provide teachers with professional development trainings to improve gendered harassment prevention and intervention. Previous research indicates teachers and staff lack the necessary skills

and knowledge around bullying as well as sexual orientation topics. In one survey of 211 health teachers, only one-quarter reported themselves as very competent to teach about homosexuality (Telljohann, Price, Poureslami, & Easton, 1995). Researchers also point to the need for school discrimination policies that explicitly address sexual orientation. These researchers reason that without school policies to hold school staff accountable and responsible for LGBTQ youth's safety, the onus would be on students to advocate for their own safety (Human Rights Watch, 2001). In the past decade, 33 states adopted anti-bullying laws and numerous school districts mandated and implemented policies to combat bullying and harassment in schools. Despite the increased number of policies, trainings, and research on the topic, the rates of bullying and gendered harassment in the U.S. have remained largely the same (Dinkes et al., 2009).

Given the proliferation of anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies in school districts across the U.S., we know little about how teachers understand and interpret these policies. Authors recommend schools adopt anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies that are as clear as possible, insinuating that once teachers know the policy and procedures they will respond to gendered harassment incidents accordingly and in the "right" way (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Swearer, Espelage et al., 2009). I utilized an institutional ethnographic framework to bring a more complex and nuanced lens in considering how teachers come to understand gendered harassment policies and how they enact these policies in their lived experiences. Specifically, I wanted to reveal the social organization of education that is not "fully visible to us" (Smith, 2005, p. 6). I was particularly interested in exploring the extent to which

larger social, institutional, and historical contexts, structures and practices framed how individuals encounter and make sense of policy messages. This study explored the ruling relations that shaped how six health and physical education teachers came to know the gendered harassment policies in one school district. I paid particular attention to the ways in which policy texts shaped the discursive framings of bullying, gendered harassment and sexuality by the teachers and the school district.

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

This institutional ethnography explored how teachers who attended district-sponsored professional development workshop(s) on sexuality or gendered harassment came to understand their district's gendered harassment policies. The goal of the project was to explore how teachers constructed and understood bullying, homophobic harassment, and harassment for gender non-conformity, in order to examine their understandings of those policies and how they incorporated into their daily work. Throughout the study, I pay attention to both individual experiences and understandings of gendered harassment as well as how the school district as an institution shaped and was shaped by these processes. My broader research goal was to understand the complex social contexts, discourses, and power relations that shaped teachers' understandings of their school districts' gendered harassment policies.

In the study, I identified the issues that were problematic in the work activities of the health and physical education teachers and sought to understand how these issues are governed by institutional demands and directives as reflected in institutional texts. Institutional ethnography was helpful for investigating teachers'

13

understandings of gendered harassment policies in a school setting since education is a bureaucratic system regulated by a large number of texts including laws, regulations, and institutional policies. The institution of education has a network of texts which organize work practices and reinforce school policies and procedures. The links between policies and work practices are the ruling relations, which are invisible.

This study featured one central question:

1. How do teachers come to understand gendered harassment policies?

I explored this central research question through two sub-questions:

1. What are local understandings and explanations of gendered harassment?

2. How do policy texts mediate teachers' understandings of gendered harassment?

These questions have implications for how we understand teachers' experiences in constructing their understandings of gendered harassment policies and the manners in which schools shape and are shaped by discursive practices that their staff often knowingly or unknowingly engage in. These are important insights to consider as school districts continue to adopt anti-bullying and harassment policies and expect teachers to enforce these policies.

**Theoretical Framework**

In this study, I framed the social organization of teachers' understandings of gendered harassment within the theoretical concept that textually mediated ruling practices coordinate the everyday work of health and physical educators. The grounding concepts of institutional ethnography as articulated in the writings of

14

Smith (1987) provided the heuristic framework for this study. Institutional ethnography (IE), a feminist methodology, is the foundation of Smith's (1987) feminist sociology for people. Smith developed IE in the context of the North American women's movements of the 1970s and 1980s.

IE uses traditional ethnographic procedures that are grounded in an analytic approach for explicating the social organization of knowledge (Townsend, 1992). I want to emphasize to the reader that those who adopt an institutional ethnographical approach cannot reduce IE as a distinct method or theoretical perspective. Instead, I conceptualize IE as a combination of the two. As a researcher who chose to employ this methodology, I had to embrace the theoretical framework of IE because theory and method are intertwined and could not be separated (Walby, 2005).

In IE, the term "institution" does not refer to a distinct physical location or organizational space such as schools (Ittig, 2008). Instead, the term refers to a specific and complex set of ruling relations within a bureaucracy such as health care or education (Mykhalovskiy & McCoy, 2002; Smith, 1990). For this institutional ethnography, I focused on the social relations that organize the work of health and physical education teachers and their understandings of gendered harassment policies in one school district. In using the IE methodology, researchers may investigate and describe the numerous social and institutional forces that organize individuals' actions and lived experiences. IE explores the connections between the experience of people in particular settings, the organization of those settings, and the processes expressed in local protocols and procedures (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). In short, IE explores the connections between different levels of interaction and aims to create an

understanding of the social and power structures within institutions that influence work activities.

IE begins with the lived experienced of individuals in order to better understand how things work and unfold within the local setting. This is done in order to discover the institutional power relations (for example: bureaucratic, economic or professional) that shape the participants' actualities (Campbell, 1998). The approach encourages the researcher to create a lens based on participants' perspectives. The lens provided the researcher a tool to understand not only how the setting of interest operates, but also how those operations matter to individuals (Ittig, 2008). Researchers in other policy fields have utilized instructional ethnography to understand how people come to understand policies. Thus, institutional ethnography offers a powerful lens to look at how teachers come to understand gendered harassment policies in the institutional context they are in.

**Significance**

This institutional ethnography provided a unique opportunity to explore teacher's understandings of gendered harassment policies. This study is significant in that it contributes to theory in both the bullying/gendered harassment literature and the educational policy literature. First, in utilizing institutional ethnography, I added a more nuanced, theoretically-driven perspective on how teachers may understand these policies. My exploration of the discourses and social relations that shaped teachers' understandings of their school districts' gendered harassment policies yields additional insights about the policy implementation process that other policy implementation approaches do not.

The findings from this study have the potential to improve policy, practice, training and research. The study's findings may bring greater awareness to how standards-based accountability systems in schools impact teachers' understandings and practice regarding gendered harassment. The results of this institutional ethnography provide insights into the contextual factors that shape teachers' understandings and their ultimate enactment of gendered harassment policies. Policymakers and/or front-line policy implementers may use this information to (re)consider the design of policies and how school districts go about framing and implementing anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies in light of other policy demands. By studying the interactions between the institutional texts and health and physical education teachers' understandings of gendered harassment, this research study provide a snapshot of the effects of the pressure of standards-based accountability on the understandings and practices of teachers and in particular, their focus on gendered harassment. Potential implications may also highlight the need for additional research on how teachers in core subject area understand gendered harassment amidst school reform pressures

**Overview**

This study explored how six selected health and physical education teachers who attended district-sponsored professional development workshops on gendered harassment or sexuality, came to understand their school district's gendered harassment policies. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on bullying to understand how researchers and practitioners have conceptualized bullying and gendered harassment and to identify the factors that are salient in school staff's

17

understandings and interpretations of gendered harassment.  In the second part of the chapter, I delineate the major ideas in institutional ethnography to consider how institutional ethnography may help me better understand the conditions and processes that shape how teachers come to know their districts' gendered harassment policies. In Chapter Three, I describe and explain the rationale for this study's research methodology, design, data collection process, and data analysis plan.  In Chapter Four, I introduce the reader to the study district, participants and their school communities. In Chapter Five, I share the findings that helped answer my research question. In Chapter Six, I discuss my findings in light of the research literature as well as my research study's contribution to research, policy and practice.

**Definition of terms**

The following terms are defined as they applied in the study:

**Bullying:** Bullying refers to a relation of power where one or more individuals engage in repetitive negative acts with the intent to harm a targeted individual (Olweus, 2003).

**Discourse:** Gee (1996) describes discourse as "ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (p. 127). In this study, I adopted Dorothy Smith's notion of discourse which refers to a field of relations that includes texts, intertextual conversations as well as the actors in local sites who produce texts, use them and take up the conceptual frames circulated within the texts (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 772). In short, discourse refers to an ensemble of ideas that are embedded within and through texts about a narrative.

**Gendered harassment:** Gendered harassment refers to a range of verbal, relational, and physical behaviors that one person uses to police another person's gender expression or gender identity. Elizabeth Meyer (2006) uses the term to conceptually link bullying, sexual harassment and anti-gay harassment.

**Institutional Ethnography**: Institutional ethnography refers to both a sociological theory and a method of inquiry that allows people to explore the social relations that structure and pervades their everyday activities.

**Policy**: I view policies as texts that reflect unique embedded discourse. Ball (1993) argues policy as discourse demarcates Foucault's notion of regimes of truth. Policy establishes and sustains relations of domination. When we read policy as discourse, we see that policies are "set within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment" (Ball, 1993, p. 15). In short, policies as discursive practices set the parameters around legitimating certain knowledge and sites of knowledge production.

**Ruling relations**: Ruling relations refer to the concept Smith uses to name the socially-organized exercise of power that shapes people's actions and their lives.

**Social relations:** Social relations refer to the "actual practices and activities through which people's lives are socially organized" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 30).

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

**Overview**

As I stated in Chapter One, how teachers interpret, come to understand, and ultimately enact gendered harassment policies remains largely unexplored in research. However, the little emerging research on teacher response does suggest a number of factors for school districts to consider in implementing these policies. In this literature review, I consider research on bullying, gendered harassment, sexuality and the role of physical education in schools as well as institutional ethnography

In the first part of the chapter, I examine the literature on bullying and gendered harassment and outline the current knowledge in the field. I begin by identifying what I see as four dominant perspectives on bullying. I do this because the bodies of knowledge that emerge from each perspective may shape or provide discursive frames for how individuals such as teachers think about bullying and gendered harassment. Then, I provide a survey of our current knowledge about teacher responses to gendered harassment. I provide an overview of institutional ethnography as a theory and the manners in which scholars in other fields have utilized the theory to consider the role of neoliberal managerial practices impact the daily work of front-line employees. I examined the role of No Child Left Behind and standards-based accountability has played in American public education in the past decade and how it has impacted the roles and work of health and physical educators. In the last part of the chapter, I describe the heuristic framework I developed from the literature review that guided the research design of this study.

**Research on Bullying and Gendered Harassment**

**Overview**

Bullying has existed since the inception of schools (Bjorkqvist & Osterman, 1999).

However, the systematic study of bullying behaviors did not begin until the early

1970s in Scandinavia. Discourse about safe schools and bullying has become more

frequent in the United States since the 1999 Columbine school shooting. Since then,

the U.S. Education, Justice and Health and Human Services departments have

administered the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, which has provided more

than $2.1 billion in federal funding to local educational, mental health, law

enforcement, and juvenile justice partnerships. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and

Communities Act is also part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Since 1999,

many states and school districts have mandated and implemented policies to combat

bullying and harassment in schools. In 2008, 33 states had anti-bullying laws in place,

and at least 10 others are considering similar legislation (Swearer, Espelage et al.,

2009). By January 2012, 48 states had anti-bullying laws (Sacco, Silbaugh,

Correndor, Casey & Doherty, 2012).

Bullying and harassment are subsets of behaviors that exist along a continuum

of violent behaviors, which includes acts such as criminal and gang activity and

physical assaults with weapons (Casella, 2001).[7] Although forms of bullying and

harassment sometimes overlap, the two concepts are distinguished by two

characteristics: intent to harm and target of behavior. Bullying is commonly defined

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[7] Irene MacDonald (1998) notes in her analysis of research and media reports that the term "school violence" has expanded to include a range of acts that were once called "student misbehaviors." School violence now not only includes criminal behaviors, but also non-criminal behaviors such as punching, vandalism, and swearing.

as a relation of power where one or more individuals engage in repetitive negative acts with the intent to harm a targeted individual (Olweus, 2003).[8] Negative behaviors and actions may include direct physical aggression such as punching, verbal aggression such as name calling, or indirect, relational aggression such as gossiping (see Simmons, 2003). While a few researchers have questioned the role of repetition in qualifying an event as bullying (Walton, 2005), much of the empirical literature on bullying hinges on Olweus's definition.

Thus, acts that *accidentally* harm another person are not considered bullying (Smith et al., 2002); those acts fall under the umbrella term of harassment. Harassment refers to intentional or unintentional biased behaviors targeted at either an individual *or* no specific targets (Meyer, 2008). Harassment may have more widespread effects since it is targeted at an individual, a group or no specific target (Larkin, 1994).

Although scholars may contest over the precise definition and criteria of bullying are contested, the empirical literature presents and positions bullying as a static, universally understood concept void of connection to a social-historical-political context (Walton, 2005). This section of the paper seeks to critically examine current bullying literature by presenting four perspectives of bullying found in the literature and considering the implications of these perspectives on bullying policies and interventions.

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[8] The publication of Olweus's (1978) *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and whipping boys* ushered in a steady rise of interest in research on school bullying. Early bullying research (Heinemann, 1973 in Smith et al. 2002; Olweus, 1978) studied and referred to spontaneous acts carried out by a group against an individual and focused extensively on physical and verbal actions in which bullies directly engaged. Since then, definitions and conceptualizations of bullying have been extended to include systematic one-on-one attacks as well as indirect behaviors (i.e. gossiping and spreading rumors and social exclusion).

**Pathological perspectives**

I categorize much of the early work in bullying research under pathological perspectives. This work focused on documenting bullying and providing manageable ways to handle bullying in schools. In addition, early bullying research suggested possibilities for prevention and interventions, which fed the schools' and parents' desires for effective ways to treat a localized problem. More importantly, this early research helped establish bullying as a legitimate problem to study (Swearer, Espelage et al., 2009).

Pathological perspectives characterize bullying as a disease that impacts individuals. Studies that employ a pathological conceptualization of bullying aim to document the prevalence of bullying and/or provide profiles of bullies and victims (Nansel et al., 2001; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Studies conducted in the U.S. and abroad suggest bullying impacts between 15 and 30 percent of students in schools (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 2003; Boivin et al., 2004; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). When students are asked if they have ever been involved in bullying at any point throughout their schooling, the figure jumps to 70 to 80 percent of students (Hazler et al., 1992). Bullying occurs across all grade levels, from elementary to high schools.

Researchers focusing on pathological perspectives construe bullies and victims as occupying static roles and identities. The juxtaposition of bullies and victims as dichotomous figures implies that students have innate dispositions towards becoming bullies or victims. A substantive number of studies have attempted to identify the salient characteristics of "typical" bullies and victims. Owelus (1993)

asserts that victims are more "anxious and insecure…and often cautious, sensitive and quiet" (p. 32). Children who are bullied by their peers are more vulnerable to depression and suicidal ideation (Roland, 2002). Egan and Perry (1998) add that victims have lower self-regard and lower self-perceived peer social competence, resulting in the projection of passivity and a "self-deprecating identity that invites abuse" (p. 306). Bullies frequently target their victims for specific relational or physical traits such as academic talents, limited physical strength or lower weight (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Egan & Perry, 1998; Janssen et. al., 2004 cited in Jacobson, 2007). Schwartz, Proctor and Chien (2001) challenge the narrow construction of the passive victim by identifying a subgroup of victims who are "prone toward aggressive or hostile behaviors" (p. 147). However, empirical research features more descriptions of the passive victim with diminished social skills and few friends.

A profile of the "typical" bully has also emerged from empirical research. Owelus (1993) describes bullies as children who "have a more positive attitude toward violence and use of violent means than [other] students in general. Further, they are often characterized by impulsivity and a strong need to dominate others" (p. 34). Bullies tend to score lower on mental health tests (Vaillancourt, Brendgen, Boivin, & Tremblay, 2003), are more likely to exhibit depression or anxiety (Rigby, 2002), and have lower self-esteem (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001) and lower levels of empathy (Farley as cited in Jacobson, 2007) than their non-bullying peers. Although many of these studies acknowledge the role of family upbringing and school contexts in influencing some of these qualities, their focus remains on individual traits and attributes. This focus assumes bullies and other young adults who behave

aggressively in schools are "deviants who broke away from an otherwise genteel…culture -- that their aberrant behavior [i]s explainable by some psychopathological factor" (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1443).  In short, the pathological perspectives' focus on the aforementioned psychological correlates positions bullies as natural delinquents with an inherent inclination for bullying.

If scholars position bullying as a disease, what treatments are suggested within pathological perspectives of bullying? Proposed bullying interventions focus primarily on altering the individual behaviors of the bullies and victims (Newman-Carlson, 2004).  School-based programs teach students problem solving skills and conflict resolution strategies and are provided with individual counseling.  Although the literature describes various programs, such as "The No Blame Approach to Bully Prevention" and "Bully Busters," few studies offer comprehensive reviews of program effectiveness in reducing or ending bullying (Swearer & Espelage, 2004).

**Social-ecological perspectives**

Social-ecological perspectives represent the perspective from which most of the current work on bullying emerges.  Social-ecological perspectives of bullying challenge pathological perspectives by considering how students' individual characteristics interact with and within larger social contexts.[9] The goal of understanding what conditions within the social ecology cause bullying to occur guides scholars and researchers who share these perspectives.  Researchers within this perspective conceptualize bullying as an ecological phenomenon (Swearer & Doll,

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[9] Social-ecological perspectives of bullying draw from Bronfenbrenner's social-ecological theory (1977, 1979) and examines four interrelated systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.  For more information, see Espelage and Swearer (2004).

2001) that results from "complex interaction between the individual and his or her family, peer group, school community, and societal norms" (Swearer, Espelage et al., 2009, p. 8). Similar to pathological perspectives, the educational and social psychology fields have shaped the discourses emerging from social-ecological perspectives of bullying.

Nevertheless, social-ecological perspectives challenge the notion that bullies and victims are fixed identities and also recognize the various roles peers can play in bullying. More specifically, social-ecological perspectives acknowledge that students move in and out of bullying and victimization roles (Swearer, Espelage et al., 2009). Social-ecological perspectives also contend that individuals are rarely bullied in isolation (Espelage, Green, & Wasserman, 2007). Bullying requires both active and passive participation from a range of students: followers, supporters, bystanders, and defenders (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Olweus, 2001; Coloroso, 2002). For example, some students might chase or hold down the victim for bullies rather than directly attack them; others might encourage bullies to continue their acts by providing positive social attention; a smaller number of students might attempt to help the victim or provide psychological help after the event (Olweus, 2001). These shifting roles suggest that peers can paradoxically serve as both sources of torment and support.

In addition to the examination of individual and peer factors, research within social-ecological perspectives seeks to identify familial and school community factors that influence individual attributes as well as the bullying process. Bullies tend to report having parents who are more authoritarian and condone the use of physical

punishment (Baldry & Farrington, 2000). The literature also suggests a link between aggressive behavior in youth and families who lack cohesion and have high levels of conflict (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Victims of bullying, on the other hand, are likely to have less authoritative parents and come from families that have high levels of cohesion (Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994). School factors that might impact bullying include whether the school is a place where adults bully others and whether a negative school climate exists (Astor, Meyer, & Pither, 2001). Features of classroom ecologies, such as support for student agency and a high quality of social relationships among students and between students and teachers can also discourage bullying (Doll, Song, & Siemers, 2004).

Interventions suggested within social-ecological perspectives of bullying in turn are system(s)- and individual-based. Programs such as Second Step focus on "altering the school environment as a whole, as well as addressing issues with individual students" (Limber, 2004, p. 353). Namely, these programs focus on influencing individual, family, peer, and school attributes. Both bullies and victims are "presumed to have the potential to interact effectively with peers, given the proper social context" (Doll, Song, & Siemers, 2004, p. 177). These program designs are framed by the assumptions that strengthening "natural supports" for healthy peer interaction may reduce bullying.

Other socio-ecological interventions also focus on altering routines and practices to discourage aggression. For example, researchers theorize classrooms where teachers model trust and care, and students know adults will observe interactions with reduced intimidation and victimization (Wright, 2004). Parents can

also diminish bullying by discouraging aggression in their conversations with their children (California Department of Education, 2003). Moreover, changes in school policy can reduce or eliminate conflict among students and between students and teachers (Swearer, Limber, & Alley, 2009). Similar to pathological perspectives, the literature offers many interventions, suggestions and descriptions of interventions. However, only a limited number of studies have evaluated the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs in practice.

**Critical perspectives**

Social-ecological perspectives recognize the potential power of micro-, macro-, and meso-level factors to impact bullying. Research from both the pathological and socio-ecological perspectives makes clear that bullying is situated in unequal power relations but limits the discussion of power to either physical attributes (i.e., the bully is stronger than the victim) or individual social status (i.e., the bully is more popular than the victim). Critical perspectives of bullying aim to explore the influence and roles of racism, ableism, sexism, and homophobia in maintaining dominance and power in peer relationships (Meyer, 2008) as well as critique the present conceptualizations of bullying and the types of interventions that are utilized in schools (Walton, 2004; Rofes, 2005; Jacobson, 2007). The following quotation encapsulates the main critique of bullying via critical perspectives:

> [C]onceptualizations of bullying that are rooted in empirical approaches do not consider political, historical, cultural, discursive, and ideological threads that, woven together, make up the construct that is now widely known as bullying. Furthermore, analyses of bullying tend not to emphasize the ways in which markers of social difference – such as sexism, racism, homophobia, and class-based oppression, among others – inform the natures and reflect the

characteristics of bullying among children (Walton, 2005, p. 112).
Although other perspectives of bullying might acknowledge the prevalence of name-calling, rarely do scholars consider why specific terms are used to insult students and why those insults have the weight to hurt individuals.

Walton reminds his readers that the problem is not that dominant conceptualizations of "the bully," "bullying," and "power" are wrong; the problem is that "they emphasize too heavily the role of individual students as the source of both the cause and the solution for the problem of bullying in schools" (p. 107).  Although none of the studies reviewed for this paper explicitly advocated for schools to adopt zero-tolerance anti-bullying policies, the casting of bullies as inherent deviants supports policies that seek to "weed out" bullies.  Walton argues that the detailed psychological profiles of bullies and victims (such as the ones described in the pathological perspectives of bullying) tacitly posit bullying as acts "perpetuated by 'bad' children against 'good' children" (p. 94). Schools assume the behaviors of these individual children have the ability to clean or tarnish school cultures, which reifies individual responsibility for these behaviors.  Walton further contends that interventions become responses "where 'bad' children will be exiled or rehabilitated for the sake of the 'good' children, as well as for the school as a whole" (p. 94). The characterization of bullies as individual delinquents ultimately constricts the types of interventions that are suggested and promoted within schools and uses a deficiency framework with regard to bullies.

Similarly, Jacobson (2007) points out the inadequacies of schools' reliance on rules, surveillance, and punishment to reduce and stop bullying. Jacobson describes one school's response to a bullying incident at his research site:

> The bullies were paraded into the office (the whole school was aware of the proceedings), parents were called, teachers were put on alert, and the perpetrators were watched (literally-when in class; and figuratively- through informants, etc.). (p. 1949)

Jacobson compares this use of surveillance as an intervention to Foucault's (1979) notion of panopticism.[10] The intervention aims to change bullies' behaviors by instilling inner control. This is accomplished by constantly putting the bullies under (either actual or perceived) close watch. What these interventions do not address are the reasons for students' desires to bully in the first place. Jacobson contends that therein lies the limitation of current school interventions: "simple surveillance cannot undo the enculturation of school itself (e.g., that one is recognized when one rises above, dominates, or ranks higher than one's peers), installed through its discourse of motivation, assessment, and status" (Jacobson, 2007, p. 1952). Rules and surveillance do not shift desires and instead encourage bullies to work harder at being bullies and to bully in more covert ways, and away from spaces that are under adult supervision.

Walton also brings attention to the generic conceptualizations of bullying. All forms of bullying, whether a child is being bullied for being short or for being gender non-conforming, are treated the same. As a result of this generic conceptualization of

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[10] In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Michel Foucault refers extensively to Jeremy Bentham's design of the "panopticon." The panopticon is a form of prison where a guard in a center tower can oversee every prisoner who is isolated in his or her own cell. The guard can see everything from the tower. The prisoners never see the guard and never knows whether the guard is watching or is even present. The end result is that the prisoners become their own guards and self-regulate their own behavior because they never know if and when they are being watched. The panopticon exemplifies the power of surveillance in that it is paradoxically both visible and unsubstantiated (Foucault, 1979).

bullying, generic interventions are produced. Walton further contends that as the public demand for individual accountability and school policies that help reduce or eliminate bullying increase, zero tolerance policies have emerged as a one-size-fits-all remedy. Policies may present a framework to lay out appropriate behaviors and consequences. However, many interventions merely "*contain, regulate and manage* to verify violence rather than *address* it" (Walton, 2005, p. 112, emphasis in original). This preoccupation with violence management ignores questions regarding how bullying is a manifestation of power relations embedded within larger society. While Walton asserts that bullying is, in fact, "a social and political construction, rooted in ideological relations of power" (p. 113), he also concedes that most teachers and parents are just concerned about finding solutions to bullying. Walton notes that even if current bullying interventions are fraught with problematic conceptualizations of bullying, they are still necessary strategies for reducing bullying and other forms of violence in school. In essence, these interventions are steps in the right direction but in no way address larger issues at hand.

Jacobson (2007) arrives at similar conclusions as he examines bullying through philosophical lenses. Jacobson argues that the system of schooling is itself a culprit in the creation of bullies. Jacobson applies Foucault's work to examine the operation of power through bullying discourses. Foucault contended that systems (such as the penal system, mental health system) create and narrate characters through the process of norming. In similar ways, bullies are made, constructed, and shaped by their environments "within larger systems of knowledges and discourses" (Jacobson, 2007, p. 1938). Jacobson points to one aspect of the (U.S.) schooling system that

creates a milieu that fosters bullying: the embedded nature of competition and ranking within schools. The grading system implicitly compels students to define themselves through comparison with their peers. Jacobson argues that competition between students drives and underlies differentiated results for students in schools. As a result, "students find status over and against other students as opposed to with other students" (p. 1948), and bullying is yet another manifestation of that dynamic. In essence, schools send conflicting messages to students about the importance and appropriateness of domination.

Critical perspectives offer insights into the limitations of current dominant conceptualizations of bullying. Under this lens, bullying is a social and political construction that is rooted in ideological relations of power. Accordingly, critical perspectives conceptualize bullies as socially constructed identities that are influenced by macro power dynamics. Critical perspectives also consider how bullying may play a role in maintaining certain forms of privileges and social power. Later in the chapter, I will utilize critical perspectives to consider the role of gender in bullying.

School interventions grounded in critical perspectives seek to provide opportunities for young people to critically interrogate the concept of gender and to recognize their own abilities to problem solve (Gourd & Gourd, 2011). The reasoning behind such an approach is that gender norms and stereotypes are ingrained into many aspects of society. Thus, children need opportunities to consider how they themselves get caught up in stereotypical notions of what a boy or girl should be like and how these stereotypical notions of gender can negatively impact their self-

images.  Lessons from the Southern Poverty Law Center's "Teaching Tolerance" or the Human Rights Campaign's "Welcoming Schools" seek to provide opportunities for students to consider these internalized stereotypes and think about the problems they cause.  Students may also engage in interactive theater to "provide opportunities for students to examine human interactions in their school community and to recognize their authority to positively affect the school climate.

## Mythological[11] perspectives

As bullying evolved as an area of study, researchers, scholars, and experts in the field have dispelled various "myths" about bullying (see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007).  Such myths posit bullying as a harmless rite of passage children pass through and as natural interactions between students.  Within these views is the notion that adult intervention with bullying is detrimental in the long run.  Some adults believe bullying builds character and allows children to develop a thick skin, which toughen the children and get them ready for the "real" world.  Often drawing from anecdotal evidence, authors write with nostalgia about the halcyon days when children were left alone to be themselves and freed from being smothered by "invasive parents" (Marano, 2008).  Others in the popular press (Gill, 2007) assert that current levels of bullying are exaggerated and that bullying as a term is overused as a descriptor for simple disagreements between children.  Gill argues that students need to learn to cope with name-calling and teasing in order to build

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[11] I utilize the terms "myths" and "mythological" both in the colloquial sense and as Roland Barthes (1957/1972) did in his seminal work, *Mythologies*.  Colloquially, myths refer to stories without factual basis or historical validity.  In *Mythologies*, Barthes describes myths as "political speech" and explores the process of mythologization, where socially constructed narratives and assumptions become naturalized and taken as given within a particular culture.

resilience.  Implicit within this perspective is that although bullying might cause initial negative short-term consequences, there are no long-term negative effects.

Another view represented within mythological perspectives of bullying is that current public and academic interest in bullying emerges from a "moral panic" about youth violence.[12]  Moral panics can "decontextualize particular events and legitimate punitive discourse and policies" (Schissel, in Walton, 2005, p. 110).  Much of the bullying work in the United States has resulted from high-profile school shootings. A question lingers in public discourse and mass media's coverage of these events: why are schools so much more violent today? The answers that emerge become an array of finger-pointing: bad parents, pervasive violence in movies and rap music, the erosion of morals and values.  As Mawhinney (1995) notes in her discussion of conceptual challenges to conventional framings of school violence, these "[p]erceptions of violence are reinforced through the discourse carried on in mass media and in the political and public arenas of education."

The link some have drawn between school shooters and students who are chronically bullied feeds the moral panic.  An FBI study found that two-thirds of school shooters had been bullied multiple times at school (Vossekuil et al., 2002). The fact that the Columbine shooters were bullying victims contributes and adds to the fear that this type of act can happen anywhere, anytime and so schools must do *something* about bullying before another shooting happens again.  Since 1997, publications on bullying have increased 200 percent.  Meanwhile, in the midst of this

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[12] Moral panic, coined by Cohen (1972) refers to a situation that arises when "[a] condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (p. 23).

increased attention, bullying has not "increased [nor decreased] in frequency as a behavioral problem over time" (Swearer, Espelage et al., 2009, p. 4).

The skepticism of how "real" of a problem bullying is unites the two views I present within mythological perspectives. The nuanced difference between the "myth" and "moral panic" spectrum lies in the reasons behind the skepticism. One view is reactionary, with a desire to return to "better" days where bullying was treated as a normal activity. The other view is critical and concerned that the popular press has built fervor around bullying to enact what Walton (2005) interprets as a "neoconservative ideology" shaping stringent controls to regulate human behavior. I include and acknowledge mythological perspectives' conceptualizations of bullying in this review for two reasons. First, the myths are frequently referenced in the bullying literature, albeit vaguely, as the dominant views of bullying during an earlier point in history and as worldviews some adults hold. Second, mythological perspectives represent part of the gamut of thoughts on bullying. These are views that help shape public discussions on bullying as well as school interventions and warrant mention in considering the myriad ways both educators and non-educators understand bullying.

**Table 2.1 - Summary point of different perspectives in bullying literature**

| Perspectives | Bullying is: | The bully is characterized as: | Interventions focus on: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pathological | a disease | a deviant | healing individuals through counseling and skills training |
| Social-ecological | the result of relationships and individual traits | a product of his/her social context who can be helped with rehabilitation | healing individuals and developing caring social contexts |
| Critical | a social and political construction, rooted in ideological relations of power; an act that privileges and maintain certain forms of social power | a socially constructed identity, influenced by macro power dynamics | providing opportunities for young people to critically interrogate the concepts of sex and gender and the ways they may engage in gender stereotyping; providing opportunities for students to problem solve |
| Mythological | normal and hyped up by media | a character everyone must learn how to deal with in childhood | keeping adults out of kids' interactions |

**Summary**

Scholars, researchers, and practitioners often use bullying as if the term means the same thing to everyone. In this section, I described four perspectives (see Table 2.1) that are featured within bullying literature. Scholars rarely identify these four perspectives of bullying in their works but these perspectives influence and shape bullying policies and interventions. In presenting this typology, my intent is not to mislead the reader by suggesting that we can categorize the bullying literature into *only* four different perspectives on bullying or that clear cut delineations exist between the different perspectives; at times, the perspectives might overlap with one another and studies might emerge from multiple perspectives. Instead, my hope is to offer a way to organize the work emerging from the relatively young field of bullying

research. These various definitions and conceptualizations of bullying have far-reaching and at times, conflicting consequences for practice and may mediate how teachers come to understand bullying and gendered harassment behaviors as well as bullying and gendered harassment policies.

In considering bullying related to LGBTQ youth, I chose to examine the various perspectives of bullying because I wanted to understand where and how bullying that targets youth who are or perceived to be LGBTQ fits within the larger body of work on bullying. What I found was that much of the research literature presents bullying in broad and generic terms. In order to answer the question of why peers target youth who are or perceived as LGBTQ for bullying and harassment, I now turn to a critical, post-structural perspective and consider the role of gender in bullying.

## Bullying, Harassment, and Homophobic Harassment: Gender as Common Denominator

As the review in the previous section indicates, bullying research conceptualizes bullying in generic terms and mostly neglects forms of gender-based bullying. Ringrose and Renold (2009) observe, "[W]hat gets called bullying is often that which violates heteronormative gender identities" (p. 19). Studies that do examine the relationship between gender and acts of aggression occur in the sexual harassment literature.[13] Whereas research on bullying tends to focus on personal or psychological attributes of bullies and contextual factors that prompt bullying

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[13] Sexual harassment theories and definitions emerged from the United States in the 1970s, focusing on sex discrimination in the work place (MacKinnon, 1979). The focus within sexual harassment literature in education has been predominantly on sexual harassment perpetrated by male students against female students.

behaviors, sexual harassment theory "prioritizes gender- and sexually-based experiences as key facts in stabilizing differences in power and privilege" (Gruber & Fineran, 2008, p. 2).

A few scholars have acknowledged the connection between bullying and sexual harassment. Stein (1995), for example, argues "the antecedents of peer sexual harassment in schools may be found in bullying" (p. 149). Other scholars and researchers (Craig, Pepler & Connolly, 2001; Pellegrini, 2001; Rofes 2005) suggest sexual harassment is the manifestation of bullying during adolescence. However, Gruber and Fineran (2008) warn against subsuming sexual harassment under bullying for two reasons. First, sexual harassment is illegal and bullying is not; school personnel, students and parents who equate sexual harassment with bullying might not be aware of schools' legal responsibility to address sexual harassment. Second, to view sexual harassment and other forms of victimization that originate from gender or sexuality as bullying may result in these acts being relegated to manifestations of private or interpersonal issues.

Rofes (2005) succinctly captures how research that examines bullying related to LGBTQ youth is dispersed in three related but distinct bodies of work:

> [D]iscussion of homophobia in schools frequently fails to engage valuable insights from research into bullying and sexual harassment. In fact, bullying, sexual harassment, and homophobic violence have developed almost entirely as three distinct lines of inquiry that rarely have been allowed opportunities for cross-fertilization. (p. 43)

In this section, I discuss research that has examined the role of gender in bullying. I consider Meyer's (2006) notion of gendered harassment and the role of gender in bullying, harassment and homophobia that targets students who are or perceived as

LGBTQ.  Meyer's "gendered harassment" bridges the theoretical gap between bullying, harassment and anti-gay harassment by examining the role of gender in these acts.  I then briefly discuss the prevalence and impacts of gendered harassment. Here, my aim is to consider how gender can help us better understand why specific children are targeted for specific forms of gendered harassment.

**Connecting Bullying, Harassment and Homophobia with Gendered Harassment**

Meyer (2006) links bullying, sexual harassment and anti-gay harassment together within the notion of "gendered harassment."  Gendered harassment describes any bullying or harassing behavior that "polices and reinforces traditional gender roles of heterosexual masculinity and femininity" (p. 43).  Embedded within the concept of gendered harassment is a critical post-structural feminist perspective in analyzing power relations and the societal antecedents that contextualize these acts. Meyer (2006) argues that using terms such as bullying or name-calling masks the "underlying power dynamics that such behavior builds and reinforces" (p. 44).  Using the term gendered harassment exposes and explicitly addresses the "underlying homophobia, transphobia, and (hetero)sexism behind such acts" (p. 44) since the perpetrator directs those words and actions towards those who do not behave according to gender norms.

Gender norms are built around the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and femininity, the idealized forms of how boys and men, girls and women should behave in specific cultural ways.[14] Hegemonic masculinity is especially pertinent in

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[14] "Hegemony" refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and maintains dominance over a subordinate group.

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examining homophobia and "gay-baiting" in schools (Tharinger, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity is signified by traditional sports boys and men play, traditional forms of work in which they engage, physical and mental strength, rationality and dominance over women and less aggressive men (Connell, 1995/2005).[15] This ideal representation becomes the "natural" standard of maleness against which boys and men compare themselves and others. Moreover, the dominant construction of masculinity grants permission for boys and men to engage in aggressive acts towards others.

The notions of "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich, 1986) as well as "gender performativity" and "heterosexual matrix" (Butler, 1990) can further elucidate why students who are or perceived to be LGBTQ are targeted by gendered harassment. Rich contends that heterosexuality is presented and seen as a natural preference and orientation for women when, instead, heterosexuality is organized, normalized and imposed by social institutions. Butler builds on this idea with the heterosexual matrix. Butler recognizes gender as not only as a social construct but as performativity and expression of "real" and idealized forms of masculinity and femininity, all entrenched within an assumed heterosexual orientation.[16] To assert or project their heterosexual identities, students engage in public gender performance(s) wherein they differentiate themselves from homosexuality and subordinate others who do not fall within the boundaries of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity (Renold, 2002; Rofes, 2005). Butler (1997) also asserts that injurious speech might be

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[15] Hegemonic masculinity is just one form of masculinity described in Connell's (2005) book, *Masculinities.* Other forms include: subordinate, complicit and marginalized masculinity, which are aligned in relation to hegemonic masculinity.
[16] Performance refers to one single act while performativity recognizes the role of cultural production within an act.

delivered through individual performance, but the speech is a reflection of what the local community has developed and accepted. In short, the term gendered harassment describes various behaviors that are entrenched within the heterosexual matrix and reinforce the pressures of compulsory heterosexuality. Ultimately, targets of gendered harassment are ridiculed for failing to be or to perform as a "normal" heterosexual boy or girl.

As sites of social reproduction (see Apple, 2000; Bourdieu, 1973), schools actively and tacitly engage in the production of masculinities, femininities, and sexualities. Schools are sites for the production and regulation of sexual identities (as well as other social identities) (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). High levels of gender conformity are expected and embedded within school curricular as well as school policies that oversee student and faculty behaviors (Lugg, 2003). Some schools might prohibit males from wearing earrings or having long hair (Rehder, 2001; Wojohn, 2001 in Lugg, 2003). Curriculum materials validate compulsory heterosexuality through portraying most historical figures and fictional characters as heterosexuals or extracurricular activities that follow the heterosexual script (i.e. high school dances) (Walton, 2004).

Conventional wisdom often portrays schools as neutral sites that avoid discussions of sexuality. Yet, the cultures of schools are, in fact, what Epstein (1996) describes as "cultures of sexuality" where students constantly engage in performances that are embedded within discourses of heterosexuality, in both primary and secondary schools (Renold, 2002). Through proms, school dances and other ritualistic events that reaffirm the natural pairings of males and females, schools consistently

reaffirm heterosexuality and provide spaces and events for students to enact these

their heterosexual roles. Thus, schools are not neutral space; they hold and maintain

power relationships that promote heterosexuality and heterosexism and may be

hostile and unsafe places for students, teachers and staff members who are LGBTQ

(Clarke, 2004).

Scholarship over the past decade reveals the extent of the sexual inequality in

schooling. Pascoe's (2007) ethnography of masculinity construction in a high school

in California noted the prevalence with which male students invoked "the specter of

fag" in order to challenge other male students' expressions of masculinity.  Pascoe's

analysis suggests that when boys called each other "fag," it was not an isolated

homophobic act, but instead, a gendered and sexualized insult. Smith (1998) found

that in schools, the "local practices of the ideology of 'fag' are never penalized or

publicly condemned. Explicitly homophobic ridicule in sports contexts goes unre-

marked. Effective toleration of the ideology of 'fag' among students and teachers

condemns gay students to the isolation of "passing" or ostracism and sometimes to a

life of hell in school." (p. 332).  Male students are not the only ones who actively

partake in this boundary policing of compulsory heterosexuality (Renold, 2000).

Girls who rejected hyper-feminine displays were free from stigmatization from peers

as long as they engaged in actions that demonstrated their heterosexuality (Tolman,

2006). Homophobia is intimately connected with the regulation of gender "norms"

and manifests in schools in its most frequent and obvious form in name-calling.

Without explicit, visible countering strategies, the formal and informal school culture

43

will ascribe and conform to normative ideals around gendered differences and use those norms to police students.

*Official Silences*

Discussions of sexuality in schools are mostly muted if not entirely silent. Students often do not feel comfortable discussing sexuality issues with teachers. Kosciw and colleagues (2008) found that nearly half (45 percent) of LGBT students felt somewhat or very uncomfortable raising issues about sexual orientation or gender identity in class. Similarly, most felt uncomfortable speaking to various school staff about LGBT issues. Of course, this discomfort does not arise only from the students. Teachers themselves experience discomfort too in discussing these topics (Kotleba, 2011; Robinson, 2002). Robinson and Ferfolja (2008) noted that potential teachable moments on sexuality may be lost due to a host of concerns from teachers' such as their own discomfort or lack of knowledge of a topic, fear of potential repercussions and/or perceived impropriety in discussing the topic. When both students and teachers avoid talking directly about issues such as sexuality, sexual orientation and gender in schools, young people learn that "sexuality, especially non heterosexuality, is shrouded in social taboos, strictly policed and regulated by adults topics" (Robinson & Ferofolja, 2008, p. 850).

Compulsory heterosexuality and the policing of gender limit the permitted ways of "being" male and female in schools and also limit the ways in which teachers and students can talk about sexuality. Most prominent is the silence regarding lesbian and gay sexuality (Rudoe, 2010). Mayo uses the term "official silence" to describe the "lack of information, and lack of teacher and administrator attention to the

homophobic action and speech" (Mayo, 2006, p. 33). Mayo also notes "the official

silences in curricula" and how the official silence "makes schools hostile places for

sexual minority youth and any youth perceived to be a sexual minority" (p. 41).

The silences that arise from both student and teacher discomfort contributes to

the overall resistance to sexuality in schools. Britzman (2000) describes three forms

of resistance in schools: structural, pedagogical and psychical. Structural resistance

refers to "the very design or organization of education" (p. 34) where issues of

sexuality are not considered integral to the curriculum or to students' learning.

Pedagogical resistance manifests itself in the belief that sexuality represents a

secretive part of an individual's nature.  Psychical resistance refers to the internal

conflict and ambivalence teachers have regarding the role of sexuality in their

classrooms. The negotiation of identity carried a psychological and emotional price

for some teachers, particular those working in school districts that do not have

policies that offered legal protections for LGBTQ teachers (Rudoe, 2010).  Wright

(2010) found that for LBGTQ educators to feel safe within their schools, support

from administrators as well policies that ensure equal rights and protections were

necessary.

A certain moral panic revolves around sexuality and education which includes

the notion that it is inappropriate for gays and lesbians to teach children (Epstein &

Johnson, 1998) that it is inappropriate for young children to *learn* about gays and

lesbians for the fear that the "gay agenda" will recruit children to homosexuality

(DePalma & Atkinson, 2006).  Teachers who identify as LGBTQ may have the onus

to prove themselves as "acceptable" in the face of such fear (Epstein & Johnson,

45

1998).  Teachers who are popular, who are "superteacher" figures and who are well-respected may be able to compensate for the perceived deficits associated with being gay or lesbian and their sexual orientation is less of a cause for stress and worry (Blount, 2006; Rasmussen, 2006; Rudoe, 2010). *All* teachers engage in identity management to some extent but the issue appears to be more of a strategic and troubling one for some LGBTQ teachers.

Evans (1999) describes this process as part of the "interactive nature of identity negotiation" where the construction of divisions between public and private spheres must be constantly renegotiated by teachers and students who are not heterosexual identified.  To main a professional identity, teachers have to continually shift and negotiate the boundaries between their public and private selves.   In negotiating the public/private boundary, teachers may utilize various identity management strategies in certain situations to protect themselves.   Teachers may draw on the importance of being a "good teacher" which is intertwined with their notions of professionalism (Rudoe, 2010).  Rudoe also notes how respect from staff and students are crucial to developing and maintaining each teacher's status in the school and plays into how teacher accounts for their personal power at the school and help them gauge whether to hide parts of their sexuality identity.  Most important in Rudoe's work is how it points to how the "structural framing of sex and relationship in education has impacted on teachers' identities and positioning within the school," (p. 34).  The silences on sexuality in schools impact not only students but also some teachers and how they view their role and responsibilities in addressing gendered harassment.

**Teacher response**

The research and practitioner-focused literature offers teachers a wide array of anti-bullying/ anti-harassment recommendations and strategies. Some seek interventions that provide transformative educational experiences and opportunities for students to critically interrogate the dynamics in which gendered harassment arise (Gourd & Gourd, 2011). However, few studies explicitly examine teachers' response to bullying or gendered harassment. The studies that do, demonstrate that both in-service and pre-service teachers have misconceptions of what behaviors constitute bullying and harassment (Hazler et al., 2001; Reis 1999). Rahimi and Liston (2011) contend that while females experience sexual harassment in a variety of ways, how teachers perceive and acknowledge sexual harassment is dependent on teachers' notions of sexuality which is conceptualized through the teachers' sense of race and class. Rahimi and Liston found that most teachers failed to recognize actual harassment and much the sexual harassment of Black female students was viewed by teachers as warranted or expected. In the eyes of teachers and arguably male student perpetrators, and perhaps even in the eyes of the young girls, these actions do not 'really' constitute sexual harassment.

Teachers typically intervene when they perceive an event as "severe" (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009). Teachers and other adults are more likely to identify situations that involve physical threat or abuse as bullying (Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1993). The implications of such findings are twofold. First, teachers are more likely to identify physical confrontations as bullying when they are. This may lead to misdiagnosis of situations and interactions between students. Second, teachers are

47

less likely to intervene in situations that involve social/emotional or verbal harm such as instances of homophobic teasing. Stone and Couch (2004) found that over 80 percent of 270 teachers who surveyed selected "Report to the designated authority on your campus" and/or "Talk to the initiator about the unacceptability of the behavior and say the behavior should stop" as the common responses to address sexual harassment scenarios.

Anagnostopoulos et al. (2009) and Meyer (2008; 2009) examined the interpretive work teachers engage in as they determine if and how they will intervene in instances of gendered harassment. Acts of gendered harassment unfold very quickly, unfurling in moment-to-moment interactions among and between students and faculty. These interactions are also "situated within webs of relationship, personal histories, school norms, and societal ideas about gender, sexuality, and power" (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009, p. 521). Teachers might choose not to intervene when they feel ambivalent about their professional responsibilities or when they view interventions require them to step out of their boundaries (Somech & Optlatka, 2009).

Research that examine how teachers respond to sexual harassment show that teachers frequently drew on a developmental discourse to explain these behaviors. Teachers may attribute male on female sexual harassment as "students' immaturity, framing this type of gender-based bullying as the product of youthful ignorance rather than acts of domination, coercion, or violence." (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009, p.541). Lacey (2003) found that teachers constructed male aggression (in sexual harassment) either as normal male conduct or as atypical development. This in turn meant that teachers also saw sexual harassment as "an extraordinary event caused by

factors beyond the teachers' control and beyond their responsibilities as teachers" (p. 192). In those instances, teachers believe mental health professionals were who should be helping perpetrators and victims of sexual harassment.

Teachers may also draw on the developmental discourses to explain why they are unable to talk about "non-heterosexuality" with some students. One perspective offered within the developmental discourse is that emotional and cognitive stages, such as those proposed by Piaget, become the markers of 'appropriate' knowledge and learning in children. Discussing sexuality with children, especially non-heterosexuality, is considered developmentally inappropriate and therefore 'potentially dangerous'. Non-heterosexuality challenges the dominant heterosexual discourses and the power relations inherent in the heterosexual/homosexual binary. A sense of 'danger' is also intensified in relation to gay men being read as pedophiles, a discourse that has important implications for teacher educators and male teacher pre-service teachers (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008, p. 849-850).

Mishna and colleagues (2005, p. 724-725) identified five major factors influencing how teachers understand and responds to bullying incidents. First, whether teachers viewed the incident as one that was serious and worthy of additional attention. Whether teachers consider the victimized child responsible and whether the victim match their assumptions about victim characteristics and behaviors also determines the level of support teachers will provide to the student. Whether teachers felt compassion for a student also influenced their responses. Finally, the nature of the school environment and organization support also impacts how teachers respond to bullying. One dimension of the school environment is "the number of students felt

pressure to address to teach the curriculum and respond to the numerous bullying-type incidents that occurred throughout the day.  Most teachers expressed feeling that there was a lack of support and that they lacked the time and resources to address bullying adequately; they described feeling "exhausted," "scared," "helpless," or "fed up" (p. 727).

Zack, Mannheim and Alfano, (2010)  identified four archetypal scenarios and responses that represent typical reactions of student teachers dealing with homophobic harassment in their classrooms: avoiders, hesitators, confronters, and integrators.  Within these four archetypes are various levels of skills, comfort and willingness to address homophobic speech and harassment.  Avoiders may remain silent and not address students' uses of gay epithets.  Hesitators include those teachers who felt a call to action to address the homophobia they witnessed, but lacked the set of skills necessary to create an atmosphere free of homophobic rhetoric or move students toward more accepting ideologies. The reasons for this lack of confidence varied among the student teachers, but were most commonly the result of 1) being accused of being gay by students, 2) encountering religious opposition in the students, and 3) feeling pressured to focus on content.  Confronters squarely addressed homophobic rhetoric whenever it occurred and integrators "sought to combat the issue of homophobia within the school by integrating homophobia reduction into the curriculum" (p.104).

Research reveals a constellation of competing interests and concerns that impact teachers' responses to gendered harassment.  Influencing factors include school policies, school norms, values shared by administrators and the school

community, and workload demands (Meyer, 2009; Somech & Optlatka, 2009; Swearer, Espelage et al., 2009). Individual attributes such as a teacher's personal life experience, teaching philosophy, and commitment to social justice can also impact teacher response to gendered harassment (Meyer, 2009).

Although the current body of work identifies mediating factors, we know less about how the mediating factors interact together to impact teacher response. Specifically, we know little about how teachers come to understand gendered harassment policies in the midst of their lived experiences. Despite the wide range of perspectives on bullying and harassment, much of the current research in the field adopts a rational and normative stance towards policy. Authors advocate for policy texts that detail teachers' responsibilities to reduce bullying in schools. Given this push for policies to "solve" our bullying problems, how may a framework incorporating institutional ethnography offer a different way of thinking about gendered harassment policies and how teachers interpret and engage with these policies?

**Additional Lenses**

As I conducted my literature review, I found both researchers and practitioners framed "publicly displayed and easy to understand" (Meyer, 2009, p. 67) comprehensive school policies as key solutions to reducing gendered harassment. Consider this excerpt from a 2010 editorial by the executive directors of two national LGBTQ advocacy organizations:

> Comprehensive anti-bullying policies help ensure that the students most at risk are afforded equal access to an education, free from fear and intimidation. Students from schools with a comprehensive policy are 50 percent more likely

to feel very safe at school (54 percent vs. 36 percent). Students without such a policy are three times more likely to skip a class because they feel uncomfortable or unsafe (16 percent vs. 5 percent).(Byard & Lettman, 2010)

The above passage captures the core assumptions one finds in recommendations from both the popular press and research literature. One assumption is that policies act as mechanisms for mandating protection for students and communicating the serious nature of bullying (Swearer, Limber et al., 2009). Individuals adopting this normative stance towards polices also assume it is possible for policymakers to craft clear, coherent and non-contradictory policy messages and that there is only *one* way of reading policy texts. The problem with this conventional view of policy is it leads us to conclude bullying and gendered harassment persists in schools only because: 1) schools don't have good enough policies and 2) teachers and other school staff are not faithfully implementing policies.

I want to be clear that I am not opposed to school districts having comprehensive policies nor am I challenging the positive impacts those policies may have in improving the lives of students who experience gendered harassment in schools. What I find troubling is that school districts embrace gendered harassment policies as *the* solutions to gendered harassment. Simplistic envisioning of policies does not consider the various ways policy implementers may learn about and interact with gendered harassment policies. Nor does this envisioning of policies illuminate how teachers and students may come to know and understand these policies within the social context of their schools' lives. Despite policies designed to ensure students' freedom and protection from harassment and access to safe and equitable learning environments, a disjuncture exists between policy aims and how students and teachers experience and interact with gendered harassment policies. These

institutional texts may be inconsequential without policymaker's active and thoughtful considerations of the local contexts in which these policies unfold. Just like other social institutions, schools shape particular kinds of subjectivities and ways of knowing (Foucault, 1980). To better understand how individuals interact with policies in their school setting, it is important to focus on institutional practices because these practices have a direct bearing on how teachers receive, interpret and understand policy messaging about gendered harassment.

In this next section, I offer some of the major concepts in institutional ethnography which provided the theoretic framework for how I approached this study. I drew on ideas from institutional ethnography to add a more complex and nuanced lens in considering how teachers perceived gendered harassment and interpreted their school districts' gendered harassment policies.

**Institutional ethnography**

I utilized institutional ethnography in this study both as a guiding theoretical framework and method of inquiry.[17] Pioneered by Dorothy Smith (Smith, 1987, 2005, 2007), institutional ethnography emerged as a feminist critique of traditional sociological inquiry.[18] Institutional ethnography is situated within the ethnomethodological tradition of sociology which examines "the routine grounds of everyday activities" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 78) and assumes our everyday/everynight lives are "socially organized." Institutional ethnography also draws from

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[17] Smith (2007) asserts she does not "view institutional ethnography as a sociological method so much as a sociology that proceeds by inquiry rather than by establishing from the onset a theoretical framework for the interpretation of people's behavior" (p. 409).

[18] Smith (2005) emphasizes that institutional ethnography is "a sociology, not just a methodology" (p. 2). Smith sees traditional sociology as part of the ideological structure that "orders, organizes and sanctions the social relations that sustain domination" (p.54).

interactionalist perspectives, which focus on the manners in which language creates meaning in daily activities.  Ontologically, institutional ethnography is grounded in the social organization of knowledge; Smith draws on Marx's notions of "ruling" and adopts Marx's notion of "social" as a setting where individuals are "real and relationally producing their own conditions of existence" (Walby, 2005, p. 161).

Feminist standpoint theories informed Smith's development of institutional ethnography.   The central tenets of feminist standpoint theories (Collins, 2004; Harding, 2004; Hartsock, 2004) recognize the role of social and historical locations in shaping individuals and their knowledge.  Thus the social situation and identities of an individual – including one's gender, race, class, religion, sexuality and physical capacities – play a role in forming and limiting what the individual knows and may know.  Feminist standpoint theories also consider how "marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that make it possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions that is for the non-marginalized" (Bowell, 2011)  and the necessity for research examining power relations to begin with the lives of the marginalized in order to gain understandings that may not be accessible through dominant standpoints.

 Institutional ethnography requires "a commitment to begin and develop inquiry in the very same world we live in, where we are in our bodies" (Smith, 2005, p. 2).  Although institutional ethnography starts with individuals' standpoints, it aims to discover beyond individuals' experiences.  A basic premise of institutional ethnography is that what people do and experience in their local workplace are coordinated with others' actions across various sites. Institutional ethnography

explores taken-for-granted assumptions about everyday life and the ruling relations coordinating people's lives in the social world.  To do this, institutional ethnographers ask two central questions: "How does this [the action of interest] happen as it does? How are these relations organized?" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 7).  In short, institutional ethnographers aim to explain and understand people's social life through interactions between people via larger historical and institutional structures.

I draw on two "principal notions" (Smith, 2007) from institutional ethnography in the heuristic framework that guided my study.  First is the concept of "social relations."  Smith (1987) defined these social relations as "concerted sequences or courses of social action implicating more than one individual whose participants are not necessarily known to one another" (p. 155).  In other words, social relations refer to the practices and activities through which peoples' lives are socially organized.  These practices and activities unfold through sequences of action. Different people may partake in different stages of that sequence across time and space; these people may not directly engage or interact with one another within that shared activity sequence.  Nevertheless, the individuals in this particular social relation are located within and bounded together by an institutional process that articulates and coordinates how and in what ways they do their work activities, "often without their conscious knowledge" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 31).

A second key notion in institutional ethnography is the integral roles texts play in establishing and maintaining institutional processes and forms of action (Smith, 2007).  Texts refer to documents that are "relatively fixed and replicable" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 765) and may include forms, reports, drawings,

photographs, videos, and sound recordings. Institutional texts may fall into three

categories:

> 1) everyday texts – found in participants' everyday work and practice;
> 2) mediating texts – district level texts – this may include policies and
> guidelines; and
> 3) boss texts – legislation and regulation that cover multiple jurisdictions

Smith (2007) asserts texts play key, essential roles in creating and maintaining

institutional processes because of the capacity of texts to replicate words, images or

sounds across multiple sites. One way texts link to institutional practices is when

"actualities [enter] into the textual form in which they can be made institutionally

actionable" (Smith, 2007, p. 412). Bell and Campbell (2003) highlight how text may

"standardize the almost limitlessly various understandings of readers; that is, they

bring a similar understanding of what is read about to all those professionals who read

the same text." (p. 117). For example, consider the discipline referral form a teacher

fills out in order to report a gendered harassment incident that happened in her

classroom. The form as a structured text, guides the teacher into a "textual

conversation" as she completes the form, shaping and standardizing how this

particular teacher reports students' (mis)behaviors.

Institutional ethnography's focus on the activities and the actual lived

experiences of people does not mean institutional ethnographic perspectives ignore

the power and discourse embedded within people's accounts of their lived

experiences as well as the texts they come contact with in their everyday life. Smith

(2005) notes:

> …the disjuncture between the experienced actualities of those caught up in
> such a process and what is recognized in the form of words that represent
> them institutionally is an important dimension of institutional power (p. 10).

These texts also wield a tremendous power in society when those who are in ruling positions activate them.

In short, adopting an institutional ethnographic approach begins with three core assumptions (Deveau, 2008). First, individuals are experts on their own lives. Research that aims to discover and explore "how things are actually put together" (Smith, 2005, p. 1) requires grounding in people's lived realities. Second, individuals are located in a range of social settings. Third, powerful, outside forces shape how individuals live and experience their lives within multiple social settings. What emerges from an institutional ethnography is a social cartography that makes visible how social relations are locally organized and trans-locally controlled through ruling relations.

Institutional ethnography has been used by researchers in various fields to investigate a wide variety of issues. IE has been used most prominently in health sciences research—specifically, community health, public health and nursing research. In this context, social scientists gather institutional ethnographic research data to examine practices within and between health-oriented settings (Rakin & Campbell, 2009). Over the years, scholars have utilized institutional ethnography in education (Andrew-Bechely, 2005; Baranowski, 2010; Daniel, 2004; Griffith, 1992), social work practice (Parada et al., 2007), food science (Cristi, 2010) and to museum studies (Aston, 2010) to learn more about the discursive and organizational processes that shape local and translocal action. For example, Akamanti (2010) explored the role of neoliberal governance, new public management and centralized information

processing and communication and their effects on food banks. Alexander (2010) explored the networks of relations that shape garment creation and the connection between consumers who try to be ethical with their consumption and an industry which exploits its mostly female workers. As a mode of inquiry, institutional ethnography has diverse application. IE offers a mode of analysis that allows for researchers to explore a regime of social policy from the standpoint of those individuals who are subject to it. What connects institutional ethnographies is that they are tools that activists may use to transform society (Deveau, 2009).

**No Child Left Behind**

The research findings of other institutional ethnographic studies (Dorsey, 2011; Freiburger, 2010; Stoll, 2011) as well as educational scholars who have explored the new political economy of urban education (Anyon, 2005; Apple, 2006; Kumashiro, 2008; Lipman, 2004; 2011) attuned me to consider the role of neoliberal managerial and market-related practices and discourses in shaping teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies. These practices and discourses can be found in the standards-based accountability provisions in a boss text such as the No Child Left Behind Act ([NCLB], 2002), which articulates the increased accountability and standardization that have shaped the work of public school personnel in the United States in the past decade (Hamilton et al., 2007).

Since its ratification in 2002, NCLB has been the foremost education reform effort across the U.S. School systems have reconfigured and shifted their school curriculum and school practices to comply with the act's guidelines. The standards-based accountability embedded within NCLB may be characterized as an integrated

system of ―"academic standards, standardized assessments, and accountability for student outcomes" (Hamilton et al., 2007, p. 2). The ultimate purpose of increased accountability and standardization is to improve school performance (Griffith & André-Bechely, 2008; Hamilton et al., 2007). NCLB directs a stringent accountability system with an explicit goal that all students become academically proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014.

At the heart of the accountability system is the concept of adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP measures the improvement of all students and designated subgroups in mastering particular standards in math and reading. Standardized tests are the most used measures for student achievement. NCLB holds schools, districts, and states accountable for improvements by mandating public reporting of AYP. When schools do not meet or maintain AYP toward statewide proficiency goals, individual teachers or schools receive punitive consequences (Noddings, 2007; Ravitch, 2011). Low performing schools, particularly those serving large number of students from low-income backgrounds, face the threat of corrective action, leading to school restructuring, the possible replacement of school staff, and implementation of new curricula (Darling-Hammond, 2007). While school leaders and teachers may have philosophical differences with NCLB, the sanctions associated with not making AYP ultimately impact teaching and teachers' work in schools (Anagnostopoulos, 2007).

Using institutional ethnography, I considered how teachers' responses to gendered harassment incidents in schools are organized by ruling relations. In conducting an institutional ethnography, I focused my attention on discovering the

ruling relations that texts help to organize and describing the connections across sites that are actually operating. I utilized the methods of institutional ethnography to examine how the school district's gendered harassment policies and other texts organized and coordinated teachers' understandings of their school districts' gendered harassment policies across space and time.

**Health and physical education**

In this study, I privileged the voices and experiences of six health and physical education teachers. Physical education (PE) teachers may observe certain student behaviors that other teachers do not see in their classrooms because of the physical aspects of P.E. and the prominent role the physical bodies play in the course. Research suggests that bullies most frequently target other students for two traits: student physical appearance and performance in physical education; female students are often more likely to be targets. (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Hills, 2007). Female students in particular may experience verbal taunts, exclusion from groups or gossiping due to lack of skills (Flintoff & Scraton, 2005). Lenskyj and van Daalen (2006) reported that peer groups often bully those students who do not meet gendered body "standards or "ideals" by gesturing and laughing at them. This may include teenage boys who are smaller in stature- either in height or in muscle mass.

As a subject area, health and physical education within U.S. schools is distinctively different from the "core" subject areas such as math and English. Health and physical education refers to the formalized courses taught in schools that focus on the skills and knowledge students need to establish and sustain an active and healthy lifestyle (National Association for Sport and Physical Education [NASPE] &

American Heart Association, 2010).  Teachers in the content area are often expected to teach health and physical education together.  The focus on physical activity may include topics such as running, dancing and other movement and the focus on health may include topics such as nutrition, social responsibility, human sexuality, disease prevention and the value of fitness throughout one's life. Given the content area's role as the official context in which sex and sexuality education is addressed in schools, some believe physical education serves as the legitimized location for the inclusion of anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexist education (Griffin, 1993; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008).

There is broad public support of physical education; many parents, teens and children have positive perceptions and attitudes toward physical education as part of the school curriculum. Over 80 percent of adults in a sample of over 1,000 adults and 500 teens agreed that daily physical education should be mandatory in schools (NASPE, 2000; 2003).  The NASPE, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Association for State Boards of Education (NASBE) all recommend daily physical education or a total of 150 minutes per week for elementary school students and 225 minutes per week for middle and high school students. Forty-three states mandate physical education for elementary school students and 40 mandate it for middle/junior high school students. In spite of good intentions and the broad support for the inclusion of physical education in schools across the US, how physical education unfolds at the ground level greatly differs from policy.

There are some external impasses that limit the role physical education plays in schools; of particular concern is the marginalization of health and physical

61

education. Amid demands to promote student skill acquisition and boost academic achievement in reading and math, other curricular goals as well as other subject areas such as physical education, social studies, science and the arts are overlooked by school officials as a significant part of young people's education (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006; Shirvani, 2009; Siegel, 2007). As educators in schools work to meet the adequate yearly progress mandates of NCLB, school leaders have reduced or entirely eliminated time for health and physical education and other "noncore" subjects in the daily curriculum (Durant et al. 2009; Hall, 2007; Locke & Graber, 2008; Nye, 2008). In Florida, 58 percent of students do not attend physical education classes in any given week (Sealey, 2010). According to the Center for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about four percent of elementary school and eight percent of middle schools provide daily physical education (CDC in Strauss, 2010).

This practice of replacing P.E. time with additional course work time for reading and math is the norm rather the exception. In some districts, students may be pulled from P.E. classes to participate in intensive tutoring designed to increase scores on state testing (Catchings, 2011). The perilous position of health and physical education in schools has been further exacerbated by the economic downturn in the United States since 2008. Faced with declining school budgets, school leaders often opt to cut physical education classes in order to save other programs such as full-day kindergarten (Hefling, 2011).

School leaders may perceive physical education as having "low subject status" (McKenzie & Lounsbery, 2009). Stevens-Smith, Fisk, Keels-Williams, and Barton

(2006) surveyed 83 principals across 25 school districts and found that 36 percent of the principals surveyed indicated they did not view physical education as an academic subject. The principals also ranked physical education last in a list of 11 subjects evaluated in terms of importance. Such perceptions of physical education coupled with external pressures to narrow the curriculum and limited time allocations for physical education help justify and contribute to schools' and districts' marginalization of physical education and physical educators.

**Conceptual Framework**

Here I offer a summary of the heuristic framework that guided my research. The bullying and gendered harassment literature as well as Smith's (1987, 2005) works on institutional ethnography and the social organization of knowledge offered me some grounding assumptions and theoretical guidance of what I might discover in my field research. Figures 1 and 2 provide a visual representation of the major concepts that guided my thinking of how teachers come to understand gendered harassment policies.

This study was heavily influenced by institutional ethnography both as a theory and method of inquiry. Figure 1 outlines the major grounding concepts in institutional ethnography that informs the conceptual framework guiding this proposed study. Institutional ethnography aims to explicate the social organization coordinating people's lives. The overarching assumption is that individuals' actions and behaviors are influenced by more than peoples' own motivation and intentions. The concept of social relations provided a step in understanding how people's everyday practices and activities are socially organized. Much of the social relations

63

we engage in are actually invisible to ourselves. Only when something goes wrong do

we recognize the "organized complexity of our lives that we otherwise navigate so

easily" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p.31). At its core, institutional ethnography

problematizes the social relations at the local level and examines how texts coordinate

actions, consciousness and forms of organization trans-locally. Embedded within

these texts are not only ruling relations that standardized behaviors across multiple

locations but also streams of discourses that permeate and mediate local and



**Figure 1 - Grounding concepts in institutional ethnography**
individual understandings of a given narrative.


As an institutional ethnographic study, this inquiry began with the standpoint

of teachers and their lived experiences. The particular problematic I explored in this

study was the disjuncture between what school district's gendered harassment policies asked and required teachers to do, competing demands from other policies within the school district and how teachers understood and enacted these policies in their daily work.

My literature review of bullying and gendered harassment research suggests several streams of professional discourses in education that may impact how teachers understand gendered harassment policies. In this study, I used discourse to refer to a collection of ideas that are embedded within and through texts. I adopted Dorothy Smith's notion of discourse where discourse refers to a field of relations that includes texts, inter-textual conversations as well as the actors in local sites who produce texts, use them and take up the conceptual frames circulated within the texts (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 772). Figure 2 highlights three specific discourses. Through my review of the research literature, I identified three prominent professional discourses that may impact teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies. These streams of discourses embedded within policy text included: 1) bullying and gendered harassment 2) gender and sexuality and 3) teachers' roles and responsibilities in responding to gendered harassment. In my analysis of the school districts' gendered harassment policy texts, I explored how these policy texts reflected, carried and activated unique embedded discourses of ruling relations.

**Figure 2- Streams of discourses embedded within policy texts**

Discourse on Teachers' Roles and Responsibilities in Responding to Gendered Harassment

Discourse on Gender and Sexuality

Discourse on Bullying and Gendered Harassment

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

**Overview**

In the previous chapters, I established the purpose of this study and drew on the literature on bullying and gendered harassment as well as institutional ethnography to develop a conceptual framework that guided my fieldwork. To explore how teachers come to understand gendered harassment and to investigate how policy discourse(s) and other assorted institutional presses influence teachers' conceptualizations of gendered harassment, I employed institutional ethnographic methods, relying on qualitative data primarily gathered through document analysis as well as interviews and observations with six health and physical education teachers in Mid-Atlantic Public Schools (MAPS).

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the methods I used in my fieldwork as well as my methods of data analysis. I describe the rationale for the study's design and provide an overview of institutional ethnography, which is the methodology that undergirds my data collection efforts. My goal is to clarify my assumptions in my research design and how those assumptions shaped and impacted this study. I explain the key decisions I made throughout the research process, particularly around participant recruitment, participant selection, interviews, participant observation, document collection and analysis and data analysis. I end the chapter with the procedures and techniques I used to establish trustworthiness of the conclusions I drew from the data.

**Rationale for Research Methods**

**Qualitative methodology**

This study focused on developing an in-depth analysis of how health and physical education teachers in one school district came to understand their district's gendered harassment policies. Exploring how these understandings and explanations unfolded in the context of the study participants' work lives required me to seek a holistic, broad panoramic view of the phenomena. The following research question and sub-questions guided my choice of research design:

1. How do teachers come to understand their school district's gendered harassment policies?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the local understanding and explanations of gendered harassment?

2. How do policy texts mediate teachers' understandings of gendered harassment?

The research questions required a research design that gave voice to participant perceptions and allowed them to explain their thinking. Embedded within this research design is the assumption that participants' verbal responses are valid verbalized cognitions of their beliefs, behaviors and understandings of gendered harassment (Maxwell, 2004).

Quantitative measures and statistical analyses did not fit the research questions I chose and had limited ability to help me gain greater insight into the social relations that shaped teachers understanding of gendered harassment and gendered harassment locally and extra-locally. In order to answer my research question, I

needed to speak directly with teachers to hear their experiences and interpretations and to gain first-hand knowledge about their work settings and how they encounter gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies.

Given this study's focus on how institutional contexts and individual factors contribute to teachers' perceptions of gendered harassment, this study was well-suited for qualitative data to answer my research questions. First, the qualitative data allowed for an in-depth study of individuals' lived experiences and standpoints in a contextualized manner. Second, qualitative methods provided a pathway for me to seek deeper understanding of the social processes and meanings embedded in how teachers understood gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies. Furthermore, the emergent nature of qualitative research allowed for flexibility that took into account changes that came up during data collection. Overall, qualitative methodology allowed me to collect and analyze data in congruence with the assumptions featured in the study's conceptual framework and allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon.

**Institutional ethnography**

I used institutional ethnography (IE) in this study not only as a source of theoretical insight but also as a framework to inform my methods of data collection. Institutional ethnography as a theory holds that teachers' lived experiences are organized by processes that extend outside of their immediate settings. IE as a qualitative research methodology can be used for investigating problematic issues that exist on an institutional level. Unlike a case study which includes "an exploration of a bounded system" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61) such as an individual, group, or program,

69

IE is more expansive. Although the initial entry point of research is through the examination of a local phenomenon, the goal of an institutional ethnographic study is to explicate the ways teachers' everyday experiences are coordinated and organized by complex sets of social relations that are sometimes invisible from individual locations in everyday life (Smith, 2005). Using institutional ethnography in this research study enabled me to explore how policy texts and the discourses of gendered harassment came to structure the everyday activities of health and physical education in one school district. Institutional ethnography aims to explicate the ways power affects everyday lives or in other words, how power relations shape local experiences (Campbell & Gregor, 2004).

Smith (1987) developed IE as an alternative sociology that drew on feminism, ethnomethodology, and Marxism. The original data she used to develop institutional ethnography were grounded in her experiences in teaching in a male-dominated discipline (sociology). IE provides new ways of exploring authoritative knowledge and universalized conceptions of how things happen by shifting the standpoint of those who are being ruled by the knowledge or whose perspectives are the study's focus (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). Another key feature of IE is that it strives to go beyond and uncover what people know in order to find out how what they are doing in one setting is connected to others' actions in another setting and in manners that are not visible in everyday interactions.

IE is embedded within a Marxian ontology of the social. Researchers drawing on institutional ethnography assume individuals are real and responsible for producing their own conditions of existence and that participants are the experts of

their everyday experiences (Smith, 2005).  Smith (2005) posits that at least two types

of knowledge are discoverable through individuals' accounts of their everyday

experiences: "a person's experience of and in their work, what they do, how they do

it, including what they think and feel" and "the implicit or explicit coordination of his

or her work with the work of others" (p. 151).  I wanted to provide an analysis of how

policies dealing with gendered harassment are socially organized through a variety of

practices and processes which are often invisible to the teachers who enact and

interact with these policies.  As Campbell and Gregor (2004) assert, texts are a key

form of social organization.  Working within an institutional ethnographical

framework allowed me to take a particular text, unpack how it works and how it

enters into and coordinates the health and physical education teachers' work in

specific ways.  Institutional ethnography allowed me to pay particular attention to the

discourses and ideologies embedded within key texts the teachers interacted with in

their daily work.  I took note of the manner by which these texts shaped how teachers

considered gendered harassment and came to know the school district's gendered

harassment policies in a coordinated manner. I used standpoint as a methodological

tool to communicate the place from which I investigated the social context of the

health and P.E. teachers' experiences.

In the remaining sections of the chapter, I detail the methods I used in this

study including guidelines for site selection, participant selection, and participant

recruitment. I also provide a summary of data sources and the data analysis plan.


**Study design**

In this study, I explicated the ruling relations that coordinate the work of health and physical education teachers' understandings of gendered harassment. I began with a problematic to explore how various texts and discourses coordinate the work activities of health and physical education teachers. I gathered data concurrently from interviews as well as key institutional texts participants discussed in interviews. Like other researchers who use IE, I utilized direct observations, interviews and document analysis to systematically investigate my research questions (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; DeVault & McCoy, 2002).

**Site selection**

I utilized purposive sampling strategies in selecting my study district and study participants. I conducted my research in one urban public school district, Mid-Atlantic Public Schools[19] (MAPS), located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. I drew on Marshall and Rossman (2006) notions of a realistic site in selecting the study district. The criteria for such a site includes:

 (a) entry is possible;

(b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people,

programs, interactions, and structures of interest is present;

(c) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the

participants in the study;

(d) the study can be conducted and reported ethically; and

(e) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured. (p. 62)

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[19] A pseudonym

My previous work experiences in the study district facilitated my ability to gain access to the research site. The district required an internal sponsor as part of their research request application. I had worked with the central office of the study district the previous spring and a colleague whose work related to bullying and gendered harassment served as the internal sponsor for my research request. My work as an educator in the district served as a shared experience that helped establish my credibility with study participants and as a beginning point to build a relationship with the participants.

I also selected MAPS as the study district because MAPS provided a rich and diverse environment to study gendered harassment policies in schools. MAPS served a student population of over 45,000 students where 69 percent of the students were African American and 61 percent of the student population were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Table 3.1 provides additional student demographic data for MAPS during the 2010-2011 school year. During the 2009-2010 school year, the state education agency published state level standards for the development of a code for student conduct for all the local education agencies (LEAs). One of the requirements that were new to this proposal was a provision to address aggressive behavior such as bullying. While the document made no mention of gendered harassment or harassment of any kind, it stated the following requirement that the student conduct code must include, "Prohibitions with regard to bullying conduct. The policies and procedures shall affirm that the LEA does not tolerate bullying of any kind" (LEA, 2009). By the 2010-2011 school year, MAPS was in the process of implementing policies and procedures that reflected these processes. Furthermore, MAPS was

located in a local jurisdiction that had comprehensive policies protecting individual's sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. MAPS had to ensure that is schools and student code of conduct provided such protections. Amidst the district's broad and at times, vague gendered harassment policies, MAPS offered an organic opportunity to explore how teachers understood gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies in their local schools.  In addition, MAPS served as a prime study district to explore and how those understandings are coordinated across school sites by various social relations.

**Table 3.1 - MAPS 2010-2011 Student Demographics**

| Category | Percentage of Student Population |
|---|---|
| Percent of Student Population Black | 69 |
| Percent of Student Population Hispanic | 13 |
| Percent of Student Population White | 16 |
| Percent of Student Population Other Ethnicities | 2 |
| Percent of Student in Special Education | 18 |
| Percent of Student English Language Learners | 9 |
| Percent of Student with Free and Reduced Meals | 61 |

Source: [Mid-Atlantic] Public Schools, 2012.

**Participant selection**

I employed purposive sampling to select information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 2002).  Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. Empirical data indicate teachers often receive no training on bullying and gendered harassment (GLSEN, 2008; Hazler, 1992; Yoon 2004).  In order to better grasp how teachers came to understand gendered harassment policies, I purposively selected my participants from a group of teachers who the school district provided with opportunities to attend trainings on topics related to gendered harassment.

Specifically, I drew my study participants from a group of health and physical education teachers from MAPS who attended a district sponsored workshop on bullying or gendered harassment. The school district provided these trainings specifically for health and physical teachers. The workshops lasted between 90 minutes to 120 minutes. Most of the trainings were mandatory as part of the professional development trainings for the health and physical education teachers. One training was optional. Additional information about the trainings can be found in Chapter 4.

There are several reasons why the health and physical education teachers from MAPS were a compelling group of individuals to include in a study exploring gendered harassment. First, the teachers taught health education classes which, particularly in the upper elementary and middle school levels, included topics regarding sexuality and sexual orientation. Second, MAPS was in the midst of rolling out a new health and physical education curriculum and learning standards during the 2010-2011 school year which required lessons on bullying, harassment and sexual orientation as part of the health and physical education curriculum. Third, the health and P.E. teachers hold unique perspectives as educators who do not teach core-tested subjects (such as math and English Language Arts) situated in a school district with intense pressure to raise standardized test scores as part of federal and local school reform efforts. Lastly, as elective teachers, the health and P.E. teachers saw more students than a regular classroom teacher. For example, a P.E. teacher in a MAPS elementary school would have every student in the school in his class during a typical week. By drawing my study participants from this population, I explored how

teachers interpreted the information shared in the workshop and how their interpretations influenced their understandings of gendered harassment policies as well as how they incorporated their understandings of the policies into their daily work.

**Gaining Entry to Study District**

Since this study involved human participants, I needed to secure Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of my data collection and analysis plans and interview protocols from both the university and the study district. University of Maryland IRB approved my project on July 28, 2010. A copy of the application is available in Appendix A.  I then submitted my research request to MAPS.  MAPS did not allow any recruitment or contact with schools or teachers to take place without formal approval of my project from its research department. The study district approved my research request on September 8, 2010 and sent a confirmation letter of the approval on November 18, 2010.

**Participant recruitment**

Once I received IRB approval from the school district, I contacted the program manager for the Health and Physical Education department in MAPS for the school placement and work email of each health and physical education teacher in the district who had attended a gendered harassment training in January 2010.  The district was not able to provide that information and instead, provided me with a list of attendees who attended a professional development day called, "Health Summit" in October 2010.

In November and December 2010, I sent recruitment emails to all 121 health and physical education teachers in MAPS, requesting their participation in this research study. I wrote the recruitment announcement in inclusive and non-advocacy language to ensure broad participation.  In the recruitment announcement (Appendix C), I asked teachers who were interested in participating in the study to complete a brief questionnaire (Appendix D). The questionnaire allowed me to collect data regarding the teachers' age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, number of years as a teacher in their school and district and other details the teachers wished to share with me.

My first call for participants yielded six responses and two people who ultimately committed to the study. Two other people responded to and joined my second call for participants.  I chose to begin first round interviews before putting another call for participants since I anticipated the potential need to recruit additional participants in case participants withdrew from the study.  I received explanations from two teachers who explicitly stated they did not want to participate due to a lack of time on their part.

In my original research design, I aimed to have six total teacher participants, two in each of the school levels (elementary, middle and high school), who attended a workshop on bullying provided through the school district in January 2010.  This workshop, entitled "How Health and Physical Education Teachers Can Make Schools Safer for All Students" was one of four different sessions offered at a professional development day for all health and physical education teachers in the school district. The professional development day was entitled: "Health Summit 2010: For health

educators, an active look at human sexuality, school culture, and the art of teaching"
and held on the campus of a religious private university in Mid-Atlantic City.
Teachers at the elementary and secondary level were split up into two groups and did
not participate in the same workshops.  Each workshop lasted approximately three
hours.

During the course of my interviews, I learned from participants that the
January 2010 bullying training was only mandatory for elementary teachers and some
middle school teachers.  I also learned that the district provided an additional bullying
workshop for elementary and middle school health and P.E. teachers as part of their
professional development training in October 2010.  Since at that point, no high
school teacher volunteered for my study and the teachers did not attend these
trainings, I decided to leave high school teachers out of my study and focus
exclusively on elementary and middle school teachers in my third call for
participants.  Two additional teachers responded to this third and last call for
participants.

**Participant Selection**

In my study's original design, I wanted to select six teacher participants from
the volunteers who returned the questionnaire.  Because I wanted to consider how
teachers made sense of gendered harassment across diverse contexts, my original goal
was to include maximum variation in the teacher participants' gender, race/ethnicity,
religious affiliation, years of teaching experience, and grade level taught (elementary,
middle or high school).  I also wanted to include teachers who taught in a diverse

range of schools (based on academic achievement and socio-economic status) as reflected by school improvement status and the percentage of students categorized as eligible for "free and reduced meals" (FARM).

Due to the low number of volunteers who responded to my recruitment calls and who ultimately committed to the study, I accepted participants "as they were." rather than selecting for maximum variation in the aforementioned categories. Despite this change, the six teachers who participated in the study included social group identity diversity. Table 3.2 lists the demographic data participants shared about themselves (I use the same terms they used) as well as the grade levels they teach and the percentage of (FARMS) students at their schools. Three of the six participants attended the January 2010 bullying workshop and five of the six attended the October 2010 bullying workshop. All six participants attended at least one training that discuss gender and sexuality. Having a racially and ethnically diverse sample enabled me to explore the ways in which race/ethnicity intersect with gendered harassment. Additional information regarding each participant can be found in Chapter 4.

**Table 3.2 - Participant Demographic Information**

| Participant | Gender | Race | Religion | Years Teaching | Grade Levels | Percent Students at School Eligible for FARMS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grace | Female | Black | Christian | 19 | PK-5$^{th}$ | 86% |
| Ziva | Female | White | None | 1 | PK-5$^{th}$ | 46% |
| Jordan | Male | Black | Catholic | 2 | PK-8$^{th}$ | 87% |
| Dionna | Female | Hispanic | Christian | 4 | 6$^{th}$ – 8$^{th}$ | 29% |
| Camille | Female | White | / | 3 | PK-6$^{th}$ | 81% |
| BJ | Male | African American | Christian | 4 | 5$^{th}$ – 8$^{th}$ | 87% |

## Data Collection Methods

Institutional ethnography (Cristi, 2011; Smith, 2005; Stoll, 2011; Weiser, 2005) and qualitative interview methodology (Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005) as well as others' studies on gendered harassment (Lacey, 2002; Meyer, 2006) informed the data collection methods I utilized in this study. Although I focused on teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies, I want to be clear that this study was not a policy implementation study. Instead, this study explicitly focused on the health and physical education teachers' lived experiences in developing their understandings of those gendered harassment policies. Thus, the primary data-collection approaches I used were in-depth interviews, participant observations and document analysis. Data that I gathered through interviews and observations allowed me to learn about how teachers made sense of gendered harassment in their local school and district contexts as well as the influences of personal identities and

experiences.  Simply put, the data allowed me to hear the teachers' own accounts of their experiences.

Another source of data for this research was documents.  I used publicly available school data and as well as district level documents that referenced bullying and harassment to add to my understandings of the district context.  I also collected key documents that teachers referenced in their interview in order to explore the ruling relations embedded within those texts.  In these instances, teachers would provide me with copies of the documents. In my analysis of the documents, I paid particular attention to the sequences of actions the texts coordinated across the six school sites and the manner in which the discourses embedded within the texts contributed to teachers' understandings of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies. Data collection for this study began in December 2010 and continued through June 2011. Table 3.3 summarizes the data collection activities I engaged in for this study.

**Table 3.3 - Data Collection Activities**

| Date | Activity | Participant | Data Sources Collected |
|------|----------|-------------|------------------------|
| 12-07-2010 | Interview 1 | Ziva | Interview transcript |
| 12-09-2010 | Interview 1 | Grace | Interview transcript |
| 12-04-2010 | Interview 1 | B.J. | Interview transcript; school positive behavior form |
| 01-13-2011 | Interview 1 | Dionna | Interview transcript; P.E. program's memo to principals |
| 02-09-2011 | Observation | Ziva | Field notes |
| 02-24-2011 | Observation | Dionna | Field notes |
| 02-28-2011 | Interview 1 | Jordan | Interview transcript |
| 03-02-2011 | Interview 2 | Ziva | Interview transcript; copies of Powerpoint slides and materials from training sessions |
| 03-07-2011 | Interview 1 | Camille | Interview transcript |
| 03-08-2011 | Interview 2 | B.J. | Interview transcript; copy of LifeSkills book; copy of positive behavior referral form |
| 03-16-2011 | Interview 2 | Dionna | Interview transcript |
| 03-17-2011 | Observation | Grace | Field notes; copy of state P.E. standards |
| 03-22-2011 | Observation | Camille | Field notes |
| 03-23-2011 | Observation | Jordan | Field notes; copy of LifeSkills book |
| 03-29-2011 | Interview 2 | Jordan | Interview transcript; referral form |
| 04-05-2011 | Interview 2 | Camille | Interview transcript; |
| 04-13-2011 | Observation | B.J. | Field notes; pictures of full-service model matrix |
| 04-14-2011 | Interview 2 | Grace | Interview transcript; referral form; student discipline code |
| 05-12-2011 | Interview | Central Office Staff 1 | Interview transcript; |
| 05-20-2011 | Interview | Central Office Staff 2 | Interview transcript |
| 05-31-2011 | Interview 3 | B.J. | Interview transcript; picture of fitnessgram database |
| 05-31-2011 | Interview 3 | Camille | Interview transcript; referral form |
| 06-02-2011 | Interview 3 | Jordan | Interview transcript |
| 06-13-2011 | Interview 3 | Ziva | Interview transcript; school handbook |
| 06-13-2011 | Interview 3 | Grace | Interview transcript; description of liaison group |
| 06-13-2011 | Interview 3 | Dionna | Interview transcript |
| 06-08-2011 | Volunteer with Jordan's school | Jordan | Field notes |

| 06-10-2011 | Volunteer with Ziva's school | Ziva | Field notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| 06-16-2011 | Volunteer with Camille's school | Camille | Field notes |
| 06-17-2011 | Volunteer with Armstrong School's Field Day Activities | B.J. | Field notes |

**In-depth interviews**

I utilized a semi-structured interview format with the study participants because this interview structure produces focused data and also allows for topics and concerns more salient to participants to emerge in an organic manner (Merriam, 1998). I developed semi-structured interview protocols around the themes I wanted to explore with some probing questions. I conducted a pilot interview with a colleague who was also a teacher in the study district. The pilot interview allowed me to test out my interview questions and see whether I phrased my interview questions in a manner that allowed me to gather data that answered my research questions. The pilot interviews also helped me recognize some interview questions that I needed to revise in my interview protocol in order to be more clear and succinct. Overall, the three interviews focused on the following topics:

1. Individual teacher's identity and experiences with gendered harassment
2. What and how teachers know about gendered harassment
3. What and how teachers know about gendered harassment policies
4. Teachers' experiences in the district workshop
5. How teachers perceive gendered harassment policies fit in with work demands and other policies and initiatives at the school

During the interviews, I asked open-ended questions that explored teachers'
identities and experiences with gendered harassment, experiences in the district
workshop and how teachers perceived gendered harassment policies fit in with work
demands and other policies and initiatives at their school and school district.
Appendix B contains copies of my initial interview guides for each of the three
interview sessions.  I interviewed each teacher at least three times during the course
of the study.  Each of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. At the
beginning of the first interview, I reviewed the informed consent form with each
participant, outlining the nature of the research and ensuring confidentiality.  I
informed participants that their names and their schools' names would be changed to
protect their anonymity.  To deepen my understanding of the district context, I also
interviewed two central office personnel familiar with the district's bullying and
gendered harassment policies. I audio-recorded each of the interviews—except for
instances where participants requested to speak off-the-record.  I transcribed all of the
interviews conducted before May 2011 and a professional transcriptionist transcribed
all interviews that occurred in June 2011.  I used the interview protocols and took
notes during each of the interviews.  My notes helped me keep track of items to
follow-up on within the interview and potential items to reference in the next
interview.

The interviews with the six teachers unfolded in three cycles. The first round
took place between December 2010 and March 2011.  The second round of
interviews occurred between March 2011 and April 2011 and the third round in June
2011, at the end of the school year.  The length between the first and third interviews

was not part of my original design. However, it was an adjustment that I made during the course of the research process and reflected the realities of conducting research in schools and with teachers who have tremendous work and life demands on their time and attention. The unexpected gaps between interviews provided a rich opportunity for me to capture teachers' reflections of their own work and practice as well as the types of gendered harassment behaviors they observed throughout different points in the school year.

The interviews held throughout the course of the study allowed me to capture some of the shifting subjectivities of the participants, particularly when discussing a complex and nuanced problem like gendered harassment. The semi-structured interviews allowed me and the participants to ask each other clarifying questions in the moment or in subsequent visits. My in-person interactions with participants allowed for us to develop relational trust with one another. Developing this rapport and trust was important for two main reasons. First, it matched what I strive for in my personal interactions with people. Second, as a researcher interested in hearing participants talk about gendered harassment in which there are legal and organizational consequences, there may be some reluctance to disclose those incidents, particularly if I did not establish and maintain trust or connection with each participant.

**Participant observations**

Participant observations provided me with knowledge of the activities each of the teachers engaged in on a "typical" day at their schools. I "shadowed" each of the

participants once at their schools after conducting the first interview. The observations of teachers' work lives occurred on a pre-arranged day with participants' explicit knowledge and consent and always with the option for the teacher to ask me to leave or stop the observation. The observations were not video or audio-recorded. I conducted these observations with two aims: 1) to gain further insights into health and physical education teachers' front-line work experiences and 2) to draw on these observational data in subsequent teacher interviews to consider if and how any aspects of their work as health and physical education teachers impact their understandings of bullying and gendered harassment policies. These observations provided me with an introduction into the everyday activities the health and P.E. teacher took up in their schools and illustrated many of the ways that their activities are coordinated and organized by a variety of texts.

The process of observation was not just merely about gathering data but also included myself interpreting events and interactions as they filtered through my own lens and biases. Nevertheless, I strived to conduct my observations in a systematic manner guided by IE, my questions and perspectives. As a result, I developed an observational protocol (Appendix E) that was used in all of my observations and that helped me attune to the following aspects and questions in the setting:

- Teacher actions (What do teachers do during the course of the day? What is the structure of their day like? What are his or her responsibilities in different parts of the school?)
- Texts/documents that are seen and/or teacher referred to during the course of his or her workday
- Teacher interactions with others (Who does the teacher interact with? What do those interactions look like? What are the verbal exchanges about?
- Topics discussed in conversations and in class instruction
- Regular practices (Note what appears as routine to me so I can follow-up in interviews

- Other unanticipated events (Disruptions/interruptions/intercom announcements)

I took notes in the form of running accounts. All the data I collected focused exclusively on teachers' lived experiences in the classroom. Although students were present in the classrooms, I did not collect any individual student specific data. Although I had intended to observe teachers teaching the health classes that directly addressed bullying and/or sexual orientation, this did not occurred as planned because some teachers had already taught the lesson earlier in the year and others did not teach the lesson at all. Formal observations with each teacher ranged from five to eight hours. After each observation, I wrote field notes and wrote or recorded memos to keep track of my reflections of the data (Berg, 2007).

In additional to the scheduled interviews and observations, I also attended meetings and school events teachers invited me to. I conducted informal observations at each of the participants' schools each time I visited for an interview appointment or for school functions study participants invited me to.  In my visits with the teachers, I also spoke with them between classes, during hall and recess duties, over lunch, and after school.  I jotted down notes or asked for permission to record some of these more informal conversations to indicate to the teachers that these were "on the record" exchanges.  Although some of these events did not directly relate to gendered harassment, they gave me greater insights into the role each teacher played at their school. After each visit to the school, I wrote memos to myself detailing my impressions.

The participant observation data provided a rich picture and background on the work contexts of each local school as well as the entire school district of MAPS. In some instances, the observations enabled me to triangulate data uncovered in interviews and document analysis (Creswell, 2007). The observation data helped illuminate some of the work routines participants described in the interviews. For example, Jordan described the challenges he encountered in not having a gym space inside the school and how his having to take his students to the gym in the high school across the street ultimately impacted the types of student behaviors he saw. Seeing that event unfold in real time gave me a better understanding of what Jordan had described and also prompted me to ask in subsequent interviews with him about how he thought about the forms of gendered harassment that occurred throughout the school day in his class, particularly in instances where he travels outside of the physical bounds of his school.

**Institutional texts**

In addition to the data I gathered through interviews with the participants, I used institutional texts as a means of deepening my analysis of the ruling relations health and physical education teachers engaged with as they came to understand their district's gendered harassment policies. The information I collected through interviews and participant observation drove the document analysis portion of this study. Throughout the research process, I asked teachers to discuss texts they encountered that inform their work. I made note of the documents participants shared in their interviews as well as the ones I observed them utilizing during participant observations. I paid particular attention to institutional texts that study participants

referenced more than once and across multiple schools within the study district. These documents provide a lens into the textually mediated discourses that framed and organized how gendered harassment is talked about throughout the district (DeVault & McCoy, 2001).  I analyzed three particular types of institutional texts in this study:

> 1) everyday texts – found in participants' everyday work and practice; this may include referral forms, learning standards and curriculum materials;
>
> 2) mediating texts – district level texts – this may include policies and guidelines; the district's teacher evaluation system and the district's student discipline code;
>
> 3) boss texts – legislation and regulation that cover multiple jurisdictions.  The No Child Left Behind act is one such example.

Educational organizations are textually mediated institutions. Schools and school district frequently use texts and documentation to regulate, coordinate and standardize everyday activities.  Smith (2005) argues that texts are, in fact, active coordinators of experiences.  What these texts represent to IE researchers are localized moments to analyze complicated institutional processes.  Texts travel within and between organizations and may be activated and taken up by organizational team members in multiple ways.

At the core of IE is an analysis of the discourses that frames the practices that organize the activities of a particular process and transforms it into institutional work flow that people across multiple sites enact, almost automatically (Campbell, 1998; Campbell & Manicom, 1995).  How teachers come to understand the district's gendered harassment policies is a textually mediated form of social organization.  It

did not unfold randomly; rather, there is most likely a text that can help us trace how texts actively coordinated social relations and regimes of practices (Smith, 1990).

I also drew on institutional texts as part of my preparation for my interviews. I relied on publically available documents to learn more about school demographics, its school restructuring status, and school programming. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) note, analyzing such texts can provide the researcher with important knowledge of the history and context in the specific setting. I also used the data drawn from these publically available documents in generating targeted prompts, questions, and follow up questions in interviews.

**Data Analysis**

Marshall and Rossman (2006) caution qualitative researchers of the "messiness" of qualitative analysis and the non-linearity of some aspects of the process. Miles and Huberman (1994) share similar advice and also identify three sets of activities qualitative researchers recursively engage in throughout the data analysis process: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. I heeded those authors' warnings and found them helpful as I was engaged in the process. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, thus continuously informing each other. At times, this meant I had to revise interview questions where I probed for additional information based on preliminary analysis or when a participant brought up a concept I had not previously considered, I wanted to make sure I asked other participants about the same concept.

As I proceeded through the data collection process, various themes emerged from the teacher interviews. These themes were both challenged and corroborated by

the events that unfolded in the teacher's classrooms while I was shadowing the teachers.  In follow-up interviews, I asked the teachers to evaluate my analytic thinking, particularly my connections between the teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom actions. I also discussed these larger themes with critical friends who were familiar with the study district.  In the last months of writing this dissertation, I also noted the institutional presses featured in the study participants' accounts of their work that emerged as I worked for the same study district.  I share this information to point out that the theoretical interpretations and claims I make in this dissertation did not simply arise from my personal interpretations of events.  Instead, my analysis of the data was shaped by my interactions and discussions with the study participants and other people within and outside of my doctoral program as well as my lived experiences and prior knowledge.

In this section, I draw on the three categories from Miles and Huberman (1994) to describe how I analyzed my data throughout this study.  I begin by describing how I organized my data before beginning data analysis.

**Data management**

I stored all field notes and interview transcripts first as a word processing document.  I labeled each document with the date, the participants' code and a brief description of the focus of the interview or observation. I kept hard copies of all interviews, field notes, and documents in a secured location within my home office and stored an electronic back-up copy on a flash drive.  I uploaded the transcribed data into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, and stored the data in labeled folders based on the types of data (i.e., interviews, observations, documents,

memos and field notes).  I created a case node for each of the participants to allow me to retrieve and analyze all data collected for each participant. NVivo also allowed me to assign attributes to each case node. I identified some of the attributes based on characteristics of teachers and schools identified in the research literature that may impact gendered harassment behaviors in schools.  I assigned the following attributes to each of the six cases: race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, school's AYP status, percentage of FARMs students and percentage of Black and White students. I used the attributes to help with comparing the experiences of teachers during data analysis.

### *Data Review and Data Reduction*

Institutional ethnographers aim to "explicate the ruling relations that organize and coordinate the local experiences" of study participants (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 89).  As I engaged in the data analysis process, I focused on data that demonstrated how ruling relations existed in and across local settings, organizing the experiences study participants talked about across MAPS.  I paid particular attention to the translocal and discursively-organized relations that permeated participants' understandings, talk and activities.  Specifically, I considered the elements of social organization that connected the local school experiences of each participant to sites across the school district as well as sites outside of the immediate experiential setting.

The data collection process for this research study generated a vast amount of data.  There were over 600 pages of interview transcripts and over 100 pages of field notes and memos on the institutional texts and documents I collected.  I used a

systematic process to review the data and to reduce the data in meaningful ways that allowed me to be thorough in my analysis and helped me answer my research questions. In reviewing the data, I read through each transcript at least 4 times while I re-listened to the audio file of the interview. During this preliminary analysis, I wrote notes in the form of memos to highlight key quotes, concepts and themes that merited additional review or follow-up with participants. I used a similar process in reviewing my field notes.

In reviewing the institutional texts I collected, I made notes of who provided the text, who created the text, when teachers would draw upon the text and then categorized the text as a(n) everyday, mediating or boss text. Mediating texts are school district level texts such as policies and guidelines. Boss texts are translocal texts such as legislation and regulations that cover multiple jurisdictions, such as NCLB (2002). Each document was examined several times and I recorded notes regarding the ruling relations embedded within the document. I placed labels on the mediating texts to indicate what boss texts they were associated with or if they were connected to another mediating text.

As I reviewed interview transcripts and analyzed the documents I collected, I began to refer back to the heuristic framework that guided my research design. I created an analytic plan in the format of a matrix by reviewing my literature review and considering recent research in the areas of bullying/gendered harassment, physical education and sexuality in schools. By jumping back into the research literature and concepts that I could draw on to help answer the research question (and two sub-questions) that underpin this research study, I began to consider potential

codes to use as I further explored and analyzed the data.

I began the coding process with the interview transcripts I had uploaded into NVivo. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe codes as "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (p. 56) and that it is essential that researchers clearly define each coding categories. Drawing from the matrices featured within my analytic plan, I created a list of broad coding categories as well as definitions for each preliminary code. These definitions helped me make sure that my coding, over time, was consistent. Furthermore, the definitions provided a proxy for the decision rules that guided the characteristics I used to determine what data I would code. I began the coding process with "big buckets" (Beazeley, 2007) to identify the five key grounding concepts in institutional ethnography. As I coded, I captured both the response and the question that prompted the response. For example, Camille described the text and process that helped her understand the district expectations for her involvement in reporting gendered harassment incidents:

**Elke**
Do you feel like there are any documents or texts or forms that help you understand what the school district expects for your involvement in gendered harassment incidents?

**Camille**
I would say that you would document it on the referral form that this is what you saw. It wants you to give a brief explanation of what you saw, who was involved and dates if you can. I actually have a copy of the referral. It just asks you to give a brief explanation of what happened, who was involved and interventions you tried- like did you try moving the student, did you try deescalating strategies, what did you try to try to prevent this situation? What the [school designees] are trained to do is to look through that referral, pick out things that belong in a certain category. So the teacher may write: "Student threw pencil at me." Well, the [school-designee's] job is to know

94

that's not really an assault yet because it was a pencil. Was the pencil sharp? Were they aiming at you? Was they purposeful or did they just throw it in a general direction? Then they investigate and figure out 'No, that kid threw a sharp pencil right at you.' So now we're calling that an assault and then they'll click on in the tracker 'assault.'"

I coded this segment of the interview with several codes, one of them being "social relations." The term "social relations" refers to coordinated institutional practices and processes that unfold through sequences of action. Different people may partake in different stages of that sequence across time and space; these people may not directly engage or interact with one another within that shared activity sequence (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). Whenever I coded at the social relations node and when I reviewed my coding, I used this definition to decide if what was coded met the criteria for social relations. In the example above, Camille described a key sequence of actions that unfolded as part of the disciplinary response to gendered harassment in the school. The sequence of action was activated by a key institutional text, the referral form. Camille articulated the particular parts of the sequence she was responsible for and the point at which she "handed off" the referral to another person in the sequence stream.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest coding move from descriptive to explanatory and from larger general codes which incorporate a wide range of activities to smaller subcodes from which the researcher infer patterns and explanations. After the first round of coding I used the reporting function in NVivo and generated node reports which included all the text coded at a particular node. I reviewed each coded passage to ensure that it fit the definition of the code. In some instances where the passages did not fit the code definition, I removed the code from

the passage; in other instances, I expanded the code to include more text. As the second round of coding proceeded, I moved between the raw data and the coded data and continued to memo to record my thoughts and as well as the decisions I made in coding and analysis.

I also coded teacher interviews by the questions in each interview protocol. I used the framework matrices tool in NVivo 9 to look across each teacher for each interview question and response. The framework matrices tool allowed me to compare and contrast teacher responses to the same questions. Coding the data in these three ways, across six months, allowed me to examine my data in multiple ways. Furthermore, this process allowed me to interpret the data in a meaningful way by keeping me connected to my research questions, the research literature and the local realities participants described in the data.

**Data displays**

Miles and Huberman (1994) define a display as "an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing" (p. 11). In order to move from descriptive coding to answering the question of the ruling relations and institutional forces that coordinated teachers' understandings of gendered harassment, I asked the data a series of questions with considerations of the social relations and ruling relations that informed teachers of the district's gendered harassment policies. These questions assisted in me generating a list of If-Then statements to further reduce the data and generate a display. For example, I posed the statement "If an institutional text is coordinating teacher's work and actions across the school district,

96

then I would expect multiple participants to identify that text in discussions of ruling relations." Although I had identified No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as a boss text that coordinated much of work the teachers engaged in, I was remiss in recognizing the linkages between NCLB and the teacher evaluation at the local district level.

| | A : Standards | B : NCLB | C : Curriculum | D : Discipline ... | E : School Handbook | F : IMPACT | G : Healthy Sc... |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 : BJ | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| 2 : Camille | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| 3 : Dionna | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 0 |
| 4 : Grace | 7 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| 5 : Jordan | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 6 : Ziva | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 |

**Figure 2.1 - Screen capture of NVivo query**

**Conclusion drawing and verification**

Conclusion drawing and verification is the third stream of qualitative analysis as identified by Miles and Huberman (1994). In this section, I describe how I came to produce the findings presented in chapters four and five. Memoing was a crucial process that I engaged in that assisted me into making sense of my data to draw conclusions from. I create memos for each of the grounding concepts of institutional ethnography: social relations, institutional texts, discourses, ruling relations and social organization. I also create memos for the three different types of gendered harassment teachers discussed: homophobic harassment, sexual harassment and harassment for gender non-conformity.

As I wrote my memos, I posed to myself three questions: 1) What does the quote say (literally)? 2. What does the quote mean? 3) Why does it matter? I reviewed each quote coded at the grounding concept or type of harassment. I summarized and interpreted the meaning of the quote. Then I summarized the findings for each teacher around the institutional texts they discussed and the social organization they described that factored into how they talked about gendered

harassment and the district's gendered harassment policies. After crafting the summaries for each teacher, I compared the similarities in the institutional texts the teachers discussed and the social relations that teachers discussed that were similar across the multiple school sites. I wrote the findings portion of this dissertation by organizing and synthesizing the findings and interpretations within my analytic memos. The framework matrices tools in NVivo allowed me to organize and summarize the information regarding the policy and school context of each participant. As I continued writing, I also read and revised my report to eliminate redundant findings as well as to provide thick descriptions that helped support key findings.

Finally, before drawing conclusions from this query I ran several text queries to search for possible data related to this relationship that I might have missed. I used the "text search" features in NVivo which provided a visualization in the form of a word tree of the ways a word or terms similar to the word were used by participants within the data. For example, this process help attuned me to ways teachers talked about the role of time in how they discussed the roles of teachers in addressing gendered harassment. Going through the process of examining and re-examining my data allowed me to gain fresh insights that I might have missed earlier. I also shared my thinking about the data with two critical friends, one familiar with MAPS and one not, so that I could continually search for alternative understandings of my data. The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Standards of Quality and Validity**

Quality and validity cannot be ensured by following particular steps or research method; instead, quality and validity depend on the relationship of the researcher's conclusions about the data.

**Quality**

I drew on the eight standards Lincoln (1995) identified for evaluating the quality of qualitative research. These eight standards include:

1) standards set in the inquiry community;
2) positionality;
3) community;
4) participant voice;
5) critical subjectivity;
6) reciprocity;
7) respect; and
8) sharing privileges.

I attempted to meet the standards set by the inquiry community by reviewing a variety of studies in the field of bullying and gendered harassment as well as other studies that informed by institutional ethnography. I reviewed these other studies from the dissertation proposal stage and through the data collection stage. In addition, during the Spring of 2011, while I was engaged in field research, I audited a 12 week course on Critical Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Maryland. Both the course and the studies I reviewed from the literature directed me to follow ethical and high quality standards and guidelines in research.

As the researcher, I mediated the types of data collected and how I analyzed the data. I strived to not distort the authentic voices of each of the study participants,

being mindful of how I represent their voices and experiences.  I am also mindful of

the power differential between the researcher and researched. As Smith (1987) note:

> The institutional relations of the discourse organize the relationship between
> interviewer and respondent, giving the interviewer special authority. Whether
> she likes it or not, the researcher participates in that order and her interviews
> and their uses are embedded in its relations. (p. 91).

I have to acknowledge that this power differential shaped various aspects of this

research project, particularly in my deciding what aspects of my data to include in my

data analysis and final report(s).  I noted my own subjectivities and strived not for

"objectivity" but in committing to representing the realities of those who I engaged in

this research study with in the most authentic manner possible.  As Luttrell (2000)

points out, "our role in shaping the ethnographic encounter is huge; consciously or

not, we listen and make sense of what we hear according to particular theoretical,

ontological, personal, and cultural frameworks and in the context of unequal power

relations" (p. 499).

As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) assert,

> Poststructuralists and postmodernists have contributed to the understanding
> that there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual.  Any gaze is
> always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and
> ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially
> situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed. (p. 12).

I proceeded through the research study cautious to not impose my own versions of

reality on what my participants shared. Being cognizant of my own history and

subjectivities, I aimed to minimize my own bias in two main ways.   First, I wrote

memos throughout the research study so that I could keep track of my bias, views and

attitudes so they shifted or stayed the same. Second, throughout data analysis, I looked for patterns that emerged in the teachers' narratives rather than just fitting data into pre-defined/pre-assigned categories.

As I engaged in the iterative processes of data analysis, interpretation and writing, I drew on two of Opie's (2008) "deconstructive textual practices" to limit possible problematic ways in how I represent(ed) the study participants. First, I attempted to ensure that I foregrounded the paradoxical, the contradictory, and the marginal in discussing the data. Second, I strived to incorporate multiple voices in my presentation of the data. Furthermore, in order to be explicit about the "ways in which the participants' voices are contextualized, the researcher's interpretations are partial, and the reader's reading is situated" (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 20), I chose to use poetic stanzas to depict and represent some of the conversations lifted from transcribed interviews.

The words and thoughts of the six teacher participants provided the foundation of this study. Throughout the research process, I attempted to show my respect for my participants and their school communities through my words and actions. I tried to show my respect for the participants' time by scheduling interviews and observations that worked best for their schedules.

I attempted to establish reciprocity with my study participants. I recognized the time and emotional energy they invested in my study and in sharing their insights with me. I maintained contact with all participants throughout the study to build and develop our rapport. I answered any questions they had throughout the process regarding my thoughts about the study and their schools. I volunteered my time with

four of the six teachers and their local schools' end of the school year celebrations and field days. I recognize the immense privileges I have and will receive in earning a doctorate degree. I will continue to consider ways I can reciprocate time, energy, knowledge and resources with my study participants as this project is published and presented at conferences.

## Validity

Maxwell (2005) defines validity as "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 87). There were two potential validity threat to this study: 1) because the study district had just implemented a large number of school reforms and were in the midst of advancing its reputation, teachers may have felt pressured to speak favorably about the school and district and 2) because of the sensitive nature of the types of student behaviors that were considered at the core of this study, teachers may not have freely spoken about the types of behaviors that they witnessed unfolding in their schools. To help ensure the internal validity of this study I openly discussed with the teachers the voluntary nature of their participation and that they may stop participating at any time. I also shared with the teachers that every effort would be made to maintain anonymity and what they share with me off-the-record will be kept out of the study. Finally, Creswell (2007) suggests that qualitative researchers examine negative cases or discrepant data during analysis. I used the query function in NVivo to search for and verify associations and to look for disconfirming evidence.

Data source triangulation (Maxwell, 2005) was also used to ensure the

trustworthiness of the findings presented in this study. I utilized triangulation not to simply verify what teachers described in their interviews by using other data sources, specifically, observations and documents. Instead, I strived to use triangulation as a means to ensure I had a holistic understanding of the situation or context. In order to develop a robust understanding of the participants' work lives, I visited each school at least five times during the data collection process and took advantage of opportunities to observe both formal and informal interactions amongst the school staff and students.  The interviews and my own impressions together created a holistic understanding of the teachers whose words I used to construct the findings presented in the chapters that follow.

**Chapter 4:  MAPS and the Role of Policy Texts in Teachers' Understandings of Gendered Harassment**

*Overview*

A central tenet in institutional ethnography is that social relations are organized and enabled by texts. What teachers do and experience locally are linked to others across different sites when individuals use, read and activate the same text(s). In discovering how teachers came to understand the districts' gendered harassment policies, I grounded my research in the actualities of six individual health and physical education teachers' lives and explored how teachers engaged in similar sequences of action(s) that were guided by common texts used across the school district.

In this chapter, I introduce the reader to the study district, the study participants and their local school contexts. The teachers' educational background, personal identities, experiences and school communities all contributed to the ways the teachers understood gendered harassment.  I used pseudonyms for individuals, their schools and other identifying details to protect the anonymity of the people interviewed for this study.  Next, I describe the school district's gendered harassment policy as well as other policy texts that the six teachers referenced in our interviews. I begin with my understanding of the terrain of the gendered harassment policy context in the school district. What policies existed and how did these policies fit with other policy demands in the district?

*Mid-Atlantic Public Schools (MAPS)*

All six teachers in this study worked in schools that were part of the Mid-Atlantic Public Schools (MAPS), an urban school system in the Mid-Atlantic United States. MAPS served a predominantly African American student population of nearly 47,000 during the 2010-2011 school year.[20] MAPS had a history of low and uneven student academic performance. During the last decade, MAPS were amongst the lowest performers on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) relative to both states and comparable urban districts. In 2008, only 42 of MAPS 145 schools met federally mandated AYP targets for student achievement. The school district also had a bleak record of high school and college graduation rates. Only 43 percent of ninth graders graduated from high school within five years, and only nine percent of its graduates obtained a postsecondary degree. Although the school district had made concerted efforts since 2000 to improve student achievement, MAPS continued to be labeled by both national and local media as one of the lowest achieving school districts in the country.

The woes experienced by students in MAC's public schools were not limited only to student achievement. MACs rates of childhood obesity, sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy are among the highest in the U.S. In fall 2011, MAC's state educational office announced that all fifth, eighth and tenth grade students in the city's public schools will begin taking a standardized test in health education. The 50 question test will ask questions about topics such as conception, human sexuality, exercise, and eating habits.

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[20] From [MAPS] 2010-2011 Audit Count. Accessed May 26, 2011 at http:/[local jurisdiction]/seo/frames.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seo/sled/final_signed_enrollment_document.pdf.

In 2007, MAPS began an extensive overhaul of its governance. The city's mayor took control of the school district and reduced the school board to mostly a ceremonial role in overseeing the state education standards. The mayor appointed a new superintendent and under the superintendent's leadership, the district focused much of its attention on school accountability and performance. In the ensuing months, the district fired numerous teachers, principals and other central office staff for poor performance.

In the United Sates, the pressure on public education to "perform" has been intensifying since the National Commission of Equity released *A Nation At Risk* in 1983. The increased interest from the public in school performance has given rise to systems that monitor and hold schools and educators accountable for student achievement. At the federal, state and local levels, many policy mechanisms have been employed to target chronically low-performing schools and narrow the persistent achievement gaps between students from poor and wealthy families as well as between White and non-White students.

Like many other school systems throughout the United States, MAPS have focused intense human capital in response to the pressures of increased federal accountability. The implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 ushered in an era of standards-based reform where these accountability mechanisms often reduce student achievement to standardized test scores. The policies featured in NCLB focused on three main areas: increased accountability for schools, monitoring school and student achievement and closing the achievement gap. Similar to other urban school systems in the United States during the early 21st

Century, MAPS approached its school reform efforts with intense focus on increasing teacher quality.

What has further compounded the challenges faced by MAPS is the instability in the school district's leadership. MAPS began the 2010-2011 school year with their sixth Superintendent within the decade.  Just as this research study was about to begin in December 2010, a new interim superintendent took over the reins when the incumbent high-profiled superintendent to pursue another career option. The multiple shifts in school district leadership meant each time a new leader assumed the position, a cascade of policy initiatives to improve student academic performance would emerge.

This high level of flux was not only limited to the school district's executive leadership. It extended to MAPS' teaching force as well.  MAPS faced serious challenges with respect to staffing just as other urban school districts that serve large concentrations of minority students and students who come from low-income backgrounds (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010).  Often times, these school districts found themselves serving some of their highest-need students with their least experienced teachers. About three-quarters of MAPS teachers leave after five years or less of teaching. Nearly 25 percent of all new hires teach one year or less (Turque, 2010). Although MAPS has not released any reports examining the impact of such high turnover rates, one can't help but wonder how this constant churn of new employees may impact the policy implementation, particularly policy problems that require long-term interventions.

In the next section, I describe the gendered harassment policy context in MAPS.

### *MAPS Gendered Harassment Policy Context*

MAPS is located in Mid-Atlantic City (MAC), a jurisdiction that features some of the more progressive policies for LGBTQ people in the United States. Same-sex marriage is legal in MAC. MAC's Human Rights Law and municipal regulations explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sex, gender identity[21] and sexual orientation.[22] This is significant because unlike many other parts of the U.S., LGBTQ students in this school district are a legally protected group both in and out of school.

MAPS has a central district office division[23] which oversees school disciplinary issues and also features a school culture team which supports local schools' efforts with gendered harassment and violence prevention. In May 2010, only three total documents on the school district's public website specifically mentioned bullying or gendered harassment. Two of the documents referenced the student discipline code which described bullying and harassment as prohibited behaviors and delineated the grounds for disciplinary action. The other public document which mentioned student bullying or harassment was the (former) Superintendent's Directive on Bully Prevention, a six-page document released in September 2006.

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[21] [Local Jurisdiction] Code § 2-1401.02 (2001).
[22] [Local Jurisdiction] Code § 2-1402.41. (2001).
[23] In October 2008, the school district created a new office, the Office of Youth Engagement.

**The Superintendent's Directive on Bully Prevention**

The Directive on Bully Prevention stated that the purpose of the document was to "ensure that school administrators take measures to promote bully prevention and inform parents of efforts to keep students safe, secure and free from bullying and intimidation in the learning environment" (2006, p.1). The document provided definitions of key terms, and outlined the procedures and steps for actions when teachers and students encounter bullying or other types of behaviors that make students feel unsafe in their school.

The document provided the following definition of bullying:

Bullying is anti-social behavior that is conducted repeatedly over time with the intent to cause harm in a relationship characterized by an imbalance of power. Bullying is a form of harassment that usually occurs in elementary and middle school settings. It is the situation in which a stronger person purposely uses his power to hurt a weaker person. Bullies can hurt their victims physically (hitting, kicking, pushing, violet attacks), but more often bullies intimidate their victims mentally (teasing threatening, spreading rumors, put-downs, intentional exclusion, snubbing, gossip). Bullies will continue their behavior until it is addressed by adults. As students move into secondary schools, patterns of bullying may be reflected in a more sophisticated forms of harassment.

The document also provided the following definition of harassment:

Verbal or physical conduct or communication relating to an individual's actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, political affiliation, disability, or source of income in a manner that denies or limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; or creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive environment for students and/or others in the school environment.

The directive required all schools to implement procedures at the school-wide, classroom and individual levels to address and reduce bullying. It delineated two sets of action steps; one for elementary and middle schools and the other for high schools.

The elementary and middle school steps identified these five key steps schools needed to take:

1. Form a bully prevention committee
2. Administer a bullying questionnaire
3. Increase effective adult supervision
4. Develop school rules against bullying that are positively stated
5. Identify "go-to" staff person(s) (i.e. counselor, classroom teacher) and inform students and parents.

The directive also required that high schools provide parents and students with external resources related to bully prevention of gay, transgender, lesbian bi-sexual [sic] and guestioning [sic] (GTLBQ) students.

The procedures for the "go-to" staff to report and investigate bullying incident included interviewing the victim and the bully separately to hear each side of the story and to document the findings. The staff should then log the incident into the discipline report of the district's online database and impose the consequences in accordance with the district's discipline code. If the behavior is persistent, then the student support team is to develop an intervention plan for the students and to monitor the plan closely and to provide parents with a copy of the plan. If the pattern of bullying or harassment is "substantiated and persists over time" then the parent has the right to seek a transfer from school under the "Individual Student Victim Transfer Option" of NCLB. It was unclear how the school district introduced this initiative in 2006.

In order to monitor and improve on bullying reduction activities, MAPS piloted a centralized bullying reduction system in twelve schools (middle and high schools) starting in February 2009. This program included the option for a school to designate a point of contact in the school who investigated the incidents, informed the principal and other staff when an incident occurred and served as a general liaison

with staff members about the program. Table 4.1 shows the description of the point of contact duties. In the pilot, school-based mental health counselors from MAC's Department of Mental Health served as the point of contact. After the pilot, it was determined that each school will be required to identify at least one point of contact whose responsibility it is to monitor and report all bullying incidents that occur throughout the year. The point of contact could be any adult in the building. It is unclear how the district implemented this pilot program and which schools and teachers received training.

**Table 4.1 – Point of Contact Responsibilities** ([MAC], 2009a)

The *Point of Contact* should do the following when an incident is reported by either a student or faculty/staff.

- Assess if student is in immediate danger/harm.
- Determine appropriate steps to resolve the incident and follow up to ensure the incident has been resolved.
- Collect information about the incident and complete the Bullying Incident report form.
- Inform the principal and appropriate staff when an incident occurs.
- Reaches out to other staff and faculty and serves as a resource for incidents to be reported.
- Review monthly summary of incident reports and work with school administration and appropriate faculty/staff to determine what/if any operational changes need to be made in the school to reduce further incidents.
- Promote the existence of this program through the dissemination of poster campaigns and other school based resources including but not limited to morning school wide announcements, assemblies, meetings with staff, flyers in homerooms and phone notification.

In April 2010, MAC's city council introduced the "Bullying Prevention Act" which called for developing a "model policy prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation in [MAPS]." It required all public schools in the city to adopt an anti-bullying and harassment policy at least as strong as the model policy defined in the bill. As of March 2012, the city council has yet to pass the bill. However, MAPS has

revised and developed anti-bullying and harassment plans that align with the standards set forth in the bill since the 2009-2010 school year.

In my interviews with MAPS central office employees, they shared that there is not an "official" bullying policy in place. According to one central office official, the 2006 anti-bullying directive was no longer being followed. She stated, "I have not operated on that directive since [the current Superintendent] has been in place." When I expanded my notion of policy to refer to guidance around the process of how gendered harassment would be addressed at the schools, the MAPS official noted that "there is a district-wide policy, if you will, in place for bullying that falls under the student code of discipline." This student code of discipline is directly connected to the city's municipal regulations and served as the de-facto policy of the district in addressing gendered harassment incidents.

**Student Discipline Code**

MAPS revised its student discipline code in 2009. The city codified the discipline code in the city's municipal regulations. The student discipline code referred to MAPS' student discipline policy which set forth the levels and types of discipline in MAPS, the punishment for various student offenses, and the procedure for schools in imposing those punishments.

Teachers generally interacted with discipline through two documents, the *Disciplinary Responses to Student Behavior* document and the *Office Discipline Referral Form*. These two documents represent two mediating texts that shaped how teachers came to understand gendered harassment. The *Disciplinary Responses to Student Behavior* was an eight page document and featured five tables which

delineated what student behaviors fell under each of the tiers and the appropriate

disciplinary response(s) aligned with the behavior. The teachers I interviewed in the

study commonly referred to the discipline code as "the tier system" or "the tiers."

Figure 4.1 shows a snapshot of what the document looked like.

Tier 3 behaviors are those behaviors not specifically enumerated in any other tier in this chapter that cause significant disruption to the academic environment or cause harm to self or others. In addition to lesser consequences, Tier 3 behaviors may result in either on-site or off-site Suspension.

| Behavior | Disciplinary Response(s) |
|---|---|
| 3.1 Inappropriate use of DCPS computer or network (restricted websites, offensive emails) | |
| 3.2 Sale or distribution of any item without authorization | • Verbal redirection/reprimand |
| 3.3 Possession or distribution of obscene or pornographic material on school premises | • Teacher/student conference or Administrator/student conference |
| 3.4 Possession or use of tobacco | • Parental contact (written or by phone) |
| 3.5 Use of alcohol | • Parent conference |
| 3.6 Use of marijuana, controlled dangerous substances, imitation controlled substances, inhalants, other intoxicants, or drug paraphernalia | • Temporary Removal of Student from Classroom* |
| 3.7 Unauthorized possession, use, or distribution of over-the-counter medication | • Behavior contract |
| 3.8 Verbal, written, or physical threat to person or property (including intimidating postures) | • In-School Disciplinary Action* |
| 3.9 Obscene, seriously offensive, or abusive language or gestures | • Grade reduction for academic dishonesty |
| 3.10 Causing disruption on school properties or at any DCPS-sponsored or supervised activity | • On-site Short-Term Suspension* with provision of appropriate intervention services |
| 3.11 Gambling | • Off-site Short-Term Suspension*, except in response to unexcused tardiness or absence |
| 3.12 Communicating slurs based on actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, or place of residence or business, including derogatory sexual language | • Off-site Medium-Term Suspension*, except in response to unexcused tardiness or absence |
| 3.13 Engaging in sexual acts on school premises or at school-related functions | |
| 3.14 Leaving school without permission | |
| 3.15 Academic dishonesty | |

| Behavior | Disciplinary Response(s) |
|---|---|
| | |

| | |
|---|---|
| 3.16 Forgery<br>3.17 Lying to or giving misleading information to school staff<br>3.18 Posting or distributing material or literature that is disrespectful, demeaning, humiliating, or damaging to students and/or staff. This includes posting material on internet or sending material electronically (via email or cell phone)<br>3.19 Engaging in behavior that demonstrates gang/neighborhood crew affiliation (displaying clothing or gestures associated with gangs)<br>3.20 Hazing<br>3.21 Bullying, or using humiliating, or intimidating language or behavior including Internet bullying<br>3.22 Possession of tools or instruments which school administrators deem could be used as weapons<br>3.23 Engaging in reckless behavior that may cause harm to self or others<br>3.24 Extortion<br>3.25 Fighting where there is no injury and no weapon<br>3.26 Trespassing<br>3.27 Any behavior or other conduct not specifically enumerated in any other tier in this chapter that causes significant disruption to the academic environment or causes harm to self or others<br>3.28 Documented pattern of persistent Tier 2 behavior | • Verbal redirection/reprimand<br>• Teacher/student conference or Administrator/student conference<br>• Parental contact (written or by phone)<br>• Parent conference<br>• Temporary Removal of Student from Classroom*<br>• Behavior contract<br>• In-School Disciplinary Action*<br>• Grade reduction for academic dishonesty<br>• On-site Short-Term Suspension* with provision of appropriate intervention services<br>• Off-site Short-Term Suspension*, except in response to unexcused tardiness or absence<br>• Off-site Medium-Term Suspension*, except in response to unexcused tardiness or absence |

**Figure 3.1 - Snapshot of School Discipline Code Tier 3 Behaviors**

115

MAPS regulations place student offenses in five tiers, ranging from least (Tier 1) to

most serious (Tier 5). *Tier 1 infractions,* which can lead to punishments including

verbal redirection, calls home, parent-teacher conferences, behavior contracts and in-

school disciplinary action, include:

- Attending class without required materials or assigned work
- Disrupting classroom teaching
- Impolite, discourteous, or disrespectful communication with peers or staff
- Using obscenity or profanity with peers
- Excessive noise
- Inappropriate displays of affection
- "Off-task behaviors that demonstrate disengagement from classroom learning"
- Unexcused tardiness
- Refusal to comply with staff instructions or school rules

*Tier 2 infractions,* which can lead to punishments ranging from a verbal redirection to
in-school disciplinary action, include:
- Directing profanity or obscene/offensive gestures toward staff
- Disruptive physical contact with other students
- Leaving class without permission
- Throwing objects that may cause injury
- Unauthorized presence in hallways during class time
- Unauthorized use of portable electronic devices during school hours
- Unexcused absences from class or school
- Documented pattern of persistent Tier 1 behavior


Although teachers could interpret some incidents of gendered harassment as

Tier 1 or 2 infractions (i.e. calling someone a "fag" could be considered as non-

respectful communication), the district generally categorized gendered harassment as

Tier 3 and 4 offenses. Tier 3 behaviors included:

> Communicating slurs based on actual or perceived race, color, religion,
> national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual
> orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, family
> responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information,
> disability, source of income, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, or
> place of residence or business, including derogatory sexual language

Posting or distributing material or literature that is disrespectful, demeaning, humiliating, or damaging to students and/or staff. This includes posting material on internet or sending material electronically (via email or cell phone)

Bullying, or using humiliating, or intimidating language or behavior including Internet bullying

When the harassment based on actual or perceived social differences is persistent, it is elevated to a Tier 4 offense. "Sexual harassment" as well as "retaliation for reporting harassment and sexual harassment" was listed as Tier 4 behaviors. Tier 4 behaviors resulted in off-site suspensions for students.

According to MAPS' philosophy and approach to student behavior and discipline, the revised discipline code provided "consistent, progressive discipline responses that minimize disruption of instructional time" ([MAPS], 2009b, p. 1). The underlying logic was that schools should impose punishments progressively. Schools should not jump to the most severe punishments but instead try to improve students' behaviors through a variety of less punitive interventions. The district also believed discipline should not interfere with student learning. When students are punished, they maintain the right to instruction and should be provided with class materials and the opportunity to do their schoolwork.

MAPS' philosophy of student discipline reflected the discourses of standards-based accountability that was also pervasive in the school districts' academic reforms. Instead of learning standards, the discipline code reflected behavioral expectations students must fulfill. The discipline system required teachers to both monitor and correct students when they fail to meet these behavioral expectations. In its philosophy of student discipline, the District stated: "School staff provide a range of

disciplinary responses that hold students accountable when they do not meet expectations…Student discipline data is systematically analyzed to inform policies and practices" (2009b, p. 1). The use of data to inform discipline policies and practices reflect the recent interest in data-driven decision making from central office to the school and to the classroom. Implicit in this statement is a belief that data are important sources of information that educators can use guide improvement at all levels of the education system and to hold students, teachers and schools accountable.

The progressive discipline actions and responses featured for each of the five tiers of (mis)behaviors represent sequences of actions teachers partake in each time they refer a student for discipline. The "Office Discipline Referral Form" was a one-page document that allowed a teacher or school staff to briefly describe the specific behavior warranting the referral, the location and time of the incident as well as any other individuals involved in the incident. The form asked the referrer, "Did you attempt any of the following classroom strategies before referring?" Below the question were two columns of strategies presented in the form of a checklist, listing strategies the teachers should have tried before completing the referral. The directions at the end of the form, printed in all capital letters, reaffirm that this referral is just one step of a sequence of action in dealing with student behavior. Once a teacher completes the form, he or she must submit it to the principal or the designated discipline personnel in the school and then that person will determine what tier behavior code(s) are appropriate for the behavior described in the referral and recommend the disciplinary action that should be taken against the student.

**Teacher Evaluation System**

Although not directly related to gendered harassment, the teacher evaluation system in MAPS was a text that all six teachers frequently referenced in their interviews. Introduced at the start of the 2009-2010 school year, the teacher evaluation system evaluated teacher performance based on measures of student achievement, instructional expertise, collaboration and professionalism. At the center of this system was the teaching and learning framework, which represented MAPS' definitions of effective instruction and outlined the key strategies the district believed would increase student achievement.

The algorithm the evaluation system used to calculate a teacher's effectiveness score depended on the subject area and grades a teacher taught. During the 2010-2011 school year, the health and physical education teachers in this study had 75 percent of their overall score derived from five classroom observations carried out by the school principal and "master educators" hired by the district, in which teachers were rated against the nine different dimensions of the Teaching and Learning Framework (Table 6). The other 25 percent of the teachers' scores include student-achievement data as measured by teacher-assessments (10 percent), teacher commitment to school community (10 percent) and the overall school value-added student achievement data as measured by the state standardized test (5 percent).

**Table 4.2 – Focus of the nine teaching dimensions of the Teaching and Learning Framework**

| Teaching Dimension | Focus |
|---|---|
| 1 | Lead well-organized, objective-driven lessons |
| 2 | Explain content clearly |
| 3 | Engage students at all learning levels in rigorous work |
| 4 | Provide students multiple ways to engage with lesson |
| 5 | Check for student understanding |
| 6 | Respond to student misunderstanding |
| 7 | Develop higher-level understanding through effective questioning |
| 8 | Maximize instructional time |
| 9 | Build a supportive, learning-focused classroom community |

None of the nine teaching dimensions explicitly addressed gendered harassment. However, the ninth dimension, which focused on building a supportive and learning-focused classroom community, does list "the classroom is a safe environment for students to take on challenges and risk failure and "students are always respectful of the teacher and their peers" as classroom evidence of an effective supportive classroom community.

**Learning Standards, Pacing Guides and Sexual Health Resource Materials**

Teachers referenced the state's health and physical education learning standards as texts that provided guidance on what to teach. With regards to topics that directly addressed gendered harassment, there were a handful of standards that directly addressed bullying, homophobia and harassment. Both fifth and seventh grade included health standards that addressed bullying. The sixth and eighth grade learning standards also explicitly discuss sexual orientation. These standards include:

6.1.6 Explain that people, regardless of biological sex, gender, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and culture, have sexual feelings and the need for love, affection and physical intimacy.

8.1.5 Define sexual orientation, using correct terminology; and explain that as people grow and develop they may begin to feel romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of a different gender and/or to people of the same gender.

8.1.7 Compare and contrast the theories about what determines sexual orientation, including genetics; prenatal, social, and cultural influences; psychosocial factors; and a combination of all of these.

These standards were part of the sexual health unit in the curriculum. The number of learning standards for a grade often exceeded the amount of time teachers had to teach such content. For example, a typical school year is 36 weeks long; the eighth grade health and P.E. curriculum included 22 health standards and 34 physical education standards. At this rate, students would have to master more than one standard per week in order to master all 56 standards in the curriculum.

The school district also provided pacing guides that helped teacher unpack the standards into units and more manageable chunks. Within those pacing guides, sometimes the district included lessons that indirectly support the mastery of a standard. One example is one of the lessons in fifth grade pacing guide. Even though discussing homophobia is not a grade-level standard, the district included a lesson that featured the following two objectives:

1) Define sexual orientation, gay, lesbian, bisexual and homophobia
2) Discuss strategies for identifying and preventing homophobia and explain how it can hurt all students.

To support teachers' instruction on this and other topics in the sexual health unit, MAPS also provided the health and physical education teachers with a sexual health resource materials packet. The packet featured activities that discussed: puberty,

pregnancy, teen parenting, sexual orientation and homophobia, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, peer pressure and refusal skills, and healthy and unhealthy relationships.

**Trainings/ Workshops**

Given the policy context in the city and school district, this institutional ethnographic study explored how institutional processes shaped teachers' understandings of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies. I bounded my study by selecting from a group of health and physical education (H/PE) teachers in MAPS who attended at least one training on issues of gender, sexuality and/or harassment. Because the health and physical education teachers' curriculum included learning standards that addressed issues of gender and sexuality, MAPS provided professional development for the teachers on such topics.

The school district provided these trainings specifically for health and physical education teachers. The workshops lasted between 90 minutes to 180 minutes. Most of the trainings were mandatory as part of the professional development trainings for the health and physical education teachers. One training was optional. In my interviews, I asked the participants about trainings that they had attended between January 2010 and March 2011. For each of the trainings I describe below, at least one study participant attended the training. Table 4.3 provides a summary of the trainings, topics discussed and study participants who attended each training.

The training that was attended by the most participants was the "Bully-proofing our Schools" workshop held in October 2010. The workshop was held as

part of a full-day out-of-school professional development day for health and physical education teachers. This workshop was one of three training sessions teachers attended that day. I was not at this training. The description I offer of the training is based on participants' descriptions as well as the training materials and PowerPoint handouts they received from the training.

The workshop aimed to provide teachers with information to use to "bully proof their classrooms and their respective buildings." A representative of the district's school culture/student behavior and targeted student support teams led the workshop. The beginning parts of the workshop included explanations of the role each team plays in supporting safe and welcoming school environments. The school culture/student behavior team focused on two key areas: "1. Capacity building in behavior support best practices; 2. Management of whole-school behavior programs" (MAPS, 2010, p. 1). To connect the topic to the teacher's evaluation system, the district made a note within the PowerPoint slides that these two areas of focus are connected to the eighth and ninth dimensions of the Teaching and Learning Framework.

The school culture team identified the Student Discipline Code as the key regulation governing its work. Meanwhile, the targeted student support team provided oversight and direction for how schools implement and comply with the *Student Discipline Code*, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and MAPS' Student Support Team process which all seek to improve student learning and engagement in schools.

In the workshop, the district defined bullying as "when someone ***repeatedly*** and ***purposefully*** hurt another person who has a difficult time defending him/herself"

123

(MAPS, 2010, p. 2).  Examples of bullying included: "punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically; teasing people in a mean way (name-calling, for example: fat, ugly, faggot, dyke); getting certain people to 'gang up' on others" (MAPS, 2010, p. 2).  The workshop also provided an RIP acronym to help teachers remember these three dimensions of its bullying definition where R stood for repeated, I for intentional and P for power-based.

The workshop featured a "gallery walk activity" where teachers reflected on four questions:

1) What are the most common things you've heard kids "tease" each other about?

2) Have you heard students teasing each other over gender roles? (boys for being "sissies or girlish," or a girl for being "too boyish")? Do you stop it or let it go?

3) Are you comfortable responding when you witness students being bullied?

4) As a physical educator/coach do you sometimes use language that COULD potentially encourage bullying? If so, can you share an example?

(MAPS, 2010, p. 2)

Next, the workshop discussed the implications of bullying and warning signs to help in "recognizing the victim" (MAPS, 2010, p. 2).

The last section of the workshop focused on what teachers can do at the individual and school level to help curb bullying.  For individual responses, a Powerpoint slide lists the "Four R's of Bully Control" which includes the following actions:

- Recognize that a problem exists
- Remove yourself or step back from the situation if you do not feel you can effectively intervene

- Review the situation
- Respond to the situation (IMMEDIATELY)

The slide also includes a reminder that "Adults who remain silent when children are bullying others give permission to the behavior and thereby encourage it" (MAPS, 2010, pg. 3). School-wide suggestions provided include: enlisting student leadership groups to plan programs on respect, school safety and diversity; hosting parent meetings, having a clearly outlined school response to bullying and forming a bullying taskforce that includes students, teachers and school administrators.

These trainings and workshops served as other institutional texts the teachers interacted with. The workshops provided definitions of bullying, harassment and sexuality that interwove particular discourses about gendered harassment and the roles teachers play in addressing such behavior. In Chapter 5, I discuss the ways in which participant referenced or did not referenced the information provided via the "Bully-Proofing our Schools" workshop.

**Table 4.3- Trainings Attended**

| Training | Date and Length of Workshop | Topic | Mandatory | Attendees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| How Health and Physical Education Teachers can Make Elementary Schools Safer for All Students | January 2010 3 hours | Gender and bullying | Mandatory | B.J., Camille, Jordan |
| Building Sexual Health Skills in a Youth Culture Context | January 2010 3 hours | Sexual health | Mandatory | Dionna |
| Beyond Pink and Blue: Transgender 101 | September 2010 3 hours | Health workshop explaining how gender identity is both unique from and related to sexual orientation. | Optional | Camille, Ziva |
| Bully-Proofing our Schools | October 2010 90 minutes | Bullying | Mandatory | B.J., Camille, Grace, Jordan, Ziva |
| Human Sexuality | October 2010 90 minutes | Child sexual development | Mandatory | Camille, Grace, Jordan, Ziva |

**Bullying in the Media**

I would be remiss if I did not also contextualize this study in the particular

milieu of the popular media in the US during the fall of 2010. In September 2010,

while I waited for the study district to grant permission for me to conduct this

research study, at least ten male teenagers committed suicide in response to anti-

LGBTQ bullying and harassment. Print magazines like *Newsweek* and *People* and

television shows such as "Dr. Phil" and "Dateline" featured stories about youths

being "bullied to death" to describe these suicides.  Although youth across the country have wrestled with such harassment over the years, bullying suddenly became the topic of the moment in the mainstream press.

Numerous individual and collective responses and call-for-action emerged from this spotlight on bullying. Dan Savage, a syndicated columnist and author, created the It Gets Better Project.  The internet-based project originally aimed to inspire hope for gay youth and prevent suicide among LGBT youth who encounter bullying and harassment by having LGBT adults convey the message that the youths' lives will improve.  It Gets Better features over 10,000 user-created videos with submissions from gay and non-gay celebrities, organizations, politicians and every day people. In November 2010, adults and youths participated in the first Spirit Day, where people wore purple to show support for young people who experienced bullying.   In March 2011, the White House along with the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services hosted a conference on bullying prevention.

The fact that these events unfolded before and during the time I conducted my research is important to note.  My dissertation research and findings arise from particular national and historical context.  The public's consciousness on bullying reached an unprecedented tremor in the fall 2010.  At that time, 43 states already had legislation on bullying but the wave of deaths became the impetus for school district to be proactive and to do something that addresses the problem. The deaths were also a visible sign and schools could no longer state that bullying and gendered harassment were issues at other schools and not at their own.  Undoubtedly, such a

context played a role in how my conversations unfolded with study participants about bullying and harassment in schools.

*Participants*

I chose to explore how teachers come to understand gendered harassment policies through the perspectives of six teachers: B.J., Camille, Dionna, Grace, Jordan, and Ziva. Each health and physical education teacher brought forth a set of specific experiences and identities to his/her teaching and the research process. In our interviews and interactions with one another, each teacher's personal and social identities as well as their own experiences in school (as students and as teachers) shaped how they perceived the cultures of their current school and district.

Although I frequently refer to the participants collectively as the "health and physical education teachers" I recognized that the participants were distinct from one another in myriad ways. In the section that follows, I briefly describe the teachers' educational backgrounds, their major responsibilities as teachers, and personal experiences they described as shaping their thinking about gendered harassment. I also share contextual factors about each teacher's school community.

As I use some of the participants' words to introduce the reader to the teachers, I wanted to be explicit about the "ways in which the participants' voices are contextualized, the researcher's interpretations are partial, and the reader's reading is situated" (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 20). In this section, I chose to use poetic stanzas to depict and represent some of the conversations lifted from transcribed interviews.

**B.J. and Armstrong Middle School**

B.J. was an African-American male. He was a fourth year teacher in his mid-twenties and in his first year at Armstrong Middle School. Born to Jamaican immigrants, B.J. grew up in the suburbs of Mid-Atlantic City. He attended college on an athletic football scholarship as a defensive back at a historically Black college where he earned his degree in physical education. As part of his teacher training, B.J. shadowed teachers across the K-12 P.E. settings in both urban and suburban schools. B.J. credited his middle school and high school teachers and coaches for his development in his sports and academic careers as well as his decision to become a physical education teacher.

B.J. shared:

> I first wanted to become a teacher
> probably around eighth, ninth grade.
>
> I've always been good in sports and my first goal,
> like most boys,
> was to make it to the NFL.
>
> I had some teachers and coaches in high school, middle school,
> who were definitely an influence
> over my sports career as well as my academic career
> in keeping me in line.
>
> Their job looked pretty easy
> from a student standpoint
> so I decided
> I wanted to be a physical education teacher.

BJ described his responsibilities as imparting knowledge to students that allowed them to be successful in his class and outside of school. "I would say my main responsibilities as a teacher I think is to impart knowledge to the students, not only in my subject area of physical education and health but just in daily things you do in

129

society on a day to day basis. I think that's my biggest influence as a teacher." As the health and physical education teacher, B.J. led "a fitness program where we do a couple exercises in the morning." He also worked with "the nurse along with the cafeteria staff, mainly because of the Healthy Schools Act, to encourage the kids to make healthy choices at lunch and throughout the day and when they go home."

B.J. delivered his words in the same way he moved –with a sense of urgency. He spoke succinctly and often included statistics and figures about his classes, school or the district. B.J. seemed to never stop moving. During the school day, when he was not instructing his own class, B.J. was all around the school to communicate with staff members about student behavior, to set up equipment for students for recess, to track down equipment and even to organize a kickball tournament as requested by the principal. Even when B.J. was sitting down for our interviews, he was always on alert, keeping his eyes and ears open to what needed to be done.

B.J. referenced his personal experiences with bullying as something that shaped his understandings of gendered harassment and bullying as a teacher. He recounted his experience for me during our first interview together:

> From fourth grade to eighth grade, I would fight every day I got off the bus.
> I got my book bag off the bus and the boys will be standing there every day.
> Step off the bus and punch me in the face.
> Start fighting.
> Kicked and just beaten cause I'm the safety patrol.
>
> I was harassed.
> Called gay,
> a faggot,
> Yeah that was when I was in fourth through eighth grade.
>
> I definitely believe God gives you everything you can handle.
> So if you get bullied as a youngster,
> you're going to go on and do great things and be successful.

It's just making you stronger.

B.J. added, "I know from my personal experience, how bad and how mind-wrenching bullying can be. You can be to the point where you are like you have two choices: fight or kill yourself."

B.J.'s school served one of the most gentrified neighborhoods[1] in Mid-Atlantic City. As B.J. described it, "[i]t's not the best area in the city, it's not the worst area in the city either. There are a lot of immigrants, mostly from third world countries. We have families that are Latin American. Caribbean, West African, Eritrean and Ethiopian. There are a lot of hard working people in the community but there are also a lot of thugs and hoodlums in the community." Walking to Armstrong Middle School from the subway station, I was struck by the number of construction projects happening in the neighborhood. Where there used to be an abandoned building, now sat an organic food market. A bright orange sign hanging from the top of a new high-rise apartment proclaimed, "IN is SO in reach!" Other self-described luxury condos and new chain restaurants peppered the neighborhood's main thruway, sandwiched between empty storefronts and local businesses that had served the community over the past 30 years. The contrasts between the new and old buildings and the differences in the targeted customers of the businesses presented another visual reminder of the changing neighborhood demographics. What used to be largely a working class Black neighborhood is now home to a growing number of working class Black and Latino families as well as young, middle class professionals of various shades and ethnicities but the latter is often called "White" in the local media's discussion of changing demographics in the neighborhood.

Armstrong Middle School was in an old, three stories high building that sprawled along two city blocks. Air-conditioning units peeked out from each classroom window. The school sat right across from a street lined with trees and brick row homes. A metal detector greeted all who entered the school and beeped accusingly each time a student or visitor walked through it. The school served a student population that was predominantly Hispanic/Latino (52 percent) and Black (46 percent). Nearly 40 percent of the school's 180 were English language-learners. Four out of five students were eligible for free and reduced-price meals. At the time of this study, Armstrong was in its second year of restructuring for its school improvement status under No Child Left Behind. When I asked B.J. what that meant for the school, he replied, "Basically, all of the administration was let go last year and teachers had to reapply for their jobs and the teachers were hired." In 2010, fewer than three out of 10 students at the school scored proficient on the city-wide reading test.

B.J. described Armstrong as a school that was making positive changes. "It's progressing. It's in constant flow. Last five to fifteen years, Armstrong's been really bad and really low. Violence, bad culture, students in the hallway all the time; it was pretty bad. But this year, as you probably noticed when you came in, the hallways are clear. You don't hear a lot of loud noises; it feels like a school so that's why I say it's been changing. We haven't fulfilled all our goals yet. We still have students who walk out of class on their own. We still have students who don't carry book bags to school. So we're changing it slowly but I think next year will be a bigger

improvement and third year, my third year, we'll be a model school. But hopefully our enrollment stays high."

The school's old design meant Armstrong had two gymnasiums that were originally designed for boy and girls to hold separate gym classes. The former boys' gym featured a leaking ceiling and jagged pieces of hardwood that poked out along the length of the basketball court. As a result, B.J. held his P.E. classes in the gymnasium that used to be a dance studio turned gym. Sounds ricocheted off the walls, which meant a cacophony of noise occurred whenever more than one person spoke or more than one ball bounced in class. When it got warm, B.J. opened the windows and sometimes uninvited guests would join the class. During one day when I was with B.J., a bird flew into the gym and stayed for a class period perched upon a light in the high ceilings of the gym.

For the past several years, the number of students at Armstrong has slowly dwindled as charter schools promising longer school hours, more enrichment activities and newer building space popped open in the same neighborhood. Towards the end of the school year, B.J. told me that he would not be returning to Armstrong the following year. Armstrong's projected student enrollment decreased and that resulted in the school district reassigning the P.E. position at Armstrong as a part-time teaching position.

**Camille and Cartwright Elementary School**

Camille was a White, second-year teacher at Cartwright Elementary. She grew up in the Midwest and moved to MAC to teach in MAPS. Camille recounted how she ended up in education:

Both of my parents were teachers and
I was like,

"I'm never going to be a teacher.
NEVER!
   I can't stand it.
      I know how hard it is.
         I don't want to do it."

But I was not happy in sports medicine and so
I looked for a major that was similar to the classes I had already taken.

I wanted to try teaching for a semester and just fell in love with it.

I was like,
     "This is what I'm supposed to be doing!"


Camille completed a traditional four-year, teacher training program in health education and physical education as part of her undergraduate studies. She characterized her program and professors as representing "the newer school of PE" where they taught her to use gender-neutral terms like "class" instead of "guys and girls." Camille described the overall message she received from her program as "it's about you [as the teacher] giving [students] confidence and the skills so no one feels like they can't do anything just because of their race, their hair color, their gender or anything like that."

Camille included exposing her students to new opportunities so they have choices and options when they are older as part of her responsibilities as a teacher. "I understand as an elementary school teacher I can't take them out of the situations they're in. I can't give them a backyard if they don't have one, I can't make their parents have money to put them on a basketball team. But I *can* expose them to a lot of different skills so when they do have more choices later in life, they can make a

choice and say, 'Oh I remember doing that in PE, I kind of enjoyed it and now I have an opportunity to do it later.'"

Camille's warmth and patience came across in the way she spoke and interacted with her students. Whether it was in one-on-one interactions or in whole-class instruction, Camille asked students probing questions to consider and talk about their own thoughts and feelings. She admitted, "I'm very much into identifying how you're feeling in the moment." She was always quick to give high-fives and hugs to students for encouragement. Camille was thoughtful in our interviews. She paused to search for the right words and examples and never rushed in her explanations of different processes and routines at her school to me.

As a non-MAC native and a White woman teaching in a predominantly Black neighborhood, Camille recognized her outsider status and also saw it as a teaching opportunity. "Being an outsider in MAC, I just bring a different view to them. I tell my students, if you want to live in MAC for the rest of your life, that's great but if you don't want to, that's also okay. I tell them, I've been to Spain, I've been to Europe, I've been to California which some of them are so excited about. I come in with fresh eyes where I don't see them as anything other than kids who can learn. I don't see their circumstance in a way, like I'm understanding to it and I'm empathetic to it- where I do understand some of them are working with less than ideal circumstances but I don't let them use that as an excuse anymore."

Camille pointed to her family as an influence on her thinking about gendered harassment. "[My parents] just sort of raised me with a lot of compassion for people and that tends to be my personality. I can always see the other person's side. I tend to

135

be able to put myself in their shoes and think about how I could want to react to it."

Camille added:

> That coupled with my sister being lesbian,
> knowing that those are people too.
> They have families. They have feelings.
>
> So for me, it's always been,
> "If you're calling someone that name, and that's how you're feeling about
> homosexual people,
> then that's how you're feeling about
> my sister."
>
> Sometimes, I do personalize it more than I should
> but that is one of the main reasons why I have such a firm stance in that.

Camille was in her second year at Cartwright Elementary school. Cartwright was situated in one of the most economically-depressed areas of the city. The area had the highest unemployment rate of any U.S. metropolitan area with a comparable workforce; nearly one-fourth of its residents were unemployed. The area also saw a large number of violent crimes. In 2010, four teenagers were gunned down in a shooting spree that happened less than 5 minutes away from Cartwright. As I rode the bus to Cartwright, the blocks of nondescript brown-boxed public housing apartments and makeshift rest-in-peace memorials provided visual cues of the challenges faced by some of the families in the school community. A military base was also located blocks from Cartwright. Many of the military families choose to send their students to the school which helped made Cartwright student population slightly more racially and economically diverse.

Cartwright served about 350 students, 93 percent of whom were Black and 81 percent of whom were eligible for free and reduced meals. Walking through the front

entrance, visitors were greeted by three stuffed-animal lions (the school's mascot), a sun-faded cardboard cutout of President Barack Obama, and reminders for students to keep the peace. Some of the décor of Cartwright helped masked the age of the building.  A bulletin board in the hallway adjacent to the office proclaimed Cartwright's school motto: "See & Believe & Achieve" with black and white portraits of students posed as a teacher, musician, cook, firefighter, politician and journalist. Camille kept her course equipment in a third-floor classroom. She held classes with her students in the school's multi-purpose room on the first floor or what she endearingly and frustratingly called the "audi-cafetorium."

Students' colorful artwork and classwork framed the school's hallways and stairwells. Some of the projects revealed the challenges students have faced that might not be seen in a "typical" elementary school. In one assignment, students created "band-aids" to heal the world and answered the prompt, "If I could heal the world, I would heal…" Student responses included "bad feelings," "hate," "hurt," "war," to items like "homelessness," "sexual abuse," "rape," and "neglect."

Cartwright made AYP during the 2009-2010 school year.  However, in recent months, the scores have been under investigation due to high rates of erased answers that turned into correct answers.

**Dionna and Williams Middle School**

A Hispanic woman in her twenties, Dionna was in her fourth year of teaching. Dionna grew up in a middle class family with her mother and sisters in a rural town in the Southeastern U.S.  Dionna studied health and physical education in college. She began her teaching career in the elementary school setting. For the past three years,

137

she had been working at the middle school level.  Dionna served as team leader and chairperson of the P.E. department at Williams Middle School.  She was well-respected by her students and colleagues.

Williams Middle School sat in the heart of an upper-class, historical neighborhood of Mid-Atlantic City.  Williams had a reputation as one of the highest achieving middle school in MAPS.  Williams serve a diverse student population. Thirty-seven percent of its nearly 1,000 students were Black, thirty-nine percent were White, 13 percent Hispanic/Latino, six percent are Asian-American and five percent of students identified as mixed race. A little over 20 percent of the students were eligible for FARMs.  The curriculum at Williams combines state learning standards with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Program (MYP).  Just below eighty-five percent of its students met or exceeded math and reading standards on the state's test.  Despite the school's percentage of high-achieving students, Williams had not made AYP the past three years and was listed as requiring school improvement under NCLB.

Dionna was quick to point out that Williams was not "what everyone would think of as an urban school." She noted: "We don't have 20 security guards. We have a police officer but it's not like that same thing. We have metal detectors and stuff but that violence is not prevalent here in this school, it's not a huge issue like it might be in somewhere else in the city which I think I'm lucky to not to have to worry about that."  Dionna described Williams as "pretty rigorous." She added, "We expect a lot from our students.  I think sometimes that can put some stress on them. We expect a lot. We have high expectations in all of our classes.  We are really data driven too so

keeping track of our data. What mastery of our standards that we have, so how are they mastering them, what's the percentage, keeping tabs on that." The school community featured an active and strong parent-teacher association (PTA). The PTA supported the school by fundraising and donating some uniforms for the athletic teams.

Like their peers across the city, each morning, Williams's students fed their jackets and backpacks through metal detectors before entering the school. The first time I walked into Williams, I was struck by the high quality of the facility compared to the other schools I visited as part of this study. The physical space of the school reflected the $70 million used for the modernization renovations completed in 2009. The building was clean and well-lit. Everything had a new shine to it. Natural light streamed through expansive windows that reached up to lofted ceilings and bathed the hallways with sunlight. Classrooms were loaded with technology and new furniture. The school gym had brand new hardwood floors and featured a regulation basketball court. Students had locker rooms to change in. Murals, student work and framed posters displaying the IB program's values lined the school's walls. A banner featured a question around the IB MYP Health and Physical Education curriculum asked: "How do I become my best self?" The school motto urged students to: "Think globally. Listen compassionately. Act inclusively."

Dionna exhibited her reflective nature as well as her ability to make quick connections and associations throughout our interviews. When we spoke, she reflected on the divisions and inconsistencies between her personal and professional identities:

When I'm at school, I'm Ms. W.
When I'm at home, I'm Dionna.
My thinking, my frame becomes a little bit different.

Like when you said, "Oh, do you hear students who say, 'That's gay'?,"
In my mind, I'm like, "I say, "That's gay"."
I say that when I'm at home or when I'm with my friends.

Here, I am a role model.
I'm teaching them. I have to show them what's correct.
If they don't know, tell them why we don't say this.
Whether how I do in my personal life, I still know
what's right and wrong
or what's appropriate in this setting.

Dionna interspersed her responses with reference to TV shows, websites, tweets and

current events that connected to bullying and gendered harassment.  She mentioned

the media as one of the factors that influence her thinking about gendered harassment

from news coverage on the bullying-related suicides to a Hilary Duff commercial.

She also considered her sister as another source that impacted her thinking. Dionna

shared:

My sister is a lesbian.
I know who my sister is.
I know how nice of a person she is.

She's sweet
but because of this one choice she chooses to make,
it's going to impact how people treat her
so that kind of bothers me.

**Grace and Pippen Elementary School**

Grace was an African-American woman in her fifties. She had been teaching

for 19 years and was in her sixteenth year teaching in MAPS. Her teaching

140

experiences had been exclusively with adolescents. The 2010-2011 was her first year in teaching in an elementary school. Grace described what led her to education:

> I also went to dental school but
> decided I didn't want to look at teeth the rest of my life.
> Every time I would do something,
> there would be a calling back to a child.
>
> So one day, I said "Okay, I'm going to do what
> I'm supposed to do and that's teach."
> And my job is to build foundations and that's the way I look at it….
> This is a ministry for me.

Grace continued: "I love working in urban areas because the only difference sometimes between children is one child has a foundation and another child doesn't. When you have a foundation, when you fall, you have something to build up on. So I make sure that they build that foundation so when people fall they can build up on something." Grace's focus on foundation reflected elements of the Pippen Elementary School mission which stated a focus on building "a foundation to enable each student to successfully compete and stand on his/her own wherever they go"

When Grace spoke, it was like listening to a sermon; tremendous energy and conviction traveled through her words. Her strong Christian faith came across in the biblical analogies she used as well as descriptions of her work outside of school. Growing up, Grace experienced bullying from her peers. Grace described how those experiences and her faith shaped her interactions with students:

> I was bullied.
> So if you want to speak biblically-
> everything that has happened to me
> has prepared me for what I have to face with a child.
> I know that.
> It allows me to have the empathy
> and the understanding and the direction on which I need to give.

It's different when you can be straight up with a child,
 be open and truthful with a child  when they come to you and say,
"Ms. D, I am gay."

        "Okay."

"I haven't told my mother yet. She's going to kill me and I don't know what
to do."

        "Okay."

When you can tell that child "It's okay. This is what I need for you to do, this
is why I need to send you in this direction because I can't help you here but I
can show that I know that you're okay and it's going to be okay."

Sometimes they just need to hear that. Sometimes they just need a hug.
Even though it's not okay in my faith.
I'm able to separate and be able to say that
and push what my beliefs are aside.
because I got that open-mindedness and that honesty
and I know that I'm not in charge because I'm not God.

Grace further explained another experience that shaped her perspectives:

I have a nephew who is homosexual and he was beaten because of his
lifestyle. I think that's wrong. He didn't go back to college for that. He was in
college and he was almost killed. So it's personal. I understand who are that
way and that's just the way it is. No one has a right to beat somebody up.
That's just like you beating me up because I'm Black.  It's the same thing.
You see my skin color and you don't like me because of the color of my skin.
It's that whole thing. So I don't like it.


Like other school buildings that have been renovated over the past decade,

Pippen featured large windows that allowed for plenty of natural light to peek into

classrooms.  The school mission was posted on the glass pane windows of the front

door. Visitors entering the school are greeted by a security officer and a large bulletin

board announcing "Read and see how we achieve" and featuring each class's

standardized scores from the previous school year.  The school's wide hallways

allowed classes of students to walk pass one another without issues.  Grace held

classes in a gymnasium that also doubled as an auditorium for school-wide events. Located on the second floor of the school, sunlight filtered through the large glass windows, covered by an "America Reads" banner that instantaneously made the space warm and inviting.

Pippen served a student population that was two-thirds Black and one-third Hispanic/Latino as well as a handful of students who were White and Asian-American. Almost 225 of the 300 students at the school were eligible for FARMs. Half of the classes at Pippen for each grade level participated in the school's Dual Language program where students take half their classes in English and the other half in Spanish. The school was in a historical neighborhood in MAC that had seen tremendous gentrification over the past decade. A low-income housing apartment sat right across from million dollar row-homes. Seven out of every 10 students at the school come from outside the school's neighborhood. Pippen elementary school did not have a school improvement status under NCLB. Eighty-three percent of students met or exceeded math standards in 2010 compared to 75 percent in 2009. Sixty-five percent of Pippen students met or exceeded math standards compared to 79 percent in 2009.

**Jordan and Grant Middle School**

A Black man in his mid-twenties, Jordan was in his second year of teaching. He grew up in a Nigerian family that moved to the MAC area when he was eight. Jordan shared:

> When I first came to America, I was teased a lot because I was different.
> I had an accent and I couldn't speak English fluently.
> I got picked on. My last name. My middle name.

143

I learned to just ignore it and don't let it bother me.

But like I said, kids get picked on regardless.

Everybody is going to get picked on in their life.
It's how you handle it, it's how you deal with it.
You can't let it affect you.
You can't let it interfere with your goals and what you want to do.
So I mean, I understood that early, it never became an issue for me.

Jordan studied exercise science and physical education in college and completed part of his student teaching at Grant Middle School. After he graduated, his principal hired him and he has been at Grant since then. Jordan described his main teacher responsibilities were to: "educate the children and to keep them safe. Keep them free from physical harm, free from emotional harm, keep them in a safe environment and to make learning fun for them and invest in their future. I am also making sure that I am being a role model, modeling myself correctly because the kids are watching everything that we do."

Jordan was intellectually curious and posed more questions to me than other participants during our interviews. He spoke with a calmness that he exhibited in the way he moved and in the way he interacted with his students and colleagues. His Christian faith also served a foundation for him to talk about his beliefs and morals:

> I'm a likeable person so I was brought up to accept people as who they are and I try to not make fun of anybody. I try to defend students who are being harassed, you know I guess, that's my personality, as somebody that likes to help people. So, I try to defend the ones that are being harassed and try to educate the ones that are harassing other students to let them know that it's wrong to do that. As a Christian, that's how we were raised. That's just like human nature to me.

> So you know, Christianity and Catholics, says you shouldn't be a homosexual. It doesn't bring up any type of conflict for me because I'm not the judge. I can't judge anybody. At the same time, there's a lot that people shouldn't be, I

144

mean, nobody is perfect in the world and I'm not God and I can't judge a person and say- well, they deserve to be getting bullied because they are homosexual. That's wrong. I just, I mean, like I said, I accept everybody.

Jordan added: "I was born Catholic but religion don't matter. We all believe in the same thing, we just call it a different name. Whether you're a Buddhist or a Muslim, you're living life the right way, you're doing good in God's eyes. Just have love in your heart. Live your life."

Grant was distinct from other middle schools because it served students from a wide age range within the same building: pre-school through eighth grades. Grant was located in a residential, predominantly Black neighborhood in MAC. In recent years, more Latino families have been moving into the area. Seventy-seven percent of the student population were Black and 20 percent were Hispanic/Latino and the other three percent included White, Asian American and Native Alaskan students. Four out of five students at the school were eligible for free and reduced meals. Nearly one in five students were English Language Learners.

The school curriculum focused on inquiry and project based learning on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Over 50 percent of students met or exceed state standards in math and reading but the school had not made AYP the past three years. Jordan expounded his thinking about AYP and what it says about his school:

> I don't believe AYP says whether you make it or not, if you don't that means your school is a failing school, that's not the case. Last year, we didn't make AYP but we made tremendous gains. We didn't make AYP last year, are we a terrible school? No, we are not because we're still improving, we're making gains. Most schools went down but we went up. So I think, as long as schools can continue to make gains each year, it's saying something.

At times the three storied-building felt too cramped for Grant's 400-plus students. Like Camille's school, Jordan's school also featured a multipurpose room that served as the cafeteria, auditorium and gym. The small size of the cafeteria meant that the lines for lunch swelled outside the cafeteria doors and also restricted student movement when they were ready to go outside for recess. Jordan often did not use the multi-purpose room because it either was being set-up for lunch, being used for lunch or getting cleaned up from lunch. Instead, Jordan took his students outside to the school playground or he walked his students over to a gym space that was not being used in the high school across the street.

**Ziva and Paxson Elementary**

A White woman in her mid-twenties, Ziva was a first year teacher at Paxson Elementary. She grew up in a working-class family in New England. After college, Ziva worked in a physical therapist office. When she realized that was not what she wanted to do, Ziva subsequently enrolled in a 12-month accelerated teaching program where she earned her master of arts with a focus on physical education. She began the school year splitting her time between Paxson and another school, Hodges Elementary. Ziva resigned from her position at Hodges in November 2010 (a month before this study began) when she faced overt hostility from her school community over her lesbian identity. As Ziva explained:

My fifth grade students were calling each other
"FAGS"
 and telling each other that they had AIDS.

They said that, "Being gay is gross and that it's like a disease."

So I told them that I was gay.

They were fifth graders and I thought that was very appropriate.

It got back to my principal that I had everyone sit in a circle
and tell their darkest, deepest secrets
and that my darkest, deepest secret
was that
I was a lesbian.

Ziva continued:

One parent in particular came up and said, "Is it true? Are you a dyke?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, it doesn't bother me, but as soon as her daughter comes home and tells me Ms. Ziva touched her, then we're going to have a problem." So I went from being a dyke to a child molester like this [snaps finger]. That's when my principal stopped talking to me and two and a half months later I stopped going to school there.

Ziva's experience at Hodges greatly influenced how she managed her personal identities and dealt with issues related to sexuality throughout the rest of the school year. She also attributed her "strong beliefs about equality and acceptance" as contributing to her thinking about gendered harassment.

Ziva was quick to laugh and peppered her conversations with jokes and one line zingers. Ziva expressed one of her main responsibilities in addition to teaching her content area standards was "to make sure everyone is comfortable and safe in my class. I think that's one of my biggest responsibilities because P.E. is a subject that is very physical and kids do have to move and they can't necessarily hide behind a desk so it brings about a lot of insecurities in kids." Like Camille and Jordan, the multi-purpose room was Ziva's assigned classroom space. When Ziva held class, the custodians were still in the process of cleaning up the cafeteria and pulling up the tables against the blue-gray and off-white cinder block walls.

147

Paxson Elementary served the largest historical residential neighborhood and most densely populated neighborhood in Mid-Atlantic City.  Paxson had a diverse student population of almost 300 students, 62 percent Black, 28 percent White, and 5 percent Hispanic/Latino.  More than one-third of students were eligible for free and reduced meals.  The school had not made AYP in the previous three years, with more than 60 percent of students not reading or doing math on grade level.  Ziva described the school parent population as comprised of "One half of is white collar liberals who are mostly Caucasian and wealthy. There are a couple of same-sex parents, families and overall consider themselves to be very accepting.  The other half of the school is mostly African-American.  I would say they are not as accepting of [LGBTQ issues]. That's the general feel. And very religious- a very, very stereotypical MAC situation, I guess."

## *Summary*

In this chapter, I provided information regarding the context of the study district, institutional texts and familiarize the reader with Mid-Atlantic Public Schools, the study participants and their schools. Each of these components contributes to the manner in which teachers come to understand gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies in their organizational settings.  The school district did not appear to have an active bullying or gendered harassment policy and it is not clear how the district communicated these policies outside of the student discipline policy. Nevertheless, various institutional texts informed and coordinated teachers' understandings of gendered harassment. The teachers' biographies, organizational positions as well as their school contexts provided a rich backdrop for the institutional

148

texts and presses to shape how teachers read and considered gendered harassment

policies. In the next chapter, I share the findings regarding the role of various

discourses in shaping the teachers' understandings of these policies.

**Chapter 5: Findings –Local Understandings and Explanations of Gendered Harassment and Policy Texts**

**Introduction**

In this chapter, I draw on data from this study to answer the research question: "How do teachers come to understand their school districts' gendered harassment policies?" I chose to explore this research question through two sub-questions and through the perspectives of six teachers: B.J., Camille, Dionna, Grace, Jordan, and Ziva. Each health and physical education teacher brought forth a set of specific experiences and identities to his/her teaching and the research process. In our interviews and interactions with one another, the teachers' personal and social identities as well as their experiences in school (as students and as teachers) shaped how they perceived the cultures of their current school and district.

The unit of analysis began with the individual participants. I found it useful to contextualize study participants throughout my analysis, giving their unique experiences and backgrounds consideration. However, following in the institutional ethnographic tradition, the participants were not the singular objects of my analysis. Instead, the participants' accounts of their work provided an analytic point of entry into the complex of institutional relations that governed their work. Thus my analysis is situated where participants' actual work experiences of engaging with gendered harassment policies met the institutional processes through which these experiences become institutionally accountable.

One of the primary questions raised in this research study was, "What are local understandings and explanations of gendered harassment?" I address this sub-

question in the first section of this chapter by presenting the ways in which the six

health and physical education teachers discussed the behaviors and acts that fell under

the umbrella term of "gendered harassment." Since the term gendered harassment is

rarely used outside of academia, in my interviews, I had posed separate questions to

the participants regarding what they defined as bullying, homophobic harassment,

sexual harassment and harassment for gender non-conformity as well as their

explanations for why such behaviors occurred.

The second sub-question I address was: "How do policy texts mediate

teachers' understandings of gendered harassment?" I was interested in uncovering

the role institutional texts played in organizing and coordinating teachers'

understandings. In the second part of this chapter, I considered how the health and

physical education teacher's local accountability work are textually mediated across

the school district by three key pieces of texts: the student disciplinary code, the

teacher evaluation system and No Child Left Behind.

**Local Understandings and Explanations of Gendered Harassment**

Institutional ethnography suggests that participants' descriptions and

explanations of local experiences are connected to larger cultural discourses and

textual accounts. I begin by presenting general descriptions teachers provided about

the three types of gendered harassment and discussing general trends that emerged in

those descriptions.

*Descriptions of Gendered Harassment in MAPS*
As I asked the teachers about the three major types of gendered harassment,

each teacher described to me at least one incident related to homophobic harassment,

sexual harassment, or harassment for gender-non-conformity that occurred in their

schools.  Collectively, the teachers stressed that gendered harassment incidents most

likely occurred everyday but students may only report incidents to staff once a week

or two to three times a month. Of the three types of gendered harassment I focused on

in this study, teachers were most open with speaking about their personal experiences

with homophobic harassment; they were most familiar with the term sexual

harassment, and; they shared that they observed harassment for gender non-

conformity most frequently in physical education.

## **Homophobic Harassment**

> "A young man -- I don't know if he had been open about whether he was
> homosexual -- he was very effeminate, very soft-spoken. He hung around girls
> a lot and openly stated that he wanted to be a girl.  He just didn't really mesh
> with the fellas at all.  He tended to stay with the girls and did whatever
> activities they were doing at the time.  One day, he was coming from lunch
> and went to use the bathroom and a group of three guys went in and beat him
> up.  They put his head in the toilet and flushed the toilet.  The students were
> expelled.  One was expelled permanently.  The other two worked out some
> mediation thing.  They weren't allowed to come back to that school.  Some
> counseling were done for the young man.  It was sad."
>
> <div align="right">Grace</div>

The six teachers articulated a range of behaviors which constituted

homophobic harassment.  All six teachers acknowledged that homophobic harassment

occurred in their schools.  Two main forms of homophobic harassment emerged from

the data. On one end of the spectrum were hostile, aggressive physical or verbal

attacks directed towards individuals such as the one Grace described above.  When

describing these intentional acts of homophobic harassment, the six teachers all

attributed the acts to students' actual or perceived sexual orientation.  Camille

exemplifies this observation when she defined homophobic harassment as: "name-

calling and other forms of bullying. It would be specifically because of the student's sexual orientation or what people perceived to be their sexual orientation." Jordan furthered linked homophobic harassment to specific derogatory terms that are used such as "gays, fags and homos." Homophobic harassment included acts that were openly hostile to those who identified as LGBTQ.

On the other end of the spectrum of behaviors that constituted homophobic harassment were student comments that demeaned gayness in some form but were not necessarily directed at a specific person. The teachers differed in their perceptions of whether those phrases were directly harmful to students and whether teachers can always read those utterances as homophobic slurs. Jordan, B.J. and Dionna, all middle school teachers, at first did not include those comments as examples of homophobic harassment. In responding to probes about whether they heard phrases such as "that's gay," Jordan, B.J. and Dionna shared their beliefs that such comments were not hurtful or harmful since such comments were often used in jest and not directly targeting anyone. Dionna described some of what she has heard at school:

> I've heard, "That's gay" or "Stop being gay," "Oh you're being gay." You know, the new slang that they do when somebody says something that's like, gay-sounding, "Pause," and "No homo." So I've heard that…I don't really think there's anybody that's targeted. I think it's just said almost like, "It's stupid" or "Cool."

Similar to Dionna, Jordan highlighted how such comments may arise with his middle school students:

> They do say "That's gay." Some of the silly immature seventh and eighth grade boys might say that. It's mainly boys that say things like that to make themselves feel secure about their sexuality. They don't say it hurtfully. They say it jokingly sometimes. It could be two friends talking to each other and somebody say something like, "Go get the ball over there," and they'll say, "That's gay." I've never heard anybody use it in a hurtful way. It's not like

153

they're saying it to make the whole class laugh at this person and say, "Oh don't mess- don't talk to him, he's gay." It's not like that... when they say gay stuff or homophobic things, it's not direct, it's not meaningful expression to hurt anybody. It's just jokes. They laugh about it and then they move on.

In the example Jordan described, the students called someone or something "gay" as a way to distance themselves from the same label. Jordan noted that even when his students said something that was "homophobic," the intention was not to hurt – which he used to justify his condoning the usage of the utterances. Both Jordan and Dionna employed a different reading of popular phrases, such as "That's so gay," where they do not *always* have to be read as homophobic. Instead, the two teachers believed it is possible for the term to be used ironically, habitually, or without connection to gayness as a sexual signifier.

In contrast, two of the elementary school teachers, Ziva and Camille explained how they considered instances where elementary school-aged students may use "gay" and "fag" without knowing what the terms mean:

> It's students using the term "fag" or using the term "gay" and not really understanding what it means but are they offending someone in the class? Definitely yes. (Ziva)

> There was one day when a fourth grader was saying it to another student over and over again, "You're gay. You're gay." I stopped the student and asked, "Why are you doing that?" He was like he was just making him really mad and I asked if he even knew what it meant and he said, "I know that it just hurts people's feelings." So the students may not know what [the term] means necessarily. (Camille)

Although some students did not have precise definitions or understandings of "gay" and "fag," they knew enough to recognize the power of the words to hurt. Ziva and Camille considered such behaviors as gendered harassment and behaviors that required teachers to interrupt and address the situation.

154

Though the focus of the teachers' responses primarily described student-on-student gendered harassment, when discussing homophobic harassment, some teachers also inserted their own behaviors or others' behaviors towards them into the conversation. For example, B.J., the former college football player who still competed in an intramural league, described the homophobic harassment that may come from his teammates:

> My team is very homophobic, extremely homophobic to the point where you can say a regular statement and at the end of each statement you have to say, "no homo" or "pause." And if you don't, you're like ridiculed for a good fifteen to twenty minutes and you won't live it down. So you just have to be very careful what you say around those guys. When I talk and text with them, I do put "no homo" at the end of statements just so I don't get ridiculed and clowned.

Ziva, who identified as a lesbian, shared her encounters with homophobic harassment at the school where she was formally employed:

> I had parents, one parent in particular came up and said, "Is it true? Are you a dyke?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, it doesn't bother me, but as soon as her daughter comes home and tells me Ms. Ziva touched her then we're going to have a problem." So I went from being a dyke to a child molester like this [snaps finger].

The two teachers' accounts of homophobic harassment in their lives highlighted the role homophobic harassment played in teachers' public and personal lives. Homophobic harassment was not an abstract concept or something that only happened in schools between students. The policing of gender expressions and roles included behaviors and acts that inserted themselves into the teachers' everyday lives both in and out of school.

## Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment was a term the health and physical education teachers were familiar with. In defining sexual harassment, the teachers drew from sexual harassment incidents they have observed. Jordan's definition captured the essence of what the other teachers articulated:

> Sexual harassment is touching other people and making certain comments that are inappropriate to other students and making them uncomfortable in a sexual manner.

Although the teachers noted that sexual harassment includes both physical and verbal comments, their descriptions of incidents they have observed focused only on physical acts. None of the teachers described calling someone a "bitch" or "slut" as a form of sexual harassment.

In the teachers' accounts of sexual harassment that unfolded in their schools, a strong demarcation emerged between the elementary and middle school teachers: elementary teachers reported seeing less sexual harassment than middle school teachers. The three teachers who taught in elementary schools, Camille, Grace and Ziva, reported having witnessed very few little to no sexual harassment incidents. Both Grace and Ziva reported not seeing any incidents in their elementary schools. Camille commented on one incident that occurred:

> We have girls who wear short skirts and things like that. On P.E. days, they are supposed to wear shorts and there was one girl who didn't wear shorts one day. We were doing something in class that we had to be on the ground and I put her up against, facing the wall. There was a boy who was following her, trying to get on the other side to see and so I had to sit him down and be like, "You can't do that. It's making her feel uncomfortable and she got really upset about it." I was like, "I have her facing the wall for a reason." I ended up not letting her participate the rest of the day because I wasn't sure if he would try looking. But it wasn't anything touching, it wasn't anything verbal, it was just trying to get to the other side. But a lot of our kids are pretty actually still

asexual. Still pretty immune to it third grade and under. Like if a girl does a somersault and her skirt rolls up and you see her underwear, the kids may say, "Oh!" but it doesn't cause a real big issue. The girl doesn't get teased for it after the fact.

The example described by Camille reflected an incident that involved the harassment of a female student by a male student. The incident did not include verbal threats or physical contact between the students. Instead, the attempts by the male student to look up down the female student's skirt created a hostile environment for the female student. Like the other elementary teachers, Camille attributed the lack of sexual harassment that occurred in her school to students' young age and her perception of their lack of sexual identities.

In contrast, the teachers who taught middle-school aged students reported observing more sexual harassment. Dionna, Jordan and B.J. believed sexual harassment happened everyday at school but they might only observe it once or twice a week. Jordan described an incident between a male and female student:

I'd seen a boy smack a girl. He smacked another girl in the butt. They were talking, just laughing and joking and he smacked her on the butt and you know, she laughed about it. I think, well like I said, they do it in a friendly way.

He then described harassment that occurred between female students:

What I do see often with the eighth graders is girls tapping other girls' butts. They play around and tap each other on the butt. Every now and then, I see them try to pull each other's skirts up. They wear shorts underneath the skirts but they try to do stuff with one another. If I see it in my class, I'll address it and let them know that's not appropriate and they shouldn't be doing that.

Dionna and B.J. observed similar behaviors in their schools:

I've seen boys smack a girl in the butt, girls trying to grab boys' privates, trying to look down a girl's shirt, touching inappropriately, maybe rubbing or something like that. Trying to be indiscreet about it. I know one time I caught

a guy trying to put a hand up a girl's skirt. (Dionna)

A young man, his hand was taken by another student, and placed on another girl's chest. So that's definitely sexual harassment. Smacking on girl's butt as the boys do at this age. Girls even hitting boys on the butt. (B.J.)

The middle school teachers did not simply position sexual harassment as acts that male students "did to" female students. Their descriptions of the incidents indicate their broad understandings that sexual harassment transcended the sex of the perpetrator as they described harassment of male students by female students, female students by male students as well as female students by female students.

B.J. also described the criterion they used to determine how they address sexual harassment of female students by male students:

You may see a boy grab a girl's breasts and like it happens so quickly and sometimes the girls just hit the boys and laugh it off. As a teacher, it's like what you run in and tell the girl, 'Do you want me to write it up? Do you want it to go further?' and most of the time she's like 'No, he's just playing', but I think they need to feel more empowered to have more respect for themselves. Like if a boy touches me like that again, I should take it to the next level sometimes because the boys shouldn't just get away with that.

Really, it's just the reaction of the young lady, like if she looks upset or looks like she's going to start crying or feels – you can tell based on her body reaction. If she usually chases the boy down and hits him or smacks him on the back then you usually just talk to both of them. I put both of them in a time out in the middle school. That's the tools we're given – separate them – and it's usually just left to that. If the girl feels violated then I write it up and take it to the administration and a suspension usually follows for the young man.

B.J. relied primarily on the reactions of the female student as cues for the seriousness of an offense and in determining the next steps for action.

Collectively, the teachers' accounts of sexual harassment focused exclusively on physical acts that created hostile environment. None of the teachers described any

forms of *quid pro quo* harassment where one individual is being coerced by another to provide sexual favors for an external reward.

## Harassment for gender non-conformity

In defining and describing harassment for gender non-conformity, the teachers observed different social consequences for males and females.  B.J. provided an example that illustrated these different social consequences for students who deviated from societal norms in their gender expressions.  B.J. defined harassment for gender non-conformity as instances where "you're being harassed because you don't fit into societal definition of masculine and feminine roles for your sex." He observed how a young man who deviated from the norms by wearing skinny jeans was ridiculed by his peers while a female student who dressed more like a tomboy was more accepted by her peers. B.J. explained:

> The young man, he wore skinny jeans to school.  Skinny jeans are in style right now but his were a little tighter than usual and a couple of students were talking about, "He has girl's jeans on," "You have stretch jeans on," "You look like a faggot."

As for the female student who wore more baggy clothes, B.J. believed:

> I feel that she's accepted because either, A, she's physically able to beat the boys up or B, she's just as good an athlete as them so they see her as an asset rather than a girl, like she can help us do well in sports.

In this example, B.J. described two students' negotiations of femininity and masculinity.  While the young man who wore skinny jeans was ridiculed by his peers for resisting hegemonic notions of masculinity, the female student's peers accepted her for her physical prowess and for the manners in which she expressed her

159

masculinity.  Similarly, Camille also observed females have more degrees of freedom in how they choose to express their gender identity in elementary schools:

> I think it's much more acceptable for a girl to express her masculinity or femininity much more freely than a boy can. A boy is much more definitely steered more toward being masculine, steered away from anything feminine in terms of general.

Camille articulated the ways in which other teachers at her school engaged in practices that placed rigid gender roles onto students:

> I have heard teachers say, don't cry. You're a boy, man-up and those little things.  I know that they don't mean it to be mean. It is just sort of what they learned but it's frustrating.  They'll just make general assumptions about the kid based on their gender. And we have a lot boys go line up, then girls go line up and stuff like that. I, for the most part, have stopped doing that because I know that statistically, there's probably at least one kid in our school that's not sure what gender they are.

Ziva and Grace also observed teaching practices at their elementary school such as lining students up by gender and giving male and female students different color stickers that reinforced the traditional gender norms and ascribed student's identities to their biological sex.

All four of the female participants also spoke about transgender issues as we talked about harassment for gender non-conformity.  Although none of the teachers knew of any students who identified as transgender, the teachers spoke about the manners in which their schools will need to provide accommodations for future students who may transcend the gender roles of their assigned sex at birth.  It is unclear what conclusions can be drawn from the fact that only the women in the study mentioned trans issues and the men did not.

Teachers across the middle and elementary school levels noted how harassment for gender non-conformity often arose in their classrooms because of the

focus on athletic ability in physical education. Jordan shared that students "might be playing football or basketball and the boys may say, 'Oh you shooting like a girl' or 'You're throwing a football like a girl.' Both male and female students were overhead saying "You throw like a girl" in the classes of all six teachers to mock males for their lack of athletic skills.

**Findings on Gendered Harassment Discourses**

By examining the teachers' descriptions of gendered harassment, we can begin to understand how they made sense of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies in their particular institutional contexts. To further explore teachers' understandings and explanations of the different forms of gendered harassment, it was important to consider the various discourses that situated their understandings.

In the next section, I present the two main categories of discourses that emerged from the data to describe the local understandings and explanations teachers attributed to gendered harassment. These two categories include: *Gendered harassment as bullying* and *Gendered harassment as silence*. The first of these categories describes how teachers grounded and linked their understandings of gendered harassment to "official" definitions of bullying that circulated in the school district and popular U.S. culture. *Gendered harassment as silence* explains the ways local school practices rendered discussions of gendered harassment silent and invisible.

*Gendered harassment as bullying*

Two key findings emerged in examining the data of the discourses teachers drew upon to understand gendered harassment. First, bullying subsumed discussions of gendered harassment in MAPS. Second, the ways in which the teacher defined bullying was socially organized.

**Bullying Discourse**

Finding 1: Bullying subsumed discussions of gendered harassment behaviors in the school district.

In its disciplinary tiers, MAPS recognized bullying and harassment as distinct behaviors; bullying was a tier three offense while harassment was a tier four offense. Although the individual teachers articulated how they have observed different aspects of gendered harassment in their schools, the school district mostly discussed those behaviors around a discourse of bullying. Across MAPS, discussions of gendered harassment revolved around the concept of bullying and this was evident in the manners in which trainings, curriculum materials and policy texts focused exclusively on bullying.

For example, an October 2010 training offered by the school district considered the ways gender norms impacted the school experiences of students. The training was still entitled "Bully-Proofing our School," and addressed issues related to gendered harassment and homophobia. The training addressed issues related to homophobic harassment. For example, it acknowledged the fact that derogatory terms such as "faggot" and "dyke" are used. However, the training did not highlight the ways homophobic harassment as a set of behaviors differed from bullying. The training equated homophobic harassment with "teasing people in a mean way" and

162

"name-calling" but never actually explicitly discussed how the homophobia embedded within the term used makes homophobic harassment different from bullying (MAPS, 2010, p. 2).

Even in instances where participants attended training that addressed other forms of gendered harassment, such as harassment for non-conformity, the participants still remarked how the biggest takeaway was around bullying. None of the trainings participants attended discussed the role of sexual harassment in schools. While the trainings discussed the ways in which the *Student Discipline Code* addressed bullying, they do not explicitly discuss Title IX and the legal protections offered to students and staff against sexual harassment.

The subsuming of gendered harassment under bullying is not new or exclusive only to MAPS. It merely reflects the general milieu of how popular culture discussed these incidents as acts of bullying. Ziva offered an explanation for why there might be this framing around bullying:

> I think it's the tabooed subjects don't get addressed. I think bullying would get addressed if it was a big football player male bullying a little nerdy kid. But if the nerdy kid was gay, would it be addressed? Maybe not, because you would have to talk about the kid being gay so like it's easier to turn away.

The bullying discourse allows these behaviors to be addressed without touching on sensitive topics of homophobia and homosexuality. This confluence of gendered harassment and bullying means has implications for how teachers ultimately think about and respond to gendered harassment.

## (Re)defining bullying

Finding 2: The ways in which the teacher defined bullying was socially organized.

If the district framed all the gendered harassment behaviors around bullying,

how exactly did the teachers understand bullying? In this section, I share how the

teachers' descriptions of bullying and their understandings of bullying were socially

organized by one particular definition of bullying that circulated in the school district

and research literature. First, just how did the teachers define bullying? Here are

some of the teachers' definitions:

> Bullying is when you are threatening somebody verbally or physically. When you try to instill fear into somebody and to make yourself more dominant than somebody else. (Jordan)

> Anything that is repetitive, it's intentional- I feel like there's an acronym that I learned- that's where I'm getting this from. Intentionally harming someone else, whether it's physical or emotional and it has to be somehow repetitive. (Ziva).

> I definitely think of one person using their perceived power to influence another person whether it's how they feel or what they make them do. (Camille)

> Picking, teasing, hurting somebody emotionally. Making somebody uncomfortable, attacking someone, degrading someone when someone has more power over the other. (Dionna)

> Bullying is aggressive behavior that's persistent, that's done on purpose to someone. It's teasing, name-calling. It can be verbal, physical and emotional. (Grace)

The six teachers' definitions shared a common view that bullying included physical

violence as well as verbal and emotional intimidation. All the teachers' definitions

also highlighted the role of power and intention as important factors in defining

bullying. In one instance, I saw one teacher utilizing the definition beyond the context

of our interviews.  When I was in one of Grace's classes, the bullying definition she provided to her class was verbatim to the response she provided to my question.

The commonality in the teachers' definitions of bullying is significant and points to the social organization behind how the teachers articulated these particular bullying definitions.  All the teachers' definitions reflected at least two of the three dimensions of bullying in the Olweus definition of bullying. Both the bullying literature and TV shows in popular culture frequently referenced the Olweus definition as the "official" definition of bullying. This definition states:

> Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself. (Olweus Bullying Prevent & Hazelden Foundation, 2007)

The Olweus definition includes three key elements: power, repetition, and intent.  The definition offered by MAPS in their "Bully-Proofing Our Schools" training reflected these same three elements featured in the Olweus definition and basically is a rewording of the Olweus definition.   The school district stated that bullying was "when someone *repeatedly* and *purposefully* hurt another person who has a difficult time defending him/herself" (MAPS, 2010, p. 2).  The training also provided the RIP acronym to help teachers remember the three dimensions of its bullying definition where R stood for repeated, I for intentional, and P for power-based.

Only Grace and Ziva pointed out the role of persistence and repetition in bullying. Ziva openly stated she was sharing a definition she had previously learned in training.  Dionna had not attended the "Bully-Proofing Our Schools" training but her definition of bullying still acknowledged the role of power in bullying interactions. All six teachers noted the intention to harm and the role of power in

165

bullying. The similarities in the key features the teachers shared in their definitions suggest the teachers may have framed their definitions of bullying around what they learned from their trainings as well as from discourses of bullying circulating in popular culture.

### **<u>Bullying as "normal"</u>**

Finding 3: Teachers drew on discourses which framed bullying and gendered harassment as behaviors that are normal and natural.

When the teachers provided explanations for the reasons they saw the gendered harassment behaviors that they did, all six provided explanations situated within social-ecological perspectives of bullying. All six teachers explained bullying behaviors as naturally arising from complex interactions between students and their families, peer groups, school communities, and societal norms. Ziva, for example, explained how societal norms and representations of weakness resulted in gendered harassment:

> I think that anything that is viewed by our society as being weaker [makes students a target for bullying]. So for a boy to be feminine, you would be bullied or someone who isn't as intelligent as someone else or someone who isn't as physically strong or athletic. I think the girls that aren't as girlie or don't fit into the cliques as well, they get picked on. I think it's very normal. Normal in the sense that this is probably happening everywhere else like-because of our school environment, I don't think anything specifically interesting happens.

Dionna, Grace, Camille, and Jordan focused on the role of students' home interactions and relationships in their explanations. Explaining bullying as a desire to gain control and power was a theme in the teachers' interviews. According to the teachers, students may bully because they experience such interactions at home and thus see bullying as a natural part of living. Others may engage in bullying because

166

they want to feel a sense of power and control in their own lives.  Camille's words

below captured the sentiments shared by Dionna, Grace, and Jordan as well:

> A lot of our kids, they sort of feel powerless. They feel like they don't have much control over things. Some of them have had things in their lives that were terrible or just things that they don't really just like.  They just want to have some sort of control.  Even if it's not conscious, some of the students are seeking an student to dominate. (Camille)

Camille's comments regarding how the search for control occurred unconsciously on

the part of the student point to the teachers' underlying belief that bullying was an

inevitable part of being human and growing up where the strong survives.  As B.J.

explained: "It's human nature to prey on the weak. It's social Darwinism."

*Gendered Harassment as Silence*

Even though this research study unfolded during a period with intense news

media attention on the negative impacts of bullying and gendered harassment on the

well-being of young people, all six teachers shared that their schools never or rarely

discussed issues related to gendered harassment. Thus, another discourse that framed

teachers' understandings of gendered harassment was the manner in which their

schools and school system engaged in institutional processes that rendered gendered

harassment silent and invisible. The data pointed to two primary factors which

contributed to the lack of discussions on gendered harassment across Mid-Atlantic

Public Schools: marginalization of P.E. and teacher discomfort.

**_Marginalization of P.E. – "It feels like you're thrown by the wayside"_**

Finding 4: Schools' focus on AYP marginalized health and physical education as a
subject area in schools.

The health learning standards in MAPS indicated the district demarcated the health and physical education curriculum as the official sanctioned space in schools to teach about sexual orientation, homophobia, and topics related to gendered harassment.  However, one major institutional factor prevented local schools' and individual teachers' execution of that vision: the intense focus in the district in meeting AYP.  The teachers in this study perceived the focus on AYP as a major force that pushed health and P.E. to the margins of schooling.  Jordan's comments below illustrated this sentiment of marginalization shared by all six teachers:

> I feel like P.E. is overlooked and P.E. is not taken seriously because of the push for AYP and the academic goals that are set in the school building. Sometimes it's seen as "send the kids to P.E. class, so the teachers can have their break, their planning period." It's like a break-time for the other teacher instead of an academic enrichment that goes along with what the teacher is doing in the classroom…society just doesn't see P.E. as important as a Math or English class.

As captured in Jordan's last sentence, the devaluing and discounting of health and P.E. as a content area isn't only restricted to MAPS; it is a reflection of sentiments in larger U.S. culture.

One way P.E. was marginalized was  P.E. around the issue of time. In my observations of the teachers' classes, four of the six teachers had colleagues who brought their classes to P.E. 10 to 15 minutes after the assigned class start time (the entire class period may be 50 minutes). Ziva commented that when incidents like that occurred, they were evidence to her that "it's not important for teachers for their class to be on time to P.E."

Test preparation and standardized testing became a reason for students to be removed from health and P.E. or for class time to be taken away altogether.  In two of

the elementary school teacher's classes and one middle school teacher's class, I observed core content area teachers coming into the health and physical education teachers' classes and pulling out students to complete additional class work without asking for the health and physical education teachers' permission. In the most extreme example, a teacher went to B.J.'s 5th grade P.E. class and pulled out nearly half of his students (10 students in a class of 21) without speaking a word to him. In the weeks leading up to and during standardized testing, B.J.'s and Camille's school cancelled health and P.E. as well as other "special" subjects so that there could be more time dedicated to test preparation.

The teachers in this study already had the challenge of trying to teach both health and physical education within one block of time. In the 8th grade, teachers had the task of addressing 56 total learning standards in health and physical education with students – but the 8th grade teachers in this study only saw their students up to 36 to 45 times during the school year. The additional time restrictions imposed by students arriving late and being taken out of class altogether meant that teachers had to further make decisions regarding what topics and standards they would and would not teach.

Health and physical education was also marginalized by administrators who ignored or overlooked the health and physical education teachers. Sometimes, administrators did not pay much attention to the teachers in the subject area. Dionna observed, "The administration doesn't ever say 'oh, P.E. is stupid.' It's through actions, like they don't come down here checking up on us all the time like they might do [with the tested subject areas]." At other times, Grace pointed out, it may be

through "being left out of meetings and of some meetings, not included in some things when it comes to certain types of academics." All across the school sites, the teachers said they and their subject area were as Ziva put it "thrown by the wayside" because their "subject area is simply not as important as other subject areas and that's definitely emphasized from the top-down, from administration down."

## **Teacher discomfort**

Finding 5: Teachers' level of comfort as well as external pressures from the school community contributed to whether teachers explicitly taught lessons and topics related to (non-heterosexual) sexualities.

The marginalization of health and physical education in the context of standards-based accountability and neoliberal school reform was by no means the *only* factor that contributed to muted discussions of gendered harassment in the school district. Teacher discomfort in discussing the topics of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation with students also contributed to the discourse of silence and invisibility that surrounded gendered harassment in MAPS.

All six teachers acknowledged that it was part of their curriculum to teach several topics related to gendered harassment. For the elementary school teachers, fifth grade was the grade where the district provided a pre-written (and almost scripted) lesson on homophobia. For the middle school teachers, the sixth and eighth grade curriculum included learning standards that addressed sexual orientation. During the course of this study, I did not observe any lessons where teachers taught explicit lessons around those topics; three of the six teachers (Camille, Dionna, and Jordan) shared that they taught lessons that directly addressed sexual orientation or sexuality in their classes.

170

The six teachers frankly discussed their discomfort in teaching some of the

health lessons. The teachers articulated their concerns regarding receiving "questions

or issues" from both students and parents.  They worried about students asking

questions or making comments that focused directly on sexual acts or about particular

sexual or gender identities the teachers were unfamiliar with. Camille's comments

about her worries of what students will ask captured the sentiments that B.J. also

expressed.  Despite Camille's external composure, she had anxiety about what

students may say in response.  Camille stated:

> On the inside I'm like, "Oh my god.  Please don't bring up anal sex. Please
> don't talk about oral sex."  I worry about what I would do if a kid tells me
> they were abused.  When you open up this can of worms – the topic of
> sexuality – you have no idea what people are going to say.

B.J. expressed his discomfort with the role the district asked that he play in

discussing sexual orientation:

> I just feel like sexual orientation shouldn't be discussed in school. I feel like
> that's a parent or family issue [to address].  Just the questions of 'Why does
> someone live like that?' or 'Why does a person feel like that?' I don't feel I'm
> empowered to answer the question of 'is it something you choose or are you
> born that way?' I don't want to go down that road, because I don't have an
> answer. I don't.

As B.J. personally grapples with the philosophical and religious implications

of the nature versus nurture question around sexuality, he does not feel ready to

answer those questions for his adolescent students.  B.J. stated:

> I'm afraid of the questions that might come my way. I already get
> some tough questions just talking about regular- just the act of sex and
> reproduction and so I'm just nervous. I'm not confident – I'm not comfortable
> enough.  I'm not comfortable talking to 11-, 12- and 13-year-olds about that.
>  I've had one training on it in professional development.  I think I would need
> a lot more professional development and practice so I can teach the children
> about sexuality.  I think P.E. teachers, we need more professional
> development on this so that we can feel empowered to have those

conversations.

B.J. pointed to his limited training as a barrier to him discussing these topics with his students.

Dionna, Grace, Ziva, and Jordan elaborated on another source of discomfort: parental complaints. Despite Ziva's commitment to discussing gender equity, her encounters with homophobia and anticipation of parental pushback stymied her efforts to teach about homophobia in her classes. Dionna, Grace, and Jordan all highlighted how controversies may arise when students share what was discussed in class or when students share their own misinterpretations of what was discussed in class:

> One thing that's said can be misinterpreted and it could get back home and parents coming up here saying that I said this or I did this. (Jordan)

> You have to be careful how you say it cause they'll go home and the next day I'll have nine parents ready to kick my butt and I don't have any idea why. I know that it might be controversial. I'm not ready for that. Not yet. (Grace)

> During my first year of teaching middle school, a student asked me what anal sex was. She went home and told her mom and her mom was really really upset. Since then, I've been kind of tiptoeing around stuff. When they ask me those types of questions, I kind of dance around it to be honest… I always think in the back of my mind, let me give a politically correct answer just in case there is something to come back and bite me in the butt because of what happened in the past. (Dionna)

The parental complaint left an indelible mark on Dionna's practice. Even after three years, she avoided the discussion of some sexual topics so she could avoid fielding such controversies.

Despite central office sanctioning health and physical education as the official space to discuss gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation, what occurred within the participants' classrooms were often times an official silence around gender and

172

sexuality because of a complex web of issues that included within school and outside

school factors, and particularly, student questions and parental complaints which

contributed to teachers' discomfort in teaching these topics.

**Section II:** *How did policy texts mediate teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies?*

In order to explore how teachers came to understand the school district's

gendered harassment policies, I had to discover what the teachers knew about the

gendered harassment policies.  Informed by Stephen Ball's conceptualization of

policy as discourses which establish and sustain relations of domination, I defined

policies to include both written and unwritten policies on gendered harassment at the

district and local school levels. Specifically, what did teachers know about the

gendered harassment policies in their school district? What were the differences in

what each teacher knew and what contributed to those different degrees in knowing?

The following section shares my findings regarding the following sub

question: "How do policy texts mediate teachers' understandings of gendered

harassment?"  I share what the teachers revealed about their knowledge of MAPS'

gendered harassment policies and the gaps in their knowledge. Then, I present

findings regarding the ways these texts were activated by teachers across the school

district in their daily work and in their understandings of gendered harassment and

gendered harassment policies.

### *School district's gendered harassment written policies*

Finding 6: Teachers were uncertain of the district policies on gendered harassment.

**Uncertainty**

When I asked teachers directly about their school district's gendered

harassment policies, four of the six teachers voiced uncertainty regarding the

existence of a formal written policy that addressed harassment and bullying in MAPS.

B.J., Camille, Dionna, and Ziva all acknowledged that although they were not aware

of a written policy, that did not mean there wasn't the possibility that a policy existed.

Ziva, for example, stated:

> I don't think we have any zero tolerance policy that I know of. I mean maybe
> we do. I don't know. That's about all I know. I just remember [a specific
> central office division] saying something about coming in if there's a bullying
> problem in your school but that's it.

Ziva could recall the specific branch in central office that provided the information

and one of the possible "official" responses to dealing with gendered harassment

incidents she may have come across. Despite that information, she was unsure of the

district's policy around bullying and gendered harassment. B.J. shared a similar

assessment about the absence of specific written gendered harassment policies:

"[t]here are not any written policies in the school district. Not that I have seen. Not

that I have been given or shown." B.J. asserted that there are not any written policies

at his school regarding bullying and gendered harassment. Though the district may

have a formal set of policies, B.J. stated that no one had explicitly shared that

information with him yet.

Unlike Ziva and B.J, Camille believed at first that the district may have a

zero-tolerance policy on bullying. Camille shared:

> I believe they have somewhat of a zero tolerance for it- bullying in general-
> anyone who is suspected of it is supposed to get pretty swift and immediate
> and severe action. I haven't really seen that.

Camille then noted that such a policy did not reflect the responses to bullying she had observed at her school. Camille shared the logic in her thinking regarding the presence of written gendered harassment policies in MAPS. She stated: "I'm sure there are written policies, there has to be somewhere. It would make sense but not much about [MAPS] makes sense so who knows, maybe there aren't any." Although she wanted to assume there would be written policies governing what actions teachers should take to respond to gendered harassment, Camille revealed she too shared Ziva's and B.J.'s uncertainty regarding the existence of a gendered harassment policy.

Similarly, Dionna stated that she did not "know of any official documents" that served as MAPS' gendered harassment policies. Dionna interpreted her lack of knowledge about the policies not as an individual happenstance but as a result of the ambiguity around the district's policy. She shared:

> I don't think there's a policy for harassment in the district that anyone can be like, "Hey, tell me about your harassment policy." They'd be like, "Ahhhhh. I don't know." I don't think there's a clear policy.

Dionna connected the district's fuzzy messaging of the policy directly to teachers' lack of clarity about MAPS' gendered harassment policies. Taken together, these teachers' experiences suggest each teacher's partial views of the district's gendered harassment policies did not simply stem from particular individuals failing to learn the policies. Rather, their understandings were connected to how the school district communicated (or did not communicate) the policies to its staff.

**A Different Take**

Unlike B.J., Camille, Dionna, and Ziva who expressed uncertainty about the existence of a policy, Grace, the veteran teacher who had been with the school district

175

for over 15 years, expressed no ambiguity regarding the existence of a district

gendered harassment policy. Grace was certain there was a district bullying policy.

She viewed it as being intertwined with the MAPS code of student discipline. In the

excerpt below, she described her understandings of the disciplinary policy and the

manner in which gendered harassment (specifically, bullying) would be addressed

with the student discipline code:

> It's zero tolerance as far as [bullying] is concerned. So the disciplinary policy
> in [MAPS], they have three different tiers. Tier 1, 2, and 3, as far as bullying
> is concerned.

Grace continued and described her local school's bullying policy:

> So our policy here, I am the safe person for the bullying situations. What I do
> is that in the event someone comes to me, I take all of the notes, all of the
> names, thank them, encourage them for being brave enough to come to me
> and things like that. Based on what the situation is, I formulate a conflict
> resolution study packet without anyone knowing what goes on and then I do a
> workshop [for the class].
>
> From that, I inform the principal and let her know. She puts the stamp on it
> after I have done the resolution type thing. If that doesn't work and it doesn't
> change, then you go into suspension. While you are away, you have to do
> some research on what the concept of bullying is and why it is not acceptable
> at our school.

Grace served as the point of contact who directly addressed bullying by providing

direct interventions with students at her school. Grace's role as the "safe person"

mirrored that of the "go-to" person and "point of the contact" identified in the

Bullying Directive. The policy Grace described reflected portions of the Bullying

Directive that a central office employee said was no longer being utilized in the

school district.

***Text-Based Social Relations: De-facto policy coordinating action across sites***

Finding 7: Teachers referenced the *Student Discipline Code* and the *Office Referral Form* as key texts that coordinated their responses to gendered harassment across schools.

Regardless of whether a teacher knew if the school district possessed a written policy for gendered harassment or not, the MAPS' Code of Student Discipline emerged as a key institutional text that informed teachers about what sequences of action to activate when they saw a gendered harassment incident.  All six teachers referenced the role the student discipline code played in addressing gendered harassment as well as other student behavioral issues in general.  The teachers acknowledged that the discipline code wasn't specifically designed for bullying and gendered harassment but gendered harassment incidents could be addressed with the procedures set forth by the discipline policy.  Jordan captured this understanding in the following quotation:

> "It's not a policy written specifically on bullying. It's just a behavior, discipline policy for the whole. It's tiers. Tiers 1 through 5 where different types of behaviors require different consequences pretty much.  Tier 1 might be name-calling, shoving, a dispute in line.  A tier 2 is just, a little bit more aggressive behavior. I know tier 3 could be a fight. Tier 3 and 4 could be bringing a knife to school. As it gets more serious, the tier goes up."

The student discipline code had a variety of names and what the teachers called the "tiers" or the "regular referral process" served as the de-facto gendered harassment policy in MAPS.

Across the school district, the six health and physical education teachers' accounts of their knowledge and understandings of gendered harassment policies intersected with their knowledge of the district's student code of discipline.   Even as

the teachers differed in their perceptions of whether a gendered harassment policy existed in MAPS, all the teachers referenced the "tiers" embedded within student discipline system as representing guidelines for how educators should deal with gendered harassment incidents.

The *Office Referral Form* emerged as one key text that teachers used to activate this sequence of action. Teachers acted as front-line respondents who reported student behavioral incidents by completing this form. Jordan noted:

> We have a basic incident report, a referral sheet that we fill out for any behavior that we want to recommend that the Dean of Student handle. But as far as a form that's made out for gendered harassment, there's no form for that.

As Jordan's quotation illustrated, although not specifically designed for gendered harassment, the referral form could be used for such incidents. Regardless of the grade levels teachers taught, the protocol for completing the referral form remained the same. Camille summarized the basic parts required teachers to "give a brief explanation of what you saw, who was involved and dates if you can." Ziva described the requirements in completing the form:

> [The form]'s supposed to be district-wide. Everyone has the same form so it's really generic. It's like the person referring, the students' name, the date, the time, the incident that happened and then you have four lines to describe the incident and then you check off if it's a one- time incident or a persistent behavior. Then on the bottom, you check off all the things that you did to combat that behavior.

Teachers had to categorized incidents based on the frequency with which they occurred as well as provide documentation of the interventions they used to address the behavior before completing the referral form. The teachers' discussion of the

referral writing process for gendered harassment or other student behaviors revealed how this sequence of action remained the same translocally, across the schools sites.

One teacher indicated she was not familiar with the institutional processes and language necessary to complete the referral form. Ziva, the first year teacher, shared the limited knowledge she had about the tiers as well as her limited exposure to the manners in which the district expected teachers to write up incident reports:

> I have no idea what those (tiers) are. During new teachers' orientation, they went over that for three seconds. It was like, if you hit someone, it's something. If you keep hitting them, then it's another tier. But I mean, we never had that given to us. So I have nothing to refer to when I write kids up. I'm just like, whatever. So where all that bullying and such falls in on those tiers, I have no idea.

The school district briefly reviewed the information regarding the different infraction tiers at new teachers' orientation.  According to Ziva, the short time the district spent on reviewing this procedure coupled with not providing a reference document resulted in her not being able to share specific information regarding which behaviors constitute which tier of consequences.

Instead, Ziva used her own standards in determining whether she should report an incident. Ziva shared the criteria she used to determine if an incident needed to be documented:

> Basically, I don't know what the procedure for the tier offense I'm supposed to write up.  In my head, if it's unsafe, if there's any violence towards someone else, like physical violence and then anything that would be verbal abuse towards other students or towards me, [then I would write a referral].

All three middle school teachers spoke explicitly about the steps they took before writing a discipline referral.  Two of the three teachers who taught middle school revealed they engaged in similar classroom actions and interventions to

address both gendered harassment and non-gendered harassment incidents.  In the

following examples, as teachers described the types of interventions they used, they

also referenced their own engagement in documenting these interventions.  Dionna

described some of the interventions she would use before making a discipline referral:

> We do something within our class first. If that doesn't work, we assign our
> first level of efforts as you have lunch detention, you have to come see me
> afterschool, I'm going to call home, I'm going to email a parent, that kind of
> thing. After awhile of that, you have proper <u>documentation</u>, then, you can do a
> discipline referral.

Like Dionna, Jordan used similar strategies such as phone calls home and student and

teacher conferences before the referral stage:

> "[I]f I see bullying happening, I would do an incident report (referral).I would
> follow my behavior system as far as the first step would be to have a word
> with the student and then, I would, if it continues on, I would either make a
> phone call, of course I would <u>document</u> everything, make a phone call, talk,
> after the phone call, maybe have a teacher-parent conference with the parents
> and the student and then the next step would be to have a conversation with
> the Dean of Students and the parent and the student.

These strategies mirrored the discipline responses listed in the MAPS's disciplinary

code.

**<u>Documentation squeeze</u>**

Finding 8:  The documentation process reflected a segment of the coordinated actions
teachers took within the formal processes of school discipline.

When the teachers documented their interventions, they squeezed their

complex experiences of working with individual students into quantifiable categories

and streams of actions that reflected institutional priorities and expectations.  Most of

the teachers' interactions with students were uneventful according to the institution

and therefore, undocumented.  It is through documentation that teacher-student

interactions in school discipline become visible to the institution.  In this case,

teachers' accounts of their interactions with students who engaged in gendered

harassment become visible when they complete the *Office Referral Form* and use

particular discipline interventions as recommended by the districts' disciplinary code.

Jordan's descriptions of the process revealed the particular nuances in how the

text inserted itself in the teachers' everyday work. In the exchange below, Jordan

explained how the tiers system provided guidance to teachers with regards to how

they needed to respond to certain behaviors:

> **Elke**
> So it sounds like to me, there's a lot of discretion left up to the teacher and
> how the teacher sees the event…
>
> **Jordan**
> Well, not necessarily because each tier has a list of offenses, a list of
> behaviors that go under each one. If I looked at the sheet, if I had it with me
> and I looked at it, I would look at everything in Tier 1 that belongs in tier 1
> and tiers 2, 3, 4, and 5 have their own lists of behaviors that are set for those
> tiers.  If I see a child cursing and that's under tier 1 or tier 2, then I know
> okay, this is a tier 2 behavior and I'll look at the steps to see what should I do
> for tier 2 and I look at the steps and follow those protocols. So it's not
> necessarily up to my discretion.

For Jordan, the discipline code served as a reference point to consider how he should

respond to a particular student's misbehavior.  The text provided a tool for him to

categorize the students' behavior and also provided boundaries for the types of

disciplinary measures he could and should take.  However, Jordan also recognized

that while the text provided such recommendations, there was room for teachers to

make modifications and changes within the suggested discipline measures. Jordan

added,

> It's just, a lot of teachers, they handle different situations differently. So it
> could be a tier 2 incident and they kind of work some type of behavior

181

discipline plan with the student to eliminate that or it could be a tier 3 or tier 4 behavior and they talk to the parent and talk to that child and maybe talk to the administration and write up some sort of behavior plan for the child to follow. In that regard, it is up to the teacher's discretion, if they feel like they can handle the situation but there's still a written guideline to follow.

When the teachers used the referral forms or written guidelines to determine their responses, they engaged with these texts to create "official accounts" of student's behaviors. The form replaced students with individual needs with teacher's textual accounts of the incident. This referral form then became the primary text and account that a school designee used to determine the next steps of discipline for the student(s) involved in the incident.

**Ruling practice and segmented processes: Reducing people to data**

Finding 9: Teachers provided the textual accounts that a school-designee then reduced into a data point. How teachers write their textual accounts may impact how the school-designees interpret the incident.

The disciplinary process included the work of multiple school employees. When teachers completed a discipline referral, they created and provided a textual account of an incident and activated a sequence of action that was similar across the school district. The first key action is for a teacher to complete a referral and provide a textual account of the incident. All six teachers named a school-based employee to whom they submitted their referral. Jordan and B.J. named the dean of students; Dionna, Grace, and Ziva named their principals and assistant principals; and Camille named the school's counselor. Four of the six teachers spoke broadly about what the designee did which included speaking with students, deciding what the disciplinary consequences should be for the tier level offense, and suspending students.

Two of the teachers, Ziva and Camille, referenced the role of a centralized

database in the disciplinary sequence of action that continued past the teacher level.

Referred to Camille as "the tracker," this database calculated the weekly number and

types of referrals each school gave out.  According to Camille, the tracker was:

> "a program that the [school designee] has access to that anytime a referral
> comes in.  It literally has the form and you click it in there and you write out
> what the teacher says and you enter it into the tracker and it tracks every
> student. It sort of is like having a permanent file.

> Based on what you have clicked on, the tracker will suggest the possible
> consequences or punishment. Certain ones are flagged at [central office]. If
> you clicked on "assault" and there are some higher tier ones. If you click on
> any one of the tier 3 and 4 ones, it flags down in central office." We've had
> [one of district's assistant superintendent] come to our school because certain
> kids were getting incidences.  Also, they'll go to schools if a school never
> enters anything in the tracker. They'll go to those schools and be like, there's
> no way your school is perfect.  Like they are actually watching what you're
> entering and how much you're entering, you're supposed to enter so much in a
> certain day and things like that."

The tracker represented an example of a textually-mediated practice in MAPS

that linked to data-driven decision making, one of the major components of

standards-based accountability. It is within the tracker that the incidents teachers

described in their referrals are reduced into data.  The tracker provided a way for

central office to monitor the number and types of referable-incidents that unfolded at

each school.  The tracker also monitored the types of incidents that schools did not

report enough according to MAPS standards.

Ziva was the only teacher to articulate her frustrations regarding the

disconnect between referral writing, data collection by the tracker, and changes in

student behavior. She shared:

> I write [the referral] up and it goes to the principal and it gets entered into a
> computer.  I never get any feedback from it, I don't know if that behavior is

ever addressed. It's strictly for someone to enter into a computer, because they are supposed to keep track of all these things in some sort of system district-wide.

In Ziva's experience, the sequence of action flowed only in one direction, up the hierarchy of command in the school district. She received no information from the school-designee regarding the consequences students received. Ziva did not perceive changes in students' behaviors that garnered the referral in the first place. In turn, Ziva spoke of the referral process as one that existed only for data collection purposes and had no visible bearing on her students' behaviors.

Camille provided an account of the ways in which the school designee must translate the textual accounts featured in the referrals into the tracker. Camille shared her knowledge of the work that occurred at this point of the process:

> "What the [school designees] are trained to do is to look through that referral, pick out things that belong in a certain category. So the teacher may write: "Student threw pencil at me." Well, the [school-designee's] job is to know that's not really an assault yet because it was a pencil. Was the pencil sharp? Were they aiming at you? Was they purposeful or did they just throw it in a general direction? Then they investigate and figure out 'No, that kid threw a sharp pencil right at you.' So now we're calling that an assault and then they'll click on in the tracker 'assault.'"

The process required the school designee to interpret the textual accounts teachers provided; sometimes this included an investigation into the nuances of an incident in order to determine the intent behind a student action. The designee then translated this textual account into institutional language by selecting and clicking certain categories available within the tracker. Once this information became a part of this centralized database, all the embodied details of the incident disappeared into to a single data point based on the category of behavior exhibited.

Camille noted how the specific terms used by teachers within the referral might alter how the school-designee interpreted and translated the textual account featured in the referral. Camille explained:

> "When a teacher is writing up an incident, they might not know to put things like, 'The student was being teased for wearing nail polish.' The teacher might just put, 'The student was being teased.' The teacher may not know that they should write that this kid was being called, not just a name but was being called a "fag" or being teased because he may be gay.

As teachers created their textual accounts of the complex, social interactions between students, both the words they included and omitted had bearing on how the school designee translated these incidents into the language used within the tracker. In instances of gendered harassment, whether and how a teacher recounted the specific terms students used can determine whether the designee will interpret the same event as name-calling or homophobic harassment.

**Competing demands**

**Finding 10**: Two other institutional texts competed for teacher's time and attention and informed teachers' understandings of gendered harassment.

The *Student Discipline Code* and the tier system served as the de-facto gendered harassment policy in MAPS. This text played an integral role in shaping teachers' understandings of gendered harassment within the parameters of the tier system. However, teachers shared that gendered harassment was not an issue that was high priority amongst schools' concerns. As teachers discussed what they talked about with colleagues, it became clear that two other institutional texts, No Child Left Behind and the teacher evaluation system, competed for and dominated teachers' time and attention. B.J. and Ziva attributed the silence around gendered harassment to

185

their schools' focuses on increasing the reading and math proficiency of students and meeting AYP targets as mandated by No Child Left Behind. Ziva stated that at her school, "test scores, that's the number one priority." Specifically, Ziva explained, the focus at the school was around, "meeting AYP because we are in our second year of corrective action so if we don't make it this year, we are basically screwed next year I think. We're all fired or something." Student-performance on high-stakes tests dwarfed any other concerns at Ziva's school as those test scores determine whether teachers would continue to be employed at the school. B.J. shared a similar observation when he stated the focus at Armstrong Middle School was to achieve "100 percent proficiency on [the high-stakes state test]." B.J. also added, "That's terrible." In the moment he answered that question, B.J. recognized how the school districts' narrow focus on advancing student achievement as measured through test scores resulted in limiting the opportunities for teachers to address other dimensions of students' needs.

This was also the case in Jordan's school, which like Ziva's and B.J.'s school had a school improvement status. Jordan detailed one of the priority goals at his school: "One of our goals is making AYP. We talk about data a lot. We are a data driven school, meaning, like as far as trying to make AYP, you put everything in perspective…like you put everything in data format so you know how far you have to go to reach your AYP goals." As he described the school's goal, Jordan used the language of standards-based accountability such as "data driven" to describe the practices the school engaged in and reflected the dominating focus at his school.

186

Grace and Camille were the two teachers who taught at schools that did not have a school improvement status under No Child Left Behind because of the gains students made on the standardized tests during Spring 2009. Grace identified "academics, behavior, classroom management, and making sure that the environment is conducive so that everyone can learn" as the schools' top concerns. Camille shared some of what is discussed as top priorities at her school:

> "I would say things that are considered of high importance…like the MAC-CAS (state test) is talked a lot about. The teacher evaluation system's talked a lot about. Planning time, class sizes, union issues, staff morale is talked about a lot. Sometimes student behavior is- who are we having the issues with, sometimes what can we do to solve the issues- but gendered harassment is never brought up.

Camille pointed out that if gendered harassment were higher on her school's priority list, "it would be directly discussed in staff meetings or morning collaborative time."

**Summary:**

This chapter presented the findings that helped answer the two sub-research questions. All six teachers interviewed for this study expressed knowledge of the three types of harassment: homophobic harassment, sexual harassment, and harassment for gender non-conformity. Of these three, the teachers were most comfortable discussing homophobic harassment and the ways in which it manifested in both their public and private lives. What stood out in the teachers' descriptions of homophobic harassment were the differences in how teachers internalized the meanings that could be derived from the usage of particular terms and phrases. All teachers were familiar with the term sexual harassment. In describing the sexual harassment they observed, teachers who taught middle-school aged students all spoke about the physical manifestations of harassment in their schools, not verbal ones. The

187

six teachers also reported they observed harassment for gender non-conformity most frequently in physical education.

The first half of this chapter focused on the ways that teachers described the types of gendered harassment they observed and the manners in which they explained why those incidents occurred. The second half of this chapter focused on the role of policy texts in shaping teachers' understandings of gendered harassment. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 summarize the findings presented in this chapter and the participants who spoke about the various dimensions of that finding. In the next chapter, I summarize the major findings and discuss the implications of these findings.

**Table 5.1 – Summary of findings: Local understandings of gendered harassment**

| Finding | Participant | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B.J. | Camille | Dionna | Grace | Jordan | Ziva |
| Teachers spoke about homophobic harassment as a common school incident | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Middle school teachers spoke primarily about the physical aspects of sexual harassment | x | | x | | x | |
| Teachers observed different social consequences for male and female students who deviated from social norms in their gender expressions | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Teachers believed gendered harassment manifested differently in P.E. classes than "regular" classes | | x | | x | x | x |
| The bullying discourse subsumed discussions of gendered harassment behaviors in the school district | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| The ways in which teachers defined bullying was socially organized. Teachers drew on bullying definitions the district provided in trainings and in policy texts | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Teachers drew on developmental discourses which framed bullying and gendered harassment as behaviors that are normal and natural | x | x | x | x | x | |
| Teachers believed schools' focus on AYP marginalized health and physical education as a subject area in schools | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Teachers' comfort levels as well as external pressures from the school community contributed to whether teachers explicitly taught lessons and topics related to non-heterosexual sexualities. | x | x | x | x | x | x |

**Table 5.2 – Summary of findings: Policy and texts**

| Finding | Participant | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **B.J.** | **Camille** | **Dionna** | **Grace** | **Jordan** | **Ziva** |
| Teachers were uncertain of the district policies on gendered harassment | x | x | x | | x | x |
| Teachers referenced the *Student Discipline Code* and the *Office Referral Form* as key texts that coordinated their responses to gendered harassment across schools | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| The documentation process reflected a segment of the coordinated actions teachers took within the formal processes of school discipline. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Teachers provided textual accounts of harassment that a school-designee then reduced into a data point. How teachers write their textual accounts may impact how the school-designees interpret the incident. | x | x | | | x | x |
| Two other institutional texts competed for teachers' time and attention and informed teachers' understandings of gendered harassment. | x | x | x | x | x | x |

**Chapter 6:  Discussion**

*Introduction*

This study explored teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies and the factors that inform those understandings. The purpose of this study was to explore the social organization of six health and physical education teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies.  This study was situated in an urban school district steeped in school reform efforts.  Late twentieth century and early twenty-first century school reform efforts in the U.S. centered on standardization and accountability measures (Ravitch, 2010; Spring, 2011). The emphasis on standardization and accountability processes in school coordinated and organized the activities of the health and physical education teachers featured in this study.

I utilized a heuristic framework comprised of four major grounding concepts of institutional ethnography and drew on literature in bullying and gendered harassment to inform my analysis.  In this study, I found that teacher's articulations of what constituted the three types of gendered harassment and the factors that shaped their understandings of gendered harassment policies were fairly aligned and consistent with those identified in the literature. This institutional ethnography discovered that how teachers came to understand gendered harassment and their school district's gendered harassment policies is mediated and socially coordinated by institutional texts they encountered in their work lives.  These texts addressed not only student behaviors but also linked significantly into the standards-based accountability systems that have become a normal, everyday facet of public school teachers' work lives.  In this chapter, I discuss the extent to which the way teachers

came to understand gendered harassment policies is consistent with the heuristic framework presented in Chapter Two. I close the chapter by presenting the implications of this study on theory, research, and practice.

## *Major Findings*

The data presented in Chapter Five offer an explanation of how teachers come to understand their school district's gendered harassment policies. The grounding principles of institutional ethnography helped illuminate particular discourses and ruling relations that organized teachers' understandings of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies across MAPS. Here, I highlight the major findings from this study that helped answer my overarching research question: How do six health and physical education teachers come to understand their school districts' gendered harassment policies?

## **Local Understandings and Explanations**

### *Teachers' accounts of gendered harassment*

In institutional ethnography, Dorothy Smith (2005; 2007) uses the term "local" synonymously with "actual" when referring to peoples' experiences, knowledge, and their day-to-day activities. These local understandings do not arise from thin air. They are influenced by social relations and ruling relations. Whether and how teachers talk about bullying and gendered harassment can be impacted by the ruling and social relations that circulate and govern their local and trans-local contexts.

The study participants indicated certain forms of gendered harassment incidents were common occurrences at the elementary and middle school levels in

MAPS. All of the teachers reported seeing two forms of gendered harassment in their

schools: homophobic harassment and harassment for gender non-conformity. The six

health and physical education teachers' accounts of their observations of gendered

harassment incidents indicated that bullying and biased remarks towards gays are

regularly occurrences at both the elementary and middle school levels. All six

teachers reported hearing phrases such as "That's gay" on a regular basis. The

teachers' accounts of gendered harassment were consistent with what other

researchers have found over the last twenty years. GLSEN has surveyed thousands of

students across the U.S. and found that over 90 percent of students hear anti-gay

remarks on a regular basis (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2012; Haskell & Burtch,

2010; J. Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). National surveys also indicate

between 15 and 30 percent of students experience bullying in their schools in the

United States (Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2005;

Nansel et al., 2001).

Homophobic harassment was the form of gendered harassment the six

teachers discussed the most at length. At times, teachers shared their own personal

experiences with homophobic harassment. Although the study did not provide direct

evidence for the reasons why teachers felt most open discussing homophobic

harassment, one possible explanation may be the prevalence of U.S. mainstream press

coverage of bullying during fall 2010. As this study began, at least ten male

teenagers (in separate incidents) committed suicide after being bullied and harassed

by their peers. The mainstream press did not use the term "homophobic harassment"

to describe these incidents. However, press coverage did note the role actual or

perceived sexual orientation played in the bullying and harassment experienced by each of the teenagers and at times, referring to the deaths as "anti-gay bullying suicides (Alexander, 2010). The frequency and intensity of the press's coverage on anti-gay bullying suicides may have heightened teachers' awareness and sensitivity to such incidents. The public discussion of the preponderance of these incidents may have made it more socially acceptable for teachers to talk about these incidents and to share personal encounters with homophobic harassment.

Physical education teachers may observe certain student behaviors that other teachers do not see in their classrooms because of the physical aspects of P.E. and the prominent role physical bodies play in the course. Extant research suggested female students are more likely to be bullied for their physical appearance and performance in physical education than boys (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Hills, 2007). The teachers' accounts differed from the findings in the literature; both elementary and middle school teachers not only reported more male students were harassed than female students but also that male students suffered greater social consequences than their female peers for traversing gender norm boundaries.

Extant research indicated nearly 80 percent of teenagers face some form of gender-based harassment during their time in school (American Association of University Women, 2011). The three middle school teachers estimated sexual harassment occurred everyday but that students rarely report these incidents to an adult. In contrast, the three elementary school teachers reported little to no sexual harassment occurred at their schools. The elementary school teachers' hesitance in describing or acknowledging sexual harassment occurred at their particular teaching

levels is consistent with extant research where teachers do not think sexual

harassment occurs in lower grades because students are not yet sexually developed.

Across both elementary and middle school settings, teachers in this study

drew on a developmental discourse to explain why sexual harassment occurred or did

not occur at their schools. Similar to the teachers in Meyers' study (2007) on

gendered harassment, none of the teachers mentioned verbal or *quid pro quo* forms of

sexual harassment.  In drawing on the developmental discourse to discuss sexual

harassment, teachers revealed a specific understanding of sexual harassment that did

not include non-physical acts.  For example, the middle school teachers attributed

male on female sexual harassment as "students' immaturity, framing this type of

gender-based bullying as the product of youthful ignorance rather than acts of

domination, coercion, or violence." (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009, p.541).  Just as

Lacey (2003) found that teachers constructed male aggression (in sexual harassment)

either as normal male conduct or as atypical development. Teacher's focus on sexual

harassment centered around "intentionality, consent, male aggression" which

conflicted with the notion that "normal" teens are immature, naturally conflicted,

equal in power and sexually naïve and confused (Lacey, p. 202).  Similarly, the

middle school teachers in this study normalized physical acts of sexual harassment as

developmentally appropriate interactions between males and females.

With a health curriculum that included learning standards on a range of topics

including homophobia, sexuality and sexual orientation, the school district provided

professional development workshops for health and physical education teachers.   In a

national survey of teachers in the U.S., just less than half of teachers (48 percent)

indicated they would feel uncomfortable responding to questions from their students responding to questions about LGBT people.  Unlike other educators in past studies who reported no previous training in addressing these topics (GLSEN, 2008; Hazler, 1992; Yoon 2004), each of the teachers in this study attended at least one training on topics related to sexual orientation, sexuality, bullying or gendered harassment.  The teachers in this study indicated the utility of the trainings in providing pertinent information on these topics.  However, all six teachers believed they required additional training in order to be able to readily apply these topics in their everyday work lives.  Just as other arenas of professional development, training for bullying and gendered harassment cannot be limited to one-time workshops (Meyer, 2012).

Without continual support and consultation from their school district(s), educators will continue to encounter impasses that limit their abilities to directly apply information they learn from workshops and to speak directly with young people about sexuality, sexual orientation and gender.  Robinson and Ferfolja (2008) noted that potential teachable moments on sexuality may be lost due to a host of concerns from teachers' such as their own discomfort or lack of knowledge of a topic, fear of potential repercussions and/or perceived impropriety in discussing the topic. When both students and teachers avoid talking directly about issues such as sexuality, sexual orientation and gender in schools, young people learn that "sexuality, especially non heterosexuality, is shrouded in social taboos, strictly policed and regulated by adults topics"(Robinson & Ferofolja, 2008).

The district-sponsored trainings and workshops revealed and contributed to local understandings of gendered harassment.  For example, the district's trainings on

bullying provided teachers with definitions and conceptualizations of what bullying meant and district expectations for teachers in bullying situations. The district heavily relied on Olweus definition of bullying and drew on a social-ecological perspectives of bullying where bullying is conceptualized as an ecological phenomenon (Swearer & Doll, 2001) that results from "complex interaction between the individual and his or her family, peer group, school community, and societal norms" (Swearer, Espelage et al., 2009, p. 8). The district trainings and workshops targeted teachers as front-line responders to bullying and gendered harassment. While it is important to ensure that adults are able to respond to such incidents, students are crucial in shifting and transforming school culture and attitudes. Thus, districts may need to provide trainings for teachers on how to speak with and train students that empower students to speak up when they witness their peers harassing another individual.

**Text-based mediated social relations**

Just as other studies that utilized an institutional ethnographic approach, this study explored the role of texts in coordinating teachers' work. Even though the teachers taught across a diverse collection of schools, the interventions and actions they spoke about using to address gendered harassment sounded strikingly similar. A single text, the district's student discipline code, served as the de-facto gendered harassment policy. Looking at these text-based relations is central to IE, and helps illuminate the ways different institutional texts activate sequences of actions and interactions that were similar or the same across schools. As the teachers talked about the *Office Referral Form*, they all highlighted how their completion of that form

197

began a stream of work that connected them to a behavior tracker that the district central office monitored. The six teachers' descriptions of the work involved in completing the discipline referral form and process highlighted how lived experiences are compressed into textual accounts which are then squeezed into categories and then distilled into numbers. The text-based social relations reflected and illuminated the prominent role data collection of centralized information in shaping educator's work in schools (Anderson, 2009).

**Ruling relations: standards-based accountability**

In this study, standards-based accountability was a ruling relation that set forth the context of the work that the teachers engaged in. The language of standards-based accountability entered the speech of the teachers; all six teachers used words such as "AYP," "data," and "testing" frequently during the course of their interviews. For all the teachers in the district, even for schools that had made AYP, the focus was on academic achievement. The concept of academic achievement that existed in the district was one that centered around students' performance on high-stakes reading and math tests.

Although the work activities of the health and physical education teachers promoted academic interests and achievement, the overwhelming message that the teachers received from the district was that health and physical education was simply not important. The marginalization of health and physical education emerged through both the actions of other teachers – such as when they bring their students late to class – or through the actions of administrators, who took away class time for test

198

preparation or simply did not provide as much attention to the work that health and physical education teachers engaged in as they did to that of other teachers.

In utilizing IE as an analytic framework, this study also revealed that how teachers understand gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies is not only related to where they teach but also what they teach. The social relations and ruling relations provided a set of constraints for teachers that were then compounded within the content area they taught. The six participants in this study all taught in a school district where health and physical education was de-emphasized within local schools. As a result of this de-emphasis, some students may not be learning important lessons about gendered interactions in the official, sanctioned space of health education where they are supposed to learn about and discuss these topics.

Taken altogether, the data from this study suggest the six teachers worked in highly institutionalized environments that influenced when and how the teachers could address gendered harassment. The intersection of multiple institutional presses resulted in a particular dynamic in the school district which marginalized discussions of gendered harassment even during a time when there was intense media attention on bullying. The confluences of institutional presses included schools (and school districts) intensely focused on making AYP, which contributed to a further marginalization of health and physical education as a content area because of its status as a non-tested and non-core subject area. The marginalization of health and physical education were often reflected in class time being taken away. The ongoing sensitivity in discussing topics related to gendered harassment further marginalizing these topics from holding center court during the school day. All of these presses

contribute to the overall institutional "official silences" (Mayo, 2006) and structural resistances in schools (Britzman, 2000) towards gender and sexuality in schools. Structural resistance refers to "the very design or organization of education" (p. 34) where issues of sexuality are not considered integral to the curriculum or to students' learning.  Such a context provides a backdrop to how teachers come to understand gendered harassment in their school districts.

Although it may appear to some readers that institutional ethnography does not speak to the role individual experiences play in shaping teachers' understandings of gendered harassment, that is not the case.  Each of the six participants had personal encounters with bullying and gendered harassment that shaped their interest in addressing these incidents. However, in spite of their own motivations, some teachers found it difficult to teach about these topics in their own classrooms. Teaching these topics carried risks such as deep institutional marginalization and pushback from administrators and community members.

The ruling relations that marginalized health education as well as discussions of gendered harassment reflected Foucault's notions of power as regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980). Foucault challenged the idea that power is wielded by people or groups of people by way of acts of domination or coercion.  Instead, Foucault argues power is dispersed and pervasive. The ruling relations identified in this study represent this pervasive power which not only contributed to teachers to act in ways that did not align with their motivations to always openly and directly address gendered harassment but also produced a reality where each individual teacher had to

negotiate how they address gendered harassment within the institutional constraints of their local contexts.

It is also possible that the number of years of teaching experience in the district appear to play a role in how teachers are able to navigate their contexts. For example, while the other five teachers were unsure of the existence of a district gendered harassment policy, Grace, the veteran teacher who had taught with the school system for over 15 years, referenced a policy directive regarding bullying that none of the other teachers knew about. Perhaps because of Grace's longer engagement with the school district, she had access to greater institutional knowledge that would allow her to circumvent factors that limit her ability to address bullying and/or gendered harassment as an elementary school teacher.

### *Limitations*

This study contributes to the research literature in addressing gendered harassment and considering the perspectives of health and physical education teachers in schools. There are some limitations to this study. One limitation is that the participants were a self-selected sample. This means that the teachers who chose to volunteer their time for this study have some type of interest in the study and the topics discussed, and therefore their expressed views on gendered harassment do not necessarily represent the full gamut of views among health and physical education teachers. Since the teachers knew they were participating in a study that considered their thoughts on gender and sexuality, the participants in this study are a selected group of individuals who were open to sharing their views on such topics. While this self-selection provided rich data, it also leaves many questions unanswered regarding

201

the health and physical educators who generally would not consider participating in such a study.

Another limitation in this study was my reliance on interviews as the primary data collection method with my participants. Because of the reliance on self-reporting, there might be a chance that inconsistencies arise between how teachers actually spoke in the course of the interview and their lived-experiences. There may also be the chance that participants may speak about things in a manner that makes them look good. I attempted to address this limitation by conducting participant-observations. Also, both the internal consistency of the teachers' responses over time as well as their deep emotional engagement throughout their reflections gave me confidence in the authenticity of their statements.

*Implications*

**Utility of IE in exploring teachers' understandings of policies**

Researchers in other policy fields (i.e. nursing, social work) have utilized instructional ethnography to understand how people come to understand policies. This study followed in that tradition and the findings suggest the utility of using IE in considering teachers' understandings and interpretations of policies in education. Institutional ethnography was useful and powerful lens in examining how some teachers came to understand gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies. Institutional texts played a central role in shaping the particular sequences of actions and interventions all six teachers took in response to gendered harassment. The *Office Referral Form* (used to write up the incident report) shaped each teacher's

understanding of gendered harassment, including the importance of the acts and the districts' expectations for their intervention. IE helped illuminate the way in the subject area teachers taught also influenced their understandings of gendered harassment.

This IE featured an exploration of the social organization of health and physical education teachers' understandings of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies in the era of standards-based accountability. The influence of standards-based accountability, primarily through the focus on AYP, has had a negative impact on health and physical education in schools. Schools' intense focus on AYP and NCLB's narrow notions of academic achievement led to school leaders choosing to limit the amount of time available for health and P.E. Standards-based accountability has also ushered in new standardizing technologies that focus extensively on data collection and data-driven decision making. There is potential for other researchers to continue to use IE as a methodology to study the implementation of bullying and gendered harassment policies in various school districts and the experiences of teachers across multiple school districts.

**Implications for further research**

The following are implications for future research. This IE study concentrated on one urban school district in the Mid-Atlantic. As a result, conclusions from the study may not be generalized to other school districts. It may be important to consider research sites in different geographical areas for future research to gain more understanding about the social organization of how teachers come to understanding their districts' gendered harassment policies. Future studies should also be conducted

in schools that do and do not participate in schools that do and do not participate in high-stakes standardized testing to consider the similarities and differences in the ruling relations coordinating teachers' understanding of their districts' gendered harassment policies.

Research studies on bullying and gendered harassment often do not distinguish teachers beyond the grade levels they teach. However, the results of this study suggest that both the context of where teacher teach but also the content of what they teach impact their understandings of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies. Further research could highlight the ruling relations which coordinate how other teachers and school personnel come to understand their districts' gendered harassment policies. How is the social organization of teacher's understandings of gendered harassment similar or different for those who teach "non-core" classes such as music, art, foreign languages or "core" but non- AYP related classes such as science and social studies?

Some data from this study suggest the possibility that years of teaching experiences may play a role in teachers' knowledge of gendered harassment policies and institutional practices. Further research is warranted in considering the variances in policy understandings between young and seasoned teachers. This may be important particularly in school districts with high levels of teacher turnover and large number of teachers with less than five years of teaching experience.

**Implications for policy and practice**

The findings from this study also hold implications for school policies and practices. First, as more school districts adopt or update their bullying and/or

204

gendered harassment policies, they need to consider how these policies fit with other school demands and school policies. In this study, the introduction of a new teacher evaluation system and the focus to make AYP competed for most of teacher's time and attention, leaving little professional development time to consider gendered harassment.

School district's bullying and gendered harassment policy cannot simply copy language or fulfill the requirements put forth in state or district legislation without considering how the policy will fit with other policies and work teachers already engage with. In MAPS, the district lacked a clear policy at the time because it was in the process of developing a policy and depended on teachers to referenced its student discipline code for guidelines of what to do with gendered harassment incidents. Districts need to consider how they will communicate their policies to teachers.

Findings from this study indicate teachers need and want ongoing training and discussions on topics related to gendered harassment. All teachers were in agreement about how they each learned information that was helpful for them in understanding how they should respond to bullying or gendered harassment. However, all the teachers also noted that one or two workshops were not enough for them to be able to be skilled enough to feel comfortable addressing these issues with students in developmentally and grade level appropriate ways. MAPS were ahead of many other districts simply by providing training to teachers. However, trainings need to provide teachers with more opportunities to learn how to include curriculum embedded discussions with students. Districts need to design opportunities for transformative,

205

educational experiences for students that reflect the inclusion of multiple and diverse perspectives. Trainings typically focus on teachers acting as frontline responders and most schools have struggled to address these conflicts beyond punitive measures. Recent research on the positive role that peers may play in mitigating bullying and gendered harassment suggest that teachers should be provided with training or education opportunities that help them help develop students' skills in addressing these incidents when they arise.  Educators can draw on pedagogical tools such as Forum theatre[24] or intergroup dialogue[25] to provide students structured, interactive and meaning-making activities that allow students to work through social and identity differences and to engage students in thinking about how to take active steps in addressing peer to peer gendered harassment.

*Conclusion*

This institutional ethnography explored how teachers who attended district-sponsored professional development workshop(s) on sexuality or gendered harassment came to understand their school district's gendered harassment policies. The goal of the project was to explore how teachers constructed and understood homophobic harassment, sexual harassment, and harassment for gender non-

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[24] Forum Theatre refers to a social justice-based art form which uses drama to address oppression and simulate individual and social change. It is a type of theatre created by Augusto Boal as part of his "Theatre of the Oppressed."  In forum theatre, participants define problems from their lived experiences and perspectives. After hearing several stories from individuals within the group, participants select and focus on one story. Volunteer actors are selected from the audience to create a scene to demonstrate the problems causing the situation. The scene is performed and the participants in the audience name the problems in the scene and participate in reenactments to resolve the conflict. For more information, see Boal, 1979/1985 and Gould & Gould, 2011.

[25] Intergroup dialogue refers to "a process in which two or more groups of individuals engage in face-to-face conversation in an effort to explore, challenge, and overcome the biases they hold about members of their own and other groups. Unlike discussion or debate, dialogue is not a solely intellectual process. It requires emotional investment and attentive listening. Participants learn to non-violently and collaboratively negotiate intergroup conflict with the goal of increasing social justice and ending oppression" (Griffin, Brown & Warren, 2012, p. 161).

conformity, in order to examine their understandings of those policies and how they incorporated them into their daily work. In particular, I investigated how standards-based accountability and its accompanying school practices coordinated the activities of health and physical education teachers and their understandings of their school district's gendered harassment policies. The social relations of standards-based accountability and physical education generated an empirical ground for the analysis of how gendered harassment policies in a school setting are organized. By inquiring into the activities of health and physical education teachers in a school setting, I explicated how these teachers' knowledge of gendered harassment and gendered harassment policies is socially organized.

In this study, I revealed how work activities of health and physical education teachers in reporting gendered harassment incidents and in teaching about sexuality and other topics related to gendered harassment are organized by ruling relations beyond their direct control. The stories of the six teachers in this study are a clear testimony that homophobia and sexism are solidly entrenched within our educational systems. Institutional practices which prize higher math and reading scores contribute to the marginalization of health and physical education classes, the sanctioned place in schools to talk about homophobia, sexuality and homosexuality.  As standards-based school reform proceed and evolve in the U.S. public education school system, educators in health and physical education and other content areas will continue to face external pressures and demands that constrain their work in addressing issues of homophobia, sexuality and homosexuality in their classes. In considering the ruling relations and power dynamics surrounding teachers' understandings of gendered

harassment in schools, this study reveals how educators, scholars, activists and policymakers who want to actively address gendered harassment must move beyond policies that simply have educators act as frontline responders who monitor what students say.  Instead, the challenge will be to craft anti-bullying and harassment policies that consider competing demands on teachers' time and attention and that allow both students and teachers to challenge the institutional practices that perpetuate the official silences surrounding conversations around sexuality, homophobia and homosexuality in schools.

**Appendix A: University of Maryland IRB Application**

**Project Title:** *Exploring Teachers' Understandings of Gendered Harassment Policies*
Principal Investigator: Dr. Hanne B. Mawhinney
Student Investigator: Elke K. Chen

## 1. Abstract
This institutional ethnographic study explores the social contexts shaping teachers' understandings of bullying and gendered harassment policies in one school district. One central research question guides this research: (1) How do teachers come to understand gendered harassment policies? Study participants include six health and physical education teachers who attended a district-sponsored bullying workshop in a Mid-Atlantic United States urban school district and two school district central office staff. This research study includes interviews with study participants, observations of each teacher's school/work lives and reviews of publicly available school district documents and data. The conceptual framework developed from a review of literature on bullying, gendered harassment, educators' responses to gendered harassment, guides the teacher interview protocol. Participants' names, their schools or other identifying information will not be used during the reporting of the study. Digital audio files of interviews, typed transcripts and all other primary data will be kept locked and password protected for the duration of the study.

## 2. Subject Selection
**a.** The study participants will be staff members from Mid-Atlantic Public Schools (MAPS), an urban school district in the Mid-Atlantic United States. Study participants include: (a) six health and physical education teachers who attended a MAPS-sponsored bullying workshop in January 2010 and (b) two MAPS central office staff who work in the MAPS unit that oversees the school districts' anti-bullying efforts and are familiar with the details of MAPS' bullying and gendered harassment policies and programming.

**b.** The student investigator will take the following steps to recruit and select teacher participants:

- With permission from University of Maryland (UMD) IRB and MAPS to conduct research in the school district, the student investigator will contact the appropriate MAPS staff (Health and Physical Education Program Manager) to request the names, work emails and school assignments of MAPS teachers who attended a bullying workshop in January 2010.
- The student investigator will send a recruitment letter and email to each teacher, requesting their participation in this research study. Personnel will have the option to volunteer to participate; there will be no repercussions for participating or not participating in this study.
- In the recruitment announcement, the student investigator will ask teachers who are interested in participating in the study to complete a brief

questionnaire and return the questionnaire to the researcher via email or via mail; a stamped envelope, pre-addressed to the student investigator, will be included with the recruitment letter.

The student investigator will take the following steps to recruit and select central office staff participants:

- With permission from University of Maryland (UMD) IRB and MAPS to conduct
    research in the school district, the student investigator will contact the appropriate MAPS staff who work in the MAPS unit that oversees the school districts' anti-bullying efforts and are familiar with the details of MAPS' bullying and gendered harassment policies and programming.

- The student investigator will send a recruitment letter and email to the relevant central office staff, requesting his or her participation in this research study. Staff have the option to volunteer to participate in this study; there will be no repercussions for participating or not participating in this study.

- In the recruitment announcement, the student investigator will request central office staff to indicate their interest in participating in the study via email or via mail; a stamped envelope, pre-addressed to the student investigator, will be included with the recruitment letter.

**c.** *Selection criterion for teacher participants*:
Teacher participants will be selected base on their attendance at a MAPS-sponsored bullying workshop in January 2010. Teacher participants also will be selected to include maximum variation in the teacher participants' gender, race/ethnicity, years of teaching experience, grade level(s) taught (elementary, middle or high school) and the free and reduced meals (FARMs) status of their schools as indicated in publicly available documents.

*Selection criteria for central office staff participants*:
Central office staff participants who work in the MAPS unit which oversees the school districts' bullying workshops and are familiar with the details of MAPS' bullying and gendered harassment policies and programming.

**d**. *Justification for teacher selection criterion:*

**Bullying Workshop Attendance** -Empirical data indicate teachers often receive no training on bullying and gendered harassment (GLSEN, 2008; Hazler, 1992; Yoon 2004). By selecting participants from teachers who attended a school district-sponsored bullying workshop, this study can provide additional insights on how teachers come to understand bullying and gendered harassment policies.

**Gender and Race/Ethnicity**: Several studies (Anagnostopoulous et al. 2009; Meyer, 2008) indicate teachers' personal experiences and social identities result in a range of differences in how teachers interpret and respond to bullying and gendered harassment. Female teachers are likely to self-reference their own experiences in their responses to student on student bullying (Anagnostopoulous et al. 2009). Individual teachers' social identities and life experiences may influence how they interpret gendered harassment policies.

**Teaching Experience**: Teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experiences have different attitudes and responses towards gendered harassment than teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experiences.

**School level (Elementary/ Middle/ High School**): Gendered harassment behaviors manifest themselves differently across age groups. In elementary and middle schools, these behaviors are more likely to manifest as bullying and as harassment in high schools. Thus, it is important to include teachers from the different school levels in considering how teachers understand and interpret gendered harassment policies.

*Justification for central office staff criteria:*
MAPS central office staff who work in the unit responsible for the bullying workshops and policies will have greatest contextual knowledge about the districts' bullying and gendered harassment policies.

**e.** The student investigator will recruit a total of 8 participants: six teacher participants and two central office staff participants.

**3. Procedures**
This research study does not administer any type of treatment to study participants. The research study includes interviews with teachers and central office staff and observations of teachers in their work lives. Eight total participants will be recruited for this study; two central office staff and six health and physical education teachers. The advertisement for this study is attached to this application.
Participants will have the opportunity to review the data (interview transcripts, publicly collected data and preliminary data analysis) as well as the final report to ensure no personal identifiers are revealed in the reporting of the data. The total time investment for central office staff participants will range between one to two hours. The total time investment for teacher participants will range between six and eight hours. Each interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Observations of each teacher's work day will last approximately two to four hours. Participant reviews of interview transcripts, publically collected data, preliminary data analysis and the final report will require an additional one to two hours.

*I. Interviews*
The student investigator will conduct interviews with the participants in locales convenient for study participants. The student investigator will interview each teacher participant on three different occasions and each central office staff

participant once. Each interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes.   The interview protocols for the teacher interviews and the central office staff interviews are attached to this application. Codes will be used to refer to individuals in notes; participants' real names will not be used in observational memos/notes.

At the beginning of each interview, the student investigator will explain the purpose of the research study, her affiliation with the University of Maryland, College Park, and the questions participants will be asked during the interview session.  The student investigator will also review the informed-consent form with each participant and ask each participant to sign the consent form.   Individual interviews will be digitally-recorded (audio) but only with the expressed permission of the interview sources and always with the option to turn the machine off at any time.  The student investigator will take notes during all interviews.  These notes will be edited within 24 hours after the completion of each interview, kept in a secure location and reviewed, in their raw form, only by the student investigator and principal investigator.

*II. Observations*
The student investigator will observe teacher participants in their school/work environment.  These observations are conducted with two aims:  1) to gain further insights into health and physical education teachers' front-lined work experiences and 2) to draw on these observational data in subsequent teacher interviews to consider if and how any aspects of their work as health and physical education teachers impact their understandings of bullying and gendered harassment policies.  The student investigator will conduct these non-participant observations of teachers' work lives only with participants' explicit knowledge and consent and always with the option to ask the student investigator to leave.  The student investigator will take notes in the form of running accounts.  Although students may be present in the classrooms, no student-level data will be collected. The data the student investigator collect will focus exclusively on teachers' lived experiences in the classroom.  Participants' names will not be used in observational notes.  Codes will be used to refer to individuals in observational notes.  These notes will be edited within 24 hours of the observations, kept in a secure location, and reviewed in their raw form only by the student investigator and principal investigator.

*III. Secondary Data*
Secondary data sources will draw from publicly available documents and databases. These data include:

- MAPS district policies on bullying and gendered harassment
- MAPS bullying workshop materials
- School's restructuring status based on publicly reported Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data
- School's student demographic data

The student demographics data collected will be the breakdown of the student body percentages of Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and White

students.  In order to protect the school's anonymity, exact percentages will not be included in the final report.

**4.      Risks and Benefits:**

There are no perceived risks as this is a voluntary study confined to exploring if and how various aspects of the social context influence teachers' understandings and interpretations of gendered harassment policies.  The information shared by teachers will be based on information grounded in their own daily experiences.  Central office staff will be sharing information considered general policy knowledge within the school district.

The study has the potential to add to anti-bullying and anti-harassment efforts in schools.  The study has the potential to add to the research and theory base in understanding teacher's interpretations of policies within the organizational context of their schools.  This study's results has the potential to benefit K-12 school policy and practice by identifying training needs for teachers and identifying best practices for teachers working to implement anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies in school.

All participants will receive a copy of the final results of the study and an invitation to participate in a seminar to discuss the results of the study with other colleagues in the education and anti-bullying/anti-harassment fields.

**5.      Confidentiality:**
To help protect the confidentiality of study participants, digital audio files, transcripts, reflective memos, field notes, and all other primary data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the student investigator's office.  The student investigator will be the only person with access to the data stored in the locked file cabinet.  Identities of participants will be kept confidential at all times.  No names will be used during the reporting of the study.  The student investigator will code all interview notes, digital audio files and all observational notes so that both physical folders and digital files have no individual identification clues on them. Any electronic data will be password protected on the student investigator's personal computer and external hard disk. It will be stored in a locked room in the student investigator's office; all electronic data will be password protected.  All participants can decline to participate in the study as well as opt-out at any time.

Identifiable information of the participants will be altered by using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.  Each participant will be given opportunities to review, make comments, and approve the verbatim transcription of the interviews, documents, and other personally identifiable information to be used in the preparation of the final report.

 The University of Maryland policy on records retention and disposal requires that all records must be retained for a period of no less than 10 years after the completion of

the research and can then be destroyed.  After the ten-year period, the student investigator will destroy the audio recordings and field notes associated with this research study.

**6.      Information and Consent Forms:**
All information concerning the study will be provided to study participants in the informed consent forms.  All participants will receive a copy of the signed consent form for their records.  A copy of the consent form and interview questions is in the appendices.  The information provided in these forms are not deceptive.  The consent will only be in English.  Participants' privacy will be safeguarded during the consent process as the entire process (obtaining consent and conducting interview) will take place behind closed doors or in a private area away from others.

**7.      Conflict of Interest:**
There is no potential conflict of interests since I am not a supervisor of the Health and Physical Education teachers or the central district staff.  I work with the district as a contractor but have no direct contact with teacher or central office staff supervisors.

**8.      HIPAA Compliance:**
Not Applicable.  I am not using HIPPA protected health information in this study.

**9.      Research Outside of the United States:**  Not Applicable

**10.     Research Involving Prisoners:**  Not Applicable

# Appendix B: Interview Protocols
## Teacher Interview Protocol

## Interview Session 1

## R1- What are local understandings and explanations of gendered harassment?
*Teacher's background, training, responsibilities and local context*:
1. I'd like to start by getting to know a little bit about you and your teaching experience. What is your position at [the school]? How many years have you been at [the school]? How many years in [the school district]?
2. Tell me about your education and teacher training:
   a. Schools & program attended
   b. When and where
   c. Majors/ Areas of expertise
3. What are your main responsibilities as a teacher? How are these responsibilities defined by:
   a. you
   b. the teachers' union contract
   c. school leaders
   d. district leaders
4. Are there any differences in these expectations? Are there any documents/texts that list out these expectations?
5. How would you describe the context of your school?
   a. What are your school's goals?
   b. What are some of your school's achievements?
   c. What are some of your schools' challenges?
6. How would you describe the context of your school district?

*Individual Understandings of Gendered Harassment*
7. When you hear the words "gendered harassment", what comes mind? What characteristics do you think of?
8. What about when you hear "homophobic harassment"? "sexual harassment"? "harassment for gender non-conformity" (not conforming to gender roles)?
9. What comes to mind when you hear the term "bullying"?
10. What comes to mind when you hear the term "school violence"?
11. Do these types of incidents occur in your school? If so, how often? If not, why not?
12. Do these incidents ever interfere with your teaching or students' learning? With school activities?
13. Why do you think these types of incidents happen? Are there particular groups of students who are targeted more than others?
14. What, if anything at all, impacts how you think about gendered harassment? (Possible probes?)
   a. Personal identity
   b. Personal experiences
   c. Witnessing gendered harassment incidents

d. Training (Teacher Prep, Grad School, District PD)
e. School context (community, school culture)
f. School goals and priorities
g. District goals and priorities
h. Mass Media (i.e. news coverage on bullying incidents)

*Local School Understandings and Explanations of Gendered Harassment*
15. Do you talk about gendered harassment with your colleagues? With other teachers? With your administrators? If not, why not? If so, what do you talk about?
16. Do you talk about gendered harassment with your students? With parents? If not, why not? If so, what do you talk about?
17. Do you talk about school violence with your colleagues? Your students? If not, why not? If so, what do you talk about?
18. Does the school as a whole talk about gendered harassment? If so, what do you talk about? If not, why not?
19. Does the school as a whole talk about school or community violence? If so, what do you talk about? If not, why not?
20. Are there any concerns in the school about particular gendered harassment incidents? If so, what are those concerns? If not, what are the concerns in the school?

*Interview Session 1 Wrap Up Questions*
21. Did I forget to ask a question I should have asked?
22. Do you have anything else to add?

## Interview Session 2

### R2. How do policy texts mediate, regulate, authorize teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies?
*Gendered Harassment Policies*
1. Tell me about the role of the **school district** in addressing gendered harassment.
   a. Are there unwritten policies? If so, what do you know about them? How did/would you learn about them? How are these policies implemented?
   b. Are there written policies? If so, what do you know about them? How did/would you learn about them? How are these policies implemented?
   c. Do any documents/forms/texts help you in understanding what the school district expect for your involvement in gendered harassment incidents?
   d. What do you know about the school district's policies on gendered harassment?
   e. Does the school district provide trainings?
   f. Is there a curriculum or program used in the school district?
   g. Whose job is it in the school district to address gendered harassment?

      h.  Who address gendered harassment the most?

2. Tell me about the role of the **<u>school</u>** in addressing gendered harassment.
    a. Are there unwritten policies? If so, what do you know about them? How did/would you learn about them? How are these policies implemented?
    b. Are there written policies?  If so, what do you know about them? How did/would you learn about them? How are these policies implemented? How are these implemented?
    c. Do any documents/forms/texts help you in understanding what the school district expect for your involvement in gendered harassment incidents?
    d. What do you know about the school's policies on gendered harassment?
    e. Does the school provide trainings?
    f. Is there a curriculum or program used in the school?
    g. Whose job is it in the school to address gendered harassment?
    h. Who address gendered harassment the most?
3. Do you feel like you have sufficient support (training, resources, time) to
4. Does anyone or anything influence how you **<u>learn or don't learn</u>** about your school's gendered harassment policies?
5. Does anyone or anything influence how you **<u>think or don't think</u>** about your school's gendered harassment policies?
6. Does anyone or anything influence how you **<u>enforce or don't enforce</u>** your school's gendered harassment policies?


**<u>R3. Does teachers' participation in the district workshop shape teachers' understandings of gendered harassment policies? If so, how? If not, why not?</u>**
1. Have you previously had training or taken coursework in bullying or gendered harassment?
    a. If so, how were the terms bullying or gendered harassment defined in trainings or coursework?
2. You attended the bullying workshop sponsored by the school district back in January 2010. Can you tell me about the training? Did the workshop share anything about:
    a. bullying?
    b. homophobic harassment?
    c. sexual harassment?
    d. harassment for gender non-conformity?
    e. district policies?
    f. school policies?
    g. what teachers should do?
    h. district priorities?
    i. other topics?
3. Did you learn anything from the workshop? If so, what? If not, why not?

4. Did the workshop change how you think about bullying? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
5. Did the workshop influence how you think about homophobic harassment? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
6. Did the workshop influence how you think about gender non-conforming harassment? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
7. Does the bullying workshop relate to your work as a health and physical education teacher? If not, why not? If yes, why so?

*Interview Session 2 Wrap-Up Questions*
1. Did I forget to ask a question I should have asked?
2. Do you have anything else to add?


## Interview Session 3

### R4. How do teachers' positions as health educators shape their understandings of gendered harassment policies?

### R5. How do teachers talk about how they incorporate their understandings of these policies in their daily work?
1. Take me through a typical day as a health and physical education teacher.
   a) What are the different tasks and activities you engage in during the school day?
   b) Is your position different from other classroom teachers in the school? If so, how? If not, how is it similar?
   c) Do you face any challenges as a health and physical education teacher?
   d) Do you face any challenges in teaching the health curriculum?
   e) Do you face any challenges in teaching the physical education curriculum?
   f)
2. Do you see gendered harassment as a health and physical education teacher? If so, how often? How are these behaviors displayed?
3. Does your position as a health and physical education teacher play a part in the types of gendered harassment you see?
4. I understand that sexuality and sexual orientation are topics in your district's health and physical education curriculum. Can you tell me your experiences in teaching these topics?
5. I understand that bullying is one of the topics listed in your district's health and physical education curriculum. Can you tell me your experiences in teaching this topic?
6. Tell me what happens when a gendered harassment incident occurs?
7. How do you know what to do?

8. Would you say you incorporate your school districts' gendered harassment policies into your work as a health and physical education teacher? Why or why not?

## Appendix C: Call for Teacher Participants

Elke Chen, a current doctoral student at the University of Maryland, is conducting a study on teachers and student-on-student bullying and gendered harassment. She is presently looking to recruit participants who are health and physical education teachers in [Mid-Atlantic Public Schools].

Participation in the study includes three 45-60 minute interviews and one school observation on a pre-arranged day. This research has been approved by the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board. The total time commitment for this project will not exceed eight hours. If you are interested in participating, please contact Elke at elke@umd.edu or 202-XXX-XXXX.

**Study Abstract:** This study seeks to examine how health and physical education teachers in one urban school district understand bullying and gendered harassment. This study will pay particular attention to the factors (e.g. lived experiences, organizational setting and social context) that influence teachers' interpretations of school bullying and gendered harassment policies.

## Appendix D: Teacher Participant Volunteer Questionnaire

**Instructions:** If you are interested in volunteering as a participant in this study, please complete the following questionnaire.  Returning this questionnaire **does NOT commit you to becoming a study participant**.  You may return this questionnaire via email to elke@umd.edu or with the enclosed pre-addressed stamped envelope.

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**Title of Study** : Exploring Teacher's Understandings of Bullying and Gendered Harassment Policies

S**tudy Abstract:**  This study seeks to examine how health and physical education teachers in one urban school district understand bullying and gendered harassment policies.  This study will pay particular attention to the factors (e.g. lived experiences, organizational setting and social context) that influence teachers' interpretations of school bullying and gendered harassment policies.

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**Participant Demographic Information:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age:** | | **Years of teaching experience (overall):** | |
| **Gender:** | | **Years of teaching experience (in the school district):** | |
| **Race/Ethnicity:** | | **Grade level(s) you teach during the 2010-2011 school year:** | |
| **Religious Affiliation (if any) :** | | **Course(s) you teach during the 2010-2011 school year:** | |

**Additional Questions:**

1. Did you attend a bullying workshop as part of the school district's Health/P.E. Professional Development Day in January 2010?


2. What is the best way to reach you?


If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me, 202-XXX-XXXX or elke@umd.edu. Thank you for your time.

**Appendix E: Observation Protocol**

**Overview**

I will observe teacher participants in their school/work environment. These observations are conducted with two aims: 1) to gain further insights into health and physical education teachers' front-lined work experiences and 2) to draw on these observational data in subsequent teacher interviews to consider if and how any aspects of their work as health and physical education teachers impact their understandings of bullying and gendered harassment policies.

The observations will not be video or audio-recorded. The student investigator will conduct these non-participant observations of teachers' work lives only with participants' explicit knowledge and consent and always with the option to ask the student investigator to leave.

I will take notes in the form of running accounts. Although students may be present in the classrooms, no student-level data will be collected. The data the student investigator collect will focus exclusively on teachers' lived experiences in the classroom. Codes will be used to refer to individuals in notes; participants' real names will not be used in observational memos/notes.

**Observation focuses on:**
- Teacher actions (what does teacher **DO** during the course of the day? What is the structure of their day like? What are his or her responsibilities in different parts of the school?)
- Teacher interactions with others (who does the teacher interact with? What do those interactions look like? What are the verbal exchanges about?
- Topics discussed in conversations and in class instruction
- Texts/documents that are seen and/or teacher refer to during the course of his or her workday
- Regular practices (Note what appears as routines to me so I can follow-up in interviews
- Other unanticipated events (Disruptions/interruptions/intercom announcements?)

| Observation Protocol | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Event:** | **Date:** | |
| **Location:** | **Time:** | |
| **Setting:** | | |
| Descriptive Account of Event | | |
| **Time Frame** | **Running Notes** | **Comments** |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

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