

Research Portal

Application - Insight Development Grants

Identification

Applicant

Family Name: Di Stasio

First Name: Maria

Middle Names: Rosaria

Current Position: Postdoctoral researcher/fellow

Primary Affiliation: University of Alberta

Department/Division: Department of Educational Psychology

Application

Application Title Gay-Straight Alliances in High Schools: A Closer Examination of Youth Participation and Well-being

Committee 12 - Education and social work

Joint or special initiative Select

Is this a [research-creation project](#)? Yes No

Does your proposal involve [Aboriginal Research](#) as defined by SSHRC? Yes No

Scholar Type

Are you an [Emerging Scholar](#) or [Established Scholar](#)? Emerging

Have you received a previous grant (with the exception of a fellowship and/or knowledge mobilization grant) as principal investigator or project director, through any of the following organizations: SSHRC, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, or Canadian Institutes of Health Research?

Yes No

When did or will you obtain your highest degree? For doctoral and master's degrees, this is the thesis defense date for the first highest degree obtained.

2015-02 

Confirmed Scholar Type Emerging

Administering Organization

Organization University of Alberta

Department/Division Faculty of Education

Invitations

Role	Last Name	First Name	Organization	Department
Co-applicant	Harley	Jason	University of Alberta	Educational Psychology
Co-applicant	Konishi	Chiaki	McGill University	Educational and Counselling Psychology

Activity Details

Certification Requirements

Does the proposed research involve humans as research participants? Yes No

Does the proposed research involve animals? Yes No

Environmental Impact

A. Will any phase of the proposed research take place on federal lands in Canada, other than lands under the administration and control of the Commissioner of Yukon, the Northwest Territories or Nunavut, as interpreted in section 2(1) of the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012](#) (CEAA 2012)?

Yes No

B. Will any phase of the proposed research take place outdoors and outside of Canada?

Yes No

C. (i) Will the grant permit a designated project, as listed in the CEAA 2012 [Regulations Designating Physical Activities](#) (RDPA), to be carried out in whole or in part?

Yes No

OR (ii) Will any phase of the proposed research depend on a designated project, as listed in the RDPA, being carried out by a third party? [Regulations Designating Physical Activities](#)

Yes No

Keywords

List up to 10 keywords that best describe the proposal.

youth, gay-straight alliances, relationships, self-identity, self-determination, peers, home, inclusivity, bullying, empowerment

Disciplines

Indicate and rank up to three disciplines relevant to your proposal, with #1 the most relevant and #3 the least relevant.

1. Education Educational Psychology
2. Psychology Educational Psychology
3. Sociology Social Processes

Areas of Research

Indicate and rank up to three areas of research relevant to your proposal, with #1 the most relevant and #3 the least relevant. If you select "Not Subject to Research Classification" in #1, the system will automatically remove any other areas of research when you save this page.

1. Education
2. Youth
3. Social development and welfare

Temporal Periods

Indicate up to two historical periods covered by your proposal.	From		To		
	Year	Period	Year	Period	
	1.	<input type="text" value="1990"/>	AD	<input type="text" value="2017"/>	AD
	2.	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	

Geographical Regions

Indicate and rank up to three geographical regions relevant to your proposal, with #1 the most relevant and #3 the least relevant.

1. Western Canada
2. Central Canada
3. Atlantic Provinces

Countries

Indicate and rank up to five countries relevant to your proposal, with #1 the most relevant and #5 the least relevant.

1. Canada
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Revisions since previous application

This proposal was submitted last year. I have addressed sub-criteria that had the lowest scores (being rated as good) in the last proposal: challenge, feasibility and capability

For the Challenge Criteria, we reconsidered aspects of the project that relate to the originality and contribution to existing knowledge. Specifically, we considered recent legislation on Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and focused this research on how GSAs impact home aspects (e.g. relationships with parents, siblings) that will further support the new legislation. Thus, we further clarified the significance of this research regarding the insight it will provide on the impact of students' participation in GSAs (as extracurricular programs) on their home and school relationships. We honed and reduced the objectives of this study to highlight the significance of participating in GSAs for the well-being of youth with regards to their self-determination, relationships, experiences with bullying and victimization and the diversity of youth attending GSAs. These objectives answer the research questions of this project and contribute new

knowledge to the field, addressing those research moments and gaps in the Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM) literature. We also strengthened the section on roles of team members and students. This proposal elaborates on the training for students with clarification of the tasks and skills that students will acquire and the substantial opportunities in every phase of the project.

For the Feasibility criteria, we reevaluated our objectives for the project and assessed the practicability of attaining these objectives for the 2-year timeline. The data collection strategies are time efficient and suitable for the scope of this project (i.e. three questionnaires, focus groups and a subset of individuals (max. 10) for interviews).

For the Capability criteria, the roles and descriptions of the applicant and co-applicant are clearly specified. We have a solid research team with combined expertise from the principal investigator, co-investigators, collaborators and students who will be graduate research assistants and have work experience and knowledge in the field.

Summary of Proposal

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) students face difficulties related to their identity. An estimated 400 000 youth encounter homelessness because they are forced out of their homes due to disagreements with family about their identity (Tierney & Ward, 2017). Compared to their heterosexual peers, LGBTQ experience more unwanted personal advances, public harassment and ridicule. They are often subjected to bullying that ranges from defamatory graffiti to verbal and physical assault making schools unsafe places. Up to 44% of LGBTQ youth reported suicidal ideation, compared to 26% of heterosexual youth (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Additionally, LGBTQ youth lack social support and have less closeness to parents, teachers and peers. To thrive in the adversities and trauma, mentoring and support is necessary. Although some sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth persevere, many are still vulnerable and trying to survive in what may be unsafe spaces (i.e. schools). In the quest for recognition and accommodation in Canadian schools, gay-straight alliances (GSAs) are peer support groups that provide safe spaces for SGM youth. These student-led clubs help youth to grow into resilience and create opportunities for belonging in schools.

GSAs have been emerging in schools since the 1980s. In the United States, GSAs have been established in 37% of high schools (CDCP,2015). To date, there are no statistics on the uptake of GSAs in Canadian high schools. GSAs are clubs that positively affect students' feelings of safety, help them feel empowered and increase their sense of self-efficacy. GSAs have been associated with higher comfort levels and increased self-esteem for LGBTQ students. On a political ground, there is a mobilization in the rights for SGM youth. Recently in Alberta, School Act 16.1 (Bill 10, 2015) mandates that all schools permit student-led organizations (i.e. GSA). Locally, the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) implemented policies for sexual orientation and gender identity that establish safe and inclusive environments (HFA.BP; EPSa, 2017) and support GSAs (HFA.AR; EPSb, 2017). Alberta has been progressive with its legislation and a majority of high schools in Edmonton currently have GSA. Thus, this makes it possible to study the effects of these student-led groups that support minority youth in the Edmonton District.

Although there are a number of prevention and intervention programs, research on the effectiveness of these extracurricular programs (i.e. GSAs) on LGBTQ youth is in its nascent stages. Numerous high schools in the Edmonton District have established GSAs, however, there is a lack of empirical evidence that demonstrates how student-led clubs can impact and benefit the well-being of youth in Alberta. Specifically, research is needed to understand how youth participation in these clubs can empower and increase their self-determination. Theories of self-determination posit that individuals have basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness that contribute to motivation, positive development, and

wellness. These basic psychological needs allow youth to be causal agents in their own life, effectively deal with the environment, and develop close, affectionate relationships with others.

This proposed research will examine the benefits of youth participation in GSAs in the EPSB district and fill the gaps in those research moments that address the following critical questions: 1) How can participation in GSAs affect student' relationships in the home and school context? 2) How does participation in GSAs empower youth and increase their self-determination? 3) Do GSAs work to expand the participation of students and embrace all identities and expressions? 4) Do GSAs help create hospitable environments in school and mitigate negative effects of victimization?

The outcomes of this study will help us understand the overall impact of GSAs on SGM youths' well-being and address the emerging research needs. These research advances will inform and guide GSAs on how to promote resilience among minority groups. Since there is still some resistance with student-led clubs that support SGM youth, the proposed study will provide data to inform school policies, mobilize action in all schools and support the initiatives undertaken by the Alberta government.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal Applicant: As principal investigator, I have the skills and experience required to lead this study. I was awarded a Post-Doctoral Fellowship from the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, and am presently fulfilling this position in the Department of Educational Psychology. I was awarded an FRQSC (Fonds de Recherche du Quebec – Société et Culture), a doctoral fellowship. I completed my Ph.D. in Educational Psychology (in 2015) with a specialization in Human Development, and a MEd in Family Life Education from McGill University. My doctoral work explored ecological factors and relationships that influence bullying and victimization in junior high school. My dissertation is available in McGill eScholarship Library Collections (Di Stasio, 2015); a paper on classroom practices and teacher-student relationships that predict bullying was published in a Special Issue on Bullying in the Journal of Adolescence (Di Stasio, Savage & Burgos, 2016).

I began my career as an educator assisting children with developmental delays and worked for 10 years as a substitute teacher in high schools. I have been a course lecturer at McGill University for the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, as well as for the Office of First Nations and Inuit Education. Last fall, I was a Term Adjunct Professor at Queen's University in the Faculty of Education and a course lecturer at the University of Alberta. I am a collaborator on an SSHRC Insight Development Grant titled Challenges Associated with the Achievement of Academic Success with an Aboriginal Student Population in Postsecondary Education with Tanya Chichekian as Principal Investigator.

My education, research, and practical experience allow me to conduct and address the goals of this project. During my MEd studies, I acquired knowledge on group processes and was coached on how to facilitate groups. I also received training on leadership styles and in working as a professional with issues of sexuality. I teach courses in universities that emphasize strategies for the inclusion of all learners within an educational setting-from the understanding of environmental (accessibility) barriers to the necessary accommodations to remove or overcome these obstacles. I have acquired knowledge to assess the needs of exceptional populations including systemic exclusions that might influence the research process. I was trained in qualitative and quantitative research methods and have a solid understanding of techniques used in mixed-method research. During graduate studies, I interviewed teachers for a project that assessed teachers' attitudes on inclusion. As a research assistant on this project, I exercised my skills for conducting interviews and gained expertise in analyzing qualitative data.

For my doctoral research, I conceptualized and designed my own project. I attained ethics from McGill University Ethics Board and from school boards, recruited schools, teachers, and student participants; collected and analyzed data. I recruited 38 classrooms and 678 student participants. I trained five research assistants in observational methods and supervised undergraduate students in data management. For this proposed research, I am the primary contributor to the research proposal. I will be responsible for the overall direction and organization of the project and oversee the daily administration

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of the research study including the training and supervision of graduate students working as research assistants on the project. I will oversee participant recruitment, monitor incoming data, direct data analyses, and be primarily responsible for dissemination of findings as reports, conference papers, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Upon completion of my postdoctoral fellowship, I will be serving as an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta to maintain an affiliation and expect to be teaching. As part of a 40hr work week, 50% of my time will be dedicated to this project (~20hrs/week) overseeing all aspects of the project's research activities, and my research contribution will be 75%.

Co-Applicant: Dr. Chiaki Konishi is an Assistant Professor at McGill University, specializing in the area of social-emotional learning (SEL) and development. Her studies also encompass marginalized populations of youth, including sexual and racial minorities, particularly in relation to their stigmatized experiences such as school victimization. She has conducted various studies in the field of SEL and development, including longitudinal and cross-national studies of bullying and victimization, large-scale studies on school climate, school safety, and social responsibility. Chiaki will help craft the ethics application, devise questions for interviews and focus groups, advise on recruitment strategies, and consult on statistical analyses. She will dedicate 10% (~2-4hrs/week) to the proposed project and her research contribution will be 10%.

Co-Applicant: Dr. Jason Harley is an Assistant Professor at the University of Alberta. Jason is PI on an SSHRC IDG titled: Fostering Historical Reasoning, Hope, Empathy, Emotional Engagement and Queer History Awareness with a Mobile Augmented Reality App. His expertise includes examining psychological processes particularly emotions which are related to motivational processes and critical psychological outcomes to understand the experiences of SGM youth. Jason will contribute his knowledge of SGM youth and key contacts in Edmonton. He will also assist with the theoretical framework of this research and draw on his methodological background, which includes publications with diverse methodologies and experience teaching research methods courses, to guide the methodology and analyses. Jason will dedicate 10% of his time (~2-4hrs/week) to this project and his research contribution will be 10%.

Collaborator: Lauren Alston is the Provincial GSA Coordinator for Alberta, a position within the Institute of Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) at the University of Alberta. Lauren helps start, strengthen, and sustain gay-straight alliances in Alberta's K-12 schools and communities. Lauren's ultimate goal is to foster student leadership within schools and communities with the purpose of creating safer and more inclusive spaces for all students. She does this by running the Alberta GSA Network (www.albertaGSANetwork.ca). Lauren obtained a BSc in Psychology and an MSc in Neuroscience from the University of Alberta. Lauren's role in this research project will be to inform us on schools that are currently running GSAs and link us with these schools in the Edmonton area. Lauren will also help us connect with youth in GSAs who would be interested in participating in the research. She will dedicate approximately 2-3% of her time to this project and make 2-3% contribution to the research.

Collaborator: Dr. Christina Rinaldi is a Professor at the University of Alberta. She holds an SSHRC IG project looking at the parent-child relationship in early to middle childhood. She is also a co-investigator and collaborating on parent-child relations with investigators in Human Ecology, Nursing, and Medicine. Christina will support this project and direct us to the literature on parent-child relationships. We will consult with Christina for crafting questions related to home aspects. She will dedicate approximately 2-3% of her time to this project and make a 2-3% contribution to the research.

Roles and Training of Students

Two master students from the Faculty of Education will be involved in every phase of the research project and receive training from principal investigator in all aspects related to the proposed research including: theoretical, methodological, analytical and educational issues. Graduate students' responsibilities will include: assisting with the drafting of research ethics, visiting educational sites (i.e. GSAs), collecting survey data, facilitating focus groups, conducting interviews and providing any necessary support to GSAs and schools related to the research (i.e. answering questions, debriefing). Once all data are collected, students' role will include transcribing data, coding, entering data, assisting with data analyses and synthesizing of research results. Students will conduct supplementary literature searches for manuscripts,

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co-author and present posters at conferences, and co-author journal articles.

Weekly meetings will be scheduled with the principal investigator, collaborators, and graduate students to reach the objectives of the project and monitor progress. During these meetings, we will review objectives of the week, discuss issues, and provide any additional support and training that is necessary. These meetings will also serve to foster a collegial and motivated research environment. Monthly meetings will also be held with all members of the research team to share insight, keep abreast with the project objectives and set immediate and long-term goals. These monthly meetings provide opportunities for all members of the team to interact which will be particularly helpful in writing reference letters for graduate students in their future career aspirations.

Graduate students will gain broad skills that will help them be competitive candidates in both academic and non-academic positions. They will have long-term mentoring from the principal investigator and co-applicants throughout the duration of the research project. Students will learn how to conduct research from the beginning phase, that is, assisting in writing sections of research ethics applications to synthesizing research findings, writing manuscripts for peer-reviewed journal articles, and addressing feedback from top peer-reviewed journals. This will contribute to their critical, analytical and oral and written communication skills.

Students will gain expertise in mixed methods approaches understanding the practical and theoretical aspects; and gain expertise in understanding protocols of collecting data. The principal investigator will instruct students on the protocols for conducting interviews and focus groups. Students will attend four 75-minute training sessions provided by the principal investigator and learn how to facilitate individual and group interviews. They will assist the principal investigator in the creation of open-ended questionnaires for interviews. This practice will broaden their scope of inquiry and provide opportunity for creating research material. Graduate students will transcribe data and assist the principal investigator in coding data which will provide students with skills and knowledge on how to extrapolate themes from data. For the quantitative aspect, the principal investigator will train students on protocols for administering surveys to youth. Students will enter all data in SPSS data management program, clean data, and assist in preliminary analyses.

Students will also increase their abilities to work in collaboration and as part of a team. In the dissemination of findings, students will benefit from attending conferences. They will collate content for poster presentations, develop their presentation skills when sharing the research, and build their networks in both academic and non-academic contexts.

Knowledge Mobilization Plan

This research will provide empirical evidence for the overall impact of GSAs on the well-being of SGM youth in Alberta schools, and support legislation i.e Bill 10 and 24 . We will communicate our results with teachers and educational leaders at the Annual Greater Edmonton Teacher Convention Association held in February. At this event, we will disseminate our findings into action plans that will infuse and integrate attitudes, skills, and knowledge into GSAs activities that teacher-leaders can use to help students build skills (i.e. problem-solving, self-advocating, empowerment) to increase self-determination. In November 2019, we will attend the GSA conference held in Edmonton to share our findings and engage in dialogue with participants (i.e. youth, community leaders and parents) who can provide insight in the interpretation of the research findings and help shape new directions in research. We will participate in the iSMSS talk series held at the University of Alberta, and in monthly roundtables held at the Pride Center. Findings of this research will be shared on the Alberta GSA network website which links information to social networks and can be accessed by teachers and students.

Dissemination efforts will include open-access publication in leading peer-reviewed journals (i.e. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Journal of Research on Adolescence) as well as presentations of papers and posters at national and international conferences (American Educational Research Association, Society for Research on Adolescence). Our publications will be accessible through the University of Alberta's open-access institutional repository, ERA: Education and Research Archive (<https://era.library.ualberta.ca>) within 12 months of publication. The ERA is listed in the Directory of Open Access of Repositories (Open

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DOAR) and is a certified repository by the Canadian Association of Research Libraries which also complies with the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications.

Expected Outcomes

Scholarly Benefits

Indicate up to three scholarly benefits of the proposed project. (required)

1. Enhanced theory
2. Enhanced curriculum
3. Student training/skill development

Summary of Expected Scholarly Outcomes

1. This research aims to advance conceptual frameworks (i.e. self-determination theory and socio-ecological theories) that enhance understanding of social contextual factors that contribute to the psychological needs of youth and their relationships. Grounding research, in theory, provides a framework to better understand the experiences of LGBTQ youth and make necessary changes at the micro and macro level.
2. Secondary school curricula and pedagogy will be enhanced through evidence that supports school board policies and legislation. Outcomes of this research will increase understanding of school-wide interventions such as GSAs that support minority groups and contribute to positive school climates and students' well-being.
3. Graduate students in the project will gain research and academic skills including procedures for ethics, gender and youth-sensitive interview techniques, survey administration, data management, scholarly writing and public presentation skills.

Societal Benefits

Indicate up to three societal benefits of the proposed project.

1. Critical knowledge
2. Enhanced policy
3. Behavioural outcomes

Summary of Expected Societal Outcomes

1. This project contributes new knowledge with the goal to promote social inclusion and justice for sexual and gender minority youth in schools and communities at large. These efforts aim to benefit SGM youth and the larger community with a wider acceptability and understanding which potentially increases tolerance and reduces discrimination and aggression.
2. This research aims to inform and support provincial (Bill 10 and 24) and school board policies (HFA.BP; HFA.AR) for sexual orientation and gender identity that establish safe and inclusive environments. It creates social movement for social justice and inclusion within schools.
3. This research builds resilience and socio-capital which helps the community to mobilize, garner resources and be connected. The outcomes of this research will provide youth with a group identity and affiliation that can empower and motivate them to engage in collective action. It promotes agency and equity for youth.

Audiences

Indicate up to five potential target audiences for the proposed project.

1. Canadian government
Provincial/territorial government
2. General public
3. Not-for-profit/community organizations
4. Scholarly associations
5. Academic sector/peers

Summary of Benefits to Potential Target Audiences

1. Institutions are still embroiled in debates about the inclusion of LGBTQ spaces. This project stands to showcase the benefits that educational intervention support groups can have on discrimination and intolerance, and support legislation that promotes equality and social justice for SGM youth.

2. Outcomes will benefit all stakeholders including SGM youth and participants, the general student population, teachers, principals, and parents/caregivers by demonstrating their role as agents of change. The outcomes of this research speak to the public by creating knowledge and efforts that contribute to inclusive environments.

3. This research will potentially increase collaboration among community organizations such as Pride Center of Edmonton, school boards, and PFLAG—a national charitable organization.

4-5. Professional and academic sectors will benefit through the dissemination of findings at local, national and international conferences, and from manuscripts submitted to journals.

Funds Requested from SSHRC

Year 1

Personnel costs			
Student salaries and benefits/Stipends	Number	Amount	Justification
Undergraduate			
Masters	2	\$25,409.00	Two part time MEd students from University of Alberta. Stipend (Award + Salary + 11% Fringe) based on 6 hrs/wk over 3 terms (4 months/term). (\$1058.71/month X 12 months) = \$ 12704.52 X (2) students = \$25409.04. Students tasks will include: assisting with research ethics, administering consent forms and questionnaires, data management
Doctoral			
Subtotal		\$25,409.00	
Non student salaries	Number	Amount	Justification
Postdoctoral			
Professional/Technical Services			

Other			
Subtotal		\$0.00	
Travel and Subsistence Costs for Research			
	Number	Amount	Justification
Applicant/Team Member(s)	1	\$240.00	Travelling to and from schools for meetings with principals, teachers, and youth (students). Four times per week X 8 weeks. Approximately 60 km/wk X 0.50\$/km = \$30.00 X 8 (weeks)= \$240.00
Student(s)	2	\$480.00	Travelling to and from schools for distribution and collecting consent forms, and data collection. Twice per week X 8 (weeks). Approximately 60 km X \$0.50 = \$ 30.00 X 8 (weeks) = 240.00 \$ X 2 (students) = \$480.00
Subtotal		\$720.00	
Travel and Subsistence Costs for Dissemination			
	Number	Amount	Justification
Applicant/Team Member(s)			
Student(s)			
Subtotal		\$0.00	
Other Expenses			
		Amount	Justification
Supplies		\$600.00	Printing of questionnaires \$0.06/page \$100; posters for research dissemination \$100; photocopying \$150; ink cartridges & supplies for data collection \$250,
Non-disposable equipment		\$2,348.00	(1) MacBook Pro 13" 2.0 GHz dualcore Intel Core i5, 8GB RAM, 256GB Flash Storage, 2x USBC (\$1839) will be used to store all data, conduct data analysis, & manuscript writing; (1) Apple Mini DisplayPort to DVI Adapter(\$35); (1) Apple Thunderbolt to Gigabit Ethernet Adapter (\$35); (1) HP LaserJet Pro M130fw Printer (\$279) for all printing purposes; (1) Seagate Expansion 4TB USB 3.0 Portable Backup Drive (\$160)
software		\$2,222.00	Nvivo (qualitative data analysis software) & license: (\$705); SPSS software & License 12 months (quantitative data analysis software: (\$1517.00)
Digital Recorder		\$300.00	(2) Sony ICDUX533S 4GB Digital Flash Voice Recorder for interviews (\$150 X 2)

Subtotal	\$5,470.00
Grand total year 1	\$31,599.00

Year 2

Personnel costs

Student salaries and benefits/Stipends	Number	Amount	Justification
Undergraduate			
Masters	2	\$28,246.00	Two part time MEd students from University of Alberta will be hired for a total of 3 terms (4months/term). Stipend (Award + Salary + 11% Fringe) based on 7 hrs/wk over 2 terms (\$1235.99/month X 8 months = \$9887.92) X 2 (students) = \$19775.84; and 6hrs/wk over 1 term (\$1058.71/month X 4 months = \$4234.84) X 2 (students) = \$8469.68. (\$19775.84 +8469.68) Students tasks include data collection, data entry, interviews, transcribing & coding
Doctoral			
Subtotal		\$28,246.00	

Non student salaries	Number	Amount	Justification
Postdoctoral			
Professional/Technical Services			
Other			
Subtotal		\$0.00	

Travel and Subsistence Costs for Research	Number	Amount	Justification
Applicant/Team Member(s)	1	\$400.00	Travel to and from schools for meetings with administration, teachers, and youth; Supervision of MEd students; data collection (i.e. interviews). Twice per week X 8 (weeks). Approximately 100km X 0.50\$ = \$50.00 X 8 (weeks) = \$400.00
Student(s)	2	\$960.00	Travelling to and from schools for data collection. Twice per week X 16 (weeks). Approximately 60 km X \$0.50 = \$ 30.00 X 16 (weeks) = \$480.00 \$ (X 2 students) = \$ 960.00
Subtotal		\$1,360.00	

Travel and Subsistence Costs	Number	Amount	Justification
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for Dissemination			
Applicant/Team Member(s)	1	\$5,540.00	PI will attend two national or international conferences (Society for Research on Adolescence; American Educational Research Association). Approximate Costs: Conference registration (non-members) \$600 X 2; airfare travel \$900 X 2; accommodations \$220/night (4 nights) X 2; transportation to and from airport \$ 90 X 2; Per diem for food \$60/day (5 days) X 2
Student(s)	2	\$5,240.00	Students will each attend one local or one international conference. Approximate Costs: Conference registration for students \$450 X 2; airfare travel \$900 X 2; accommodations \$220/night (4 nights) X 2; transportation to and from airport \$ 90 X 2; Per diem for food \$60/day (5 days) X 2.
Subtotal		\$10,780.00	
Other Expenses		Amount	Justification
Supplies			
Non-disposable equipment			
Participant Compensation		\$1,000.00	Research participants will each get a 10\$ gift card. We anticipate 100 participants. (100 X \$10)
Articles Processing Fees for Open Access		\$2,000.00	Open Access for articles published in top peer reviewed journals (Journal of Research on Adolescence; AERA - Educational Research and/or Journal of Youth and Adolescence)
Subtotal		\$3,000.00	
Grand total year 2		\$43,386.00	
Grand total		\$74,985.00	

Funds from Other Sources

You must include all contributors (e.g., individuals, not-for-profit organizations, philanthropic foundations, private sector organizations) that are providing contributions for the project. Indicate whether or not these contributions have been confirmed.

If a funding source is not listed, you must:

- (a) type the source name in Funding Source
- (b) identify the contribution type
- (c) enter an amount.

If you have received, from a single funding source, more than one contribution of the same type (e.g., cash) and confirmation status, you must combine these into one entry (e.g., two \$20,000 confirmed cash contributions from a university become one \$40,000 confirmed cash contribution).

For examples of Canadian and international sources of eligible cash and/or in-kind support, see [SSHRC's](#)

[Guidelines for Cash and In-Kind Contributions.](#)

Note: All contributions must be indicated in Canadian currency.

Funding Source	Contribution Type	Confirmed	Year 1	Year 2	Total
					\$0.00
Details					
					\$0.00
Details					
					\$0.00
Details					
Grand total					\$0.00

Reviewer Exclusion

Excluded Reviewers

Exclusion Type	Family Name / Collaboration	First Name	Initials	Organization	Department	Email
No records to display.						

Objectives:

Sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth are often subjected to heterosexism (discrimination against homosexuality on the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation), genderism (belief that gender is binary with only two genders –masculine and feminine), and homo/bi/trans/ phobic bullying that ranges from defamatory graffiti to verbal and physical assault (Cénat et al., 2015; Grace, 2015; Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005). The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools found that 70% of both lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual and queer (LGBTQ) and straight youth hear homophobic remarks; and more than 20% are physically assaulted due to their sexual orientation with even greater rates among the trans youth (Taylor et al., 2016). In addition to greater prevalence rates of harassment and victimization, sexual minority youth experience greater health disparities compared to exclusively heterosexual youth including substance abuse and suicidality as a consequence (Coker, Austin, & Schuster, 2010; King, Semlyn, Tai, et al., 2008; Saewyc, 2011). The 2015 National School Climate Survey demonstrates that anti-LGBTQ language and victimization has a negative effect on LGBT students' academic achievement and well-being (Kosciw et al. 2015). Students who are victimized because of sexual orientation or gender expression were three times more likely to miss school in a month than those who are not victimized. They have lower educational aspiration and academic success (i.e. students who were more frequently harassed had lower grade point averages and were twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education). Additionally, they also experience higher levels of depression (Kosciw et al., 2015).

In light of the increased risks that sexual minority youth face in school contexts, they often feel unsafe and isolated. Programs addressing school victimization that provide safe spaces for LGBTQ students have been launched to help promote wellbeing. The establishment of student-directed clubs known as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) provide individual support to students and may also serve the purpose of engaging in broader political activism (St. John et al., 2014; Stonefish & Lafreniere, 2015). The National School Climate Survey reports GSAs as a solution to this problem. Students surveyed expressed that GSAs and similar student clubs can provide safe, affirming spaces and support that is critical for LGBT students (Koswic et al., 2015). A recent systematic review indicates that the presence of GSAs in schools is associated with lower levels of school-based victimization of LGBTQ youth (Marx & Hensman Kettrey, 2016). Since increased victimization is associated with academic success and well-being, school boards have the responsibility to address these issues by ensuring that support is provided in school for all students.

As well as addressing victimization and school success, student-led organizations such as GSAs promote social inclusion, can help students develop a better self-understanding and enhance relationship building skills. In 2015, Bill 10 was amended to mandate gay-straight alliances in any schools where students want them. Despite this legislation, schools were delaying on making GSAs possible in schools on premises of funding and pressures that parents should be consulted. In November 2017, Bill 24, an act supporting Gay-Straight Alliances was legislated by the Alberta government which mandates schools that get public dollars take specific steps to create and embrace GSAs. Further, this bill was amended to protect students from being outed to parents. It is important that students feel safe and that the choice of coming out to a parent, rests with the child as it could lead to family ostracism or physical harm. With the risk of being outed to parents, students may not join these clubs causing the clubs to wither away. To strengthen LGBTQ students' self-determination, it is important that these clubs exist while still ensuring privacy and giving individuals the choice of coming out to others.

GSA's are a recent development in Canada. Thus, there is a need for research on the roles and effects of these student-led clubs that aim to promote positive youth development and support the recent legislation. The purpose of this proposed project is to understand how GSA's are benefiting the well-being of SGM youth in Alberta - a province that has been progressive in implementing legislation to protect minorities in schools. This project will evaluate how GSA's impact SGM youth relationships in the home and school, affirm their identity, increase feelings of empowerment, and motivate them to become self-determined. Additionally, we need to understand the diverse membership of GSA's, examine who is attending the GSA's and their personal experiences. This will increase our knowledge of the nuances and complexities of LGBTQ youth. Since GSA's can build community resilience which serves to benefit one and all, it is imperative to understand its inclusivity with an in-depth inspection of the composition and diversification of student members.

The objectives of the proposed study are to:

- Examine the role of GSA's on students' well-being. Students' well-being will be determined by how these clubs can strengthen their self-identity and increase their level of self-determination. Self-determination is understood as how students' basic psychological needs of relatedness, competence and autonomy are fulfilled as a consequence of attending GSA's.
- Examine the impact of GSA's on students' school and home relationships. School relationships are understood as teacher-student and peer-peer relationships. Home relationships are understood as students' relationships with parents and siblings.
- Examine the heterogeneity and person-context interactions. The inclusiveness of GSA's will be reflected in the diversity of sexual and gender minorities, ethno-minority attending the clubs and their experiences within GSA's.
- Examine gender and sexual minority students' experiences with bullying and victimization for those attending GSA's and students in schools without GSA's

These objectives will inform the following research questions:

- 1) *How does student participation in GSA's affect their experiences of relationships in schools with peers and teachers; and in the home with parents and siblings?*
- 2) *How do GSA's contribute to individual well-being, specifically exploring sexual and gender minority students' sense of self-identity and self-determination?*
- 3) *Do students describe the GSA's as working to expand their participation and embrace all identities and expressions?*
- 4) *Does the presence of GSA's mediate students' experiences of bullying and victimization across sexual and gender minorities?*

Context:

The emergence of GSA's in North America began in the 1980's in the districts of New York and Los Angeles. In Canada, the uptake of these support groups in schools has been slow and legislation exists only in certain regions of Canada. The province of Alberta legislated Bill 10 mandating the establishment of GSA's in any school upon students' request (Bill 10, 2015) and more recently Bill 24 (2017) strengthening the existence of GSA's in schools. Similarly, the province of Ontario has also legislated Bill 13 – The Accepting Schools Act which mandates the establishment of activities or

organizations including using the name GSAs. These provincial laws designed to make educational institutions safer by mandating school boards to establish policies and guidelines with respect to bullying prevention and intervention in school are a step in the right direction. Nonetheless, opposition is still encountered with GSAs and not all schools are encouraging or supporting students when GSAs are being requested. GSAs are sites where SGM students can understand and develop their identities through a process of affirming themselves and others (Grace, 2015). These clubs offer a secure place where students can socialize in an accommodating environment with the support of school personnel (Heck et al., 2014; McCabe, 2014; Scharrón-del-Río et al., 2014). Although there has been an increase in the number of GSAs in high schools in the Edmonton Public School district (EPSB), there is still some resistance encountered.

Research on GSAs will further inform politicians, providing evidence for existing legislation. Research can elucidate the role of GSAs as safe spaces for SGM youth where they can validate their differences, embrace diversity and create opportunities for belonging in junior and senior high school contexts. GSAs provide an affiliation for students that can be self-empowering, motivate them to engage in social action and find ways and possibilities for change (Wexler et al., 2009). GSAs can provide students with support that positively impacts home relationships and reduce the rates of homelessness for SGM youth. In Ontario, these clubs serve to help SGM youth connect with the wider SGM community and build a support system which enhances the capacity and sustainability of these student-led clubs (St. John et al., 2014).

Theoretical Approach and Framework. This research investigates the role of student participation in GSAs from a socio-ecological perspective focusing on the school and home context. A socio-ecological perspective is a broad framework that allows us to understand developmental outcomes as a result of interactions between contexts. At the center of the home and school microsystem, we want to understand how self-identity, a sense of empowerment and self-determining behavior can develop as a result of the person-context interaction from participation in these student-led clubs. Thus, we examine GSAs through the lens of a self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to SDT, social-contextual conditions facilitate the natural process of self-motivation and healthy psychological development. When motivated, people demonstrate agency, effort, and are inspired to learn and master new skills (Ryan & Deci, 2000). GSAs motivate SGM youth to engage in activities because they provide mutual support and a place of belonging to a group of individuals with a significant degree of commonality in identities, interests, and culture (Ungar, 2011). SDT postulates that inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs of relatedness, autonomy, and competency are the basis for the integration of self-motivation and personality (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Social contexts may vary in the amount of autonomy support which is defined by the extent of interpersonal acceptance and support for expression (Lynch, La Guardia, & Ryan, 2009). LGBTQ youth are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation or express their identity in autonomy-supportive contexts, and these contexts are associated with more positive well-being (Legate, Ryan, & Weinstein, 2012). Longitudinal research has demonstrated an association between basic need satisfaction (i.e. autonomy, relatedness, and competence), identity dimensions (i.e. commitment making, identification with commitment, exploration) and identity formations (Luyckx, Vansteenkiste, Goosens, & Duriez, 2009).

GSAs are contexts that can allow SGM youth the choice to initiate, maintain and regulate behavior leading to increased feelings of autonomy. Therefore, we hypothesize that GSAs provide autonomy support that encourages individuals to affirm their self-identity. As we are aware of the disparities among SGM youth, we will further explore whether the composition of GSAs impact youth experiences

of autonomy. GSAs may also help individuals establish a sense of mutual respect and connectedness with others and provide increased feelings of agency. If this is correct, we also anticipate that SGM youth attending GSAs will experience increased feelings of relatedness and competence. We predict that an increased sense of self-determination will lead to better quality relationships in school. The composition of GSAs may also influence the relationships SGM youth develop with peers attending these clubs and the teacher-leaders of the clubs. We anticipate that students attending GSAs will report less bullying and victimization. As a result of shared experiences in the student-led clubs and increased self-determination, we anticipate that this support system will benefit and impact students' relationships at home.

Methodology:

The proposed project will employ a mixed method research design. This method collects, analyzes, and mixes both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions. The different kinds of data increase the credibility and allow for cross-checking which adds depth and breadth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011). This research will use an explanatory sequential design in which data will be collected in two phases. First, we will collect the quantitative data using surveys and then conduct focus group and individual interviews. The rationale for using this approach is that the results of the quantitative data will provide a general picture and the qualitative data is needed to refine, extend and further explain and answer the research questions (Creswell, 2015).

Quantitative Data: The following three surveys will be administered to SGM youth attending GSAs and SGM youth in schools with no GSAs: 1.) SDT Basic Need Satisfaction Scale (La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000) will be used to measure the degree to which the person experiences a satisfaction with each of the three needs (i.e. autonomy, relatedness, and competence). 2.) An Interpersonal Domain Scale (La Guardia et al., 2000) will be administered to explore youths' relationships in school (i.e. with peers and teachers) and at home (i.e. caregivers). 3.) Perception of Teasing Scale (POTS) – a 22 item scale assessing the frequency and effects of teasing and bullying will be administered. Additionally, one questionnaire collecting demographic information with open-ended questions to assess the inclusiveness and diversification of SGM youth and ethnic-minorities of GSAs will be administered only to youth participants attending GSAs. The survey method provides us with objective data and allows us to build on our knowledge and expand on constructs using subjective qualitative data (i.e. interviews and focus groups).

Qualitative Data: Once we collected all quantitative data, we will follow up with an in-depth qualitative exploration specifically on experiences of SGM youth attending GSAs. Individual and focus group interviews will be used to collect detailed data on SGM youths' sense of empowerment and self-identity. Focus groups: We will begin by conducting 60-minute focus groups (at each GSA site) with five to seven youth who attend GSAs on a regular basis. Focus groups allow students to discuss and co-create meaning with opportunities to elaborate and extend on ideas suggested by others in the group (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Sensitive issues may arise from the discussions and all voluntary participants will be made aware of the confidentiality nature of focus group discussions. Students will be free to withdraw from discussions at any point in time, without any explanation. If the researcher notices that a participant is distressed with the topic being discussed, the researcher will immediately terminate the discussion. Individual Interviews: We will conduct interviews with a voluntary sub-sample of SGM youth participants who attend GSAs and aim to also interview youth participants who attend schools with no GSAs. Semi-structured face to face interviews will be conducted in a public location mutually agreed

upon by the participant and the researcher. Research on SGM diversity, inclusion and exclusion have used interviews with good effect, reforming the process of interviewing and the analysis/interpretation, to recognize the particularities of SGM identities and the nature of their experiences (Fine & Weis, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).

Sample:

This research study will recruit junior and/or senior high schools in the EPSB district with existing GSAs and with no GSAs. We will begin to proceed by attaining ethical approval from the University of Alberta to conduct research with humans. Due to the inherent sensitivities and the population being studied, a strict protocol for conducting research with SGM youth and addressing ethical concerns will be considered and followed. Once ethical approval has been granted, we will contact the EPSB for permission to conduct research in their schools. Our research collaborator, Lauren Alston who has been working with GSAs in Edmonton district schools will provide us with information on schools presently running GSAs. We have several collaborating teachers who are already facilitating GSAs in EPSB schools and who will be our liaison for recruiting GSAs and student participants. We will aim to recruit four junior and/or senior high schools in the Edmonton district with existing GSAs and four junior and/or senior high schools with no existing GSAs (N=8 schools) with a total of approximately N= 100 youth participants. Consent will be attained from all participants. We will begin by explaining the project to youth members in order to obtain their approval and for us to proceed and provide information letters to parents for consent.

Data analysis and interpretation:

Surveys: Quantitative data from surveys will be analyzed using SPSS. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and covariance (ANCOVAs) will be used to interpret any significant differences existing between groups (i.e. youth in schools with GSAs versus youth in schools with no GSAs) on constructs of self-determination and bullying. We will use simple regression analyses to understand the associations between constructs of self-determination (i.e. relatedness, competence, and autonomy) and quality of relationships at school and home. Descriptive statistics will also be conducted to analyze demographic information data gathered from questionnaires to examine the inclusivity and diversification of GSAs.

Focus groups: Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Although focus groups will cover a range of topics we will focus on the discussions surrounding affirming one's identity, empowerment, and self-determination. Our premise is that the subjective experiences of empowerment, identity affirmation and self-determination are important starting points to understand the experiences of youth members and the role of GSAs. We will employ an interpretive phenomenological perspective to position the perspectives and voices of youth as authorities on constructs of interests (i.e. affirming identity, empowerment, and self-determination) based on their daily experiences. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) allows for a close examination of experiences and meaning-making of activities shared among a group of individuals (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Data will be coded and analyzed for patterns. Those patterns of codes will be the emerging themes and recurring meanings (i.e. ideas, thoughts, and feelings) extracted from the texts.

Individual interviews: Interviews will be audiotaped, transcribed and exported to NVivo, a software program designed to manage large quantities of qualitative data. A constant-comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) will be used to analyze the data. The text will be coded into meaningful 'chunks of data' that will be contrasted and compared to develop appropriate categories. We will use an iterative process to select emerging themes and relationships between categories to explore rich insights and findings grounded in the data.

Project Timeline for Major Tasks	2018	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Research ethics applications							Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow			
Consult w GSA coordinator										Grey	Grey		
Recruit schools										Green	Green	Green	
Administer consent forms											Blue	Blue	Blue
Recruit MA students as RAs							Red	Red	Red				
Training for RA – MA students										Orange	Orange		
	2019	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Administering surveys		Blue	Blue	Blue									
Quantitative data entry & analysis			Orange	Orange	Orange								
Focus groups & interviews				Red	Red	Red							
Interview/focus gr transcriptions							Green	Green	Green	Green			
Mixed data analysis											Blue	Blue	Blue
ATA convention; GSA Roundtable			Brown	Brown									
GSA conference												Light Green	
	2020	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Manuscript writing		Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple								
Submission peer-reviewed journals					Purple	Purple	Purple						
ATA convention; GSA Roundtable			Brown	Brown	Brown								
International conferences					Cyan	Cyan	Cyan						
Submit final report to SSHRC							Yellow						

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