

SAFE SCHOOLS FOR (ALMOST) EVERYONE: THE CHRISTIAN  
RIGHT'S RESISTANCE TO ONTARIO'S LGBT INCLUSIVE  
'ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT'

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY  
YORK UNIVERSITY  
TORONTO, ONTARIO

JULY, 2013

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## ABSTRACT

The Christian Right is an important and influential voice in contemporary political discourses and popular culture within Canadian society. This research seeks to analyze the discourses and framing strategies utilized in arguments by the following Christian Right organizations in Ontario: The Institute for Canadian Values, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and the Family Coalition Party. Each of these groups opposes the passage of *Bill 13: Accepting Schools Act*. The aim of the Bill was to introduce LGBT inclusive anti-bullying policies into all Ontario classrooms. A comprehensive content analysis of standing committee transcripts, official documents, multimedia records of interviews, transcripts or public speaking events, and websites/articles produced by these Christian Right organizations in Ontario are analyzed to uncover recurring themes, patterns and objectives of current discourses surrounding this issue. This research provides insights into the rhetorical strategies being utilized by these Christian Right organizations in Ontario as they fight the *Accepting Schools Act*.

## DEDICATIONS

*For my family, friends, and all those who have been subjected to bullying.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for all those who have helped me in this undertaking to write and complete a thesis. Thank you especially to my supervisor Karen, and second reader Carmela who agreed to take me on as a thesis student in my second year of study, and at a time when I felt like it was too late for me to find a committee that would be a fit for my research interests. I must also thank my family and friends whose constant support throughout this challenging time was much appreciated. I however owe my deepest thanks to my partner, Travis, for helping keep me sane throughout this entire endeavor and talking me down when the work and deadlines became too overwhelming. Without his encouragement I probably would not have completed this thesis at all.

Lastly, I would like to thank the entire Sociology faculty, especially those with whom I had the pleasure of taking courses with. Each of you has helped shape and cultivate my interests in this project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	5
Theoretical Considerations.....	19
Method.....	25
<i>Manifest Coding and Analysis</i> .....	31
Figure 1.1 ICV Data Set.....	35
Figure 1.2 FCP Data Set .....	38
Figure 1.3 EFC Data Set .....	41
Figure 1.4 The Occurrence of Homosexual in Discourse .....	44
Figure 1.5 The Occurrence of Research Findings in Discourse.....	46
Figure 1.6 The Occurrence of Force in Discourse.....	31
Figure 1.7 All Data Sets .....	49
 <i>Latent Coding and Analysis</i> .....	 55
Institute for Canadian Values.....	57
Family Coalition Party.....	85
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.....	115
 <i>Discussion</i> .....	 131
The ICV, FCP, and EFC: Exceptionally “Special” LGBT Students.....	132
Connections to Theory and Literature: Specialness of LGBT Children.....	141
The ICV, FCP, and EFC: Rights and Authority of Parents and Religion.....	138
Connections to Theory and Literature: Religious and Parental Rights and Authority....	153
 Conclusion.....	 157
 Bibliography.....	 160

## INTRODUCTION

How is it that many of us come to first learn about human sexuality? In what circumstances do we come to the realization in our youth of our own sexual desires, and of ourselves as sexual beings? What does this have to do with anti-bullying policy? Many may argue that the foundational and fundamental venue for acquiring sexual knowledge in youth comes from the family. While it is true that familial values, practices, cultural backgrounds and religious convictions help shape and frame what an individual comes to learn about sexuality, in Canada, a vast amount of learned knowledge about sex and sexuality come from state-funded sex education programs in schools. The content of this education has historically been framed and disseminated through a heteronormative Judeo-Christian lens of sexual morality and values. As such, children in Ontario elementary school curriculums have not been exposed to educational materials discussing the diverse forms and expressions of sexuality and desire.

LGBT inclusive sex-education and anti-bullying policies arguably share one very common and important goal: teaching acceptance, tolerance, and respect for diverse forms of sexuality and gender identity. The influence of sex education then, can be argued to reach far beyond the course curriculum to include policies that promote inclusive environments within the institution. Discussions of anti-bullying policies may be deemed “sex education talk” given the fact that LGBT populations are demarcated specifically on the basis of sexual and gendered differences from established Christian norms of heterosexuality. Such discussions of sexual diversity have traditionally been non-existent, especially for students in the Catholic school system.

In the past few years, there has been a blanket of mainstream media coverage on anti-gay bullying in schools and the numerous resulting suicides across North America. As a possible response, in November of 2011 the Liberal Government of Ontario, led by Premier Dalton McGuinty, introduced Bill 13 (*The Accepting Schools Act*). This Bill was a proposed amendment to the *Education Act of Ontario*, which ultimately sought the inclusion of LGBT anti-bullying policies and provisions across all Ontario funded school boards. Controversially, for some, this also included the Catholic publically-funded system. Many right-wing Christian organizations therefore opposed this amendment, claiming it was a violation of religious liberties, an attack on the family, and toxic for children, and have thus fought against its passage into law.

Over a decade ago, a similar Bill was introduced in the provincial legislature. The government of Ontario passed *The Safe Schools Act* in 2000. This Bill was entitled “An Act to Increase Respect and Responsibility, to Set Standards for Safe Learning and Safe Teaching in Schools and to amend the Teaching Profession Act” (Bill 81). According to Part XIII, section 301, subsection 1 of the Bill, the Minister of Education is permitted to establish a code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in schools. Subsection 2.3 outlines one of the purposes of this code of conduct “to maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility,” and subsection 2.5 stating its purpose as being “to promote the safety of people in the schools”. In doing so, the Bill sought to establish and promote safer environments for all persons in schools. The Bill then continues to outline the guidelines and procedures

for teachers and principals in dealing with suspensions and expulsions. Section 306, subsection 1.1 for example explains, “uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm” as a reason for mandatory suspensions. These policies ensure that serious offenses and threats on school grounds may be dealt with efficiently.

This Bill lacks specific descriptions of what kinds of activities or behaviours are considered to be offensive, aside from general assault and threats. It also foregoes any explicit inclusion of anti-bullying measures or protections for vulnerable minority populations. The *Accepting Schools Act* (Bill 13) is a welcome and much needed update to legislative policies involving the safety of all students in schools. In this Bill, the preamble states that the People of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

believe that students need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitude and values to engage the world and others critically, which means developing a critical consciousness that allows them to take action on making their schools and communities more equitable and inclusive for all people, including LGBTTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, intersex, queer and questioning) people.

The Bill features an amendment to subsection 1(1) of the Education Act by including and defining bullying and its negative physical, psychological, emotional and social impacts. Section 303.1 of the amendment is also notable, as it requires all school boards, including Catholic boards, to support organizations that promote safety and an inclusive and diverse learning environment—including gay-straight alliances. The amendment specifically “prohibits boards and principals from refusing the use of the

name gay-straight alliance or a similar name for certain organizations”. This was a very controversial part of the amendment for many Christian Right groups and religious advocates, however, was arguably a monumental victory for LGBT advocates in ensuring transparency and increased safe spaces for LGBT youth. While Catholic opponents of this Bill share many congruencies with other Christian Right groups in respect to moral and ideological beliefs regarding the issue, there are important distinctions that must be noted. These will be explored further throughout the research process.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the ways in which three prominent Christian Right organizations—The Institute for Canadian Values, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and the Family Coalition Party in Ontario—have presented, framed and argued against the passage of the “Accepting Schools Act” (Bill 13) through an extensive qualitative content analysis of official documents, standing committee transcripts, multimedia records of interviews, public speaking events, and news reporting.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Christian Right have been an influential force in the North American political landscape. This force is perhaps more visible in the United States, but their influence in Canadian politics and policymaking should not be dismissed. Much of the literature surrounding the discourses<sup>1</sup> of the Christian Right are framed with an American perspective, however, the analyses and findings made by researchers remain relevant, as both American and Canadian conservative Christian organizations tend to share similar cultural, moral and ideological assumptions of how the social world ought to be, albeit they do differ in their own respects and in mobilization efforts.

The work of Didi Herman has effectively explored the Christian Right in the U.S. and their influence in anti-gay discourse. Herman's (1996) research focuses on how the American Christian Right (CR) has come to make anti-gay politics central to its worldview and immediate political agenda (346). She describes two key discourses that have been traditionally utilized by Christian Right: biblical injunction and disease and seduction rhetoric. While these discourses have not faded from view, she explains that a certain subset of CR activists have begun to dismiss these older discourses, claiming they are no longer useful and are actually mobilizing support for gay rights rather than opposition. Traditional views of many in the CR may sound extremist and hateful for a less orthodox public, while a rhetoric of sin and seduction comes across with a moralism that is easily recognizable as religious, although not all religious persons are comfortable

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this research, I have defined "discourse" to refer to instances of speech by the Christian Right that highlight strategies and ways they have framed their opposition to Bill 13. I invoke Foucault's conception of discourse, noting that talk occurs within specific socio-political contexts that are important in considering the scope and intent of what is said and how it is framed and propagated in the public sphere in ways that attempt to reproduce it as verifiable and normative.

with such discourses in the public realm. As a result, Herman further explains how the CR needed to begin fighting the gay movement on neoliberal democratic grounds. To do this required the acquisition of secular discursive strategies<sup>2</sup> aimed at undermining the legitimacy of gay men and lesbians as a rights deserving group. She explains how the CR makes two connected arguments regarding gays and lesbians as undeserving of rights. One is that gays are immensely wealthy, and the other is that the gay movement is one of the most powerful in the nation, and gays and lesbians individually hold vast amounts of political power and wield it over others. The CR perceives civil rights protections as further extending and entrenching the “extraordinary privileges of this elite group” (Herman, 1997: 349). The theme of gay wealth is intimately tied to this argument that gays are powerful political actors. The CR argues that this power is evidenced throughout cultural and institutional life, pointing specifically at the schools, media and military as being particularly under threat. It is the theme of “no special rights” that follows from this logic. Herman (1996) goes on to explain that:

within this discourse, gays are already special: especially wealthy, especially powerful. Lesbians and gays, then, are far from an ‘oppressed minority’; their wealth and power vastly exceeds their numbers. Indeed, ‘normal’ people, particularly orthodox, practicing Christians, need protection from them and their ‘retribution’ (p.351).

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault (1978) describes ‘discursive strategies’ as continually reproduced discourses that seek to normalize certain subjectivities while excluding others. Strategies of normalization and exclusion may be recognized as comparing, ranking, classifying, hierarchizing, or dividing, for example. Within this research, the classification of LGBT children compared with “normal” heterosexual Christian children and families are examples of this. These organizations thusly seek to maintain and further acquire institutional powers justifying the heteronormative worldview of sexuality and binary understandings of gender in Ontario schools.

In order for this discourse to succeed with audiences it relies upon the old rhetoric pragmatists had hoped to leave behind. The CR must still rely upon their audience's traditional beliefs about the filth and sinfulness of homosexual behaviour in order to succeed. Otherwise, they may find the neoliberal picture of gay life too appealing (as gays are wealthy and powerful). These combined discourses are needed to rouse resentment and jealousy towards gays and lesbians as over-privileged populations that do not need any protections or special rights at all. And hence, this stream of logic therefore dictates that gays and lesbians are not legitimate minorities. The discourses of the Christian Right seek to portray the equitable access and treatment in law and policies among gays and lesbians as a violation of Christian values and as highly dangerous and confusing for children.

Moen (1994) similarly argues that the Christian Right in contemporary times has begun to make use of the language of liberalism and has focused its discourse on the topics of rights, equality and opportunity. Previously, the Christian Right commonly invoked moralistic language and used religious beliefs and doctrine as a catalyst for its opposition to morality based issues such as abortion, prayer in schools, gay rights and pornography. However, Moen now explains that Christian Right rhetoric has now been recast using the language of liberalism in order to maximize support. Instead of blatantly accusing homosexuality as being a sinful activity that the bible condemns, the issue has become framed in regard to the denial of religious rights, freedom, and equality. Moen gives the example of arguments against the advancement of gay rights now being framed as a "case of homosexuals seeking 'special rights' as citizens" (352).

Warner (2010) presents a Canadian perspective on the Christian Right and how they have argued for their rights within this context. He claims that social conservatives who comprise the Christian Right in Canada have strenuously rejected both the social acceptance of homosexuality as a healthy, normal sexuality, and the notion that the state should acknowledge and protect the rights of LGBT persons. He describes a “new age of rights”, marked by liberalism, and one in which the Christian Right began to shift the ways in which they framed their religious and moral objections to homosexuality and gay rights. He states the CR in Canada began to respond to these new judicial and social frames of rights and equality by characterizing gay and lesbian rights as being illegitimate and an example of “special rights”. He proceeds to argue how these special rights are understood to be merely disguising the true objectives of a “gay agenda”, namely, the positive acceptance of “homosexuality” as a natural and normal alternative to the traditional heterosexual nuclear family. As a response to this shift to the “age of rights”, Warner claims the Christian Right have “endeavoured to overlay their fundamental religious and moral objections with a more secular patina of preserving the traditional heterosexual family” (116). It is assumed by these groups that the advancement of gay rights is an immediate attack on heterosexuality, the nuclear family and traditional Judeo-Christian values.

By the mid 1980s, Warner explains that Christian Right advocates in Canada were arguing gays and lesbians as an illegitimate minority undeserving of rights that would protect their “immoral and destructive behaviour” (116). At this time, these groups also began to argue that gays and lesbians already had the same rights and protections as other

citizens according to the law, and therefore, there was no need to introduce sexual orientation protection amendments to the existing human rights law, a controversial amendment at the time. Warner (2010) proceeds to cite a 1986 submission by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada opposing this amendment to the Human Right Act in order to demonstrate the ways in which its opposition was framed by the EFC, stating:

Homosexuals have the same legal and constitutional rights, as do all Canadians. They are protected by the Charter of Rights and existing human rights codes and enjoy the same equal protection and benefit of all statutory and common law remedies... What they want is special recognition of their lifestyle and sexual preference (116).

In a later fundraising solicitation in 1993, Warner similarly quotes the EFC's claim that "homosexuals are seeking the special status of a protected group, and indeed, the public acceptance of their lifestyle, the implication for the family in all of this is frightening (117)."

While Warner's work makes mention of the controversial issue of the Human Rights Act amendments, the response by Christian Right organizations in Canada such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, aid in providing a picture of rhetorical strategies used by such groups in opposing legislation that would provide further protections and rights for LGBT populations. Within this context, the legislation was opposed because of the fear it would seek to "normalize" gay and lesbian sexual orientation. This is perceived as being a threat to the heteronormative nuclear family model and its supremacy as the only "normal". Based upon this, and the fact that the school is one of the primary areas of

socialization, it is likely that the issue of anti-bullying policies promoting protections for LGBT students in schools would receive similar backlash and framing strategies by the EFC other Christian Right groups being examined as part of this project.

Another way Warner's (2010) work demonstrates the tactics used by the Christian Right in Canada, which coincides with Moen's (1994) findings, suggest a reliance on scientific evidence or research to support the notion that LGBT persons are less deserving of rights, and as a way to justify this opposition:

The [Christian Right] understands that merely casting homosexuals as morally depraved sinners appeals only to a very limited audience of the devout. Thus they have broadened their pitch to include other, non-religious arguments—drawing on 'scientific' support... (104).

The reliance on research, or scientific evidence is another tactic Warner describes as being used in order to substantiate the claim that LGBT persons should not be afforded rights and protections they deem to be "special". This conception of "special", however, appears to be conceptualized as rights and protections being afforded to a group that does not conform to the purview of religious and moral teachings regarding sexual orientation and identity.

Gruending (2011) similarly notes that religious conservatives in Canada may not have the same critical mass as they do in the US; nevertheless, they have developed a well-established network of like-minded individuals and organizations, many relatively new and unknown amongst Canadians. Charles McVety of the Canada Family Action

Coalition (CFAC)<sup>3</sup> is an example of one of the leaders of such organizations. Gruending describes McVety as “a religious entrepreneur of the American variety”, and perhaps one of the most outspoken members of Christian Right organizations in Canada (22). By this, it is suggested that perhaps not all Evangelical based organizations have the same views or use the same tactics to achieve their ends. Gruending references a statement made by EFC leader Don Hutchinson in regard to McVety, stating “there’s a broad spectrum on the Evangelical meter. Charles may be the representative of one end, probably the extreme end of that spectrum” (24). The EFC is described as a mainstream organization created in the mid-1960s to represent Evangelical Christians in Canada and lobby on their behalf. The CFAC (and the Institute for Canadian Values) do not belong to the Evangelical Fellowship, nor does McVety’s Canada Christian College. The discrepancy between their ideological frameworks and the discursive approaches they take to achieve their goals may shed light onto why this may be.

However, Gruending proceeds to argue that the growing influence of religious conservatives in Canada may be evidenced by the increased occurrence of cross-denominational cooperation among religious conservatives in order to achieve common goals. He explains that Evangelicals and Catholics have a history of mutual mistrust and suspicion but have recently become engaged in growing collaborations in the US and Canada. There has been a “coalescing” between Evangelicals and conservative Catholics, as Gruending demonstrates, by detailing how the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada had

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<sup>3</sup> The Canada Family Action Coalition (CFAC) website cites Charles McVety as a former President, and currently sits on the Board of Directors. <http://www.familyaction.ca/who-we-are/>

joined forces with Catholic bishops in order to combat morality based issues such as same-sex marriage and euthanasia in the courtroom. Similarly, McVety and the CFAC aligned in 2006 with several Canadian Jewish organizations to lobby the Harper government on matters of asserting a pro-Israel position during the Israel-Lebanon conflict.

Within an educationally based context, Irvine (2000) discusses Christian Right discourses within the context of the sex education culture wars. She explains how the CR has organized the most vehement opposition to comprehensive sex education in the United States. Controversies over sex education have become occasions for what Irvine refers to as the “strategic deployment of sexual speech in order to agitate parental concern, recruit constituents, raise money, and ultimately consolidate power” (Irvine, 2000: 59). She explains how the CR routinely employs explicit and inflammatory sexual speech to achieve these goals. These rhetorical strategies play to historical anxieties about sex and exploit fears around danger and shame. She discusses an example of an inclusive education plan in New York City called Children of the Rainbow curriculum meant for children in the first grade. The 443-page teacher’s guide centered on folk songs and holidays of diverse cultures. The controversies over this curriculum focused on six short entries in the entire guide, discussing tolerance towards lesbian and gay families. There was no mention of sex in this curriculum, but it was enough to mobilize local Christian Right organizers and saw protesters outside of city hall. As Herman’s (1996) work has demonstrated, the opponents of the Children of the Rainbow curriculum have similarly used discourses of seduction in order to heighten anxieties around LGBT positive spaces

in schools. The reliance upon traditional sexual and moral beliefs, grounded in Christianity, are necessary for producing successful discourses vilifying gays and lesbians, and convincing parents that their children are in need of protection while making use of more secular discursive strategies. The Christian Right discussed by Irvine (2000) and Herman (1996) both rely upon Christian mores to garner public support for their cause, however, both have similarly seen their discourses shift strategies. Like the pragmatists, opponents of gay and lesbian issues in schools Irvine (2000) discusses have moved away from notions of gays and lesbians as sexual predators or individuals to be feared. Discourses have instead shifted to notions of seduction into the gay lifestyle, and protecting children from “abnormal” sexual choices, the breakdown of the nuclear family structure, and the violation of religious liberties (as teaching children about gay families challenges the heterocentric worldview and values of CR parents).

Irvine (2000) continues to note how contemporary opponents have begun utilizing sexualized discourses around sex education and other LGBT topics in schools. The CR activists have begun embellishing longstanding fears that talking about sex triggers sex. It is the misinformed accusation that sexual speech within school curriculums produces sexual behaviour, and thereby constructs sexual identities that the CR find so dangerous. These fears, of course, centre on discussions of homosexuality and the potential “seduction” of heterosexual youth into this “alternative gay lifestyle” (Irvine, 200: 63). The focus on the sexual at a young age is argued to be a kind of emotional and mental molestation of children, who should not be exposed to such materials at their age, especially not “confusing” materials discussing homosexuality. The CR has utilized these

strategies to shape and frame lessons of gay/lesbian issues as sexualized and “dangerous” ones, even when sex is not part of the lesson plan at all, as is the case with many inclusive anti-bullying policies. The root fear and cause for resistance is the danger and fear associated with the sexual aspect of gay/lesbian identity. The master-status of sexual orientation (and the assumption of its influence on young minds) supersedes the value of educating and providing safe spaces for youth of the diverse realities of human cultures, sexualities and gender identities.

Warner (2010) gives an example of this sort of discourse being used within a Canadian context by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in response to the amendments of the 1986 human rights legislation that afforded official rights and protections for gays and lesbians. This fear towards the indoctrination of children as a result of increased rights for LGBT persons extends this far back in regards to the EFC. Warner quotes an EFC statement warning that:

Public and private schools will be pressured to teach that the homosexual lifestyle is a viable and normal alternative to traditional marriage and family life. It is not unrealistic to expect, if sexual orientation legislation is passed, that a school refusing to condone other sexual orientations would be considered discriminatory by the courts. Almost certainly, schools would be pressured to teach in such a way as to imply that homosexual activity is equal to and just as desirable as marriage and family life.

What is most interesting to note, is that this excerpt is not in relation to Bill 13, but the EFC’s opposition to the inclusion of LGBT rights (or specifically ‘gay and lesbian

rights') being included as part of an amendment to the Human Rights Act. What this demonstrates is the ways in which the CR have framed the acquisition of rights of gays and lesbians.

This point may be further demonstrated in Warner's (2010) discussion of the opposition to the same-sex marriage debates, which produced the usage of similar discursive tactics by CR groups such as the EFC and CFAC. In the face of the perceived infringement of religious rights, Warner notes that the Christian Right have "ascribed to themselves the role of the victimized and persecuted—a beleaguered and increasingly repressed minority, believers who are no longer able to express their honestly held religious views and act in accordance with their moral values" (188). As one of the many concerns surrounding same-sex marriage, Christian Right groups in Canada were concerned with its impact within schools, and how teachers would handle the matter.

According to the arguments of Christian Right groups noted by Warner, parent's rights are deemed to be supreme over any rights that may be claimed by others, but especially rights claimed by gays and lesbians. Warren explains that these organizations believe teachers and schools should not have any role in teaching children or informing them about anything that conflicts with the values of their parents. Specifically, this is in reference to information that conflicts with heteronormative values of sexual normalcy and the nuclear family. Warren proceeds to demonstrate this by quoting the EFC putting forth the concern (in reference to the same-sex marriage debates circa 2005), "if schools will be forced to teach children that homosexual behaviour and same-sex marriages are normal and healthy", while the CFAC declared their belief that "policies which protect

the inherent right and responsibility of parents in the raising and education of children” (193).

In a similar analysis of the Christian Right in school policy, Macgillivray (2008) examines how opponents of LGBT inclusive policies in schools frame their arguments. His research involved interviews with two teachers, a former and current school board member, and four parents with children in local schools. He began by framing the worldview of the Christian Right using Herman’s (1996) argument that the Christian Right believe state bureaucracies over-interfere in the lives of individuals, that Christian faith is at the heart of the Constitution, and that the state has a duty to act as a moral leader, and legislate morality. Macgillivray (2008) similarly continues to argue that based on his interviews with opponents of LGBT inclusive policies, persons with CR worldviews do not believe the state has the right to legislate this kind of morality. The CR often contradicts itself however, supporting the state-sanctioned legislation of morality only if it aligns with their Christian worldview. Macgillivray explains how the Christian Right has made conscious and strategic efforts to frame its opposition to homosexuality, and LGBT issues in schools, within the context of a more liberal and middle ground approach. In a bid to appeal to the more mainstream and centrist public, Macgillivray explains how they actively seek to ensure they keep their “activist agenda in the background” (2008:33). The Christian Right has accomplished this by appealing to mainstream conservatives by emphasizing issues of liberty, such as freedom of worship and religion within school policies. In this regard, he concurs with Moen (1994), Herman

(1996), Irvine (2000), Greunding (2011) and Warner (2010) in noting discourses of the CR in contemporary politics have attempted to not seem too radical at the risk of being seen as unreasonable by more mainstream conservatives and the public. Macgillivray (2008) argues that the Christian Right believes society is experiencing a moral decay and blames public schools as a site of immense danger. When it comes to including sexual orientation in school policies, he explains that the Christian Right believe being LGBT is wrong, and they do not want their children being taught that “its okay to be gay” or “its okay to change your physical body to match your gender identity” (p.34). These are fears and causes for alarm for the Christian Right. The value placed upon hegemonic, essentialist, and heteronormative understandings of sexuality, gender identity, and sexual morality are supported by their Christian worldviews. He notes how recent discourses propagated by the CR are meant to protect the children, and the traditional structure of the family. Macgillivray (2008) similarly explains as all previously discussed researchers have, that in opposing LGBT policies and being adamant about the immorality of homosexuality, the Christian Right have used tactics to frame their opposition to “special rights” given to gays and lesbians as infringing upon their religious and moral rights (and those they claim are representative of all society). Because they do not consider gays and lesbians to be minorities, they do not believe they warrant such special rights. Macgillivray (2008) cites examples to explain the ways in which the CR disseminates anti-gay discourses to appease more liberal audiences. Many CR activists for example, openly oppose bullying and believe that measures should be taken to prevent and stop it from occurring. The problem arises when they argue LGBT students should not be

singled out as populations specifically protected, and that “no one should tolerate bullying for any reason” (p.34). This argument is problematic because homophobic attitudes in schoolyards and classrooms run rampant and often go dismissed or unnoticed by teachers, principals, and school boards as “a part of growing up” or just “boys being boys”.

Another argument the CR has in response to the “special rights” afforded in schools is the threat of discrimination against Christian students. CR activists argue that if Christian students state they believe in the bible and that homosexuality is sinful, that this would infringe religious rights and would be an example of Christian oppression through the advancement of the “homosexual agenda” (p.38). This example is especially relevant in the case of bullying when some school officials may not actively attempt to prevent or stop anti-LGBT bullying because if they do it may appear that “lifestyle” is acceptable in their worldview.

## THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The discourses of the Christian Right have sought to frame gays and lesbians in a negative light. This has further supported the Christian-based view of normative sexuality as something sacred, in need of protection, and intimately tied with the traditional family model. In Gayle Rubin's (1984) influential work advocating for a radical politics of sexuality, she defines the theory of "sexual essentialism" as "an idea that sex is a natural force that exists prior to social life, and shapes institutions" (149). She breaks down this theory into five ideological subsets that dictate how discourses of sexuality are perceived and propagated in Western culture. Of these five, the most important and relevant for the purposes of this research are *sex negativity* and *the domino theory of sexual peril* (150). According to Rubin, sex negativity encompasses morality-based assumptions of the inherently sinful nature of sex, and can only be redeemed within certain acceptable circumstances: for procreative acts between married heterosexual couples. The domino theory of sexual peril carries forward the theme of the sinful aspect of sex, and the negative impact its influence can cause. Due to the stronghold of Christian tradition in Western culture, religious reasoning has dominated in suppressing sexual activities that are deemed to be sinful and against morality. The Christian Right's strong opposition to LGBT inclusive anti-bullying policies in schools is an example of the domino theory of sexual peril. It posits that enforcement of such policies will confuse children, seduce them into a "lifestyle" of homosexuality, and teach them that it is a natural and normal lifestyle. These policies are believed to dovetail into the gradual decay of the family, morality and the collapse of society. Entrenching inclusive anti-bullying policies across Ontario

schools may be viewed as one example of the sort of “threat” perceived by the Ontario Christian Right. The acceptance of LGBT students, and tolerance towards their “lifestyles” via anti-bullying policies may be perceived as promoting a “radical sex agenda” specifically because of the master-status associated with sexual identity. These themes of sex negativity and domino theory of sexual peril are also recurring ideological formations within the discourses of the Christian Right previously discussed (Herman 1996; Irvine 2000; Macgillivray (2008).

Popular discourses among the Christian Right within debates around the inclusion of LGBT inclusive policies focus on the moral decay of society, the protection of children and religion, and the potential breakdown of the family structure. Christian hegemony contradicts the diversity and tolerance expected of LGBT inclusive anti-bullying programs, and this greatly threatens the worldview of CR activists and organizations as they continually shift and reshape their discourses in order to garner the most mainstream support for the exclusion and silencing of LGBT students, and re-entrenching heteronormative gender roles and sexual values within society.

Most famously, Foucault (1978) has argued that talk of sex and sexuality was almost non-existent in the Victorian era. Sex was considered something sacred and only acceptable within certain circumstances. Because only “a single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space,” the legitimacy of the procreative couple took precedence over all else; this procreative heterosexuality was established “as a model, enforced as the norm, and safe guarded as the truth (3)”. Foucault’s repressive hypothesis posits that as a society we do not ‘repress’ sex and sexuality per se, but instead there exists an obsessive

desire to discuss and scrutinize it so we may then establish both its legitimate and illegitimate forms (11-12).

This desire to establish and maintain illegitimate forms of sexuality from legitimate forms may be argued as one of the main projects of the Christian Right. In opposing inclusive anti-bullying policies, what the CR is fighting so hard to prevent is the legitimization of ‘deviant’ forms of sexuality, or what Foucault collectively would have referred to as “*We Other Victorians*” (4). Inclusive anti-bullying policies may seem threatening because they work to legitimate LGBT identities, which many opponents erroneously view as concurrently promoting and glamourizing gay sex. This fear of sex, especially non-normative sex, is one of the main reasons why we as a heterosexist and patriarchal culture talk so obsessively about it: we *must* regulate it. According to Foucault, this includes the prostitute, adulterer, and the homosexual.

Within the contexts of this research it is conceptualized that it is the Christian Right organizations’ opposition of provincially supported LGBT-inclusive legislation that is at the heart of repressive efforts. While the topic of bullying is not explicitly an issue of sexuality, sex and sexual regulation, discourses of Christian Right organizations have framed the issue within the contexts of gay sex, sin, seduction, and morality.

Foucault’s theory of sexual regulation focuses on power and governmentality in repressing deviant forms of sexuality and sexual identity. In his theory of power, Foucault (1978) explains that “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (93). It exists as a constant, and is not something one may or may not have. It is not externally applied but instead exists inside and helps shape

and determines the internal structures of relations. Most significantly, Foucault argues that power does not only come from top/down or ruler/ruled models as are seen in most historical forms of political and legal governance. Instead, it is continuously exercised in a multiplicity of different ways and in all kinds of social relations and institutions.

The function of power and power relations are extremely important for understanding the power dynamics between Christian Right organizations, the proliferation of discourses concerning sexuality and school children, and the creation of new laws. The opposition to anti-bullying legislation within educational institutions that seek to support safe spaces for LGBT youth challenges the relations of power between heteronormative religious convictions of sexuality and morality, along with the rights of children and LGBT students. What Foucault's theory suggests is that power is expressed throughout multiple sites of society, and is not simply a case of the Christian Right exerting power over LGBT students – resulting in a lack of legal reform. Instead, complex matrices of social relations work together to generate and proliferate discourses or “truths” regarding “innate” or “natural” ways for sex and sexuality to be expressed, taught, and understood within the public sphere—specifically in regards to children. These discourses enable Christian Right groups, or those opposed to this legislation, to argue towards the perceived validity and “naturalness” of heteronormativity and the desire to protect children from illegitimate forms of sexual knowledge.

Furthermore, Butler's (1990) exploration of the normative effects of dominant understandings of sex and gender are highly relevant to the potential motivations of the Christian Right's resistance to the “Accepting Schools Act”. In bringing a focus on

gender and sexuality to the work of Foucault, she conceptualizes gender as “the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (p.33).

Through this “repeated stylization of the body,” Butler refers to the discursive means by which gendered bodies perform repetitive “acts” which give the illusion of an innate and naturalized heterosexuality. This heterosexualization requires the production of oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine,” where these are both understood as “female” and “male” respectively (p.17). As a result, anti-bullying efforts and education without explicit attention to queer/LGBT-inclusive perspectives and knowledge may frame “safety” within the context of a naturalized heterosexuality. Within these conditions, anti-gay “bullying” may be misconceptualized as a normative and acceptable regulative effect of correcting inappropriate gendered or sexual aspects of identity and behaviour (i.e. teasing an ‘effeminate’ boy).

I would argue that one of these many “acts” is the means by which we are socially and culturally conditioned to reproduce compulsory heterosexuality. The social and moral regulation of sexuality is very relevant within the context of controversies surrounding LGBT inclusive anti-bullying policies. Through the performative effects of gender, heterosexual normalcy is propagated and instilled within students and attitudes that foster anti-LGBT bullying are able to develop. These same entrenched illusionary conceptualizations of gender and sexuality may be argued to be one of the driving forces in the convictions of many Christian Right opponents of LGBT inclusive anti-bullying policies in schools. If such policies promote notions that LGBT identities are in fact

'normal,' should be 'tolerated', and treated with 'respect,' it is thereby giving legitimacy to these "Other" forms of gender and sexual identity which defy traditional Christian norms. In opposing such policies, the Christian Right is hoping to re-entrench and propagate the same homophobic, transphobic and exclusionary discourses which have provided the perfect environment for LGBT students to become the victims of so much bullying, harassment and discrimination.

## METHOD

The goal of this thesis is to explore the discourses and rhetorical framing strategies utilized by Christian Right Organizations in Ontario that oppose the '*Accepting Schools Act*' legislation that recently passed in the Ontario legislature. I will be using a qualitative content analysis to collect and interpret data as discussed by Neuman and Robson (2011), to empirically explore the discourses of the Canadian Christian Right in opposition to this legislation.

While quantitative content analyses can offer insight regarding how often certain instances of manifest code appear, they are unable to infer meaning as qualitative content analyses can. Qualitative content analyses are useful in allowing the researcher to identify general themes among a variety of text, organize, and link the themes in order to establish a theory about social life. In such an analysis, patterns and commonalities between codes are discovered through the coding process instead of statistical techniques. Instead of presenting findings through graphs and tables, a qualitative content analysis "provides evidence of themes and their linkages through extensive quotation and the development of a narrative around the themes that explains their connectedness" (Neuman and Robson, 2011: 308).

Similarly, Billig (1997) describes a discourse analyses as an attempt to translate philosophical ideas into an empirical project. By this, he argues that discourse analyses put words into their discursive context and analyze what a person is doing while performing a "speech act", or utterances that have performative functions in language and communication.

Within a discourse analysis, it is therefore surmised that layers of meaning may only be uncovered when examining utterances within their unique social contexts. In the scope of this project, the social contexts in which these utterances are produced are important in shaping the impact and meaning of the discourse. Most of the data in this project originates from articles, documents or reports produced in written form by the three Christian Right organizations, however, some data does originate as “speech acts” from such persons within the context of transcriptions of Standing Committee Meetings on Bill 13 and/or press conferences.

Billig proceeds to argue that one should not assume people have stable responses to “attitudinal issues”. By this, he means one should pay attention to what a person is saying and doing when providing an opinion. He explains how people have a variety of ways of speaking, or “discursive repertoires”, at their disposal. Therefore, depending on what they are doing and to whom they are speaking they may speak in ways that are either conciliatory or uncompromising. Billig (1997) claims:

There is often a lot going on in discussions when people are engaged in giving their views: they may be wanting to appear reasonable and consistent, while arguing against the views of others and while seeking to persuade their hearers. Discourses analys[es] then, seek to uncover the complex richness of the social business of “giving opinions”. This is done by attention to the details of what is said and how it is said (43).

These notions are quite important for understanding the ways in which these Christian Right groups have framed their arguments against Bill 13 and the portrayal of their

respective discourses. The intended audience of written documents as well as the setting and context of public speaking events (Standing Committee Meetings, press conferences, etc) would reasonably be expected to have an impact on the tone of the discourse produced.

Therefore, the goal of this research to examine the discourses of Christian Right organizations would, arguably, benefit most from a qualitative analysis that takes both manifest and latent data into consideration. For this reason, a summative content analysis would be an ideal method for examining the statistical occurrence of certain words, phrases, or patterns, as well as the themes and inferred meanings, narratives and theoretical conclusions that may derive from such data. These coding forms would greatly enrich the analysis and conclusions generated because, as Neuman and Robson (2011) explain, “equal attention is paid to [both manifest and] latent (implied) meaning and the development of codes in the data analysis process” (309).

This content analysis explores such patterns and themes through the use of publicly accessible official documents (press releases, websites), multimedia records or transcripts of interviews, public speaking events, and standing committee transcripts from the legislature of Ontario featuring representatives or supporters of the Institute for Canadian Values, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and the Family Coalition Party.

These organizations have been selected because they appear to be the most vocal based upon my preliminary search of documents, newspapers, and YouTube video and other data discussing opposition to Bill 13. Specifically, Charles McVety, an Evangelical Minister and President of the Institute for Canadian Values appear to be one of the most

visible and outspoken opponents of the legislation. I have found many videos and press releases regarding his opposition to the legislation, as well as material acquired through his organization. McVety, along with Don Hutchinson of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, often write commentaries and speak publicly about issues they feel are important, including Bill 13. As a political party in Ontario, the Family Coalition Party is also an organization that has a vested political interest in their opposition towards Bill 13. Its leader, Phil Lees is another vocal advocate against the Bill. Along with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Family Coalition Party has a YouTube channel where the issue is discussed by Phil Lees in videos uploaded onto the site.

All three organization's official websites host links to their own documents, reports, and press releases that discuss the Bill and reasons for their opposition. By examining videos, standing committee transcripts, official documents and press releases of these organizations, I hope to uncover themes, patterns and strategies utilized in the discourse around anti-bullying legislation Bill 13. Discourses generated by these groups, in a variety of contexts and forms of data will allow me to examine discourses and framing strategies used depending on the intended audience (i.e. like-minded individuals, vs. general/mainstream public).

I have located data in a few ways. Firstly, I conducted an extensive search of online newspaper articles in databases such as Factiva and/or Google News. These news articles were written by or included commentary from members or official supporters of one of these Christian Right organizations. I also searched their official websites for additional material, such as press releases, interviews, and other information regarding the

legislation.

The criterion for inclusion of data was based specifically on the date the content was created. Data was collected between publication dates of November 2011 and November 2012. The reason for this yearlong time frame is that Bill 13 was introduced, opposed, and passed all within this date range. Therefore, relevant data regarding this topic was most likely to be discovered within this time period. In databases such as Factiva or Google News, specific dates can be requested in search for articles.

The data collected must also have discussed Bill 13/Accepting Schools Act within the context of its opposition by the Institute for Canadian Values, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and/or the Family Coalition Party. When conducting research, I made use of search terms such as “Bill 13”, “Accepting Schools Act”, “Bullying”, “Religious”, “Catholic”, “Christian”, “Conservative” “Gay-Straight Alliances” as well as the names of the aforementioned Christian Right organizations of specific interest.

I created a coding frame by amalgamating the data from their various sources and organized them according to emerging themes, patterns, and narratives that arose from the data. When reviewing the data sources, themes and patterns that had emerged from the data were taken note of, and thus was how categories from which to analyze the data were created. Colour coded labels were used to keep track of relevant data demonstrating particular theories or themes. Additionally, I also recorded the number of materials as well as how often manifest codes occurred throughout the data, which could suggest a discursive pattern and further implications for latent meanings. I searched for themes and codes based upon my research interests, however, I also actively searched for new

patterns or themes to arise from the coding process that I may have overlooked due to assumptions I bring into the project as researcher.

Current data materials are saved in my own private RefWorks and Google Drive account. Here I have collected and saved links and documents which discuss the topic matter at hand, and from which I drew my analysis. Compiling and coding data was done through my private Google Drive account, which allows me to easily access, save, and share my data and progress with others I approve. It also automatically saves any changes I make in real time, thus reducing the chance of lost data in the instance of computer malfunctions, viruses, or power outages. Regardless, I continued to make saved backup copies of my progress in either pdf or docx formats.

### ***MANIFIEST CODING AND ANALYSIS***

The coding process proved to be a menial and tedious task. After looking over numerous data sources, I noted the occurrence of several words, related terms or ideas that kept appearing consistently within organizational groups and/or amongst all three organizations. The codes selected are based upon terms and phrases that appeared frequently in preliminary readings and analyses of data sources that helped indicate group conceptualization or ideology surrounding non-normative sexualities or gender identities, LGBT education and/or its impact on religious liberty and children. Codes such as homosexual, protect, religious/religious belief, and rights/human rights were included for this reason. Codes such as these were chosen due to their implications in the topic being researched: how the Christian Right have discussed and framed their opposition to Bill 13, and to highlight how they interpret this legislation as diminishing the rights of religious persons, and the “loss of control” over the education of their children.

Initially, I manually counted the occurrence of codes throughout documents by using the “find word in document” (Ctrl+F) feature to find the frequency that certain codes appeared throughout the scope of a document. In order to assure accuracy, I utilized a computer program written for me in Python by a professional in the field. At its core, Python is a programming language that can be used to instruct the computer to perform a series of operations or create a logical flow of instructions. The programmer created a set of instructions in this programming language, instructing the program to count the occurrence of select code words in each source document and record the totals per document. When I created a plain-text file that simply listed the codes, this program

then searched each of these data sources and churned out a spreadsheet identifying each code and the frequency at which it occurred in each source. This was used to revise and update the numbers I collected through my manual and much less effective method of counting the occurrence of the codes.

After this process was completed, the values in the charts were converted from raw numbers to percentages of the total amount of occurrences within each group situation. From these spreadsheets, four charts were made to aid in visually demonstrating the rate at which specific codes occurred across all data sources and within each organization.

### ***Manifest Findings***

The manifest coding process has proved to be quite useful and informative for the current scope and goals of this project. Through a comprehensive analysis of standing committee transcripts, official organizational documents, press releases, and informational packages, I was able to uncover some interesting patterns and themes emerging from the data. Each organization provided its own unique twist to the predominant discourse within each organization. However, many commonalities and ideas embedded in the mutual discourses of these organizations help shed light into the means by which they have framed their own arguments against the passage of The Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13). For manifest coding and analysis, all data sources were analyzed for specific code words. The rate of occurrence for each code has significant value for the purposes of this research, as it will reveal some common ways of speaking, articulating and discussing the Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13), and most specifically the means by which these three Christian Right organizations opposed this legislation and

advocated openly against it. The occurrence of specific codes will also help point toward common themes and patterns that emerge within the data. This information is valuable for the analysis of the data for latent themes.

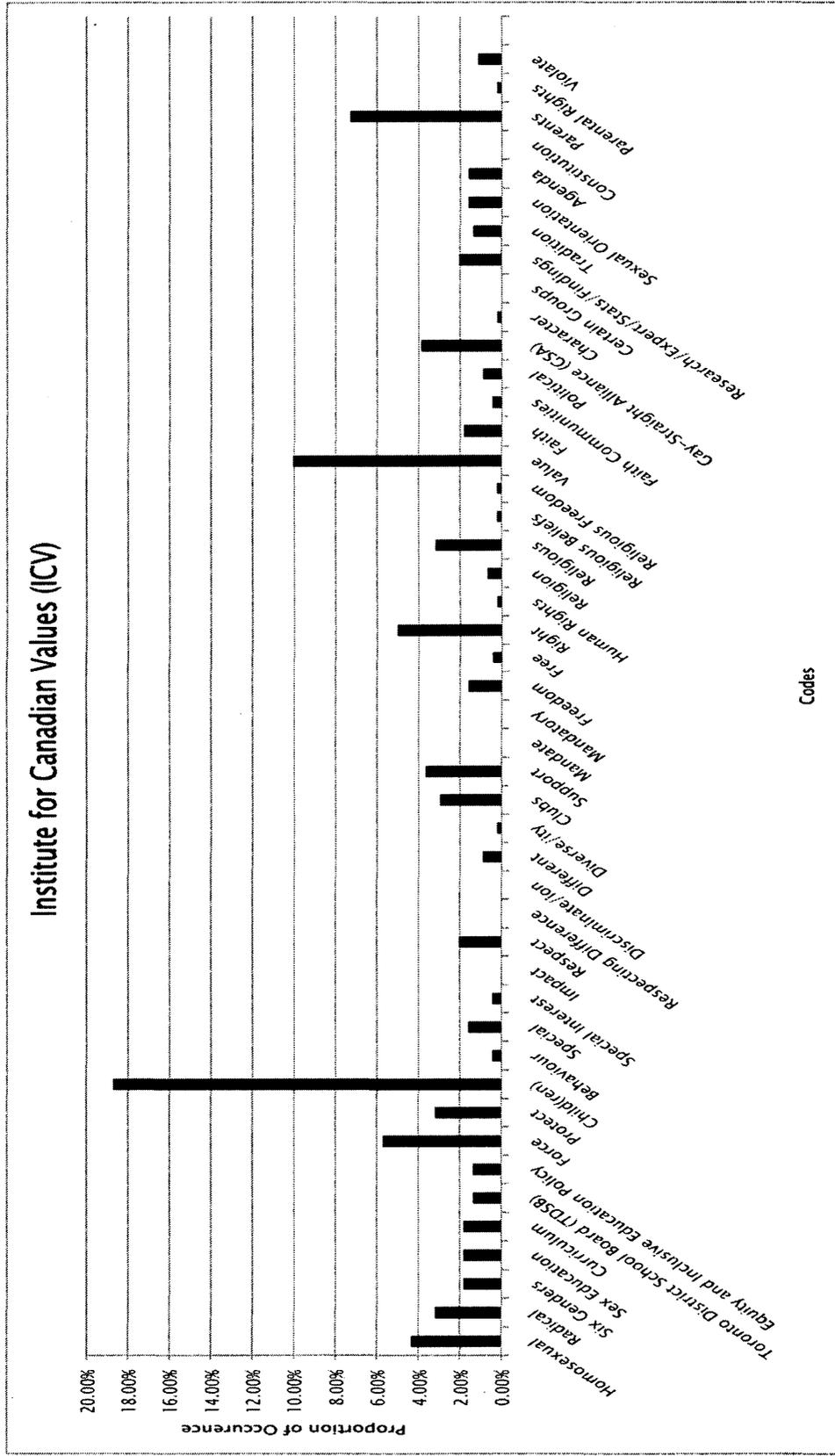
### *Institute for Canadian Values (ICV)*

The Institute for Canadian Values (ICV) is a socially conservative religious organization lead by Charles McVety of the Canada Christian College. The organization's official homepage describes itself as a "national think-tank dedicated to advancing knowledge of public policy issues from Judeo-Christian intellectual and moral perspectives, as well as building awareness of how such perspectives contribute to a modern, free, and democratic society. In examining the lexical choices by the ICV through this content analysis, the ICV appears to make exclusive use of some more controversial terms and phrases compared to the other groups in this study. Terms and phrases that very much appear to be a staple of the discourse of the ICV that warrant acknowledgements are: *radical* and *six genders*. Both of these codes are exclusive to the ICV and do not appear at all within any of the data sampled from the other Christian Right organizations. The significance of these terms sheds light into the tone of the discourse and rhetoric regarding the ways in which Bill 13 has been discussed and framed by the ICV.

Compared to the other codes (*Figure 1.1*), *radical* comprised 3.2% of all analyzed codes among the ICV data set, while *six genders* comprised 1.83%. Combined these codes represent 5.03% occurrences in the data. Within its organizational discourse, the

ICV have made use of such terms as *radical* and *six genders* in hopes of highlighting the dramatic shift in the scope of Bill 13 and its explicit support and protection of LGBT children and diversity within classrooms. Most frequently, the term *radical* occurred in such instances as “radical agenda” and “radical sex education”. In these instances *The Accepting Schools Act* is being framed as an extreme shift in the ideological conception of sexuality and gender norms that children will be *forced* into learning and respecting in schools. Similarly, *six genders* are usually in reference to the kind of radical sex education this policy is purported to instill within classrooms across Ontario.

Figure 1.1 ICV Data Set



Specifically, this line of discourse references a previous Bill scrapped by the province of Ontario that would include LGBT discussions of sexuality in sex education. This was seen as quite radical by the ICV, which seems to have kept a similar line of discourse regarding this policy as being about sex education and the corruption of young minds. The *six genders* phrase is also used to exemplify the type of *radical* curriculum being implemented in the Toronto District School Board with its Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, citing the teaching of six biological genders within its curriculum. Quite obviously, these policies and ideas conflict with the worldview of the Christian Right and specifically within the more vocal Institute for Canadian Values.

Among all terms used, the codes *children*, *values*, *force*, *parents* and *homosexual* were the top five most frequently occurring codes in the ICV data samples. These codes comprised 18.72%, 10.05%, 7.31%, 5.71%, and 4.34% of the data respectively. The frequency of these codes further suggests the intent of the discourse and framing strategies utilized by the Institute for Canadian Values in voicing opposition to Bill 13. The usage of these terms are within the contexts of protecting children, parents rights, and forcing this “curriculum” onto children despite the opposition of parents. It is also important to note that this policy is not about sex education. It does not teach about gay sex, however, these discourses seem to suggest otherwise.

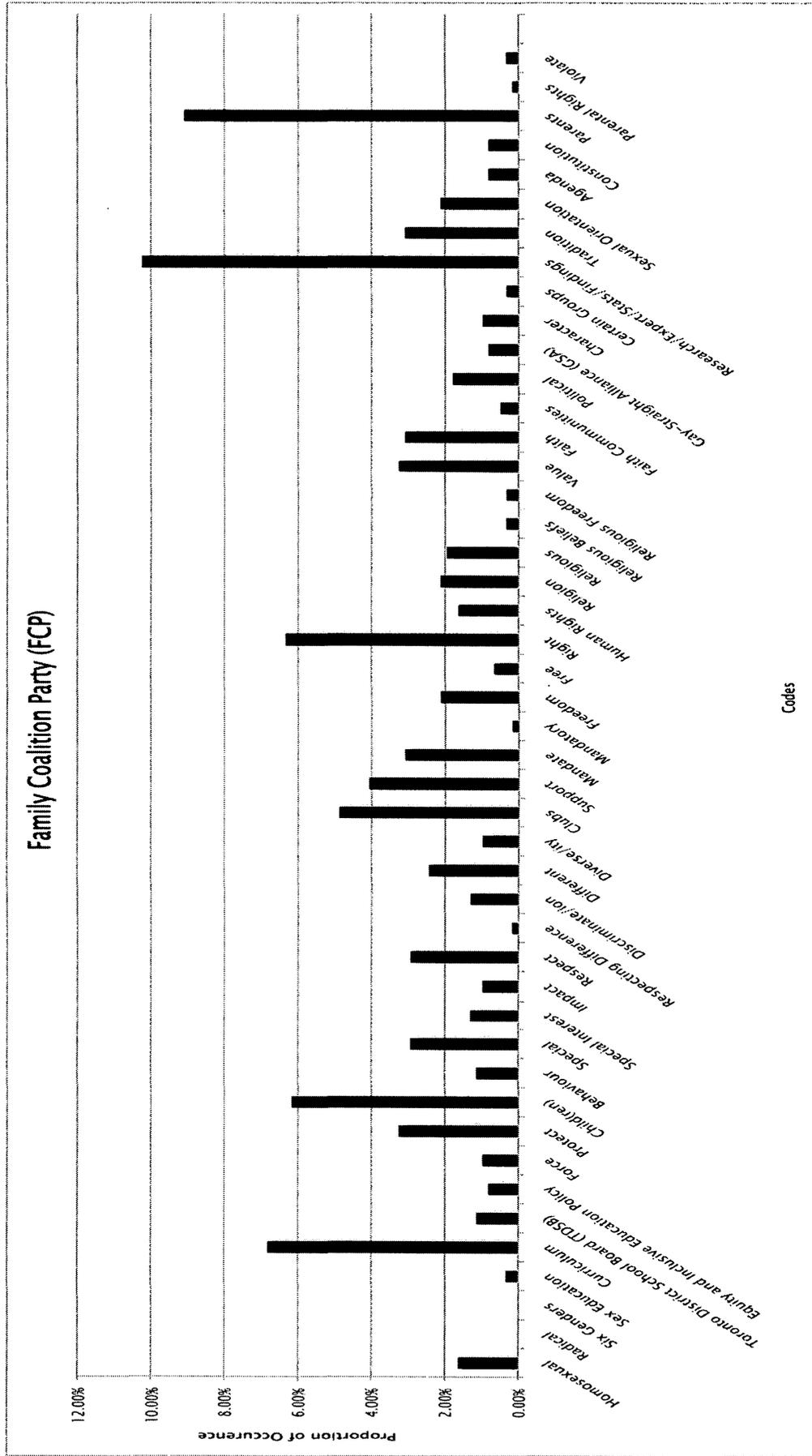
### ***Family Coalition Party (FCP)***

The Family Coalition Party is a fringe political party in the province Ontario that has candidates in provincial elections. According to the party’s official site, it describes itself as Ontario’s “only life-respecting, pro-family, fiscally and socially conservative

political party”. Additionally, “the FCP principles recognize the supremacy of God and the Rule of Law, respect for life, freedom, and ownership of property”. In essence, this party supports Judeo-Christian values within the policies and rule of law. It should be no surprise that this organization is also highly opposed to the passage of Bill 13.

As a political party, the code that appeared most often among the data produced by the Family Coalition Party was in regards to research studies or findings (*Figure 1.2*). The party often quotes statistics or research studies as a means of validating the opposition to Bill 13 by stating that other forms of bullying are more rampant (due to weight or appearance) and that these things are not mentioned in Bill 13, and that because it specifically protects LGBT students it is unfair and discriminatory. They are not alone in this, as each other organization cites studies and research in an attempt to validate their opposition. I would argue that this might be used as a means of shifting focus from denying recognition of the historical discrimination and oppression faced by a minority population over towards discrimination towards groups that have not been historically oppressed or prosecuted by law or in political life (i.e. those who wear glasses or are overweight). The citing of studies or research makes up a large 10.21% of all codes within the FCP data set across samples. This is the second largest percentage a code has occurred in data across all three organizations individual data sets. The largest is the occurrence of *child(ren)* at 18.72% of the data sampled among the Institute for Canadian Values.

Figure 1.2 FCP Data Set



Codes

The codes *parents*, *curriculum*, *rights*, and *children* were the next most frequently occurring terms in the FCP data sample. *Parents* garnered 9.08% with *curriculum* at 6.81%. The focus on *parents* and their *rights* (6.32%) to decide what children are exposed to in schools is a hallmark argument made throughout the data by the FCP and an important component of the discourse they produce in regards to their opposition to Bill 13. The focus on the *curriculum* (6.81%) is in regards to the continuous changes to curriculums they cite that have become more sensitive to LGBT populations. The right of the child as well as the *protection* (3.42%) of *children* (6.16%) is also routinely discussed within the contexts of the discourse.

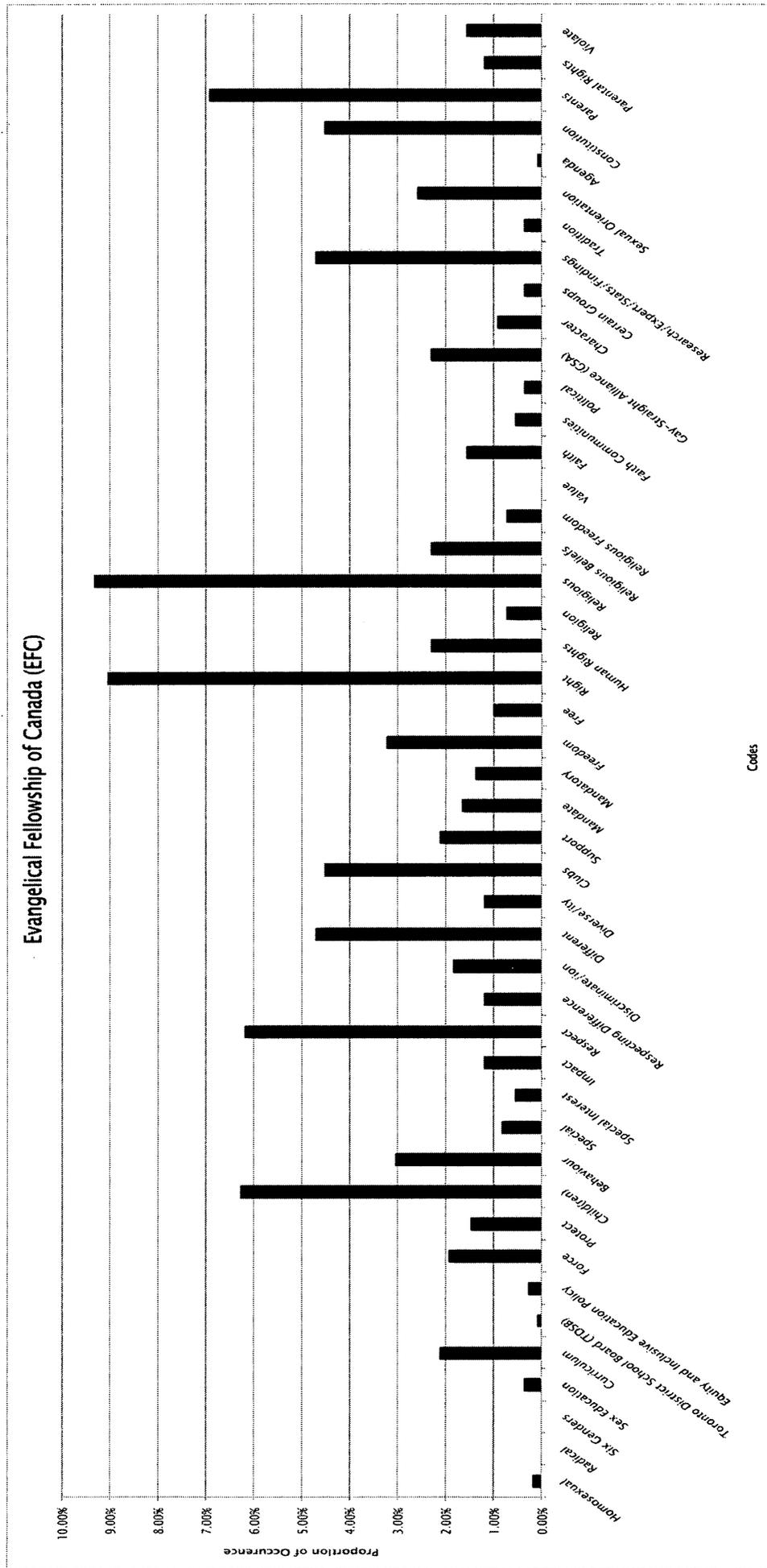
### ***Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC)***

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is a national association of Evangelical Christians in Canada that “gathers Evangelicals together for impact, influence and identity in ministry and public witness”. According to their website, one of their main purposes as an organization is a commitment to “making a positive contribution to this nation” by fostering “a discussion on the application of biblical principles to contemporary issues”. The EFC as a foundation is strongly in favour of promoting and ensuring biblical based understandings of the law and society as defined by their religious faith. The Accepting School Act as a piece of legislation contradicts with these biblical understandings as it assures protections to a minority LGBT population.

The EFC data has shown that a large amount of the coded discourse discusses religion and rights. *Religious* appears in 9.33% of the EFC data, while *rights* is not too far

behind with 9.05%. Together, *religious* and *rights* make up 18.38% of total code occurrences among the EFC data set. This suggests a large amount of the discourses circulated by the EFC is concentrated around discussions around the rights of religious persons in Ontario and how Bill 13 will impact *religious freedoms* (2.31%) and *[religious] beliefs* (0.74%). In fact, discussions of religion in general appear to make up a significantly large portion of the data produced by the EFC. If amalgamated, *religious*, *religious freedoms*, *religious beliefs*, and *religion* make up 13.12% of all occurrences in the data set.

Figure 1.3 EFC Data Set



The perceived loss of agency or choice for *parents* (6.93%) in regards to the materials exposed to *children* (6.28%) is another recurring theme within this discourse. The perceived lack of *respect* (6.19%) for *parental rights* (1.2%) with respect to what information *children* (6.28%) are exposed to is a great cause for concern. The EFC often argues that such anti-bullying policies favour one group of children over another, yet focus the majority of its arguments on the rights of parents, the religious, and its negative implications for school-aged children.

The discussion of *rights* (9.05%) is also at times framed within discussions about the *constitution* (4.52%) and the protections affirmed to religious freedom. Discussion of the constitution is most notably evident in the discourses of the EFC, while it remains completely absent from the data produced by the Institute for Canadian Values, and (surprisingly) only occurs in 0.81% of all data produced by the Family Coalition Party. I would expect this code to occur more frequently in the discourses produced by a political party such as the FCP, rather than an Evangelical association like the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada simply because the FCP is representing a party to hold power in the government of Ontario.

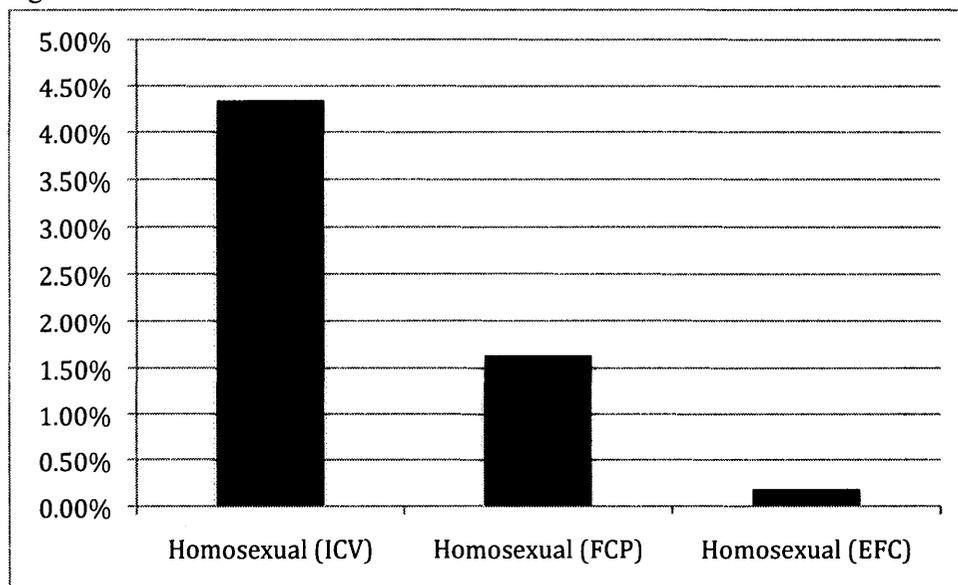
These data help lend credence to the idea that the EFC has members in their organization that are involved in politics and the law. By having such persons involved, it may help legitimate judicial appeals to support their beliefs and ideas in the legislature. As evidenced by the author of some data produced by the EFC, Faye Sonier has been employed as legal counsel for the EFC since 2008. According to the group's website under the "Leadership Team", Faye Sonier's work focuses "on issues of religious

freedom in Canada and the sanctity of human life. These include understanding fetal rights, abortion and euthanasia”. She is also cited as a regular contributor to EFC’s law and public policy blog. As evidenced in the data, her work helps bring a legal standpoint to support and affirm issues tackled by the EFC and to challenge Bills or laws the group opposes (such as Bill 13).

### ***ICV, FCP and EFC: All Data***

Comparing and contrasting the occurrences of certain codes in the data across all three organizations yields interesting findings. Not looking specifically at the most common occurrences of codes but rather their similarities, differences, and/or discrepancies may prove to be the most telling about specific organizations and their ideological perspectives and opinions on the Accepting Schools act and how they discuss this legislation specifically.

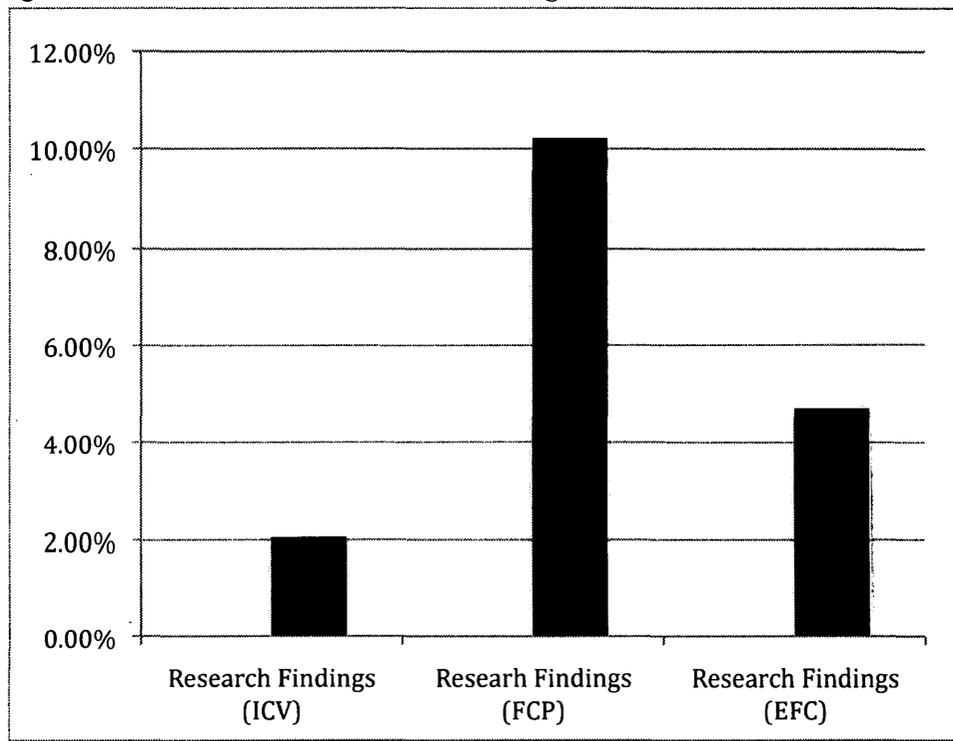
The Institute for Canadian values for instance, has used the identifying term ‘*homosexual*’ the most out of all three groups when referring to the LGBT community within the contexts of the legislation. *Figure 1.4* below demonstrates the usage of the word *homosexual* as comprising approximately 4.34% of the materials analyzed, produced by, or involving the ICV. In contrast, the code “homosexual” was present in the data from the Family Coalition Party of Canada (FCP) in 1.63% of all codes, while in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada’ (EFC) data, it comprised a mere 0.18% of all manifest codes.

Figure 1.4 The Occurrence of *Homosexual* in Discourse

As a term that broadly and generally defines the LGBT community or gay men specifically, *homosexual* has a historical significance for the ways in which it has been used in discourse to describe non-normative sexualities within a framework of medicalization, disease, and seduction. Within mainstream discourses, Cameron and Kulick (2003) have pointed out that “gay” has assumed the status of an unmarked and relatively neutral term, while “homosexual” is avoided in contexts where the speaker does not intend to use a pejorative term. They explain that since the mid to late 1990s, “homosexual” has generally become understood to carry negative connotations within mainstream discourses when used, and that “gay” is the term to be preferred. Therefore, it is not surprising that the occurrence of *homosexual* does not occur as frequently among all the data sets as a whole, as it has taken on this negative connotation its use in popular culture has reduced. Nevertheless, its inclusion at all within these contexts does warrant discussion.

Perhaps the use of *homosexual* was not perceived as offensive or as carrying with it negative connotations by those who used it. Regardless, the fact that the data demonstrate all three organizations have used *homosexual* at some point or another is quite interesting. The Institute for Canadian Values has used it by far the most out of all three groups, while the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada had used it very rarely. Framing and propagating discourses and terms such as these in the context of opposing legislation that would grant further protections to vulnerable populations may suggest underlying assumptions and misconceptions these organizations foster towards LGBT persons, their “normalcy” and “rights” within the broader public sphere.

Additionally, the use of research studies and findings to justify opposition to Bill 13 has been broadly used across all three organizations. As discussed previously, the Family Coalition Party has a disproportionately large percentage of codes referring to research studies at 10.71% (see *Figure 1.5* below). Both other groups do make use of such studies within the discursive framework of their arguments; however, it appears that it is not relied upon as heavily as it is within the Family Coalition Party (FCP). By comparison, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada make use of this code 4.71% of the time, while it only occurs 2.05% in the case of the Institute for Canadian Values.

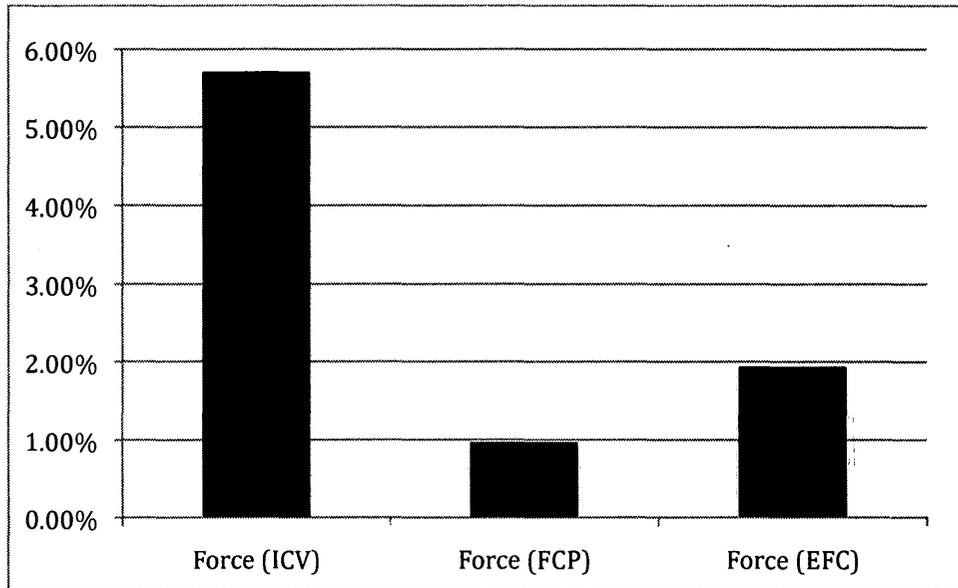
Figure 1.5 The Occurrence of *Research Findings* in Discourse

By using *research findings* within the discourses of opposing the Accepting Schools Act, these groups are attempting to legitimate their views against Bill 13. The data suggests that, especially in the case of the Family Coalition Party, the use of research is an important aspect of conveying disapproval and opposition to the Bill and its main principles. As Moen's (1994) research explains, the Christian Right has made use of discursive strategies, such as the use of research data, to support their positions on issues to which they object. As opposed to past tactics that focused primarily on morality and religiously based rhetoric, these recent discourses have begun to be framed with a special focus on rights, equality and opportunity, and thereby framing their language within the widely accepted purview of liberalism. In these circumstances, Moen argues that issues

such as gay rights become framed as a case of “homosexuals” seeking “special rights” as citizens.

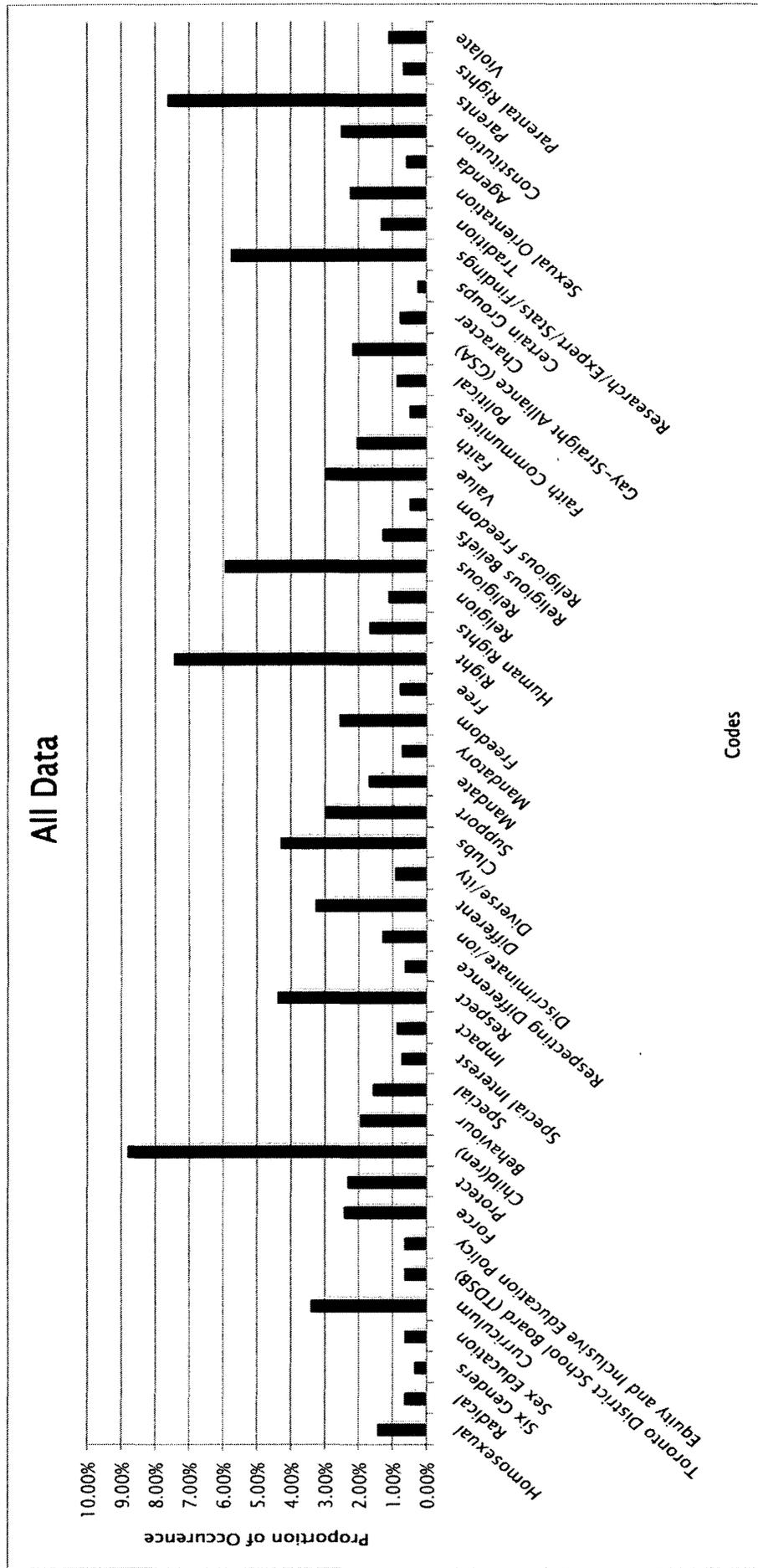
Likewise, Herman’s (1996) later work continues to demonstrate how the Christian Right have historically made use of discourses that warned against seduction into a gay lifestyle and sin. Recently, she notes that discursive secular strategies have been employed to fight gay rights movements on neoliberal democratic grounds. This has been accomplished through strategies used to undermine the LGBT community as a group deserving “special rights” or “protections”. The reliance on research findings as a means of dismissing protections for LGBT students, an historically persecuted group, because not “all” are represented, or because it threatens “religious freedom” is an example of Christian Right groups employing such neoliberal strategies to undermine the purpose of this legislation. This has proven especially true for the FCP. Their heavy use of research studies to oppose the Bill points to the political nature of their organization. As a political party in Ontario, one of their main objectives is to provide statistical evidence for constituents to prove and help support their arguments against Bill 13. Using or misusing research studies to promote an anti-gay agenda remains consistent with the scope of rhetoric and discourse being propagated within these data sets.

Fig 1.6 The Occurrence of *force* in Discourse



Like with *homosexual*, the occurrence of *force* within the discourse across organizations similarly depicts the Institute of Canadian Values as making use of this code the most. This aids in further demonstrating how the ICV makes use of more direct, frank and sometimes “controversial” linguistic choices when framing its arguments and discourse against Bill 13 compared to the FCP and EFC. As demonstrate in *Figure 1.6* above, *force* only occurs 0.97% and 1.94% among the FCP and EFC data respectively. The ICV on the other hand, has 5.71% of its codes referring to the use of *force*.

Figure 1.7 All Data Sets



When analyzing the occurrence of codes among all three organizations, *Figure 1.7* demonstrates this by offering the total occurrence of each code across all data sets, regardless the organization it had originated from in discourse. For example, when compared to the high occurrence of *Research Findings* among the FCP data, overall the code *Research* ranks fifth by appearing in only 5.75% of the data encompassing all three groups. Unsurprisingly, *child(ren)* was the most common code to appear across all of the data. As this legislation directly impacts school-aged children, the main controversy surrounding it is the impact it will have upon the children. Although the Bill is not about curriculum, it is perceived and being opposed as if it were. For this reason, all three groups focus on the consequences this will have for children. In particular, the Institute for Canadian Values erroneously conflates this Bill as a *radical sex education curriculum*, and argues that it is our (Ontario's) moral responsibility to *protect* our children from such shocking material.

Consequently, discussing the impact and protection of children has led to the discussion of *parents* and their *religious rights* as important topics being discussed by these Christian Right organizations opposing Bill 13. *Parents* had occurred among 7.62% of the data across groups, while *rights* was not far behind at 7.44%. Indeed, the rights of parents have been conceptualized as being challenged or infringed by this proposed legislation, as is evidenced in many instances throughout the data within the occurrences of these codes. Similarly, *religious* (5.94%) ranked the fourth most common code to appear across all three organizations. This code most frequently occurred with reference

to the rights of religious parents to control the kinds of materials their children are subject to, as well as the perceived erosion of religious liberty (as evidenced by the scope of this legislation). These opponents of Bill 13 feel threatened that the bill specifically infringes the rights of parents to teach their children about sexual morality. Endorsing anti-bullying initiatives that include gay-straight alliances, and other LGBT friendly policies contradicts the religious teachings and beliefs of many Christian Right activists and supporters. For this reason, the prevailing argument among the discourse is the infringement of religious liberties broadly, as well as the infringement of parental rights to specifically dictate the material they believe to be morally appropriate for children, and to also “protect” children from being confused by socially progressive ideals that conflict with their family’s religious faith and traditions.

### ***Summary of Findings***

The data have demonstrated through the frequent occurrence of certain codes the general tone and themes of the discourse of these Christian Right organizations in their opposition to Bill 13. The discussion had focused most predominately on the impacts towards children as a result of this legislation, as well as the religious and parental rights of parents. Many are concerned as to whether their rights as either parents or as families of religious faith are being dismissed for a socially progressive liberal “agenda”. Many groups try to make this point through the use of research studies and their findings in order to cast doubt on the legitimacy and merit to this legislation. Arguments around the focus

on LGBT students state that this ignores other populations and sources of bullying (specifically sources not related to a form of social identity).

To compare the differences and similarities among all three groups in terms of the occurrence of codes, each group's results are different however there are similarities. In order of most frequent occurrence, The Institute for Canadian Values made use of the codes *children, values, force, parents, and homosexual (Figure 1.1)*. Based solely upon these words and their rates of occurrence compared to other codes, one is given the impression of a very conservative organization that may harbour great hostility towards this legislation and/or perhaps the "homosexual" community. The high instance of words such as *force (Figure 1.6)* and *homosexual (Figure 1.4)* suggests this hostility, perhaps not specifically to "homosexuals" themselves, but to LGBT activists, the Ontario legislature, Minister of Education, and politicians or political parties that support the Bill. This is due to the perceived erosion of religious liberties and mandated "influence" of LGBT material or groups within schools which non-LGBT children will be exposed to.

In comparison, the Family Coalition Party made most frequent use of the following codes: *research findings, parents, curriculum, rights, and children (Figure 1.2)*. Taking these codes into consideration alone, the data in *Figure 1.5* suggests that a heavy emphasis was placed upon the FCP providing a rationale backed up by scientific data or evidence to support the party's stance and opposition to Bill 13: The Accepting Schools Act. The curriculum in question is brought up as a point of contention, indicating a possible change in the education curriculum that this legislation may be purported to alter. In fact, most instances refer to the FCP assertions to the ways in which laws and policies

have become more open to enshrining rights to LGBT populations in the school curriculum in one way or another. This legislation is conceptualized in another step along that path. Similarly to the Institute for Canadian Values, the FCP makes heavy use of the codes *parents* and *children*. A large amount of the discourse propagated by these organizations involved discussion of its impact on children, parents, and their respective rights, religious or not.

Alternatively, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada had the codes *religious*, *rights*, *parents*, *children*, and *respect* as the most commonly occurring codes within its data set (*Figure 1.3*). It is unsurprising that the term *religious* was the most frequently occurring code. The evangelical association places high priority on the *rights* of religious persons in Canada, specifically hope to represent evangelical Canadians' interests within the political sphere. This is of course one of the major roles and functions they played in their opposition towards the Accepting Schools Act, as is evidenced by their fairly prominent legal counsel. In addition, *respect* for religious families and values are an important component of the *rights*-based arguments by these groups.

Generally speaking, each organization varies slightly in regards to their specific use of which code words are favoured or circulated most frequently. A major point of discourse that each group shares in common is the frequent occurrence of *parents* and *children* (*Figure 1.7*). In all three organizations, these two codes are amongst the top 5 most commonly occurring codes. This is greatly attributed to the focus of discourse on the impact on parents, children, and how it will negatively affect each group. It is also of interest to note that based upon the manifest findings, it appears that the EFC relies on

discourses of legal legitimacy to support its arguments, whereas the ICV and (more prominently) the FCP rely on scientific evidence.

The codes used in this analysis have helped to suggest the potential impacts, tone, and scope of the discourse being produced by these specific organizations, and how it is heavily reliant upon the intended or assumed audience for such instances of speech. These arguments will be analyzed in much greater depth and detail in the following latent content analysis of the data sets below.

## **LATENT CODING AND ANALYSIS**

Compared to the manifest analysis, the latent coding and analysis will look more specifically at rhetorical themes and patterns among the data instead of focusing specifically on individual linguistic codes. There is great benefit to utilizing latent data in this project, as it will aid in giving a sense of the tone and main arguing points of the Christian Right in a way that is beyond the scope of manifest analyses. By examining entire sentences and paragraphs of discourse through linguistic content, tone, and rhetoric, one is able to paint a more detailed picture of the ways in which these Christian Right organizations have framed the discourse surrounding the Accepting Schools Act.

Coding for latent data was a markedly different process than coding for the manifest data. Throughout the creation and analysis of manifest data, I became acutely aware of patterns and themes emerging within the data. This became evident through the frequency of common codes and terms throughout the set of data across all organizations. These linguistic codes, within their context, gave rise to more general themes and patterns that became increasingly apparent within the data. This led me to come to the data with a general sense of themes that would likely emerge from the data, as the results and analyses of the manifest data had pointed towards certain themes that appeared suitable for more in-depth latent analysis.

The latent coding process involved the use of hard copies of each set of data produced from each organization under study: the Institute for Canadian Values, Family Coalition Party, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Each document was read twice before beginning to code for latent content. Coding was accomplished by using

variously coloured highlighters and pens. Each colour and colour combination represented a different code within the data, as some codes were identified using a highlighter and pen combination to express its difference. For example, sentences highlighted in yellow indicated “*protectionism*” while, yellow highlighting combined with red pen indicated “*religious rights*”. This system of colour combination was used due to the amount of codes exceeding the number of available highlighter colours. All of this information is clearly indicated in a legend I created indicating which colours and combinations refer to a specific code.

In all quotations within the following latent analyses, bolded text will added for the purpose of emphasizing certain words and phrases for in order to aid in illustrating the tone, direction, and intent of discourse.

### ***INSTITUTE FOR CANADIAN VALUES (ICV)***

Initial impressions of the Institute for Canadian Values based upon manifest analyses appeared to suggest the group utilized a more blunt and direct discursive approach when conveying its opposition to Bill 13 (Accepting Schools Act). A common theme among the data produced by the organization suggested several patterns that demonstrated various tactics and methods used to justify or rationalize opposing amendments to the Education Act to promote safe spaces and policies for Ontario's LGBT students. The most vocal ICV spokespersons within the data produced and analyzed for this project are President Charles McVety , Executive Director and Reverend Ekron Malcolm. The ICV themes I will be analyzing in this section include: the protection of children, changes to the curriculum, the "specialness" of LGBT children, and religious and parental rights.

#### ***Protecting Children***

The notion that children must be "protected" from socially and politically progressive "agendas" is nothing new in contemporary western discourse. Children are often understood as highly vulnerable and impressionable. Their innocence is thought of as something almost sacred that should not be tampered with before an age arbitrarily deemed "appropriate". This is specifically true in regards to sex and access to sexual knowledge. Bill 13's requirement of gay-straight alliances across all school boards and equity in education policies has roused discourses of protectionism. The aim of this line of discourse is to shield the minds of young impressionable children from being exposed

to information about sex, non-normative sexualities, gender identities, and topics that stray from a normative Judeo-Christian worldview. Children must be protected from sexual knowledge, inappropriate (sexual) LGBT knowledge, as well as any education that seeks to promote immoral and faith-conflicting conceptions about sex and sexuality.

The main method by which the ICV has framed discourses of protection has been through the guise of protecting children from explicit sexual information, knowledge, and LGBT awareness more generally. In order to accomplish this, the organization and its various spokespersons have made use of multiple examples of the types of “education” children will be faced with if Bill 13 were to pass, with an equity and education policy and mandatory gay-straight alliances that would be enforced in all schools and school boards.

In a piece written by ICV President Charles McVety for the *Canadian Times*, he discusses the perceived impacts of Bill 13 on young children. Most notably he describes how children would be exposed to and confused by “*six gender teaching*”. This article appears to be an editorial or opinion piece regarding the legislation. The idea of six-gender teaching is presented as an extremely confusing, immoral and dangerous idea that would be presented to children. The tone of the writing suggests that parents should be extremely worried and protective of their children and the potential influence this Bill and its policies could have upon the molding of young children’s minds. In the *Canadian Times* article, McVety advises parents about the material that children would be faced as a result of Bill 13 and the agenda that it purportedly promotes, warning that:

*As you drop your **innocent children** off at school this week, know that their teachers are **forced** to 'read some traditional folk tales and fairy tales with the class [and] have students write/illustrate their own "**gender-bending**" versions. After **opposite sex role-play** the children must read the textbooks, *Are You a Boy or a Girl*, *William's Doll*, or *Doing It Right* (covering topics such as **anal sex and masturbation**) [emphasis added].*

The justification for protecting children is primarily placed upon the notion of saving them from perspectives or ideas that may confuse them. Specifically, these ideas include those about gender bending, opposite sex role-play, and teaching of the existence of six biological genders. Topics such as masturbation and anal sex are also topics from which children must be protected. The age at which children would be exposed to this material is not specifically mentioned, however, the most important point is that children would be taught about these things at all. The fear of influencing the minds of children into accepting or tolerating persons of various gender identities or sexualities fiercely contradicts heterosexist and heteronormative ideals of sex and gender. In addition, these policies and ideas contradict with biblical teachings and are therefore intolerable by Christian Right advocates such as those of the Institute for Canadian Values. McVety continues his warning to parents about what their children to be subjected to stating:

*Your child will then be **forced** to "Read Gloria Goes to Gay Pride and "Search images of Pride Week". I warn you not to do so. Your child will find numerous pictures of **full scale nudity** and people performing **mock sex acts** on the street. The **little children** are then ordered to "make posters for the TDSB float and/or*

*school bus that are in the Pride Parade. Additionally, students could have their own Pride Parade in their school. (McVety)*

The implication in this excerpt suggests that children will be exposed to sexually explicit material of LGBT persons during Pride. It is assumed that they will encounter images of nudity and explicit mock sex acts. After doing my own Google image search for both “pride week” and “pride week Toronto” with default filter settings, I came across no images of nudity or mock sex acts. The most potentially scandalous images I came across were a few of men and women in undergarments; there was no nudity. This is not to suggest that such images do not exist or cannot be found. However, I would argue that this tactic of embellishing purported material under Bill 13 would only serve to garner further support from like-minded individuals who would already object to LGBT material being taught in schools (regardless of any potential “sexually explicit” material).

McVety then goes on to state that thousands of parents have expressed outrage “as they discover the *bizarre teachings* their children are being taught” and asks what good it does “to *indoctrinate children with hostile, caustic, explicit gender confusing material?*” This idea of schools “indoctrinating” children with teachings about non-normative sexualities and gender identities is viewed as harboring a toxic environment and exposing children to materials that are deemed inappropriate due not only to religious convictions, but also according to historically traditional heteronormative understandings of marriage and the family.

Many of the proponents of this position have demonstrated an understanding that the “explicit” material being taught to children would be under the guise of preventing bullying. It has been assumed by McVety that this anti-bullying Bill is a reincarnation of a scrapped “radical sex education” Bill introduced by the Liberal government in 2010 that was fiercely opposed by the Institute for Canadian Values. By introducing this anti-bullying Bill with LGBT specific policies and provisions, it is falsely assumed that this “radical sex agenda” is being brought back to the public sphere as part of The Accepting Schools Act.

However, unlike the previous excerpts of ICV discourse that were intended for a target audience of like-minded individuals, the following data were produced during standing committee meetings of social policy for Bill. The standing committee meetings are a far more formal and neutral setting, which requires the use of sound reasoning, logic and empirical data to back up claims. Understandably then, the tone and purpose of the discourse shifted in term of the ways in which the need to “protect children” was presented. One standing committee meeting, led by McVety, begins with the ICV President expressing his support for the overall goal and intent of this legislation: to protect children. He begins by first wanting to “commend the Legislature for coming forward with a bill to *protect the vulnerable children* who suffer as a result of bullying” (ICV Standing Committee, McVety). Similarly, a like-minded colleague who also spoke on behalf of the ICV at the same meeting, Rabbi Kaplan, shared similar sentiments when explaining his belief that “anti-bullying legislation is a good thing. We should seek to

*protect the most vulnerable* members of our society. We should not be thinly veiling a *radical sex education program* as anti-bullying”.

McVety proceeds by questioning members of the committee if they have taught their own children about “*six genders*” and upon not receiving a response, he continues saying, “*my daughter is a precious little 14-year old girl. I ask you, I beg of you, not to do this to my daughter* and not to do this to my friends’ daughters or sons and not to do this to Ontario’s children”.

What these excerpts of discourse from the Institute for Canadian Values suggest is that the opposition towards the Accepting Schools Act is based primarily on one issue: gay sex. More specifically, the idea of gay sex being taught to children, or being “presented” to children as an acceptable, normative form of sexual behaviour that is not based upon relations between opposite sexes or the patriarchal nuclear family model. Regardless of fact that “radical sex education” (or sex education at all) is not included within the premise of the Bill, this remains to be one of the primary complaints received about this piece of legislation: the supposed explicit descriptions of anal sex, masturbation, and notions of “gender-bending” being taught to young children. The ways in which ideas about sex and gender are discussed also imply that these heteronormative ideals should not be questioned, and children should be shielded from material that asks these questions (or challenges heteronormative assumptions) at such a young age.

Most specifically, the way in which children are consistently described as “vulnerable”, “innocent”, and “little” further demonstrates the implicit understanding of children as a population that lacks agency and is in constant need of protection, especially

from this legislation and its “dangerous” and “sexually explicit” policies. Information about LGBT identities is framed and conceptualized in a negative and hypersexualized light. The idea of children being exposed to any information regarding this is described in a way that seems to imply it as borderline abusive because children are commonly considered to be in need of protection from sex and all knowledge about it until they are “old enough” to understand it, even though feelings and ideas about it will most likely exist long before that arbitrary age. The way McVety has described how parents would drop off their “*innocent children off at school*” and his “*precious little 14-year old daughter*” best exemplify the means by which children are implicitly understood as weak, vulnerable, and in need of protection. The child’s loss of innocence is perceived to be the impact of increased knowledge about LGBT sexualities and identities. These perceptions are demonstrated and supported within the data through the many excerpts of text similar to those previously discussed.

While it is evident here that the Institute for Canadian Values (and indeed all organizations that opposed Bill 13) believed that no child should be subjected to bullying, there was never any intent for this project to insinuate that the Institute for Canadian Values or any other Christian Right organization hopes to encourage or allow LGBT bullying to continue. The main argument is that the way in which the topic is being approached (and therefore opposed) is being done in a way that is perceived to infringe on religious and parental rights, as well as purportedly harming children with “inappropriate” sexual information and knowledge. Children need not only be protected from bullying, but also the perceived bullying behaviours of politicians and legislators

who wish to enforce the teaching or exchange of “inappropriate” LGBT policies and sexual information.

***New Curriculum, New Morality: A Radical Sex Education Program***

Another emerging theme from the discourse produced by the Institute for Canadian Values is the conviction that Bill 13 will introduce a new form of “radical sex education”. Specifically, there appears to be a perception that all children will be taught about explicit sexual activities and most worrisome, types of non-normative sex outside the confines of marriage that are considered to be most commonly associated with gay sex and/or non-procreative sex. This is in reference to anal sex most significantly, as well as oral sex.

This fear does not come out of nowhere, as the Institute for Canadian Values has combated against “this kind” of legislation before. A new sex education curriculum in Ontario was introduced by Premier Dalton McGuinty in 2010 but was shortly withdrawn after much public criticism, especially from Christian Right groups like the Institute for Canadian Values, as well as other fundamentalist religious groups. In response to this proposed legislation McVety is quoted by CBC News stating “it is *unconscionable* to teach eight-year-old children same-sex marriage, sexual orientation and gender identity” and that “it is even more *absurd* to subject sixth graders to instruction on the pleasures of masturbation, vaginal lubrication, and 12-year-olds to lessons on oral sex and anal intercourse”. Upon the withdrawal of this “radical” sex education curriculum,

Executive Director Reverend Ekron Malcolm was quoted as saying, “we are by no means gloating, but we give God the glory. It’s a victory for the Canadian children”.

These statement not only reinforce previous analyses on the need to protect young children from such explicit, or confusing information related to gender and sexuality at a young age, but also aids in demonstrating the root of the Institute for Canadian Values’ strong persistence that Bill 13 is in fact a piece of legislation whose main purpose is to covertly reintroduce this “radical sex agenda” as part of the inclusive anti-bullying policies which are embedded within this anti-bullying legislation.

In an opinion piece written for the *Canadian Times*, McVety discusses Bill 13 in terms of homosexuality as a new form of state decreed morality. He references the previous 2010 legislation that was withdrawn by Premier McGuinty explaining:

*Last year, parents voiced their concern over this same material. The Premier promised to withdraw the program. Instead the Ministry of Education transferred the teaching to another department, refaced the curriculum and belligerently continued to teach this **special interest** material.*

Statements like these demonstrate the ways in which the Institute for Canadian Values and Charles McVety conceptualize and categorize the Accepting Schools Act as a piece of legislation that seeks to include the kinds of sex education and teaching provisions that were a part of the aforementioned Bill from 2010. The idea that Bill 13 would include a sex education program under the banner of an anti-bullying program suggests that the ICV and similar groups with similar beliefs strongly uphold the idea that

sexual knowledge and information must be protected from children when deemed morally “inappropriate” due to their LGBT content. The main point of interest here is that the ICV believes that these anti-bullying policies which are more inclusive to historically oppressed minorities, will amend the curriculum to teach children LGBT-specific sexual material (anal sex) that will “indoctrinate” children into a “homosexual lifestyle” or in some way subject and influence children into accepting this behaviour as “normal”.

The thought that Bill 13’s enforcement will result in an amendment to the curriculum and introduce sex education in all Ontario classrooms originates in the oft-quoted part of the legislation [wherein Section 2 (1) Paragraph 29.1 of subsection 8 (1) is repealed and the following substituted: equity and inclusive education 29.1] which is quoted in the following excerpt from the Standing Committee transcripts by Charles McVety of the Institute for Canadian Values :

*In fact, this Bill 13 embraces the teaching of a **radical sex education** program that has never been implemented in a pedagogical way anywhere on planet earth at any time. It has not been studied. It has not been tested. Are our children going to be subjected to this **radical teaching**, teaching such as **six genders** and teaching such as **anal sex** and **oral sex**, at very young and **inappropriate** age levels? **This is the result of the clause that requires boards to “develop and implement an equity and inclusive education policy, and, if required by the minister, submit the policy to the minister and implement changes to the policy as directed by the minister”.***

What the legislation actually states is that equity and inclusive education policies will need to be developed by Ontario school boards. It does not state what material must be covered. Specifically, it does not state that this policy must include sex education or lessons about sexuality involving descriptions of sexual acts between same or opposite sexed persons. It is safe to assume, however, that this provision requires that the school environment is inclusive and equitable not only for LGBT students, but all students for any reason. The immediate presumption by members of the Institute for Canadian Values that explicit sexual education will be included as part of this subsection is not very reflective of the Bill itself, and many of the arguments and claims made are not in reference to what Bill 13 states, but what can be found in the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) equity and inclusive education policy entitled "Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism: A K-12 Curriculum Resource Guide". While addressing the committee, Charles McVety clearly assumes the Bill and policy are one and the same in the following excerpt:

*In my hand, and we have given you all a copy, is the **Toronto District School Board's equity and inclusive policy program**, which includes teachings such as children in grade 3 reading the book *Are You a Boy or a Girl?*, role playing, opposite gender role playing, teaching children to study the pride parade and even entertaining having their own pride parade in their own schools.*

There is no mention, formal or informal that this resource guide specific only to the TDSB has been influential in any way in the construction and/or execution of Bill 13

and its efforts to limit bullying. The Bill does not suggest all school boards in Ontario must follow and/or implement the activities or teachings found in this TDSB specific equity and inclusive education policy. Instead, the Bill states that each school board must construct or adopt their own policy that must include important provisions to promote principles of inclusivity and acceptance of all people, while paying specific attention to the existence of sexual and gender diversity (among others) as a target for discrimination and bullying in schools. Based upon these examples of discourse, it can be argued that the Institute for Canadian Values assumes that the model presented in the TDSB equity and inclusive education policy will be used within the Bill as a province-wide blueprint on how LGBT acceptance and tolerance will be entertained in all Ontario schools. The discourse also exemplifies the continued perceived need to protect children from these confusing activities which challenge establish Judeo-Christian heteronormative norms of gender, sexuality and identity. But most importantly, the discourse produced here reiterates the idea of a radical shift in sexual education in Ontario schools and the ideal that it will be based on the very liberal teachings and policies suggested in the Toronto District School Board's equity and inclusive education policy. The idea of this becoming reality across Ontario is fiercely opposed by ICV members because it is believed these teachings will go against their religious and moral beliefs, and will use the education system to indoctrinate children into a radical pro-gay agenda, and give children a second or alternative viewpoint, which will "turn them against" their families own moral and religious values and worldviews.

### ***LGBT Students Are Exceptionally Special***

The discourse from the Christian Right has also focused upon the notion that LGBT groups, children, or persons are “special” or somehow more “special” than other children who do not fit into this group. Bill 13 is seen as legislation with a specific focus to advance protections and special rights specifically for LGBT students, without the explicit inclusion of other groups. This includes the requirement of all schools allowing gay-straight alliances. By paying attention to the specific needs of LGBT students that have been victims of bullying and discrimination, McGuinty and all those behind this Bill are accused of promoting an activist LGBT agenda. As suggested by Charles McVety at the Standing Committee Meeting, this idea is supported through the way in which former Premier McGuinty had introduced Bill 13:

*The other handout that we gave you shows you how the Premier launched this campaign. We're going to show you a one-minute video of Dan Savage, the Premier's partner [alluding to an anti-bullying partnership], who—Dan Savage, two years ago, launched the It Gets Better project, and when the Premier launched Bill 13, he launched it by using an It Gets Better video, making his own Dan Savage video.*

The point of the “It Gets Better Campaign” was to post videos on YouTube telling LGBT youth who were depressed, victims of bullying, and possibly contemplating suicide that “it gets better”. Persons in these videos hoped to convey their personal experiences or viewpoint (if not LGBT themselves) of how the negativity you may feel now in school will not last; people will grow up and mature. Your life will get better, and you will be

happy being yourself. The fact that McGuinty introduced this legislation sends the message that he supports this campaign, and therefore, is acting on behalf of an activist agenda to promote further rights or special “protections” for LGBT students exclusively.

McVety makes sure to highlight this point explicitly in the Standing Committee meetings when stating how the Bill “*appears to focus primarily on one group of people, as if one group of children are **special** and then the other are not quite so **special***”. This is being done, purportedly, while neglecting children who suffer from bullying but do not identify as LGBT. McVety continues to describe this as an example of “*the Orwellian thought that we are all equal but some of us are more equal than others*”. The idea that LGBT children are being privileged or receiving special treatment at the expense of others is being used to point out the inadequacy of the Bill because it allegedly fails to protect *all* children from bullying. This notion is continuously proliferated through ICV discourse, regardless of the fact that in several sections of the Bill, other historically disadvantaged groups and minorities besides LGBT person are indeed recognized. According to the legislation, Subsection 1 (1) of the *Education Act* is amended by adding a definition of “bullying,” which it describes in part as an act or behaviour that creates:

a negative environment at a school for another individual, and the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as *size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education.*

Additionally, this legislation includes provision to support students who want to establish clubs or organizations that support these principles. Gay-straight alliances, clubs that support gender equity, anti-racism, and promote respect, understanding and awareness for persons with disabilities are four groups that are mentioned explicitly in the Bill as clubs with recognition. Nothing suggests, however, that any other groups formed with the same principles of inclusion, respect, and diversity will be prevented. This also does not necessarily preclude the creation of religious clubs if students so choose. A potential caveat to this, however, would likely be that such clubs must not be exclusive or discriminatory in themselves. Religiously-based clubs, or any for that matter, could not decline membership to a student that identified as LGBT, for example. This is suggested in section 12, subsection 303.1 (5) about board support for certain pupil activities and organizations where it states, “a board shall comply with this section in a way that does not adversely affect any right of a pupil guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*”.

Despite all of this, the Institute for Canadian Values continues to enforce the idea that as a result of this Bill, inequity and lack of support for non-LGBT students will flourish. It is understood that students who do not identify as LGBT will receive less protections than their LGBT counterparts. In the Standing Committee meeting, McVety continues to speculate about the potential impacts of this piece of legislation and the sweeping protections and benefits it lends to the LGBT community and students, and what this means for society and our social morals more generally. He begins by asking a series of rhetorical questions to make his point clear:

*Are our [non-LGBT] children second class? Is this setting up a tiered system in our society where some children are **special** and other children are not so **special** as to have this level of protection?"*

These posed questions show the level of concern regarding the overarching societal impacts of laws such as these, which seek to protect and support specific (and historically marginalized) groups of people. The continuously emphasized idea of the special status and treatment of LGBT students compared to non-LGBT students implicitly suggests that this group is actually undeserving of “special” protections or statuses. Instead, the ICV (and other groups studied) suggest alternative groups which are generalized anti-bullying groups, and do not focus specifically on points of difference, but rather acceptance and understanding for all people and their differences. This is somewhat contradictory, because in having general groups about bullying, the groundwork is laid to allow students with identities or social characteristics to remain hidden or feel marginalized because they may be “the only one” who identifies with a certain social identity category. In this sense, students will have to “come out” to each other to explain their experiences about bullying and discrimination, without knowing how others will react, or if there are others like them or who support them in this generalized group. For this reason, I would argue that having only “generalized” anti-bullying groups would be an ineffective way to combat bullying, and create safe and accepting spaces for all students. MacDougall and Clarke (2012) similarly argue in favour for clubs like gay-straight alliances, claiming GSA’s are important as they offer all students (especially LGBT students) a chance to feel safe and flourish in ways that would not be possible if clubs were not to exist. All of this cannot be

guaranteed in clubs that's intent is to simply "gloss over" difference and lump all difference together and call for "respect".

### ***Religious and Parental Rights and Authority***

One of the most important and (somewhat obvious) themes to emerge from the data is the fervent discourse surrounding the freedom of religion and the ways in which this Bill will infringe on religious liberties. The Institute for Canadian Values strongly believes that this legislation is an attack on religion and against the bible specifically. The discourse suggests that mainly because of the LGBT positive essence of the Accepting School Act, it is infringing on religious liberty. One of the areas in which this "infringement" is most apparent, is in relation to the Catholic school system and the ways in which inclusive and safe environments (or clubs) for LGBT students are considered an attack on religion and religious freedoms. In the Standing Committee, McVety bluntly makes this claim most clearly in the following excerpt:

*This [Bill] will require that all schools, including the Catholic schools, support activities and organizations that are antithetical to their very existence. Now, this is something that I believe is a violation of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I believe that our religious leaders should not be forced to entertain organizations that are antithetical to what they believe. I believe that we are guaranteed, under the first fundamental freedom, the freedom of conscience and religion, that we will not be forced by big government. But in this case, in this bill, big*

*government is also going to, in sections 9 and 7, require that pastors that are renting school auditoriums for the purpose of having a worship service on Sunday will also have to abide by the minister's code of conduct. **This is egregious. It violates basic charter rights.** More importantly, history is littered with overreaching governments that come out with something that looks good but has unintended consequences.*

This excerpt points to the central theme of this sort of discourse among the data, that the Accepting Schools Act is negatively impacting the rights of religious institutions. Specifically mentioned here are the Catholic schools, and other schools or organizations where it is “antithetical” to what they believe. McVety argues that by forcing religious schools to accept these terms [gay straight alliances], it is a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The main point to consider here is the belief that by fostering safe spaces for children who may not identify as heterosexual, or may be questioning their sexuality, it is infringing on religious freedom. While this Bill does not stop Catholic schools from operating nor from professing their beliefs, it does ensure LGBT students can have clubs, and that teachers can teach students about sexual and gendered diversity. I would similarly argue as MacDougall and Clarke (2012) that this does not infringe on religious freedom, but value of GSAs in schools. As they suggest, deny such clubs and their name only further stigmatizes the subject, and promotes the notion that only certain (heterosexual) ways of being are correct or tolerable.

It is simply stating a fact of society; there are persons whose claimed identities stray from Judeo-Christian sexual and gendered norms. Should the fact these social

identities exist that may be offensive to some religious belief systems be reason enough to exclude them from the same level of protections as students who do not belong to such socially marginalized groups? The discourse suggests that this claim of religious prosecution, or rights infringement is directly evidenced by the “special status” of the LGBT community within this legislation. The fact that gay-straight-alliances are officially supported in the Bill, and that sexual orientation and gender identity are protected forms of bullying (among many others), is an example of this.

Also noteworthy within this excerpt is the way in which McVety claims this is being “forced” upon religious leaders and institutions by “big government” and how this has had historical consequences. The repeated use of “big government” seems to imply the conceptualization of the Ontario legislature, and the McGuinty government especially as one that is meddling, or trying to “regulate” or “teach” about matters traditionally handled at home or within the private sphere. Specifically, matters relating to sexual orientation and gender identity are not understood as something “big government” should concern itself with; these matters should be left to the discretion of parents and the religious leaders in their communities to whom they follow and may seek advice, or personal and moral guidance.

In order to further demonstrate the effect of intended audiences on discourse, an opinion piece, “Fringes Don’t Speak for the Majority” from the Belleville Intelligencer by Bill Glisky (2011) quotes Charles McVety at a news conference where he makes very similar claims about religious infringement, but in a slightly different way:

This bill *requires that Christian leaders support activities and organizations on homosexuality*, that is *led by homosexuals*, even if that is *antithetical* to the teaching for that institution. This is overreaching. It is not the position of the government to force religious leaders to teach something that they say must be taught.

This quote discusses how Christian leaders will be forced to support “activities and organizations” concerning “homosexuality”. One of the most striking differences from this quote and the previous one from the Standing Committee Meeting is the inclusion of “homosexual” and “homosexuality” as a part of the discourse. All other linguistic aspects remain largely unchanged: referring to clubs as “activities and organizations” and using the term “antithetical” to describe the way these clubs would be contrary to the moral beliefs of these institutions. At the news conference, “homosexual” and “homosexuality” are used to help explicitly describe one of the most controversial aspects of the Bill for many Christian Right organizations: “mandatory” gay-straight alliances. This same idea is given in the previous quote, however its relation to “homosexuality” or LGBT identity is not included.

Additionally, the way in which McVety refers to gay-straight alliances as “organizations on homosexuality” that are “led by homosexuals” is an important example of another prominent theme in the ICV discourse, which supports previous manifest findings on the prominent occurrence of “homosexual” in ICV produced discourse compared to ICV and FCP usage (*Figure 1.1*). The way in which this statement is framed and worded suggests that these school “organizations” on homosexuality (instead of gay-

straight alliance clubs) will be “led by homosexuals” (instead of a gay, straight or combination of students wanting to start the club). The way in which this statement is framed also seems to implicitly come across as attempting to generate fear, confusion or the idea that some “unknown homosexual” will place children in danger. The use of the terms “homosexuality” and “homosexual” are highly medicalized descriptors to refer to gay men specifically, and sometimes the LGBT community more generally. It carries with it many negative and psychological connotations. This statement also fails to indicate who the “homosexuals” leading the club will be. Of course, the image of a male adult “homosexual predator” comes to mind, recruiting children and seducing them into a “homosexual lifestyle”. There is no indication given that this “homosexual led” club would in fact be led by students. Instead, the imagination is left to fill in the blanks. Unfortunately, when discourse is framed in this manner, it is not always easy to dismiss prejudicial or stereotypical ideas of marginalized communities that have been a staple of our societal consciousness for so long, especially when concerning sexual normalcy. In actuality, these gay straight-alliances will be led by the children themselves (gay or straight). This idea is not threatening at all, but the way had been framed and worded by McVety suggests this idea is more potentially alarming and dangerous than it actually is. The fact that Christian leaders would be required to “support” this also lends credence to the idea of the superior morals of Christianity for protecting children and opposing such controversial “organizations”.

The Christian leaders who would be supposedly forced to support these clubs are Catholic school boards, teachers, principals and school administration. However, these

gay straight alliances are “mandatory” only when there is interest from the students, and where one student wishes to lead that club. Every school does not require a gay-straight alliance, but if there is demand, all schools are required to allow its creation, and for it to be called a “gay-straight alliance” if that is what students wish to call it.

McVety claims that it is not the position of the government to force religious leaders to teach something they do not morally agree with. But who exactly are these religious leaders teaching children that would be impacted? This is not explicitly explained within the discourse. Regardless, the main point here is the concern over how religious leaders would be forced to support clubs and teach about topics they do not agree with and how this infringes on the rights of these religious institutions. These ideas concerning religious rights and freedoms are continuously circulated throughout the Christian Right discourse about Bill 13 and the implications it contains. The idea that children will be exposed to information about the LGBT community, whether in the context of “explicit” sexual education, or in a manner that disseminates information about social difference and identity, it is still perceived as a “violation” of religious liberty. It is perceived as a violation because LGBT persons as a community, and the hypersexualized association of their identity are perceived as one and the same. LGBT inclusive material is understood as exposing children to ideas which may seduce them into a lifestyle which is morally incompatible with Christianity (or at least the version McVety and the ICV subscribe to). Therefore, by “forcing” teaching of acceptance and tolerance may be seen as inadvertently promoting a lifestyle which many Christian Right organizations feel are

not the right of government to enforce in the public sphere, especially in the Catholic school system.

Closely related to the persistence of ensuring religious rights and freedoms are maintained, the theme of parental rights and authority was another similarly prominent staple of the discourse produced by the Institute for Canadian Values. The notion of parent's rights and authority is most relevant in regards to the will of parents to have a say or "control" what kind of educational materials to which their children are exposed. Most importantly, this is in reference to educational material or school clubs in which the ICV and Christian Right proponents would deem morally inappropriate. According to McVety, the material that would be presented would be used to question the authority of parents who opposed this material and considered them as fostering "poisoned environments":

*The Ministry admonishes teachers "to address controversial issues" even in the face of "negative parent response". Teachers are further warned if they omit any of the curriculum then they will be guilty of "foster(ing) a poisoned environment". **The fact that they include such a statement means that the Ministry knows that parents are upset but just don't care.***

This would mean that if children were dismissed from LGBT positive anti-bullying information, it would be seen as "fostering a poisoned environment". This perceived invasion of parental authority not only is said to infringe on religious freedoms and mores, but as a result, will also infringe on the belief in the supreme authority of parents in dictating to their children right from wrong. This is even at the expense of legislation

that would promote diversity and respect for all persons, even those persons that parents (who vehemently oppose the premise of this legislation) have deemed to be morally objectionable.

To demonstrate this discourse more clearly, Rabbi Mendel Kaplan who spoke on behalf of the Institute for Canadian Values during the ICV Standing Committee Meeting was quoted by the *Hamilton Spectator* detailing why he opposes this legislation, and what it means for parents when arguing that “*this legislation proposes that children be indoctrinated to reject their parents’ faith and their parents’ family values, and that’s an affront*”. This notion of children being indoctrinated to reject their parents’ faith and values is not something new in the discourse produced by the ICV. To present children with perspectives that contradict the values and beliefs of parents (and most explicitly, their religious beliefs) are understood as diminishing parental authority while simultaneously infringing on religious freedom. In this sense, the insistence on maintaining parental authority and religious freedom are intricately linked within the discourse. This also interestingly highlights instances in which fundamentalist religious groups will work together to achieve a common goal. This supports Warner (2010) and Greunding’s (2011) previous findings that had shown cross-denominational religious groups working together to maintain religious rights and freedoms (in the cases of amendments to the Human Rights Act and debates surrounding same-sex marriage specifically).

In comparison, Executive Director Reverend Ekron Malcolm of the Institute for Canadian Values made a speech before the Standing Committee in a separate instance

than did President Charles McVety. In Malcolm's speech, he speaks directly and most candidly about the perceived infringements to families and family values that this piece of legislation presents to parents:

*As I read this legislation, I feel that it is hostile as well towards parents. This legislation wants to be able to **take away the rights of parents to govern their children**, and I would ask, in that case, what kind of society are you trying to create? I feel this is a form, really—and I've thought about this—to me, as I came to it, **it's really a form of slavery**. What I mean by that is, yes, it's to bind our minds to engage in what we do not want and what we do not believe is appropriate for us, and to take away our traditional values.*

In this excerpt, Reverend Malcolm depicts a very clear view of his opposition towards Bill 13 for the way he perceives it strips away the rights of parents to “govern their children”. He then proceeds to compare the legislation to a form of slavery, in the sense that he perceives the government is taking the minds of children prisoner and forcing them to believe certain things that the Bill has described as “morally acceptable”. The idea of schools “taking away” traditional Judeo-Christian values by teaching children about sexual diversity within the context of promoting anti-bullying demonstrates more specifically a fear of the perceived normality and institutionalized acceptance of LGBT persons and identities. Clearly, Reverend Malcolm disagrees with the perspectives of this legislation, and instead has accused it as being a form of mental slavery and in agreeing

with Kaplan, insinuating that it is further indoctrinating children to acknowledge and accept a “gay agenda”. He continues this line of thought when arguing how:

***“The legislature is trying to make me second-class by this bill, that you are forcing your plans and your desires upon me and my family. Now, I would say this with respect, but how dare you try to force children to subscribe to this explicit and sexual material? How dare you try to take away my heritage, my right to live and believe what is right for me and my children and my children’s children? I am not a second-class citizen, and I will not bow to this legislation”.***

Here, Malcolm insists that this legislation is attempting to make him, and all parents’ second-class citizens. Parents are considered to be second-class citizens because the control over the information being given to children is no longer exclusively in their hands in regards to sexuality and what is deemed “appropriate”. The bill does not teach children that being LGBT is better than heterosexuality, or that it is something everyone should “try”. Instead, its purpose is to disseminate information that would aid in the promotion of tolerance, understanding and respect for LGBT students. However, because religious convictions are so closely linked with the values that the Christian Right believes to be moral or traditional suggests that this idea of being a second-class citizen is because their personal religious beliefs are being challenged within an educational context. They are not being challenged in the sense of being dismissed, but are challenged in how ideas which are deemed “immoral” are being discussed in positive ways to promote tolerance and acceptance.

In complementing Malcolm's assertions, McVety is quoted by Kevin Connor of the *Toronto Sun* explaining that the fight against Bill 13 is "*about our schools and what we want to be taught. (The government) has no respect for parents. We do not want this taught to our children*". In the same article, he is quoted again when stating, "*We don't want homosexual clubs led by homosexuals against the will of the parents. This is offensive material and that is why we are standing up*".

In these quotes, McVety is clearly expressing the perspective of the Institute for Canadian Values and the ideals of their view of evangelical Christianity. It is their belief that it is more harmful to their faith to have these policies stand than it is to allow LGBT children to have explicitly stated protections from bullying (among other vulnerable minority populations). It is also clear, in both McVety and Reverend Malcolm's statements that these clubs and "material" will in some way involve explicit sex-ed conversations of gay or non-heteronormative sex. This however, is not the case. It is believed to then expose children to alternate sexual "life styles" which they do not morally agree with, and from which they feel their children must be protected.

The most fundamental problem with Bill 13 according to these arguments is the way in which parental rights are perceived as being infringed and stripped away. The objective of the Bill is that understanding will lead to more tolerance and acceptance, and thereby aid in reducing bullying not only directed at the LGBT population, but all students for any reason. The strict belief that children should not be exposed to ideas that conflict with a dominant western worldview and ideal, not only demonstrates a further need for legislation like this, but also how without it anti-gay bullying and stigma would

be allowed to covertly continue within some schools, for lack of explicit protections for minority populations with a history of discrimination.

When concluding his Standing Committee speech, McVety pleads, “*we ask you [members of the Standing Committee] respectfully to amend Bill 13. **Make it about bullying instead of about bullying people who believe the Bible***”. This is of course in reference to parents. The idea that parents and/or people who believe in the Bible are now being bullied is somewhat ironic, because it is the deeply held beliefs on sexual normalcy which have systemically harboured the promotion and propagation of the heteronormative ideals which have historically encouraged so much anti-gay bullying and discrimination both in schools and in public policy and law.

### ***FAMILY COALITION PARTY (FCP)***

Initial impressions of Family Coalition Party based upon manifest analyses suggest the group makes heavy use of statistical and research based discourse and to back up claims or provide empirical evidence about the purported inefficiency of The Accepting Schools Act in truly protecting “all children”. Common themes among the data produced by the organization suggests several patterns that demonstrate various tactics and methods used to justify or rationalize opposing amendments to the Education Act to promote safe spaces and policies for Ontario’s LGBT students. The most vocal FCP spokespersons within the data produced and analyzed for this project are party leader Phil Lees, and the President of the Sudbury Constituency Association, Jane Djivre.

### ***New Curriculum, New Morality: Social Engineering***

The Family Coalition Party has utilized discourse to suggest that Bill 13 is in fact, a social engineering project which seeks to liberalize classrooms and provide children with controversial information about LGBT issues and sexuality. While the aim of Bill 13 is to provide inclusive and respecting environments for LGBT students, the FCP, like many Christian Right groups do not see it this way. Instead, FCP views Bill 13 as the instrument of a new hidden curriculum that seeks to indoctrinate children into new “alternative” ways of thinking which contrasts heavily with the values and beliefs of “traditional [Judeo-Christian] families”. Lees illustrates this ideology clearly when attacking the legislation in his article written for the FCP website, aptly named “Bill 13: Social Engineering in Disguise”. In it, he claims the power and weight of Bill 13

*...rests in its underlying social engineering implications. This is not a strategy to respect everyone, nor is it a comprehensive attempt to reduce bullying in schools. Legislators and special interest groups are using Bill 13 to push the development of a curriculum-taught, government-approved worldview.*

Lees claims that the government and special interest groups (LGBT activists) are using Bill 13 to covertly implement a curriculum that will enforce a worldview onto children. This is problematic specifically because this perceived worldview is one with which the FCP disagrees. This “*LGBT sensitive*” worldview, as Lee refers to it, does not maintain the supremacy of Judeo-Christian philosophies and ideologies. Exposing children to these ideas and views through educational policies or clubs is perceived to be a form of social engineering. He claims that this strategy is not to protect everyone or reduce bullying in schools, it is instead discussed almost as a conspiracy of sorts, in which the government hopes to teach children that being gay is okay (or the idea that you can become gay, or change your gender on a whim). The fact that there is no legal protection for LGBT students who have been victimized is not viewed as an issue. The perceived risks associated with this legislation are believed to heavily outweigh any benefits. The positive impacts it may create for LGBT children are dismissed solely because it is believed that children’s moral upbringing, or religious worldviews will be questioned or challenged. This is specifically the case if this worldview includes an explicit declaration of homosexuality or LGBT persons as sinful or abominations.

Lees proceeds to provide a brief legislative history leading up to Bill 13 understanding of the legislative history leading up to Bill 13 may help to shed some light. To briefly summarize, in the 1990s to 2008, he states there was increased pressure from teachers' unions to implement sexual orientations policies that were "*LGBT affirming, protecting self-identified LGBT individuals from discrimination*". In 2009, the Equity and Education Strategy was developed and "*imposed*" on the province. He argues that this policy is similar to sexual orientation policies schools have passed which helped foster a curriculum he again describes as "LGBT sensitive". In 2010, the Health and Physical Education curriculum was revised, which he suggests contained material at the elementary level that was controversial. In 2010, this controversial sex-education material (previously discussed) was pulled by the McGuinty government due to negative feedback.

The most pertinent aspect of this history he details is the introduction of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) resource document released entitled "Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism"; this has been referenced in the discourse by all three organizations in this study as the "Equity and Inclusive Education Policy" cited in Bill 13. Lees states that the purpose of TDSB's "Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism" was to have LGBT affirming lessons integrated into all subject areas at all grade levels.

From this history, Lees goes on to speculate that because of the failed sex education curriculum (Health and Physical Education) in 2010 due to "public outcry", the government then decided to develop a curriculum resource document with "*the most*

*LGBT affirming school board [TDSB], within the most LGBT affirming community [Toronto]” that “encourages integration of LGBT affirming messages into the curriculum”.* The TDSB then made that document available for free to any school board or teacher who wished to download it from the internet:

***Although this was released under the auspices of TDSB, it is difficult to believe that it was not created to encourage all school boards. When a school board document is developed, the Board of Education usually does not publish it on the internet. Because it is expensive to create such documents, they aren't given out for free: schools usually have to purchase them. However, this document was made freely available to anyone who wanted to download it. It stands to reason that if you want all Boards to embrace and use the document, this is a good strategy to use.***

This quote clearly demonstrates the reasoning behind the belief that Bill 13 will reintroduce a radical form of sex education that was dismissed in 2010. The fact that the TDSB's policy was made freely available online is cause enough to speculate that this is how the government has furtively sought to promote and implement LGBT sensitive materials across all school boards. While it is true that school boards may choose to use this model developed by the TDSB, there is no indication in Bill 13 that school boards must use the TDSB policy, nor that it should include the same teachings or policies that are found within it. Therefore, the notion that the TDSB's Equity and Inclusive Education policy is a part of a broader attempt by the government to alter the Ontario curriculum to

include controversial and sexualized teachings to children across all school boards appears to be merely speculation.

*If it is just about bullying, why does Bill 13 mandate the implementation of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy? Since wherever this has been implemented the result has been the return of the 2010 curriculum, is this not simply a way to legislate the return of the revised Health curriculum?*

In questioning the legitimacy of Bill 13 and its “true” purpose, the FCP appears to insinuate that the government is attempting to insidiously infringe upon parental and religious rights. If it is just about bullying, why are children being taught about LGBT issues? Why should sex be discussed at all? By closely associating Bill 13 with the failed 2010 health curriculum, it appears to be a discursive tactic used to garner support from FCP and Christian Right supporters that vehemently opposed that curriculum program in the first place. The Accepting Schools Act does not seek to change the curriculum or how sex education is taught, however, the discourse surrounding the “Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism” resource guide produced by the TDSB, creates a perfect exemplar of what this kind of “inclusive education” can produce in school boards across Ontario.

In her speech to the Standing Committee, Jane Djivre describes some of the many concerns from the Family Coalition Party regarding Bill 13 and its implementation in schools. This is articulated through a series of points of concern the party has related to the piece of legislation. Concern 3 of her speech indicates that:

*Although the bill does not say “change the curriculum,” the act does state that it will require boards to develop and implement an equity and inclusiveness policy. We need only to look at the Toronto District School Board to see the impact of its equity and inclusive education policy. The policy’s objective is to affirm experiences related to sexual orientation. The policy is implemented through the curriculum guide **Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism**, and through the learning environment, which is the curriculum. The same TDSB document says the curriculum is actually not just materials, but also includes extracurricular and in-class activities. It’s an all-encompassing description of the school culture.*

Here, Djivre echoes sentiments expressed by Lees surrounding the impact of Bill 13 on the curriculum. She notes that while the Bill does not state to change the curriculum, she does emphasize that it will require boards to develop and implement equity and inclusiveness policies. Again, the TDSB and its “Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism” guide are used to exemplify the effects of this section of the Bill province-wide.

The continued use of “LGBT sensitive” or “affirming” by both Djivre and Lees are also of interest to note. Both terms and phrases emphasize the fact that LGBT issues and topics are being discussed and explored in schools under the TDSB policy. This is not framed for reasons of safety, understanding, or anti-bullying. Instead, by framing discourse in a manner that suggests the objective of the policy is to “affirm experiences related to sexual orientation” insinuates that these experiences are not in need of

acknowledgment or affirmation at all. The experiences of bullying of LGBT students do not matter as much compared to the perceived risks posed to heterosexual children, their parents, and religious beliefs. If this affirmation is presented to children in schools, does this mean parents and religious institutions should *affirm* LGBT persons and identities as well? They will not of course, but the fact that this legislation seeks to disrupt that normalcy is perceived as something sneaky, frightening, and infringing on the rights of a population that is in a majority and normative standing within North American society.

Finally, a special report published on the FPC website claims that the government has admitted the goal of Bill 13 is to “change the attitudes of society”. To demonstrate how this will be done, the FCP describes its implementation through a “*sexualized curriculum, clubs that undermine traditional values, prevention of those who subscribe to traditional values from using/renting public space that will ‘un-teach’ traditional morals and values*”. Here the FCP appears take a statement from the government about hoping to change attitudes in society, which was in reference to help end or diminish the reality of bullying and those targeted at marginalized minority populations such as the LGBT community, and instead insinuate that the government is hoping to impose a radical worldview on Ontarians and using this new curriculum modeled after the TDSB’s policy as the vessel to enact it. This of course, will be used to “un-teach traditional morals and values” and replace them with what? With values and morals that are not traditional, and do not conform to heteronormative Judeo-Christian conceptions of gender and sexuality as binary or static.

### ***LGBT Students Are Exceptionally Special***

The Family Coalition Party (FCP) has also contributed to the discourse which purports LGBT children are being seen as being special, or receiving special treatment within the scope of Bill 13. In Lee's "Social Engineering" piece he describes the legislative history of behind Bill 13's introduction in the legislature, noting how "*the events leading up to Bill 13 clearly demonstrate that this legislation has been designed to address a specific agenda – affirmation of LGBTTTTIQQ community*". This "affirmation" of LGBT students, or the LGBT community more generally is the main point of the controversy. Having a community that is understood largely as "sexual deviants" according to religious or "traditional" moral doctrines, discussing LGBT identities and issues positively in schools is threatening these normative values. The fear towards this "affirmation" is due in part to the way in which this legislation seeks to normalize LGBT identity in a way that helps increase understanding and prevent bullying in schools. However, affirming the LGBT community and granting it protections under this Bill have stirred up discourse surrounding the how LGBT students are seen as being special, or more important than the non-LGBT students. In order for LGBT students to be better protected legally from bullying, of course, their identities and struggles do need to be "affirmed" by this legislation. It must be "affirmed" because the lack of affirmation has been a contributing factor to the incidence of homophobic and/or transphobic bullying and attitudes present in so many Ontario schools (which of course, remains present in varying degrees in society at large). This "affirmation" and recognition affords LGBT students formal protection in areas where they were dismissed as a population while other

causes of bullying have long been identified, acknowledged, and “affirmed” (race, religion, appearance, ability, etc).

Because the LGBT community is being “affirmed” to the dismay of the Christian Right, the FCP has helped frame the Bill as affording special attention to the LGBT community by giving them “special rights” and protections, while supposedly dismissing the rights of other students that do not fit into this social identity category. The inclusion of mandatory gay-straight alliances (only if requested by students) is an example of how this is viewed to be placing a “special” status on the protection of LGBT students while neglecting needs of all others. Lee’s makes this point very clear in his discussion of clubs as they have been explained in the Accepting Schools Act:

*Only one club appears to have been given thorough examination: clubs related to sexual orientation. And if policies are being drafted to respond in part to the above data, where are the mandated clubs related to religious issues and beliefs, for which one-third of all hate crimes are committed?*

This of course, is despite the fact that gay-straight alliances are not the only clubs “affirmed” in Bill 13. As previously stated, clubs that support gender equity, anti-racism, and promote respect, understanding and awareness for persons with disabilities are also mentioned in the Bill as “mandated” clubs or groups. Clubs related to religious issues or beliefs are not mentioned explicitly within the legislation, however, the definition of bullying did include “creed” or “religion” as a cause of bullying. It stands to reason that any clubs or groups based upon religious groups (whether specific to a certain religious

denomination, or world religions more generally), would be embraced within schools if there was student demand for such groups. If these clubs promoted tolerance and respect for religious diversity and understanding, without excluding or discriminating against other groups then there would be little reason for such groups to not be supported or mandated.

However, while Lees and the FCP have noted this lack of officially “mandated” groups based on religious beliefs, in the same breath, they contradict themselves when stating they do not believe groups would be an effective means at all to reduce bullying in schools. Speaking on behalf of the Family Coalition Party at a Standing Committee hearing, communications director Eric Ames demonstrates this contradiction clearly in his statement before the committee:

*I'm not convinced that clubs work. I know that a number of people have talked to us and said that they don't agree that they do either **because a club excludes certain things**. There are **certain requirements** for a club. So, you've basically **created a box for kids** to sit in. That might be an empowering thing for those people in the box, but have you broken down any walls in the school? I would argue no.*

In this breath, clubs are deemed to be an ineffective means of preventing bullying. The reasons given are because they exclude “certain things” or requirements for a club. He states that this essentially creates “a box” for kids. However, the entire point of a gay-straight alliance is that it should not seek to exclude anyone. Students who identify as straight are encouraged to join. By definition, a gay-straight alliance should not be

exclusionary towards anyone. The website MyGSA.ca provides a description of what a gay-straight alliance is, and offers resources for those who wish to start one at their school. According to the “Why Have a GSA” page, a gay-straight alliance is described as a “student-run group that provides *a safe place for any and all students* to meet and learn about all different orientations....and to raise awareness and promote equality for *all human beings*”[emphasis added]. Additionally, MyGSA describes a gay-straight alliance as a place to “promote acceptance, respect, and tolerance of *all individuals* regardless of racial background, socio-economic status, gender, *religion*, or sexual orientation” [emphasis added]. As such, all clubs would reasonably be expected to maintain this philosophy of inclusion, especially for the purposes of preventing bullying and promoting, tolerance, inclusiveness, and increased understanding of difference. What is most interesting, is this philosophy of inclusion also explicitly includes “religion” as a status for which individuals must be “accepted, respected, and tolerated”. It is perhaps then the specific focus on the inclusion of gay-straight alliances that has troubled the Christian Right groups like the FCP and other similar groups. By allowing schools to “affirm” these groups promoting tolerance, does more to threaten religious values some may hold which view the LGBT community as one in which some would like to shield their children from being exposed.

Speaking for the FCP from the perspective of Northern Ontario, Djirve’s speech emphasizes the disdain for the specific inclusion of the LGBT community within the Bill. It again dismisses the fact that LGBT students are not the only ones receiving this “special attention”, she suggests that parents are surprised by the “*means by which the*

*bill proposes to go about this and the granularity of focus to target specific bullied groups*". Similar sentiments are echoed in a piece written for the Family Coalition Party's website, titled "Special Report: Bill 13 to be fastracked (sic), connected to LGBT activist goals". In the piece, constituents are warned:

*...this bill is setting up a climate of reverse discrimination in schools by giving certain characteristics special status. Kids who are bullied for reasons outside of the mandated supports are effectively being told: "your being bullied is of lesser significance than those kids over there"*

Within these statements, it appears Djirve and the FCP statement are alluding to the attention that is indeed paid towards clubs involving race, ability and gender equity as specifically targeted groups. The absence of religious groups and the presence of gay-straight alliance appear to be one the main issue of concern. This is because Djirve then proceeds to recommend amendments to the Bill to make it more equitable and fair for all:

*Suggestion 2 is to remove the language of Bill 13's preamble with terms of inclusiveness specifically related to the LGBT community, and replace it with language that represents equity and inclusiveness for all students.*

She similarly states:

*Suggestion 3 is to retain the language of Bill 14, requiring schools to develop a bullying prevention plan, and removing the Bill 13 reference to equity and inclusiveness if the interpretation of such language is specific to the LGBT community. Again, this will meet the needs of all students.*

As demonstrated in the above excerpts of discourse, removing Bill 13's inclusive language directed towards the LGBT community is seen as a primary concern. The reason given is that it does not include "the needs of all students", these other students who are not "included" are primarily argued to be students who are religious, and those who are bullied due to reasons that are not based upon social identity categories.

This "specialness" of the LGBT community can be further demonstrated by a statement in the "Special Report" piece on the FCP website concerning clubs, where it claims that "*one issue in particular- sexual orientation- has been given additional attention and status. According to the wording of Bill 13, sexual orientation clubs already have support for their name*". Again, statements like these fail to recognize that this "*sexual orientation club*" is not about pride for the LGBT community, or a place for LGBT students to congregate and promote "immoral" behaviours. Instead, it is a "gay-straight alliance" where students of all identities, backgrounds and sexualities may congregate to promote tolerance, acceptance and understanding within the school environment. This is all of course, in hopes to curb the prevalence of bullying among the LGBT community, but again, this is not the only club that can be formed, and there are no clubs that would be explicitly forbidden unless they promoted discrimination or bullying.

Therefore, it is interesting to take note of how these "others" are supposedly dismissed from the legislation and what implications this may mean for Christian Right groups like the FCP in terms of arguing against the legitimacy of Bill 13 as adequate legislation. Djirve goes on to condemn Bill 13 when claiming that is "*not inclusive and marginalizes others. Children who are, for example, bullied for being short, fat,*

*freckled, wearing glasses and lisping: Where are they in this bill?"* The students who are apparently absent from this legislation are those who are not specifically members of social identity categories that have histories of systemic and institutionalized oppression and discrimination. While bullying for reasons of physical appearance (being short, fat, freckled, glasses etc) must not be tolerated, and of course this is not meant to suggest these causes of bullying are less important or severe, however, physical appearance has long been known to be an acknowledged cause of bullying within mainstream society. Therefore, this Bill does not marginalize these students; it does not dismiss or “marginalize” them. Instead, schools with the anti-bullying policies promoted within Bill 13 would be most troublesome to those with highly religious moral values that view LGBT education as something extremely controversial, and something that children should be shielded from. It is in this regard, that perhaps, the ones who are truly in fear of being bullied are very religious, conservative parents.

### *Religious and Parental Rights and Authority – Who’s the Bully Now?*

The rights and freedoms of parents and religion are two very prevalent themes within the discourse propagated by the Family Coalition Party. The perceived impacts of Bill 13 are discussed increasingly in relation to the ways in which the legislation will infringe on the rights of parents and on religious freedoms. Within the discourse, parents’ rights and religious rights are continuously framed as being heavily infringed upon or challenged by the Accepting Schools Act and the ways in which the legislation is being enforced. Christian (Catholic) schools are said to be an example of such religious

infringement, while the inability for parents to have direct control over what children are taught or exposed to in school is viewed to be flagrant example of the persistent infringement of parental rights resulting from this legislation. As the two themes are closely related and constantly overlapping within Christian Right discourse related to Bill 13, these two themes will continue to be discussed and analyzed in tandem.<sup>4</sup>

In a petition to the legislative assembly requesting amendments to Bill 13, the Family Coalition Party identifies three ways in which the legislation should be amended in order to protect parental and religious rights and freedoms from being infringed. The petition requests Bill 13 be amended to “*require school boards to respect federally protected rights of all faith groups, as children from these groups are often bullied by their peers and governments*” and “*include statements protecting the religious rights of individuals and groups – a segment of society that is often bullied because of its convictions.*” The next proposed amendment builds upon these religiously based ones in ensuring “*accommodations for any child whose parent identifies the curriculum to be in conflict with values taught at home*”.

The focus of much of the discourse from the FCP has focused around rights protected by the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that protect religion from being infringed by this legislation. Here, the FCP states that children from faith groups are “often bullied by their peers and government” and that the legislation must have protections for the religious rights of individuals. In maintaining the protections of

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<sup>4</sup> In previous drafts religious and parental rights were written as separate themes, but were merged into one theme as I began to notice more and more how the two themes were very interconnected. It became difficult to discuss them as separate themes because the data for each continually overlapped.

religious freedoms, and using this as a tool to downplay the significance of the LGBT specific protections in Bill 13, the FCP goes on to suggest that accommodations must be made for any parent that believes these policies will conflict with “values taught at home”. In this way, the assurance of religious protection is being used as a catalyst to demand the requirement for parental rights being maintained. Specifically, the right for parents to withdraw children from material they feel conflicts with “values taught at home.” Of course, “values taught at home” are references to deeply held religious convictions or beliefs. By using the demand for religious protection simultaneously sets the stage for ensuring “parental rights” are maintained as well. The right of parents to control children’s exposure to “LGBT affirming” material is rooted in religious beliefs and values. In this regard, the goal of preventing LGBT bullying through policies and clubs that aid in promoting acceptance, understanding, and respect will be negated by the will of religion and parents who feel uncomfortable with their children being exposed to topics they feel may be inappropriate based upon their religious beliefs that condemn homosexuality. By demanding the removal of LGBT specific protections in Bill 13, the FCP are effectively preventing policies that would benefit a community that has a history of discrimination and prosecution. To dismiss these communities is implicitly condoning the continuation of such thoughts and ideas based upon homophobia and/or transphobia. By “protecting” children from “LGBT affirming” material, the FCP and similar Christian Right groups are also implicitly condoning the continual understanding of the LGBT community and students as “different” or as “other”. The desire to protect children from these materials only reinforces the intolerance and prejudices that can be at the heart of

many instances of bullying targeted to specific groups based upon marginalized social identities.

The fact that opponents of Bill 13 feel religious and parental freedoms are being impeded or challenged by this legislation has roused accusations of possible “reverse discrimination” as demonstrated in the “Petition to Legislative Assembly” and “Call to Action” documents by the FCP. As a result, there has been increased fear and speculation that Christian children and parents who hope to instill their family morals and values unto their children are now the victims of bullying as a result of the proposed aims of the Accepting Schools Act. According to an information page on the FCP website about Bill 13, the Party warns:

*From a legal standpoint, **Bill 13 has nothing to do with bullying, but is actually an EXAMPLE of bullying through biased legislation.** Coupled with the statements made by Minister of Education Laurel Broten during 2nd reading of the Bill- regarding how this is the first step of a much larger plan- **this bill appears to be part of a strategy created with the intention of removing all aspects of faith from public life** [capitalized emphasis not added]*

As is clearly evident in this excerpt, the Family Coalition Party accuses the government and legislators of *being* bullies. The FCP has worked to frame themselves and the constituents they hope to represent as victims of bullying as a result of this legislation. The fact that Bill 13 includes provisions to protect and “affirm” LGBT students and gay-straight alliances is portrayed as a clear example of the ways in which

parents and religious or “*traditional-principled citizens*” are being marginalized or “bullied” as a result of the Accepting Schools Act. The perceived bullying is a result of the fact that these parents and religious persons feel that by allowing LGBT protections or “affirmations”, their religious views are being infringed upon because conservative Christianity does not “affirm” LGBT persons (homosexuality) as a normal or “accepted” aspect of society that should be condoned. If parents seek to shield their children from these influences but are barred as a result of Bill 13, their religious and parental rights are argued to be thwarted by the policies and provisions of the Accepting Schools Act. The Bill 13 Information page also claims that if Bill 13 were to pass without amendments it would “*discriminate against persons with traditional faith values*”.

Similarly, a “Special Report” article published on the FCP website claims that the “*strategy to bully people of faith, in order to ‘correct’ traditional values surrounding sexual activity is already being quietly delivered to GSA clubs across the province.*” Statements framed in this way further propagate the notion that people of faith are being bullied by this legislation and the government to blindly accept the terms of Bill 13 even if they conflict with their religious views and what they believe is best for their children as parents. The insinuation in this quote is that a strategy exists to indoctrinate children and ‘correct’ the *traditional* values relating to sexual activity. In other words, it is thought that GSAs will teach children “gay sex is okay”. Of course, sex is one of many aspects of the LGBT community and identity. However, it is evident that the FCP assumes that these gay-straight alliances are being strategically designed to teach children that “gay sex” is “normal sex” and are promoting it as such. But the purpose of gay-straight alliances, as

explained by the “Why Have a GSA” page on the MyGSA website, are not to discuss or teach sex, but to provide a space for LGBT students and allies with a safe space to share experiences and promote understanding, tolerance, social justice and/or activism.

Alternatively, the following excerpt from the article written by leader Phil Lees on “Social Engineering” discusses how Bill 13 is an example of bullying and utilizes legal discourses to establish and maintain that religious and parental rights must be maintained:

*Legal counsel- working with FCP and the consortium of organizations vocalizing concern about the Bill- has stated that **this Bill is in fact an example of bullying and, especially in regards to the use of public school space, makes implications that are in direct violation of the freedoms of expression, religion, thought, belief, peaceful assembly, and association granted under the federal Charter of Rights***

Again, the idea that the Accepting Schools Act is an example itself of bullying is again propagated within the discourse. It is arguably ironic how the protections and “affirmation” of *LGBT students who are bullied* are viewed as an example of *bullying against religious and traditional families*, which may also be viewed as an example of the kind of bullying that requires Bill 13 and its “affirmation” of LGBT students and persons in the first place. These notions become proliferated through discourses that frame Bill 13 as an example of social engineering that strips parents and the religious of the right to govern and control the information and ideas their children are exposed to in school.

It is additionally noteworthy to mention that the persons and groups the FCP seeks to represent and protect from Bill 13 are repeatedly described as “traditional-principled”

or those with “traditional values” or “traditional morals”. By framing FCP supporters as *traditional* lends credence to the impression that those pushing for Bill 13 and the policies that explicitly support the LGBT community are very *untraditional*. The values, morals and worldview (as the FCP refers it), is diametrically opposed to traditional values which beliefs of religious parents and Christian Right organizations. According the FCP’s “Call to Action” document found on their website, “*Bullying should be addressed without politicizing tax-payer funded classrooms and introducing controversial, sexual topics to children against their parent’s will*”. Gay-straight alliances and the LGBT affirming policies do not focus on sexual topics, however LGBT issues often become hypersexualized as the “sex part” becomes a main focus of controversy.

These policies and clubs do demonstrate a marked challenge towards patriarchy, traditional gender roles, hegemonic masculinity, and heteronormativity. These theoretical concepts are direct challenges to traditional philosophies and worldviews embedded within Christian doctrine. Therefore, the evidence presented suggests that parents and religious schools oppose Bill 13 because these *untraditional* views are perceived as being thrust upon them against their will, regardless of the potential positive influence such clubs and policies may have for vulnerable populations and groups like (but not exclusive to) the LGBT community within schools.

Interestingly, the FCP discourse also suggests some apprehension exists that religious freedoms will be infringed upon by students who follow and believe in the traditional values and biblical teachings they learn at home from their parents. In the document “Report on Bill 13” which analyzes highlighted text from Education Minister

Laurel Broten with commentary from FCP leader Phil Lees, a multitude of concerns are raised. Specifically related to the treatment of students who express religious beliefs that conflict with the tenants of the Accepting Schools Act, it states “***If expression of religious beliefs is deemed (or redefined) to be hate, consequence to vocal faith-minded students could be suspension/expulsion, enforced by Human Rights Commission.***” The report then proceeds to state:

*The legislation does not include religion as a characteristic for which schools should be accommodating and inclusive. This will likely mean that my child’s right to freedom of religious expression will be compromised... This is not in keeping with our rights under the federal Constitution [Fundamental freedoms, Section 2b]. How will my child’s right to freedom of the expression of his/her personal faith be protected?*

This does not mean religious beliefs will not be protected, however, it more realistically suggests that religious belief will not trump the rights of persons to say hurtful things about others in the name of religious beliefs. If a religious student began telling an LGBT student that he or she was going to hell, or that homosexuality is evil and disgusting due to biblical teachings, this student’s “religious rights” would most likely not take precedent over the right the LGBT student has to not be subjected to verbal abuse. Whether one believes the Christian doctrine to be true or not is irrelevant; a child teasing or telling an LGBT student he or she is going to be punished or is disgusting because of who he or she is bullying.

### ***Research and Statistics to Justify Opposition***

Based upon the findings from the manifest analysis exploring the most commonly used codes among each organization, the Family Coalition Party stood out as having the largest percentage of coded discourse relying on research studies, findings and statistics to justify opposition to the Accepting Schools Act. A large component of the discourse produced by the FCP is supported by the use of research statistics. In order to establish credibility and support for reasons why Bill 13 is inadequate or flawed, statistics are used to help demonstrate the arguments made by the FCP with empirical findings. These empirically based strategies echo those uncovered by Moen (1994), Gruending (2011) and Warner (2010). The fact that the Family Coalition Party has made much more obvious most use of these statistics and empirical methods within their discursive frame compared to the Institute for Canadian Values and Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, warrants attention.

Within the data, hate crime statistics are routinely discussed and presented as a reason to support claims that the LGBT population is receiving special treatment and attention at the expense of other bullied students. In the “Social Engineering” article written by leader Phil Lees, he cites that:

*According to a Statistics Canada report from 2009 on police-reported hate crime, the following are the 3 major categories for hate-crime motivation:*

- 1. Race and Ethnicity (54%)***
- 2. Religion (29%)***
- 3. Sexual Orientation (13%)***

*The study also reports that incidents of hate crime peak among those aged 12-17, showing that this is indeed a problem within our schools and school-aged population.*

What these data suggests is that the most targeted groups of hate crimes are based on race and ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation respectively. This research is being used to highlight the wastefulness on this legislation by focusing on a group that is “only” targeted 13% of the time for hate crimes. Similarly, transcripts from Standing Committee meetings, FCP communications director Eric Ames discusses the same hate crime statistics in his presentation, however, deviates from discussing all of the findings, and instead focusing specifically (and selectively) on the results of one group.

*We've included the hate crime statistics report from 2009, presented by the police, that was reported in Statistics Canada. Using these reports, religion was the second highest motivator for hate crimes in 2009, at 29%. Most of this occurred between the ages of 12 and 17, so indeed this is a school-based problem.*

The focus of the research findings becomes the incidence of hate crimes perpetrated due to hatred of religions. Which religions comprise the majority of those targets is not discussed, however, an updated 2010 Statistics Canada report by Dowden and Brennan (2012) that compared the same 2009 findings cited above, demonstrate that the Jewish faith was identified as the most commonly targeted religion for hate crimes in 2010 (and 2009) with 55% of all reported religiously motivated attacks (or 6 in 10), with Islam marginally reporting the second highest rate at 14% with 52 reported incidents\*. Based

upon these findings, this argument and data does not support the claims that Christians are as subjected to religiously motivated hate crimes as severely it is suggested in the discourse (aside perhaps for the Catholic denomination—which is however not an officially represented faith by the FCP, ICV or EFC).

These findings as presented in both circumstances are justified as applicable to Bill 13 due to the fact that according to the report, most of these hate crimes occurred between the age of 12 and 17. Aside from highlighting sexual orientation hate crimes as occurring less often than religious ones, Ames specifically focuses on religion being the second highest motivator for hate crimes. What is exempted from the FCP testimony however, is the 2010 Statistics Canada finding that hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation were the most likely to be violent:

*Findings from previous years indicate that hate crimes targeting sexual orientation, specifically homosexuality, are more likely than other types of hate crime to be violent. This trend was also seen in 2010, as almost two thirds (65%) of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation were violent. In comparison, 34% of racially motivated hate crimes and 17% of religiously motivated hate crimes were violent. Hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation were also more likely than other types to result in physical injury to victims. More specifically, injuries were reported in 59% of violent incidents motivated by sexual orientation, compared to 40% of racially motivated violent incidents and 14% of religiously motivated violent incidents (13).*

Using FCP logic, would these findings then suggest that LGBT students are in fact in greater need of anti-bullying protections given that, according to the same Statistics Canada report, most hate crimes are committed by school-aged youth aged 12-17, and that hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation are by far the most likely to result in violence and physical injury?

Framing the findings of Statistic Canada reports on hate crimes in a certain way to benefit their argument, is a discursive tactic employed to aid in structuring an argument that religious freedoms for Christian parents and students must be protected as a part of this legislation. Thereby, selectively using statistical evidence to support this claim appears to be one of their discursive strategies employed by the FCP.

Another significant point to highlight would be to question why the FCP references hate crime statistics to demonstrate a need for protecting or not protecting certain groups from bullying in the first place. Hate crimes and acts of bullying are not necessarily one in the same, with the former usually being more severe and involving physical assault upon victims based predominately on hatred of a characteristic of that person (sexual orientation, religion, race, etc). Bullying on the other hand, while similar, usually involves habitual and continuous harassment, teasing, and/or assault against the same person or group of people over a period of time. As an example, the murder of Matthew Sheppard (who was brutally beaten and left for dead) can be classified as a hate crime based on sexual orientation, whereas a male student continually being teased at school for being effeminate or identifying as gay would be classified more as bullying, though it can still be motivated by hatred based upon sexual orientation.

Furthermore, in the “Petition to the Ontario Legislature to Amend Bill 13” and a “Call to Action”, the FCP describes more statistics to demonstrate the emphasis on LGBT specific protections in Bill 13, even though there are other bullied groups that are not specifically mentioned within the legislation as protected groups. According to the “Call to Action” document on the FCP website:

*Current statistics show the following:*

- *1 in 3 children in Ontario report being bullied at school.*
- *The most common reason for students being targeted is physical appearance – which can involve a wide variety of issues including one’s weight, a girl who is developing faster than others, a child who wears glasses, kids with certain hair colour, or facial features.*

The article then proceeds to ask whether “*each of these situations require their own clubs? (Overweight club, skinny club, club for those with unique facial features, etc.) Further, would these clubs actually lead to an inclusive environment?*” It quickly becomes apparent that the FCP is using these statistics to further demonstrate that gay-straight alliances are unwarranted and potentially discriminatory. Besides gay-straight alliances, clubs promoting gender equity, understanding and respect for various abilities, and racial diversity, there are others who are bullied that do not necessarily fit into any of the above categories. According to evidence presented by the FCP the most common reason for being bullied is physical appearance. This is said to include a variety of possible issues including weight, puberty, wearing glasses, different hair colours or facial features.

Through demonstrating the statistics that physical appearance is the most common cause of bullying, the FCP uses this language to draw critical attention to the LGBT population and other groups supported with recognized clubs. The FCP then asks if all these issues deserve their own club. However, one very important distinction to take note of is that the groups protected in Bill 13 and supported with clubs are ones that have had long histories of discrimination, persecution, harassment and inequality. The LGBT community, women, racial minorities, and persons with disabilities as distinct social identity groups and categories have long been discriminated against in many ways within mainstream society. Persons discriminated against based upon physical appearance (weight, freckles, glasses, etc) do not necessarily represent social groups or identity categories with histories of oppression and discrimination as the aforementioned clubs and groups. Of course, this is not to suggest that bullying as a result of physical appearance is not as important or less severe, however, most would not find controversy in advocating to prevent bullying based upon physical appearance the way some would with groups that have been historically oppressed and marginalized (like the LGBT community).

Finally, in their “Report on Bill 13”, the FCP uses more statistics and data to help frame and justify opposition towards Bill 13 and how it is ineffective. Again, this report analyzes data provided by Education Minister Laurel Broten, with Lee of the FCP

providing critical commentary. Minister Broten also cites statistics to demonstrate the prevalence of LGBT related bullying: “In the a 2011 national climate survey found that 64% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer students, and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents, feel unsafe at school. These numbers speak volumes and are haunting.”

Based upon this quote, FCP leader Phil Lee comments:

*Focus is on LGBT stats which seem ominous, BUT:*

*Notice that the stats refer to “feeling unsafe”, not to actually being bullied.*

*Statistics clearly shows that the sentiment is not shared by 100% of the LGBT community.*

*If 1 in 3 students are actually bullied...*

- *How many students would this actually be?*
- *What percentage of population is LGBT?*
- *How many non-LGBT students feel the same way?*

*So...let’s use the given stats and work the numbers:*

*- If a school’s population equals.....1000*

*- 1/3 of these kids are reporting being*

*bullied.....330*

*- 2% of the population identify as LGBT (Canadian stats), the total*

*school LGBT population is.....20*

*- Quoted study says 64% (LGBT) “feel unsafe”: in our school population this equals.....13*

The fact that the original study used the term “feel unsafe” instead of “bullied” was also questioned, even though a student “feeling unsafe” is a serious example of bullying in action, as a main component of bullying is the fear and intimidation roused by the real or perceived power imbalance between the bully and the bullied. This is another example of the ways in which language is being twisted to their own agenda-related advantage. The way in which “feel unsafe” is marked with quotations marks above appears as an attempt to almost trivialize the legitimate feelings of the “64% LGBT students” who feel unsafe in school. By proceeding to highlight this “only” represents 13 students further demonstrates this point.

The outcome of these calculations demonstrate that only 13 LGBT students would “feel unsafe” in a hypothetical school of 1000 students. The following talking point in the report is framed in way that helps exemplify the discursive means groups like the FCP use statistics and research findings to convey and justify their opposition to LGBT inclusive policies like the Accepting Schools Act. In response, Lees asks, “*why is the legislation focusing disproportionate attention and resources on a special interest group – favouring (out of a school of 1000 students) the 13 LGBT students who “feel unsafe” when 330 other students actually report being bullied?*”

The legislation may be focusing attention on a group that may only have “13 LGBT students” who feel “unsafe”, but this a group of students that been often dismissed or ignored when subjected to bullying, and have not had protections in place to aid and promote respect, understanding, and tolerance for diversity. By using and commenting on

statistics in this way, the FCP has sought to facilitate conceptions about the Accepting Schools Act which have been framed and discussed in ways to diminished its importance, and paint the LGBT community as overbearing and demanding special protections not afforded to all. While Lees does point out 330 students are being reportedly bullied who are not LGBT, we do not know the severity of the bullying, nor the reason behind it or if it is based upon discriminatory factors based upon social location, gender, appearance, race, religion, sexual orientation and so forth. This is not to say other reasons do not matter, however, to dismiss LGBT students as “only 13” suggests they are not important or worthwhile. In fact, because the LGBT population is such a small minority, it makes it even more important that policies like Bill 13 are in place to ensure LGBT and other discriminated students are legally protected from bullying.

### ***EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF CANADA (EFC)***

Initial impressions of Evangelical Fellowship of Canada based upon manifest analyses suggested the group has perhaps has been the most prolific in its generation of discourse against Bill 13. In terms of volume, the EFC had produced the most documents, petitions, articles and reports concerning The Accepting Schools Act. The concentration of discourse based upon manifest findings were focused around talk around the codes *religious*, *rights*, and *parents*. This focus is unlike the other two Christian Right organizations being analyzed as a part of this study. It is evident through analysis of discourse and mission statements by the EFC that they are especially concerned with upholding the legal rights and religious protections of Evangelical Christian Canadians (but also religious rights more generally). Common themes among the data produced by the organization suggests several patterns that demonstrate various tactics and methods used to justify or rationalize opposing amendments to the Education Act to promote safe spaces and policies for Ontario's LGBT students. The most vocal EFC spokespersons within the data produced and analyzed for this project are General Legal Counsel and Vice President Don Hutchinson, and Legal Counsel Faye Sonier.

### ***LGBT Students Are Exceptionally Special: The Problem with "Respecting Difference"***

Similar to Institute for Canadian Values and the Family Coalition Party, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada continues the proliferation of discourse concerning the "specialness" or heightened status of the LGBT community and LGBT students as victims of bullying. Appearance-based bullying as a result of wearing glasses or having

red hair, for example, are not treated as less important in the legislation. Bullying for any reason is not tolerated. However, many students probably would not think to start a club or support group based around students' experiences around wearing glasses or having a certain hair colour. Though, an argument may be made for clubs based around positive body image promotion. The point is, none of these other clubs is explicitly forbidden from being created by the legislation if students request it, nor would school boards or schools find these clubs to be too controversial or "against their values" as many schools and school boards have found gay-straight alliances to be. The main and somewhat common sense requirements would that these clubs be accepting, non-exclusionary, and do not promote violence or intolerance towards others. The refusal of many gay-straight alliances in many schools and school boards is an example of the requirement for such protections for marginalized group identities as part of Bill 13.

Due to the religious and moral convictions of parents and some school administrations, the notion that LGBT students and issues related to bullying are being given special attention continues to be proliferated in the discourse by the EFC as is demonstrated in the article published on their website "Bill 13 and a Response to Bullying in Ontario Schools" which suggests:

*Many families feel as though the interests of some groups are being privileged at the expense of others. Families of public, private, and religious school students feel as though the proposed policies are being legislated and implemented in a public relations campaign that leaves no*

*room for their input or consideration for their constitutional rights to individual and corporate religious beliefs.*

For the EFC, ensuring the constitutional rights to religious beliefs and freedom is a central part of their mandate. As such, noting that these policies are apparently “privileging” some students over others is a useful way of calling into question the actions and “agendas” of legislators and supporters of the Accepting Schools Act. It is suggested that all of this is being done as part of a campaign to make the current government look good publically and politically by supporting and spearheading such a sensitive (and progressive) topic. In order to protect the concerns of religious parents and conservative groups, but most importantly to ensure that some students are not being treated as “more important” or “special” than others, they discuss the merits of the “Respecting Difference Policy Paper” that has been proposed as a compromise by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (OCSTA) who do not wish to have gay-straight alliances as it is against Catholic teachings, and instead opt for “Respecting Difference” clubs.

In the comprehensive “What You Need To Know ” document provided by the EFC to answer questions concerned citizens may have about Bill 13, it describes in detail the proposed “Respecting Difference Policy Paper” in an attempt to showcase how it is a better and more inclusive alternative to the four “special groups” that are “privileged” in the Accepting Schools Act. As the EFC explains, “*the OCSTA paper addresses all forms of bullying equally, whereas Bill 13 gives more attention and focus to some forms of bullying over others.*” Again, the EFC continues to insist that students are being treated

unjustly due to the special attention given to LGBT students and suggests that the “Respecting Differences” clubs proposed by OCSTA would prove to be a fair and appropriate alternative to gay-straight alliances (GSAs) and other “issue specific” groups. In describing the guidelines for “Respecting Difference” clubs as noted in the policy paper, the EFC reports:

*They must be open to all students who would like to participate, their activities must be consistent with Catholic doctrine, they are to be mentored by individuals committed to Catholic teachings and outside speakers must respect Catholic doctrine. Further, it makes clear that clubs are not a place for activism or protesting the beliefs of the school itself, but a safe place, under their supervision of a responsible adult, to share concerns about bullying.*

While the aims and purported goals of “Respecting Difference” clubs are laudable, however, they remain problematic for LGBT students and others who belong to minority populations. Firstly, the homogenization of students and the issues they face in regards to bullying is problematic, especially for those in which the issues they face may be embarrassing or something they do not wish to speak openly about with others who may or may not be supportive of them. Additionally, what assurances would there be that LGBT students and other students belonging to oppressed minorities would have their voices and concerns met with as much credence as others whose experience of bullying is the result of less politically or religiously controversial issues? In gay-straight alliances, all persons in said clubs would join specifically because they are supportive and

understanding of the difficulties and issues faced by LGBT students, or are the victims of LGBT bullying themselves. People in these groups would come in with an understanding of the struggle of coming to terms with sexual orientation or gender identity they may have faced themselves, or who may be supportive of their LGBT friends or family members. A “respecting difference” club would not share that same implicit level of assurance and understanding, regardless of the presence of a responsible adult.

Additionally problematic is the way in which the paper states that Respecting Difference clubs must be consistent with Catholic doctrine and that these clubs are not a place to protest the beliefs of the school. With respect to bullying and discrimination based on LGBT identity and sexuality, the official viewpoints of Christian and Catholic doctrine is that homosexuality is an abomination, sinful, and an act against nature. The intrinsic philosophies of Catholicism and Christianity are rooted in the belief that homosexuality is a sin. Arguably, many instances of LGBT discrimination can be rooted in prejudiced conceptions of non-heteronormative expressions of sexuality and gender identity that religious texts and schools may not recognize as problematic. For instance, what would happen if a student in a Catholic Respecting Difference club became hostile or disrespectful towards an LGBT student by accusing him or her of being a sinner or immoral? How would “respect” be handled in a way that upholds Catholic doctrine yet also assures the safety, understanding, and respect of LGBT students? These questions are not answered in the policy or suggested by the EFC. It appears nonsensical to suggest respect and feelings of safety can be assured in homogenized clubs that must follow a doctrine plagued with instances of homophobia, racism and sexism.

Therefore, singling out students into “issue-specific groups”, especially when these “issues” are based upon socially constructed identities that have faced histories prejudice and discrimination by various religious institutions, including schools, seems to suggest that broad homogenous groups about respecting difference would ultimately be inadequate to provide the support *all* students would need.

***Religious and Parental Rights and Authority – Who’s the Bully Now?***

The continuous mention of religious and parental rights and authority in discourse is once again prominently presented, this time, throughout the latent data produced by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. As is demonstrable from manifest findings, ***parents*** and ***religious*** were the most frequently occurring codes within the EFC discourse. The mission of the EFC is to ensure legal and religious protections for Evangelical and religious citizens, and in regards to Bill 13, especially for parents. It is then unsurprising that the most focused and reiterated aspect of their discourse is focused around the legal rights and religious protections of parents as a result of the Accepting Schools Act. The perceived infringements and loss of rights and protections for parents and religious institutions are at the forefront of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. These alleged legal and constitutional violations are stated most explicitly in the Standing Committee transcripts in which Hutchinson argues how problematic the EFC views the proposed legislation from a legal standpoint:

*Bill 13 is fraught with legal problems and if not amended will likely generate legal challenges that will result in expenditures of taxpayer dollars on legal fees as the challenges make their way through the courts, with a likely destination of the Supreme Court of Canada some five to seven years down the line because of the constitutional issues that are involved. The approach adopted by **Bill 13 lacks sensitivity, flexibility, and a full consideration of proper application of the Constitution Act, 1867, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code.***

The EFC continues to emphasize how Bill 13 will violate many constitutional and human rights protections due to the infringement upon religion and the lack of agency on the part of religious parents to oversee what their children will be exposed to at school<sup>5</sup>. Here, Hutchinson notes the Constitution Act of 1867, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code as examples of where such religiously based infringements occur. This line of discourse is continued throughout almost all of the data sources produced by the EFC. The following excerpt from the Bill 13 “What You Need To Know” document further demonstrates the prevalence of this talk:

*There are **constitutional and human rights issues** apparent on a surface reading of the bill. It will likely **violate the individual religious freedom of***

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<sup>5</sup> There is legal precedence for this. Bill 44 in Alberta has added “sexual orientation” to prohibited grounds for discrimination in the Human Rights, Citizenship, and Multiculturalism Act. However, parents will be notified and allowed to pull students from class when “subject-matter that deals explicitly with religion, sexuality or sexual orientation is discussed”. For more, see: [http://www.assembly.ab.ca/ISYS/LADDAR\\_files/docs/bills/bill/legislature\\_27/session\\_2/20090210\\_bill-044.pdf](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/ISYS/LADDAR_files/docs/bills/bill/legislature_27/session_2/20090210_bill-044.pdf)

*families and the institutional religious and associational freedoms of religious schools and boards. It will also likely violate the constitutionally protected denominational rights of separate school boards (Catholic and Protestant)*

The rights of religious individuals, schools and school boards are framed as becoming victims of constitutional infringements based upon the protected denominational rights of separate school boards. The document similarly goes on to claim that if passed, Bill 13 will have a “*significant and negative impact on religious schools and boards and faith-informed families*”, and will “*set a new, lower standard in the province of Ontario, for respect of its citizens’ constitutional rights to religious and associational freedoms and parental authority.*” As a religious organization of Evangelical Canadians, the assurance of legal protections is unsurprisingly a foundational aspect of the EFC mandate based upon the reliance upon legal discourses produced stemming from the fact that both prominent spokespersons (Don Hutchinson and Faye Sonier) work for as legal counsel for the organization. It is clear throughout the discourse that protecting religious freedom is very important to the EFC, and this legislation is a clear example of one which appears to violate the values, beliefs and morals of many religious schools, boards, individuals, and families.

Of course, the discourse surrounding perceived infringements of constitutionally protected rights is not only claimed on behalf of religious schools and school boards. The rights of religious parents and families are also argued as being violated due to the anti-bullying policies and provisions found in Bill 13 that pay specific attention to LGBT

students and their needs as a vulnerable minority population.

The Bill 13 “What You Need To Know ” document proceeds to explain the rights of parents when citing the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

*Canadian and international law recognize that it is **the right of parents to determine the education of their children.** Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms assures both freedom of religion and conscience in regard to government action – from school boards to Parliament.*

This same concept is similarly argued in an article by Hutchinson “Are Anti-Bullying Policies Bullying Christian Families and Schools?” when he argues that:

*Parents have the right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children (see The Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and they can ensure that the **religious and moral education of their children is consistent with their own beliefs** (see the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). In Canada, parents are granted the “**fundamental freedoms” of conscience and religion** (see The Charter of Rights and Freedoms), and they are free to declare, manifest and practice their beliefs.*

In instances of discourse referring to both religious and parental rights (and sometimes both simultaneously), the EFC continuously proceeds to back up these claims of constitutional infringement with citations from national and international legal Bills and declarations of religious and parental rights. In doing so, they continue to enforce the

notion of the legal and constitutional violations that will be experienced by many religious parents and institutions as a result of the Accepting Schools Act, especially religious schools and school boards.

One of the central arguments the EFC makes as an exemplary claim of infringement and rights violations for both parents and religious schools can be found in the Bill 13 sanctioned formation of gay-straight alliances in all schools in which students request them. The discourse surrounding legal rights and constitutional laws are further exemplified within these modes of discourse surrounding these controversial clubs that are contrary to religious beliefs and parental authority. The “Open Letter to Members of the Ontario Legislature on Bill 13, Accepting Schools Act” further demonstrates this point when claiming “*there is an obvious constitutional violation in forcing religiously based schools to establish clubs not endorsed by the faith community, parents or students, or to implement a curriculum that disrespects their beliefs.*” This sentiment is shared throughout the various EFC produced data surrounding the Accepting Schools Act. The idea that religious schools and faith communities, parents, and students will be forced to create something against their will is used to motivate opposition against Bill 13. This of course, is all framed around the constitutional and human right claims surrounding both individual parental rights to govern their children’s education, as well as the rights of religious denominational schools.

The “What You Need To Know ” document produced by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada continues to frame gay-straight alliances as well as religious and parental right infringements in a way that pays specific attention to the use of force by the

government against religious schools and families, and how they are being attacked for their deeply held religious and moral beliefs that are safeguarded by constitutional laws and protections. This document claims:

*Bill 13 and its policies in regard to **mandatory clubs** should not be **imposed on religious schools** which deem the policies inconsistent with their religious beliefs. **Schools, boards, and parent groups should be able to determine for themselves which groups and policies should be in place to meet the needs of their students and are in compliance with the existing laws.***

The EFC wishes to ensure religious schools and parents full control over to what material their children are exposed. The LGBT-affirming information acceptance believed to be propagated in a gay-straight alliance is something the EFC and similar Christian groups and concerned parents feel infringes on their rights as parents and religious persons to dictate what is morally right and wrong. In Christian/Catholic doctrine, homosexuality, of course, is considered to be a sin. Therefore, allowing schools and groups to independently come up with their own “groups” and “policies” against bullying would be problematic for LGBT students and minority populations that are often discriminated against on the basis of various religious convictions. Based upon Christian doctrine, LGBT students cannot be afforded the same degree of respect or acknowledgement in clubs governed solely by the regulations of conservative religious institutions and ideologies. Christian philosophy reinforces traditional heteronormativity and gender binaries as the only natural, legitimate, and normal expression of human sexuality and

gender. The perceived lack of agency on the part of religious schools and parents as primary educators is viewed as one of the most problematic aspects of Bill 13 and its requirement of gay-straight alliance clubs as opposed to other groups based on general diversity.

In an attempt to offer a compromise which would purportedly be more inclusive than the clubs outlined in the Accepting Schools Act, the EFC also (as did the FCP) suggests Respecting Difference clubs (produced by the Ontario Catholic School Trustee's Association) as an alternative that affords parents and religious institutions the respect, power, and control they feel they deserve in regards to how and what material children are exposed to in order to cultivate an environment of respect and understanding. In an outgoing letter addressed to Premier McGuinty, the EFC produced document entitled "Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, Proposals to Amend to Ensure its Inclusivity, Constitutionality" proceeds to recommend Respecting Difference clubs as a viable solution to the gay-straight alliance dilemma that would infringe on parental and religious rights:

*A thoughtful and more constitutionally-sound alternative [to gay-straight alliances] can be found in the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association's Respecting Difference policy paper. **The flexible and inclusive approach proposed there respects the religious and conscience rights of schools and families by permitting customization of the clubs to reflect schools' and communities' beliefs and cultures.***

The “What You Need To Know ” document, while making similar arguments for Respecting Difference clubs as a viable alternative, also proceeds to continue to make use of legal discourse to justify its opposition and uphold the rights of parents to as the deciding factor in how and what materials their children are exposed to:

*The Respecting Difference paper identifies a Supreme Court of Canada decision that affirms that **parents are the primary educators of their children and they delegate this authority to the educational institution(s) of their choice.** It also highlights that **the right to be taught from a specific religious perspective finds its foundation in Charter freedoms, such as the right to religious belief and conscience in s. 2(a), equality in s. 15 and multiculturalism and pluralism in s. 27.***

In this excerpt, the EFC uses the Charter of Rights and freedoms to support the claim that parents are the primary educators of their children. As such, it is the belief of the EFC that parents should have the ultimate say in how their children are educated, as well as the sort of material or “worldviews” they are exposed to as a part of their educational upbringing. Gay-straight alliances are categorized and conceptualized as an environment where children will be educated or taught to think differently. Children in clubs like gay-straight alliances will be taught understanding, respect, tolerance and will come to understand about the sexual and gender diversity that exists in our world. This type of education, or exposure to such ideas or views conflicts with the moral and religious ideologies some parents subscribe to. In this way, children become understood as being “indoctrinated” in environments where children may be exposed to ideas that may

conflict with deeply held religious beliefs, beliefs that are in their very essence, homophobic in nature. But as the EFC claims in “Proposals to Amend to Ensure Inclusivity, Constitutionality”, *“it is not necessary to violate the rights of **some Ontarians**, in order to ensure the protection of **others**.”*

Finally, one of the overarching themes prevalent within the EFC discourse is the notion that the new victims of bullying are the religious schools, school boards, and the parents who feel their rights are being trampled by having their children forced into learning about LGBT issues in a way that “affirms” their identities while simultaneously violating their rights as parents and religious persons and/or institutions. In his speech to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Hutchinson goes on to detail the kind of “bullying” Evangelical Christians are facing by taking a stance against this Bill:

*As evangelicals engaged in the province-wide dialogue on anti-bullying legislation, we have frequently been ostracized in a manner intended to exclude our thoughts from the discussion by **trivializing and ridiculing our sincere and constitutionally guaranteed religious beliefs**. Evangelicals were accused of being “**homophobic**.”*

He continues to explain the negative connotations associated with the word “homophobic” and how it is being used to persecute the opinions and religious beliefs of Evangelical Christians, parents, and all those who opposed Bill 13 on the grounds of its “affirming” and “supportive” nature towards LGBT students:

*This label [**homophobic**] has become the contemporary slur of the 21st century, intended to silence the voices of those in our free and democratic*

*society who might disagree with the public policy agenda of a select group of activists. This slur is intended as an insult directed at the very nature and character of the person or organization that dares to disagree*

While arguing that religious schools and parents are being discriminated against and having their rights infringed by this legislation, the EFC continues to claim that they themselves are also becoming victims of legislative bullying. Specifically, parents and those who believe in “traditional” and religious conceptions of family, sexuality, and gender identity are being bullied. They feel they are being bullied because their opposition towards the Accepting Schools Act is based upon the very religious values and traditions that have been a motivating or enabling factor in many instances of bullying and discrimination within schools.

This sentiment is further proliferated in excerpts concerning the religious rights of children and parents who may express their beliefs based upon religious understandings of sexuality and gender identity. In “Proposals to Amend to Ensure its Inclusivity, Constitutionality”, the EFC expresses how the term “likely to cause” to define bullying as behaviour or actions that cause harm, or feelings of fear or distress may cause parents and/or children to be accused of being “bullies” when they are simply professing their religiously protected beliefs. The document states that *“parents of a faith background are concerned that certain religious beliefs or religious texts on sexuality and marriage may be captured by the vague language “likely to cause” and question whether “a child will be penalized for behaviour that is not bullying behaviour, or has not caused any harm, fear or distress, but may potentially cause harm, fear or distress...”*

Again, throughout all of this, one of the focal points of the discourse remains the importance of protecting the rights of those with religious “traditional” beliefs and values, as well as ensuring the rights of parents to dictate what is best for children, and what their children should be exposed to in schools. The insinuation that Christian children and parents may now be “bullied” by this legislation for professing their beliefs suggests that the real concern may not be just for “respecting difference” but insuring that heteronormative Christian ideologies and philosophies are able to flourish, even at the expense of hampering inclusive and educational environments, especially for minority populations that may be more prone to bullying and harassment. Yet, in all these instances, the persistence of maintaining religious constitutional rights, and the rights of parents to govern the education and anti-bullying initiatives children are maintained as a fundamental aspect of EFC discourse. In this way, discourses based upon religious and parental rights are fundamentally linked.

## DISCUSSION

Latent and manifest analyses have helped to give a general perspective on how three Christian Right organizations in Canada have utilized discursive strategies to frame and discuss their opposition to Bill 13. From the data, the Institute for Canadian Values appears to be the most outspoken in respect to the type of message it promotes and the tone of the arguments presented. The ICV used the code “homosexual” the most in discourse, as well as referring to “radical” ideas and “radical sex education”. The discussion of “radical sex education” and “six gender teaching” to confuse children is only evident within discourse produced by the ICV. Some similar topics are inferred by the EFC and FCP, but none are as direct or aggressive in the delivery of their message. The main concern and focus of ICV discourse appeared to be “protecting children” from exposure to grotesque descriptions of sexuality, specifically, non-heterosexual conceptions of it and sex education policies. The Family Coalition Party, on the other hand, proved to focus an overwhelming amount of its discourse around the usage of research, statistics and empirical data to prove and back up their claims as to the *inefficiency* of Bill 13. Such discourses were also present in the ICV and EFC data sets; however, nowhere near the degree they were present in FCP produced data. EFC discourse on the other hand, most heavily revolved around discussing the legal rights and protections of religion (Christianity) and parent’s (religious) rights in governing their children. Again, both the ICV and EFC do discuss religious and parental rights in discourse at length, however, it is not focused on as intently as it is within EFC produced data.

***The ICV, FCP, and EFC: Exceptionally “Special” LGBT Students***

The discursive strategies employed by the Institute for Canadian Values, Family Coalition Party, and Evangelical Fellowship of Canada quite prominently portray LGBT students as being given special attention within the scope and aims of Bill 13. All three Christian Right organizations take issue with this perceived “specialness”, and argue that such increased attention is inherently discriminatory and unfair to all other students who do not identify or belong to the LGBT community. The specific focus on LGBT students, identities, and promoting this within schools throughout Ontario is opposed because it is perceived as being unfair to all other students.

***Institute for Canadian Values***

The Institute for Canadian Values argues that Bill 13 is being used a way for legislators to pay specific attention to LGBT populations and their needs while dismissing the bullying that may be happening to all other students who do not subscribe to the “homosexual agenda” or identify as LGBT. McVety has questioned in the Standing Committee meetings if the Accepting Schools Act is trying to establish a “*tiered system in our society where some children are special and other children are not so special as to have this level of protection?*” He goes on to similarly state how Bill 13 “*appears to focus primarily on one group of people, as if one group of children are special and then the other are not quite so special.*” By emphasizing and insisting on the “special” status of LGBT students, the ICV is simultaneously downplaying the importance of LGBT based

bullying by implicitly questioning the need for such specific protections for LGBT children in the first place. Manifest findings suggest that codes “special” and “special interest” combined only occur 2.06% among the ICV data sets. This seems to suggest that labeling LGBT children as receiving unfair special treatment may not have been a focal point of the discourse produced by the Institute for Canadian Values based solely on manifest findings. However, it remains a theme that occurs throughout the data sets of all three Christian Right organizations and a prominent feature of the discourse as evidenced by latent findings and analyses.

### ***Family Coalition Party***

Comparatively, the Family Coalition Party argues that children are being treated differently based upon their identity. The favoritism that is purportedly displayed within this legislation towards the LGBT student population does not explicitly protect the needs and bullying of others who do not belong to that community. As has been demonstrated, the Bill has “mandated” support for clubs based on anti-racism, gender equity, respect and understanding disability, and sexual diversity. Because these four groups have been explicitly mentioned in the legislation as having support for the formation of these types of clubs to prevent bullying and teach diversity and understanding, the FCP argues that all “others” are being deemed insignificant or less “special” than the four aforementioned groups. In the “Special Report: Bill 13 to be Fastracked (sic), Connected to LGBT Activist Goals” found on the groups official website, they claim that *“kids who are bullied for reasons outside of the mandated supports are effectively being told: **your***

*being bullied is of lesser significance than those kids over there.*” “Those kids over there” is of course, a reference to the “special” LGBT children being exclusively protected by Bill 13 and its anti-bullying efforts. By framing LGBT students as being afforded more protections at the expense of all others, it helps paint legislators and the government as supporting an unseemly “agenda” that seeks to normalize sexual identities that are incompatible with traditional conservative conceptualizations of sexuality and gender identity. Additionally, an excerpt of data written by FCP leader Lee’s in his “Social Engineering” article states, *“this legislation has been designed to address a specific agenda – affirmation of LGBTTTIQQ community”*. By stating that the “specific agenda” of this legislation is to “affirm” the LGBTTTIQQ community, the FCP is again insinuating that they need not be “affirmed”, and that their identities and experiences are not worthy of official recognition in a Bill that seeks to end bullying. By portraying the LGBT population as “special” or being afforded exceptional rights and recognitions, it seeks to justify its opposition to this legislation on the basis of fairness. In continuously referring to the attempt to “affirm” LGBT identities and community, it suggests that affirmation is not required. However, this lack of “affirmation” is exactly why LGBT students, as a marginalized group, require “affirmation” because without it, what is to stop bullying on the basis of straying from sexual and gendered norms? And what is to say teachers and school boards that may not personally “affirm” these students will not treat these sexual orientation-related bullying incidents as seriously as they ought to? Without “affirmation” of the legitimacy and respect afforded to LGBT students, how can an anti-bullying bill be successful? The manifest findings support the influence of the

notion of LGBT students being “special” as an important feature of discourse. When combined, “special” and “special” interest codes occur among 4.22% of the FCP data set. This is approximately double the occurrence of these codes than was seen among the ICV data set. This suggests that accusations of the “specialness” of LGBT children is a more prominent feature of FCP discourse than ICV, which has proven to be true based upon the latent analysis of both group data sets

### ***Evangelical Fellowship of Canada***

On the other hand, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has framed the issue of the “specialness” of the LGBT community and students within a framework that emphasizes the consequences this privileged position creates for other students, families and school boards. In an article published to their website, “Bill 13 and a Response to Bullying in Ontario Schools”, The EFC furthers this discourse around the “special” treatment and attention LGBT students are afforded as a result of Bill 13, and notes the general concern around the issue when claiming that *“many families feel as though the interests of some groups are being privileged at the expense of others”* and that *“Families of public, private, and religious school students feel as though the proposed policies are being legislated and implemented in a public relations campaign that leaves no room for their input...”* To the EFC, the input of families is important and Bill 13 is seen as lacking this input because the desires of highly religious, conservative parents and school boards were not consulted about the construction of the Accepting Schools Act. These parents, religious groups, and schools feel as though this “mandated” tolerance and

respect placed upon LGBT sexuality and identity is hindering their beliefs and perspectives.

The EFC proceeds to defend its stance on the inadequacies of Bill 13 by framing the issue within the debate surrounded the controversial “affirmation” of four groups or clubs within schools as a tool to combat bullying. These four clubs specified in the Bill are based upon socially constructed identity groups with unique histories of discrimination and oppression due in part to Judeo-Christian worldviews and teachings. However, instead of also emphasizing the “special status” of the other three groups (women, non-white, persons with disabilities) explicit concern and attention is paid towards LGBT students, gay-straight alliances, and how they conflict with religious doctrines and the values of religious parents and schools. It is through this lens that the EFC furthers the discussion of the specialness of LGBT children. As a solution, they recommend “Respecting Difference” clubs as proposed by the Ontario Catholic Schools’ Trustee’s Association (OCSTA). In the “What You Need To Know ” document found on their official website, the EFC argues that “*Bill 13 gives more attention and focus to some forms of bullying over others*”, but insists that the “Respecting Difference” clubs proposed by OCSTA address all forms of bullying equally.

Based upon the findings from manifest analyses, the occurrence of “special” and “special interest” comprise only 1.38% of the codes among the EFC data sets. Based upon this analysis alone, the EFC appears to discuss the “specialness” the least among all three organizations. However, the EFC shifts its framing of this subject in discussing clubs and the issue of gay-straight alliances being officially endorsed, making them “special”, and

thereby pointing out the inclusion of “non-endorsed” clubs (i.e. religious clubs). The code “clubs” appears among the EFC data sets at 4.52% and provides a much clearer picture of the true extent the EFC discusses the “specialness” of LGBT students and clubs.

*Connections to Theory and Literature: Specialness of LGBT Children*

Within the scope of this research, the data concerning the “specialness” of LGBT students falls in line with existing literature. When discussing the discourses produced by the Christian Right, Herman (1996) describes two connected arguments that hope to paint LGBT persons as undeserving of “special rights”. She argues that the LGBT community possesses great amounts of political power and wields it over others. Additional protections afforded to the LGBT community are seen as entrenching the “extraordinary privilege” of this “elite” group. She notes that one of the places in which the influence of this community can be seen is through cultural and institutional life, such as within schools. She explains that “lesbians and gays, then, are far from an ‘oppressed minority’; their wealth and power vastly exceeds their numbers. Indeed, ‘normal’ people, particularly orthodox, practicing Christians, need protection from them and their retribution” (p.351). Of course, ‘normal’ people described here, is in reference to those who subscribe to the Judeo-Christian standards and heteronormative conceptions of sexuality and gender identity. By framing gays and lesbians as being privileged, the Christian Right are employing strategies that suggest that they are receiving special treatment for obtaining rights or protections they had not been previously afforded due to deep rooted discrimination and intolerance. Changes that seek to establish these rights, assume special status and privileges are being afforded to this powerful group. This is similarly evident in the discourses produced by the ICV, FCP and EFC regarding the “special” privileges LGBT students are afforded in Bill 13.

In an effort to disprove the benefit of gay-straight alliances, the ICV, FCP and EFC argue that unfair attention is being placed on LGBT students. Instead, clubs should be more homogenous and focused simply on “respecting differences”. There is a great attempt to diminish the impact of these policies with respect to raising awareness and understanding of LGBT students, sexuality and identity; but why? Homosexuality is conceived to be intrinsically flawed by many Christian Right groups, and in effect, harmful to society. All three groups have emphasized that increasing knowledge, understanding and acceptance of non-normative sexualities is not beneficial. The ICV professes these ideas most bluntly in their opposition to the “special treatment” of LGBT students. Rubin (1984) has defined a theory of “sexual essentialism” to describe the “idea that sex is a natural force that exists prior to social life, and shapes institutions” (149). This notion that discourses produced by these Christian Right groups is based upon ideas of sexual essentialism help to demonstrate the issue they have with providing LGBT-inclusive policies that single out the LGBT community. Within a view of sexual essentialism, heterosexuality would be considered the utmost normative aspect of sexual expression. It is argued by Rubin to shape institutions such as schools, and thereby the quest to disrupt the inherent “naturalness” of heterosexuality through providing specialized anti-bullying measures for LGBT students demonstrates a rupture from this ideology that the Christian Right regard as a basic foundation of their worldview. To further her theory, she also suggests “the domino theory of sexual peril” as an ideological subset that describes the sinful aspect of sex and the negative impact it can cause for society. The strong opposition these three organizations have towards LGBT inclusive

policies, such as gay-straight alliances, can be based upon the notion that children will become sexually “confused” and potentially “seduced” into a gay lifestyle. As the domino theory of sexual peril suggests, this has been inevitably thought to lead to the decay of the nuclear family and “traditional” sexual morality. In essence, society as we know it will cease to exist

### ***The ICV, FCP, and EFC: Rights and Authority of Parents and Religion***

The most prominent and all encompassing themes evident from the discourse produced by the Institute for Canadian Values, Family Coalition Party, and Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is the discussion and framing of the opposition towards Bill 13, Accepting Schools Act with specific regard to religious and parental rights and authority. Another secondary theme embedded within these religious and parental rights discourses is the use of tactics relying upon empirical evidence and legal legitimacy as a means of supporting the claims made by these Christian Right organizations. It is very much a part of the discourse produced by the Christian Right and fundamentally linked to the ways in which arguments regarding the rights and authority of religion and parents are presented in relation to schools, Bill 13 and the material children will be exposed to. The discourse surrounding these topics seep into and become part of most other arguments and codes created and framed by these Christian Right organizations. Interestingly, the rights and authority of parents and religion are shaped and framed in two interesting ways that have guided the proliferation of the discourse: the first being the need for *protection*, and the second being the burden of *victimization* and *bullying* being shifted from LGBT students and unto parents and religion (religious parents and religious institutions). This especially appears to be the case with regard to gay-straight alliances.

### ***Institute for Canadian Values***

The Institute for Canadian Values discusses and frames the rights of religion in discourse by arguing that the provisions in Bill 13 actively work to discriminate against

and infringe on the rights of religious schools and institutions by “forcing” an activist LGBT agenda that conflicts with religious teachings. In an opinion piece from the *Belleville Intelligencer* entitled “Fringes Don’t Speak for the Majority”, Glisky (2011) quotes Charles McVety arguing that Bill 13 “**requires Christian leaders support activities and organizations on homosexuality, that is led by homosexuals, even if this is antithetical to the teaching for that institution. This is over reaching.**” Similarly, in the Standing Committee transcripts, McVety argues that Bill 13 will require Catholic Schools “**support activities and organizations that are antithetical to their very existence.**” He proclaims that this is a violation of “**our Charter of Rights and Freedoms**” and that religious leaders should not “**be forced to entertain organizations that are antithetical to what they believe**”. The “organizations” that McVety refers to are gay-straight alliance clubs. Essentially, he argues that gay-straight alliances are “antithetical” to religious institutions and schools, such as Catholic schools. This is because the very doctrine of Catholicism views homosexuality as sinful. Throughout much of the discourse, gay-straight alliances are discussed as one of the most controversial aspects of Bill 13 that all three organizations have a problem with. The issue of gay-straight alliances isn’t tackled directly by the ICV, instead, by referring to “activities and organizations”, the ICV sets to distance themselves from the clubs altogether.

To further this point, the discourse also heavily details the concern over the infringement of parents’ rights in dictating what their children are exposed to. During the Standing Committee meeting, McVety is quoted as claiming that Bill 13 “**proposes children be indoctrinated to reject their parents faith, and their parents’ family values**”.

Here McVety claims that children are being indoctrinated to reject the faith of parents and their family values. In this argument, McVety frames the Bill as both infringing on religious faith by indoctrinating children to reject it, and bullying parents by denying them the ability to pass on their values unto their children.

Executive Director Reverend Ekron Malcolm makes some more candid remarks concerning the way parents' rights are being diminished and stripped away by Bill 13. Before the Standing Committee, he claims that the Accepting Schools Act in its present form is "*hostile as well towards parents*", and that the legislation seeks to "*be able to take away the rights of parents to govern their children*". In this sense, the legislation itself is framed as becoming the very bullying it is trying to protect children against. This strategy is used to claim that parents and religious institutions are being targeted because their rights are being infringed. The fact that gay-straight alliances would be "mandated" (among others) becomes such an issue, that it alone is framed as stripping away the rights of all of those religious schools and parents, their right to "oppose" or "discriminate" against it. In essence, it is fighting to maintain the status quo.

The manifest data suggests that the ICV does indeed discuss these topics fairly often within the data. The codes for "religion", "religious", "religious belief" and "religious freedom" when combined occur among 4.38% of the ICV data set. Similarly, the code for "parents" came in higher at 7.31% of total occurrences in the data, while the codes for "rights" and "human right" resulted in 5.25% of the ICV data set. This does support the intensity of the focus on these themes as well within the latent analyses of ICV data. The data also suggests, however, that the ICV does not rely upon the use of

empirical evidence or legal legitimacy to support these claims to rights. This is also evidence in the manifest data, with only 2.05% of total occurrences. Instead, the discourse is framed around the need to protect children and the rights of parents and the religious.

So while the ICV places a large emphasis on “protecting children” from explicit and confusing information about gender and sexual identity, they also have a vested interest in protecting the religious rights, and concerned parents. In a way, they are linked. In protecting religious freedom of belief within schools, that is, ensuring inclusive LGBT policies fail to come to fruition and parents rights are maintained, the ICV is simultaneously *protecting* the children they are so concerned will become “confused” or “brainwashed” by biased liberal education that threatens the very structure of heteronormative understandings of the nuclear family, patriarchy, and sexuality.

### ***Family Coalition Party***

The Family Coalition Party has similarly framed its opposition to Bill 13 around the perceived infringement of religious liberties and parental rights. The discourse surrounding these rights and liberties is much more prominent in the data produced by the FCP than it was in the ICV data set. The FCP, as a political party in Ontario produces much of its discourse on the basis of being in the public eye, and thusly utilizes research studies and data to back up and justify many of their claims. This is a trait that is fairly unique to the FCP.

Most prominently, the FCP employs discursive strategies to frame Bill 13 as diminishing the rights of parents and religious freedom in general. This is seen as highly problematic for the party, and has a main goal to have it amended before become law. In a detailed document “Report on Bill 13” found on the organizations website, the FCP claims that Bill 13 “**does not include religion as a characteristic for which schools should be accommodating and inclusive**”, which party leader Phil Lee’s proceeds to suggest that “*this will likely mean [his] child’s right to freedom of religious expression will be compromised*”. He then proclaims that this lack of protection for the religious freedom of expression does not keep with “*our rights under the Constitution [Fundamental Freedoms, Section 2b]*”. However, protecting the right of children to speak opening about their religious beliefs (even if this discussion becomes offensive in nature towards an LGBT student), the FCP is more pressingly concerned with right of parents to control and direct the education their children receives. This includes, but is not limited to, the being able to withdraw them from LGBT inclusive educational discussions, or club activities. So ideally, Bill 13 would be amended to make “*accommodations for any child whose parent identifies the curriculum to be in conflict with the values at home*”.

Furthermore, the “Special Report” article published on the FCP website also claims that the “*strategy to bully people of faith, in order to ‘correct’ traditional values surrounding sexual activity is already being quietly delivered to GSA clubs across the province.*” What this suggests is that not only are the rights of parents and religious institutions being threatened, but a covert plan to indoctrinate children is underway that is “correcting” the “traditional values” of children via gay-straight alliance clubs that

promote an inclusive environment where LGBT students and persons are promoted as “normal”. This, of course, highly conflicts with Christian doctrine. As a response, the FCP claims that these examples of indoctrination, and forced challenges to traditional religious values are an example of the ways in which Bill 13 will work to “bully people of faith” through an increasingly secularized anti-bullying bill.

The FCP proceeds to support this claim information on the FCP website “Bill 13 - Accepting Schools Act Information And Resources” by suggesting “from a legal standpoint *Bill 13 has nothing to do with bullying, but is actually an example of bullying through biased legislation... [it] appears to be part of a strategy created with the intention of removing all aspects of faith from public life*” What is clear from these excerpts of FCP data is that it is believed that the aim of Bill 13 is to severely diminish the rights of religious parents and schools. In essence, it is viewed as an “attack” on religion, the nuclear family, and the rights of parents. It is viewed as bowing to an activist agenda that pays special attention to the needs to LGBT students.

The way in which statistical research is used to support these claims is demonstrated in the following excerpt of discourse:

*Notice that the stats refer to “feeling unsafe”, not to actually being bullied. Statistics clearly shows that the sentiment is not shared by 100% of the LGBT community. If 1 in 3 students are actually bullied...*

- *How many students would this actually be?*
- *What percentage of population is LGBT?*

- *How many non-LGBT students feel the same way?*

*So...let's use the given stats and work the numbers:*

- *If a school's population equals.....1000*
- *1/3 of these kids are reporting being bullied.....330*
- *2% of the population identify as LGBT (Canadian stats), the total school LGBT population is.....20*
- *Quoted study says 64% (LGBT) "feel unsafe": in our school population this equals.....13*

The FCP has used this statistical data in an attempt to downplay the need for specific LGBT protections, and to frame religious and parental rights as being infringed more prominently. By promoting these notions, it is presenting the notion that LGBT protections are being advocating by radical advocates seeking to promote a gay agenda that infringes on religious and parental rights. The statistical data is being twisted in a way to present their claims in a light that appears to support their arguments. The fact that "only 13" students in their hypothetical school would be impacted by these protections is therefore reasoned as being less important than the perceived infringement religious parents, children and schools would experience by being forced to entertain these ideas.

The manifest data collected from the FCP demonstrates the extent to which the group has produced and proliferated data with regards to the violation of the rights and authority of religion and parents, these two things, along with similar accusations of "reverse discrimination" are purported to be demonstrative of the negative impacts Bill 13 will have. 4.05% of all codes appearing within the FCP data set include "religion",

“religious”, “religious beliefs” or “religious freedom”. The code “parents”, on the other hand, comprised over nine percent (9.08%) of the FCP data, while “rights” and “human rights” collectively garnered 7.94% of all the occurrences in the data. This suggests that discourses produced by the FCP have been largely focused around protecting the rights of religious parents, religious institutions, and maintaining normative Judeo-Christian values within schools, especially in regards to information regarding sexuality.

While the FCP has placed a proportionally significant amount of its discourse around the protection of religious freedoms and parental rights with 10.21% of codes referring to it (*Figure 1.5*), it is unique in the overwhelmingly large amount of its discourse that was dedicated to producing and justifying its beliefs and opinions through the use of various research studies to demonstrate the inefficiencies within Bill 13, and the ways in which it infringed on the aforementioned religious and parental rights. The extent to which this is achieved by the FCP, is not matched by the Institute for Canadian Values or the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

### ***Evangelical Fellowship of Canada***

The central focus and theme of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is the protection of religious freedom. With reference to this legislation, this also means explicitly protecting the rights of religious parents. This is the main objective and indeed, the overall mandate of the EFC. On the “Mission and Vision” section of its website, the group states:

*The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is committed to making a positive contribution to this nation. The EFC fosters discussion on the application of biblical principles to contemporary issues. Bringing together Christians with expertise in a variety of areas, the EFC develops resources such as background and position papers, fact sheets, government submissions and forums.*

One of these areas of expertise is, of course, the law. Both Vice President Don Hutchinson and Faye Sonier act as legal counsel for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. It is these two persons whom the overwhelming majority of the EFC produced discourse originates from, and largely infused with legal perspectives and jargon. The group relies upon this perspective to put forth an air of legal legitimacy to their claims, and thereby justifying their opposition in ways the FCP similarly has done with the use of empirical evidence.

The “What You Need To Know ” document from the EFC website demonstrates most clearly the main focus of EFC produced discourse, protecting constitutional rights of religious parents and schools. With regard to Bill 13, the EFC argues “there are constitutional and human rights issues apparent on a surface reading of the bill” and proceeds to warn that “*it will likely violate the individual religious freedom of families and institutional religious and associational freedoms of religious schools and boards. It will also likely violate the constitutionally protected denominational rights of separate school boards.*” From this, it is evident that protecting religious freedoms is very important to the EFC. Fundamentally linked to these discourses of religious freedoms are

those related to the rights of parents in controlling the material and information to which children are exposed. Specifically, this is in reference to gay-straight alliances and material that seeks to promote non-heterosexuality as normative and a healthy and natural alternative.

The “What You Need To Know ” document also exemplifies this clearly when it explains that “*a Supreme Court of Canada decision affirms that **parents are the primary educators of their children and they delegate this authority to the educational institution(s) of their choice.***” The reason such discourses are being proliferated by the EFC is because the provisions set forth in the Accepting Schools Act threaten the very foundation of normative Christian morals and “traditional” values in regards to sexuality and what is considered “normal” and “ideal”. By providing children knowledge of these “sexual alternatives”, it is challenging the compulsory nature of heterosexuality that has been a staple of Christian doctrine.

This discourse is also framed in a way that similarly suggests, as other groups Christian Right groups have, that religious parents and institutions are now becoming the victims of bullying. To demonstrate this most prominently, Vice President Don Hutchinson in the Standing Committee claimed that “*as evangelicals engaged in the province-wide dialogue on anti-bullying legislation, we **have frequently been ostracized in a manner intended to exclude our thoughts from the discussion by trivializing and ridiculing our sincere and constitutionally guaranteed religious beliefs.** Evangelicals were accused of being “**homophobic.**”* By continuously promoting the rights to “sincerely held religious beliefs” as a part of the constitution, the EFC is seeking to

ensure their religious rights are upheld at all costs, and are also establishing themselves as victims.

These rights that all EFC, ICV, and FCP all wish to firmly establish is, essentially, the right to discriminate against LGBT children. Ostensibly, they are arguing for the right to diminish the need for gay-straight alliances by suggesting groups like “Respecting Difference” that simply homogenize issues of difference, thereby reducing the potential effectiveness of policies that could help cultivate knowledge and understanding of difference. Additionally, the right to refuse this information and prevent it from being part of provincial anti-bullying policies because it is perceived as “damaging” to religious parents, families and institutions, but also to “society” in general. Bill 13 understood as “radical” in the sense that it provides explicit protections and knowledge for students in an effort to prevent bullying on the basis of social identities that have been constructed and portrayed negatively, and in ways that have promoted discrimination, intolerance, and lead to many incidents of bullying in Ontario schools.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that among all three organizations, the opposition towards inclusive LGBT policies and gay-straight alliances is so strong that it makes up for a majority of the content of the discourse among all groups. However, the intent on diminishing the need or value in gay-straight alliances or LGBT policies is contradictory, because it is based on the “deeply held beliefs” of Christian doctrine. This is arguably rooted more in homophobia than in anything else. Christian doctrine is similarly

notorious for advocating that women be subjugated as the property of men<sup>6</sup>, and slavery<sup>7</sup> as something promoted in parts of the Bible. In light of this, it is interesting to note that neither the ICV, FCP nor the EFC claim establishing clubs for anti-racism or gender equity is against their “beliefs” or infringing on their religious rights and freedoms. Perhaps, this may be because these teachings have been dismissed as “out of date”, “unimportant” or simply that society has progressed to a point where topics such as “gender equity” and “anti-racism” are no longer as controversial topics as they once were. The intense focus on sexual orientation suggests that the real issue is not with protecting religious rights; it is in protecting the right to hide behind religious beliefs to allow homophobic worldviews to proliferate, however, in a way that seeks to justify uses neoliberal tactics to places the emphasis of discourse on protecting constitutionally guaranteed “rights” of religion and religious parents.

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<sup>6</sup> Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” (Timothy. 2:11-14) [on women’s inferior status]

<sup>7</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. (Ephesians 6:5 NLT) [on slaves’ duties]

***Connections to Theory and Literature: Religious and Parental Rights and Authority***

The topic of ensuring the legal rights of religious parents and schools as a main framework of the discourse produced by the ICV, FCP and EFC is similar to the conclusions made by Macgillivray (2008) when he explained his research on LGBT inclusive policies in schools and how Christian Right groups framed their opposition. Macgillivray argued that based upon his interviews with opponents of LGBT inclusive policies, members of the Christian Right did not believe the state has the right to legislate morality. This is something all three organizations in this study have demonstrated, especially the Institute for Canadian Values and the Family Coalition Party in their discussion of Dan Savage's "It Gets Better" campaign that catapulted this "activist legislation" according to Charles McVety's Standing Committee claims, and the accusations of the "Social Engineering" the government is engaging in as claimed by Phil Lee's of the FCP, to push through the Accepting Schools Act. The way in which the all groups continuously cite their religious and parental rights similarly suggests that they all believe the McGuinty's government was indeed trying to enforce an activist agenda, and morality unto them that conflicted with their religious beliefs on sexuality.

Macgillivray also argues that the Christian Right has made strategic efforts to frame their opposition to homosexuality, and LGBT issues in schools, within the context of a "liberal and middle ground approach". The purpose of this is to appeal to more mainstream and centrist aspects of society. As Macgillivray explains, the Christian Right actively seeks to ensure they keep their "activist agenda in the background" (2008:33).

Macgillivray's arguments coincide with the findings by Moen (1994), Herman (1997),

Greunding (2011), and Warren's (2011) research. The FCP and EFC make heavy use of the language of liberalism to express and justify their claims that Bill 13 is inadequate legislation. The ICV still relies more heavily on morality-based fear tactics, however, they do still argue fervently for the rights of parents and religion. They do not frame it by highlighting evidenced based statistics or legal jargon as do the FCP and EFC. By stating their claims and framing it as the loss of religious and parental rights and then backing these claims with empirical evidence or legal jargon to convey the legitimacy, the FCP and EFC demonstrates how their arguments have been framed in ways that benefit their ideological and moral agendas.

This is the most prominent way these organizations have sought to keep their "activist agenda in the background", through the continuous proliferation of discourses that argue the rights and civil liberties of religious families, parents, and schools. By claiming their own rights are being infringed, demonstrates that these groups do not harbour any hostility or homophobic notions about LGBT students or persons. Instead, they are "simply" seeking to ensure their constitutional rights. According to the ICV, FCP, and EFC, for religious parents and religious schools, the right to discriminate against LGBT students is protected in the constitution. In order to demonstrate the inadequacy of Bill 13, all three Christian Right organizations claim that it only protects "specific groups", while in discourse, they focus mainly on the problems inherent only one out of these four "special" groups: LGBT students and issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Through these numerous examples of the ways in which the ICV, FCP, and EFC have argued for their religious and parental rights as a focal point of discourse opposing Bill 13, it is also a clear demonstration of Foucauldian theories of sexual regulation. Foucault's theory focuses on the role of power and governmentality in inhibiting deviant forms of sexuality and sexual identity from flourishing. He describes power as existing as a constant, and not something one may or may not have. He argues that power does not only come from "ruler/ruled" model, but is also continuously exercised in many ways and is present in all kinds of social relations and institutions. Foucault's theory helps demonstrate that opposition to Bill 13 and its violation of "religious liberties" and "parental rights" is an example of the way power is expressed through multiple sites of society that have worked in an attempt to dismiss the importance of policies, within schools, that would see LGBT students as a deserving population in need of protections from bullying. The fact that sexuality is seen as such a contentious issue among the highly conservative Christians, who oppose this bill, and the insistence on fighting it, suggests that it is an expression of the power of Christianity as a regulating factor in the expression, proliferation, and protection of normative conceptualizations of sexuality. As Bill 13 is specifically legislated with the interests of school children in mind, the need to ensure religious and parental rights are "protected" can also be argued to be another way in which regulative effects of Christian-based heteronormativity continue to be proliferated within schools and passed unto future generations. The fear that drastic changes to policies that may promote acceptance of LGBT people will lead children to stray away from religious teachings around sex, and thereby "affirm" that which Christian

Right organizations like the Institute for Canadian Values, Family Coalition Party, and Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, arguably want to prevent most: the idea that it is “okay to be gay”.

## CONCLUSION

The Institute for Canadian Values, Family Coalition Party, and Evangelical Fellowship of Canada are three Christian Right organizations in Canada that have opposed the piece of provincial legislation known as Bill 13: The Accepting Schools Act. Throughout the collection and analysis of manifest and latent data, it had become strikingly apparent of specific patterns and themes that each group had utilized within their respective discourses in an attempt to effectively argue against the merits of the legislation.

Within discourse, Institute for Canadian Values was the most frank and blunt with regards to its approach. It made use of unique words and phrases such as “six gender teaching” and “radical sex education” to demonstrate the negative impacts Bill 13 would have for children. Their main discursive impact for the ICV was to advocate for the protection of children from confusing sexual knowledge, and to ensure the rights of parents and religious institutions were maintained. The Family Coalition Party was unique in its heavy use of discourse that provided statistical research as evidence to support the opposition towards Bill 13 and its policies, such as gay straight alliance, in where cited research suggested that LGBT students were not the most bullied in schools, hence, why are they so special to get all of this attention? In this way, the FCP made the protection of religious rights and parental authority another focus of its discourse. The EFC on the other hand, was undoubtedly the most vocal in its usage of legal and constitutional claims to justify its opposition to the Accepting Schools Act. These legal

discourses were used to ensure that legislators were aware of parent's rights to govern their children's education and materials they were exposed to. It was also used to demonstrate that protections afforded to religious beliefs in the constitution, thereby, arguing that LGBT inclusive policies such as gay-straight alliances in Catholic schools, was a violation of religious beliefs.

In the analysis of my research, I utilized qualitative methods and conducted a content analysis for manifest and latent data. The strengths of this two tiered method was it allowed me to become more familiar with the data, and thereby aided in identifying themes and patterns in the manifest analysis, for example, that I may have missed until I become more familiar with the data through the process of coding for the latent analysis. However, this also sheds light on one of the shortcomings of my analysis and methodology. It was very difficult to code for manifest data, despite manually combing through each document, I often missed codes I had intended to include and document. The "double-check" I conducted using a computer script was programmed to count all instances of certain words among all the data I had collected as a whole, however, what it failed to account for was some of the ways in which synonymous words, or short phrases meaning the same thing as a specific word, or code, would be missed. I was only able to come across these missed codes during the latent analysis.

Another shortcoming is the complexity with which the discourses produced by these three organizations have worked to project opposition towards Bill 13. Each theme is implicitly linked and tied to another, however, the commonalities between the arguments for religious and parental rights soon became clear to me as I began writing up

the latent analysis of data. If given more resources and time, I would have liked to go into greater depth about the ways in which the discourses produced by each group reinforced or helped “validate” the discourses of another.

For future research, I would recommend conducting an analysis of more data sources, and specifically adding an analysis of video as well. The addition of video data, specifically featuring protest rallies, and speeches by Christian Right groups would be an interesting way to get a more “hands on” appreciation for the tone and intent of the speech and the ways in which it is framed for specific audiences. I would also recommend focusing more intently on latent meanings in order to get a more in depth understanding of the ways in which discourses are used to frame opposition. Lastly, I would suggest in the future that policies implanted by the passage of Bill 13 be reviewed in order to see if it has proven beneficial in the ways it aspired, and if attitudes among Christian Right organizations had shifted at all, and if so, how?

The Accepting Schools Act hopes to be a piece of legislation that will encourage increased understanding and acceptance of the diversity that exists in our society, not only for those based upon sexual orientation and gender identity. In accomplishing this goal, it could help provide students with more fulfilling school experiences, without fear of others abusing or bullying them for who they are, or how they identify. All students should be treated fairly and with respect, religious or not, we all deserve the ability to proceed through our lives, in school or not, without fear of persecution for who we are or what we believe.

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