# OUT OF THE CLOSET AND ONTO THE STREET: YOUNG, GAY AND

# HOMELESS IN VANCOUVER

by

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**Literature Review**

This literature review examines research on the representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth within the media and academia, as well as research on the group's preponderance among young people within homeless populations. It also explores tensions involved in portraying the experiences of people who have struggled with not having a home in the media, in addition to research on what it means to be homeless, part of the youth demographic, and belonging under the LGBTQ umbrella. For the reason my online thesis project represents LGBTQ youth homelessness, investigation into these areas is necessary to obtain knowledge about common narratives and stereotypes employed by the media when representing individuals in this group.

As a young, white, queer-identified, middle class woman who has never experienced poverty, reporting on this topic poses certain challenges because of potential power differentials and personal bias. Thus, one of the main purposes of this literature review has been to interrogate the domains listed above in order to ensure an ethical framework is incorporated into the project.

To gauge the problem of LGBTQ youth homelessness, I selected both qualitative and quantitative studies of street youth in British Columbia, examining how the homelessness of sexual minority young people was calculated in addition to the methodologies used to gain information on their lives. Inquiry into this domain is limited, thus I focused my attention on Suzanne de Castell's report called *No Place Like Home: Final Research Report on the Pridehouse Project* and on three studies completed by the

McCreary Centre Society, two of which were analyzed in the 2007 *Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study* prepared by the Vancouver Youth Funders Committee. From April to August 2002, de Castell and her research team carried out individual and group interviews with service providers and street-involved LGBTQ youth to determine housing and support needs. The McCreary Centre Society carried out surveys in 2001, 2002, and 2006, profiling marginalized and street-involved youth in British Columbia.

**1.1 Who are youth?**

Understanding how and why various groups classify youth categories differently provides a useful framework for choosing an appropriate age range for the subjects of my project. In the *Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study*, young people were divided into two subgroups from the ages of 16- to 18-years-old and from the ages of 19- to 24-years-old. They were split in this way because 19-years-old is the age of majority in British Columbia and the authors believed the subgroups inevitably face different challenges as a result (Kraus et al.1). The McCreary Centre Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to the health of young people in British Columbia, has also studied those up to 24-years-old (Kraus et al.10; Murphy et al. *Between* 66). The McCreary Centre Society's classification is relevant as data from its reports on youth homelessness was included in the *Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study* and it is a provincial leader on the health research of young people. As for de Castell, her research team's definition of youth included those from 12- to 29-years-old, explaining that 12-year-olds do end up living on the street and that many people in their twenties still face difficulty coming out and transitioning into adulthood (Ruitenberg 96). Since the above groups include young

people in their late teens and up to their mid twenties in their definitions of youth, I also included this age range in my reporting demographic when seeking out sources. Furthermore, I followed the judgment of de Castell's team and extended the potential age range to include 12- to 29-year-olds because of the team's practical knowledge gained from personal interactions with young queer people on the street.

In their book *Critical Youth Studies: A Canadian Focus,* sociologists James Côté and Anton Allahar also make the inclusion of those in their late twenties persuasive by arguing that changes in the twentieth century have transformed what it means to be a young person. While they do not mention LGBTQ youth in particular, they explain that due to an increase in mass education, the rise of a youth-orientated pop culture separate from adult pop culture and a breakdown in the youth labour market, people in their twenties resemble what people in their late teens did 50 years ago (Côté and Allahar 6-7, 25). This group now experiences a lengthier period of dependence on adult society, as well as a prolonged preparation process for becoming self-sufficient adults. From these developments the authors construct two categories for classifying youth as either emerging adults or adolescents. Emerging adults, those who are increasingly being treated as teenagers, are from 18- to 30-years-old, and adolescents are those in their teens (Côté and Allahar 6-7, 25). Côté and Aloha's analysis provided further impetus to expand my definition of youth to incorporate individuals in their late twenties.

## 1.2 Who are LGBTQ youth?

Some of the challenges of defining and doing research on LGBTQ young people are the plethora of sexual identity labels circulating and how adolescents have become less inclined to label themselves with them. A survey of more than 2,500 high school students in California carried out between 2003 to 2005 shows that more than two-thirds of non-heterosexual youth used historically typical sexual identity labels such as gay, bisexual, and lesbian. The remaining 27 per cent of students in this category said they were either "questioning" their sexual identities, identified as "queer," or employed alternative labels showing resistance, ambivalence, and fluidity towards sexual identities by calling themselves terms such as "heteroflexible," "bisexually gay," and "bicurious" (Russell, Clarke, and Clary 884, 887). Ritch Savin-Williams produces similar findings in his research on "the new gay teenager," describing a generational trend of young people with same-sex desires hesitating to adopt a fixed label explaining their sexual orientation. His studies also reveal that while many adolescents may have same-sex desires, much fewer of them are willing to identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (41,43). In many cases, who actually count as being a lesbian, gay, or bisexual adolescent is decided by researchers' criterion as opposed to how young people choose to speak about themselves (Savin-Williams 37-41). Researchers have also been criticized for referring to youth with same-sex desires as a sexual minority, because the term implies most people have exclusively heterosexual attractions and homosexual practices are culturally taboo (Savin-Williams 8; O'Driscoll 32). Consequently, this research shows the importance of paying attention to how young people describe their identities to ensure accurate and truthful reporting that does not push subjects into preconceived categories. Nonetheless, I

used identifiers falling under the LGBTQ umbrella generally as well as the phrase sexual minority when speaking about young people with same-sex desires. My intention was to make my reporting understandable to an audience who may not be adept in debates surrounding identity politics. However, the ways in which individual interview subjects chose to identify themselves were respected and reported in the project's journalistic components.

The LGBTQ umbrella is also not representative of all First Nations people, many of whom will identify themselves as Two-Spirited when they who do not comply with Western heteronormative understandings of sexuality or gender. In 1990, the name was coined at the third Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference held in Winnipeg as a way to purposefully distance the group from non-Aboriginal gays and lesbians (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 2-3). Two-Spirited is meant to place importance on spirituality and tradition rather than on sexuality, referring to individuals who embody the presence of both a male and female spirit (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 3; Deschamps 10). Before Europeans colonized North America, First Nations communities viewed Two-Spirited individuals as respected visionaries and healers who could fulfill important societal roles (Deschamps 10). The term was meant to reclaim the positive identities of First Nations persons who fall outside Western gender binaries and replace the derogatory term "berdache." "Berdache" was originally used by Europeans refer to Aboriginal people whose behaviour was interpreted as homosexual and showing gender variances (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 2-4). While Two-Spirited is meant as an intertribal term to explain the traditions and social classifications of gender for numerous Aboriginal

communities, some reject its use believing it ignores differences across cultures (Epple 268). Some also reject the term for other reasons, such as believing it actually reinforces Western gender binaries, it doesn't extend to those on reservations, and it promotes a non-Native romanticized view of accepting gender variance (O'Brien 64). Being aware of both the criticisms against and widespread use of the concept Two-Spirited, I used the term when an interview subject referred to himself and others in this way.

Particularly in the realm of queer youth studies, the term "queer" has been used as an identity marker for young people who have same-sex desires and transgress traditional gender roles. In the book "Queer Youth Cultures," Susan Driver shares her definition of queer youth as "those who name themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersexual, queer and/or questioning without being confined to a narrow set of terms" (Driver 2). In Suzanne de Castell's 2002 research on street-involved and homeless youth in Vancouver, she employs a similar category she calls "queer and questioning" as her subject group. She defines them as young people who have taken a gender identity other than heterosexual, as well as those who are uncertain about their gender and sexuality (de Castell and Jenson, *Final* 3). These definitions employ "queer" as an umbrella term for young people who experience same-sex desires and break gender norms, including those who choose to name themselves according to historically and non-historically typical identity categories or who resist labeling themselves altogether.

Understanding how the term "queer" is used as well as criticism against it is important because of the amount of literature coming from queer youth studies analyzing

the demographic. The notion of "queer" sprang up from the emergence of queer theory in the early nineties as an approach to recognizing sexual identity categories as created through historical and cultural processes. It was invoked as a challenge to the discourses assigning individuals supposedly stable sexual identities such as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, and bisexual, purporting that people do not fall into these categories naturally (Watson 67, 70, 74). On the other hand, the use of "queer" to embrace fluidity of identity has been criticized for allegedly appropriating its namesake from the word's antithetical street use as a synonym for gay or lesbian, as well as for being an elitist, disengaged academic concept (O'Driscoll 34; Watson 75). Queer theory has also been critiqued for territorializing lesbian and gay studies by attempting to subsume its works and identity markers under its domain, and as a result denying the fluidity it claims to embody. Through also focusing on the essentialism involved in how other identity labels are constructed, it takes away the possibility of analyzing the systems that construct what makes someone "queer" (O'Driscoll 32). Furthermore, Driver also acknowledges how whiteness remains the invisible centre of heteronormative ideologies, which has also seeped into how queer youth studies analyzes its subjects. When speaking about youth, language often focuses on a constricted selection of social conditions and individual experiences of whiteness, subsequently disregarding the lives queer youth of colour (Driver 6). These arguments demonstrate the significance of understanding the meaning and scope of specific identifying terms used by researchers and academics, as well as paying attention to how cultural background may influence one's relationship to sexual identity. In my reporting, such concerns influenced how I interacted with interview

subjects in order to fulfill my aim of portraying the nuance and uniqueness of each person's experience.

**1.3 Who are homeless or at-risk youth?**

Reports on homelessness in British Columbia describe the varying degrees of what it means to belong to the group. The definition in Vancouver's Homeless Action Plan 2005 includes both people in "absolute" homelessness as well as people "at-risk" of becoming homeless. People in "absolute" homelessness consist of those who live on the street, sleep in parks, couch surf, stay with friends or family or stay in shelters and transition homes. People "at-risk" of becoming homeless are those who live in places that are not secure, affordable or safe. This second group also includes people who could potentially lose housing for non economic reasons, such as women trying to escape abuse or people with disabilities who could lose the services necessary to maintain their homes (City of Vancouver 2). Suzanne de Castell's research team used a similar definition of homelessness, referring to youth without any housing or shelter and those who lived in unstable or temporary housing arrangements (Ruitenberg 94). The McCreary Centre Society studies used broad definitions of homelessness to select its survey participants, stating young people did not have to literally be homeless or living on the street, but they had to be significantly involved in street life in some way (Murphy et al., *No Place* 8-9; Smith et al., *Against* 7-8). For the scope of my project, I searched for subjects who fell under the definitions of homelessness found in Vancouver's Homeless Action Plan 2005. These definitions take into account the judgments of de Castell's team as well as the McCreary Centre Society, and are also the authoritative terms used in the city where I

focused the majority of my research.

Provincial reports suggest sexual minority youth are overrepresented among young people in homeless populations. The 2007 *Vancouver Youth Funders Options Study* consulted two surveys done by the McCreary Centre Society titled *No Place to Call Home: A Profile of Street Youth in British Columbia* and *Between the Cracks: Homeless Youth in Vancouver* to obtain specific data on how many sexual minority young people were either homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless in the city. In 2001 the McCreary Centre Society surveyed 145 homeless and street-involved youth in Vancouver from 12- to 19-years-old, and then added 180 interviews with older youth from 19- to 24-years-old. The research group found 33 per cent of those 19-years-old and younger who were homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless in Vancouver identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning. For 19- to 24-year-olds, 24 per cent identified in the same way. Importantly, the authors of the McCreary Centre Society studies asked for help from service agencies in order to get in contact with youth who were involved in street life or believed to be "at-risk" for not making a successful transition into adulthood. As a result, the surveys were not done at random and the authors warn that the most vulnerable youth might not be represented in the numbers because they were likely not accessing outreach services (Murphy et al., *Between* 66; Kraus et al. 8-9). A 2006 study carried out by the McCreary Centre Society called *Against the Odds: A profile of marginalized and street-involved youth in BC* found that 25 per cent of the 762 participants ages 12 to 18 identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Smith et al., *Against* 15). A follow-up report titled *Moving Upstream: Aboriginal Marginalized and Street-Involved Youth in B.C.* showed

that 34 per cent of the 410 Aboriginal homeless youth from the survey were gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning their sexuality (Saewyc et al. 18). On the other hand, the 2008 *Adolescent Health Surve*y also carried out by the McCreary Centre Society showed that less than three per cent of British Columbian youth in grades seven to 12 identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual (Smith et al., *Picture* 12).

De Castell's research team referenced studies to estimate that the percentage of homeless youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) as being from between 5 to 20 per cent, which is higher than the percentage of LGBT youth in the general population (de Castell and Jenson, *Final* 10; Ruitenberg 94). The most relevant survey cited was carried out by the McCreary Centre Society in 1993 to 1994 sampling 110 street youth in Vancouver. Of the 56 males surveyed, 67 per cent identified as heterosexual, 17 per cent identified as either bisexual or homosexual while the sexual orientation of 16 per cent was unknown. Of the 54 females surveyed, 40 per cent identified as heterosexual, 27 per cent identified as bisexual or homosexual while the sexual orientation of 33 per cent was unknown. From these numbers the author infers that sexual minority youth could make up as much as 32 per cent and 50 per cent of the young homeless population for males and females respectively because of the unknown data. Noting that even if those who did not disclose their sexual orientation did identify as heterosexual, contrasted with data on how 93 per cent of males and 92 per cent of females in British Columbia high schools identified as heterosexual, those in the homeless sample who identified as LGBT would still be considerably higher (Ruitenberg 113-114). In addition, as these numbers do not include those who explicitly identified as

transgender, it is unclear whether this population was incorporated into the statistics. De Castell's team also concluded that Aboriginal or "of colour" transgendered youth are the most overlooked group for support services (de Castell and Jenson, *Final* 80; Ruitenberg 94). These statistics provided motivation to discover individual stories that could elucidate why sexual minority youth appear to comprise a disproportionate percentage of the young homeless population in the province, including the experiences of young Aboriginals. On the contrary, the analysis of de Castell's research team raised some doubts about accuracy. The McCreary Centre Society studies' data gives credence to de Castell's team's estimations concerning the overrepresentation of queer youth who are street-involved; however, its approach appeared to uncritically accept and interpret statistics to support its agenda. This doesn't invalidate the findings of the project, although it raised my awareness of the need to be judicious when interviewing activists or community workers who are trying to promote the special interests of their work.

De Castell's findings also show how it is difficult to contact young queer homeless women and girls because they are not necessarily visible within the homeless youth population. As a result, studies about LGBTQ youth often overlook their experiences. One of the reasons why queer female youth are less visible is because homeless young girls often regard survival sex work as way to find money and shelter. Because men are more likely to buy sex and pimps will often control girls' lives, identifying as anything other than heterosexual could put themselves in potentially dangerous situations (de Castell and Jenson, *Final* 38). When seeking sources through speaking to youth workers and at youth groups, only male respondents were willing to

share their stories with me during the course of this thesis project. As a result, one of the limitations of my reporting is that it is not representative of all young person's experiences of homelessness.

**1.4 LGBTQ youth and the "victim" myth**

Within the news media, the construction of the "victim" is one of several myths that fulfill a social role. In *Daily News, Eternal Stories,* Jack Lule unpacks how archetypal stories about the "victim" are employed in particular to reconcile people with devastating and apparently random events by portraying them as innocents struck by an unfortunate fate (Lule 54). In cases of death, victims are often transformed into heroes by the press through depicting their demise as a sacrifice and their life struggle as indicators of their strength (Lule 48, 54). While myths serve a society by creating a sense of order, some scholars believe they also operate to carry out and uphold ideology and social order (Lule 191). Exploring how queer youth studies' theorists analyze the use of the "victim" myth to represent LGBTQ youth will highlight how it can naturalize discrimination against them.

One of the largest critiques of the representation of LGBTQ youth in the media is how their lives are frequently described in terms of their victim status, which subsequently reinforces their marginalized position in society. According to Susan Talburt, the release of the 1989 U.S. State Department of Health and Human Services' *Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide* stating that gay and lesbian teens commit 30 per cent of teen suicides sent this trend into motion. Talburt explains:

"Queer youth suicide became a refrain, such that article after article, essay after essay, and report after report portrayed youth as at risk through statistics on queer youth suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, homelessness dropping out, depression, verbal and physical assaults, and so on" (28).

Talburt argues that one of the reasons for the popular portrayal of sexual minority youth suffering is because this group resides in two denigrated positions in regards to the heterosexual/homosexual and adult/youth binary categories. While the ideological underpinning of our society privileges heterosexual adults, those who fall under the label of homosexual or youth are perceived as abnormal. As a result, interpreting queer young people is impossible unless it is done in a pathologizing framework (Talburt 17). Attempts to counteract such depictions have created a new narrative binary that either portrays queer youth in terms of danger and risk or as being both well-adjusted and openly proud about their sexuality (Talburt 18). Talburt suggests that queer adults have contributed to these opposing narratives through trying to create a collective experience intended to aid political progress, although it has brought an unfortunate consequence of making young people comprehensible in restrictively defined ways (Talburt 18, 26). For instance, adults have created an image of "normal abnormality" through describing pain as a naturalized part of queer adolescence stemming from societal stigmatization without questioning why same-sex attraction is denigrated in the first place (Talburt 26, 28).

Other academics also criticize this representation of LGBTQ youth for reinforcing a one-dimensional perspective on their lives. Susan Driver reiterates Talburt's arguments saying that although it's important to report on harsh truths, consistently representing the suffering of LGBTQ youth does so at the expense of showing the multifaceted dynamics

of who they are. By focusing on their "wounded status" it's almost inconceivable to hear

other voices offering alternative viewpoints, and instead portrays LGBTQ youth

generally as a group that needs to be taken care of by others (Driver 4).

While some LGBTQ youth do view themselves as victims, others fail to identify

with depictions of persecution and suffering. For instance, when educator Eric Rofes

taught a course on LGBT issues in schools at the University of California, Berkeley, a

gay male student was resistant to his course content. After showing a video to a class

reporting that lesbian and gay youth were three times more likely to commit suicide, this

particular student said he was insulted by the statistic and questioned its accuracy. He felt

focusing on the topic of suicidal gay youth was homophobic (Rofes 46). In another case a

student complained that Rofes's syllabus didn't represent young queer people as full

human beings who also experience joy in their lives (Rofes 47). On the other hand, a

lesbian student in one of his classes identified with the death of Matthew Shepard, a gay

teen who was tied to a fence and murdered after accepting a ride home from his eventual

assailants. She declared, "What he did, I have done. What he did all queer youth have

done. He was not stupid. He was not naïve. He was not unusual. We are all Matthew

Shepard" (Rofes 43). Rofes was consequently drawn to interrogate what he was teaching

and what other teaching resources were available. He discovered the majority of content

portrayed the group as martyrs, targets and victims, suggesting that such narratives are

central to how queer students view themselves and are asked to view themselves (Rofes

42).

The popularity of the It Gets Better campaign, an online video project targeted towards

helping LGBTQ young people who are contemplating suicide, illustrates the wide

acceptance of and some problems with narratives portraying youth as victims. After 15-

year-old Billy Lucas killed himself after an increase of news coverage on gay teen

suicides last year, sex advice columnist Dan Savage urged his readers to make videos to

tell kids being bullied for their sexuality that their lives would improve as they got older

(Savage). He wrote in his column:

> I wish I could have talked to this kid for five minutes. I wish I could have told
> Billy that *it gets better*. I wish I could have told him that, however bad things
> were, however isolated and alone he was, *it gets better*.

Celebrities and popular politicians including Anne Hathaway, Jenny McCarthy, and

Barack Obama created videos for the online campaign that repeated similar messages and

told kids how they could find support. Gay-identified adults shared their stories of

bullying and childhood isolation, informing young people that because they had made it

through, today's youth could as well (*It Gets Better*). The "victim" myth came into play,

elevating gay adults as heroic role models showing how it was possible to one day enjoy

a happy life. People criticized the project for failing to address the structural causes of

gay teen suicide such as bullying and institutionalized homophobia (Eichler; Doyle).

Through being told to hold on and make it through their post-secondary education,

bullying was presented as an inevitable part of LGBTQ youth's upbringing. LGBTQ

youth can be in a vulnerable population due to homophobia. In order to report on my

thesis topic accurately and ethically, these perspectives show it's vital to recognize how

representing their lives solely in terms of vulnerability offers an unbalanced perspective.

Consequently, it was necessary to put the stories I shared in my journalistic narratives

into the context of the broader population and explore other dynamics of my subject group's realities.

**1.5 Representation of the homeless**

Reporting on homelessness holds challenges because of media constructions and societal perceptions of people in this group. The terms "the homeless" and "homelessness" recently emerged in news discourse in the 1980s, intended to describe a new class of poor people who had become victims of the economic downturn. In a change from how reporters had described those without homes in the 1970s as bums, drifter, and vagrants, these people did not choose life on the street (Pascale 252-253). However, the terms eventually evolved to characterize "the homeless" as people who chose to live without a home, often for reasons of substance abuse and mental illness (Pascale 255). In effect, such characterizations have operated to prevent discussions about other causes of homelessness, and how the trauma of homelessness can cause mental illness or substance abuse (Pascale 262). Instead of describing alienation, these discursive practices actually generate the conditions of alienation (Pascale 263). Despite negative and incorrect opinions entwined in the connotation of "the homeless" and "homelessness," I employed both terms in my reporting. Being aware of negative associations, I strove to put the experiences of my interview subjects into a broader social context in order to minimize misperceptions that could portray them as societal outsiders.

Certain academics argue news outlets report on the homeless in a way that distances the group from the rest of society. In the paper, *Covering the Homeless: The*

*Joyce Brown Story,* Richard Campbell and Jimmie Reeves analyzed how ABC, NBC, and CBS presented the story of Joyce Brown, a woman who lived on the streets of New York city and was ordered by the city to enter a psychiatric institution in the late 1980s. On ABC and NBC, Campbell and Reeves argue that the broadcasters employed a discourse of hierarchy in representing Brown by using a vertical narrative to frame the piece. This started with an anchor and then a reporter introducing the story, followed by the inclusion of voices from unidentified homeless people that depicted them as nonsensical and mentally troubled (Campbell and Reeves 33). Brown did not appear in either news package other than through sketch drawings (Campbell and Reeves 31). All the broadcast news stations had their anchors and reporters use "them" to refer to the homeless and "us" to speak about the rest of society, suggesting the perception that homeless people fall outside the realm of what it means to be a human in our society (Campbell and Reeves 27). CBS framed its story differently by using Brown as a main character, portraying her as a heroine not belonging to the homeless population and fighting against a city wrongfully trying lock her away in a mental institution (Campbell and Reeves 35). Consequently, she rose on the vertical hierarchy of discourse, again leaving the homeless at the bottom, voiceless, and poorly represented (Campbell and Reeves 39). These arguments reveal the importance of focusing on the voices of my interview subjects who have struggled without a place to live in order to discover accuracy and insight into the realities of their experiences. Depicting LGTBQ youth as full human beings depends on moving away from news practices that deny homeless persons their own personal stories.

**1.6 Reporting on vulnerable persons**

Many people in my subject group do not want to speak about the time they've spent without a place to live, using sex to obtain a roof over their head, or becoming addicted to hard drugs. However, many of these experiences are strongly tied to what happened when they were homeless and raises the question of whether it's ethical to conceal a source's identity. The ethical codes of journalism hold reporters responsible for telling the truth, and naming a source is considered an important factor in accuracy and accountability. Using a source's full name reduces the possibly of spreading false information because it gives readers more power to verify what has been reported (Boeyink 234-235). Anonymous sources can do harm and undermine justice by spreading false or an unfair balance of unverifiable information (Boeyink 235). However, the journalistic principles of truth-telling, doing no harm, and seeking justice can also be undermined if there is no alternative to full attribution. Disclosing someone's full identity could damage their reputation and could force victim's of abuse to undergo stigma (Boeyink 236). Simpson and Coté believe rape victims should not be named unless the person is willing to come forward and identify herself or himself, as doing so could interfere with her or his recovery (Simpson and Coté 216). The resulting stigma inflicted on someone who has experienced sexual assault might also deter other survivors from coming forward (Simpson and Coté 210). Many people may not come forward to tell their stories unless they are anonymous, which would subsequently impede the dissemination of critical perspectives. Justice for marginalized groups in society could also fail to be upheld, as information about unjust actions against them could remain untold (Boeyink 236).

To ensure the use of anonymous sources isn't abused, David Boeyink outlined seven guidelines for reporters and editors to follow when considering using an anonymous source. First, an editor should authorize the use of an anonymous source and know his or her identity. This will minimize the risk of inaccuracy and harm by providing a second person as a check. The story gained by using an anonymous source must be important enough to justify concealing someone's identity. Why a particular story is deemed important must be explained by whoever wants to use an anonymous source and is up for debate, but the story must offer more than casual interest to its audience. A reporter should identity the source as fully as possible in other ways and explain reasons for keeping anonymity, only use an anonymous source as a last resort, and if doing so, should use other sources to verify what an anonymous source has told you. In addition, a journalist must balance to potential harms and benefits of using an anonymous source and have just intentions for concealing identity (Boeyink 236-243). Thus, following Boeyink's guidelines, I strove to identify as many sources as I could and employed his recommendations for verifying information. I did not report a source's full name when I believed allowing anonymity was the only way to include a source's life experiences and in situations where sources felt disclosing their full identity would damage their reputation and cause them further harm.

**1.7 Conclusion**

Reporting on LGBTQ youth homelessness has required an examination of ethical questions as well as research regarding how the media and academics have represented

young people belonging to sexual minorities. One of my biggest concerns throughout this process was sharing the experiences of people who had been homeless without reducing their stories to one-dimensional narratives. As a result, I placed my interview subjects' stories into a larger social context through reporting on relevant statistics and also including the voices of outreach workers and researchers. From recognizing the complexity of sexual and gender identity labels and how young people have chosen or chosen not to use them, I was pushed to pay close attention to the nuance in my sources' lives. My aim was also to move beyond simple interpretations that perceived their situations as caused solely by discrimination against same-sex attraction and consider cultural, economic, and personal background. Furthermore, research focusing on media representations of homelessness illustrated how people without a home have commonly been depicted as voiceless outsiders. This provided a strong impetus to spend several hours with and repeatedly meet the main sources of my journalistic articles in order to better understand and accurately portray their experiences. The issue of protecting privacy while balancing my responsibility as a journalist to reveal my sources was always at the forefront of my mind. In the end I agreed to change the name of one of my main interview subjects and revealed the full names of the remaining three with their consent. The young man whose name I changed would not have shared his story otherwise because of personal reasons I promised I would not disclose. I believe his story was important enough to justify using him as anonymous source due its insight into how young men are sexually exploited. To ensure he was being honest I met him many times and with people he knew who could verify his story. Finally, the most important lesson I've learned from working on my project on LGBTQ youth homelessness has been the

necessity of gaining the trust of interview subjects so they would allow me into their

lives. This was crucial for eventually illustrating the complexity of their individual

experiences and to avoid singularly depicting them as helpless victims.

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