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Under the Covers : The Complexities of Sex Role Stereotyping in the Classroom Practices of Three
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Under the Covers: The Complexities of Sex Role Stereotyping in the Classroom Practices of Three Ontario Sexuality Education Teachers

Adinne Schwartz

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ABSTRACT

Literature indicates that sex role stereotyping in the sexuality education classroom is a pervasive problem in three primary areas: sexual responsibility, sexual orientation and sexual purpose. According to the literature, girls are portrayed as potential victims, with near exclusive **sexual responsibility** for controlling boys who are irresponsible and sexually aggressive (Rury, 1987). Regarding **sexual orientation**, queer relationships are ignored and heterosexual relationships are emphasized (Fine, 1988; Lenskyj, 1990). Discussions of **sexual purpose** (the reasons for sexual relationships) focus almost exclusively on reproduction, and not pleasure, particularly for women (Fine, 1988; Greenberg and Campbell, 1987). However, studies are outdated and few focus on actual classroom practices of teachers. This study explores how sexuality education in three Ontario classrooms aligns with literature on sex role stereotyping. Data from classroom observations, interviews and documents are analyzed using qualitative methods. Findings indicate that the teaching practices reflected a more complex picture than literature on sexuality education suggests. Although stereotypes were reinforced, surprisingly, there were several occasions when the teachers also challenged sex role stereotypes. This study identifies obstacles to gender equitable teaching practices and makes recommendations for research, teacher practice, policy and theory.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Research Context	1
Sexual Responsibility.....	2
Sexual Orientation.....	2
Sexual Purpose	2
Research Questions	5
Terminology	6
Starting Assumptions	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	12
Sex Role Stereotyping.....	12
Sexual Responsibility.....	16
Sexual Orientation.....	20
Sexual Purpose	21
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework	26
Radical Feminist Theory	27
Lesbian Feminist Theory	29
Queer Theory	31
Chapter 4: Methodology.....	34
Rationale for Case Studies	34
Official, Intended, and Taught Curriculum.....	35
Ethics Procedures	36
Site Selection.....	37
Data Collection Procedures.....	38
Interviews	39
Participant Observation.....	41
Documents.....	43
Data Analysis	44
Feminist Accountability.....	45
Chapter 5: Results.....	47
Case Context	47
Metroville.....	47
Educational System.....	47
Sexuality Education Program.....	49
The School Board.....	50
The Schools	50
Cases	52
Beth Brighton	52

Sexual Responsibility.....	55
Sexual Orientation.....	58
Sexual Purpose.....	59
Summary.....	60
Bob Thomas.....	61
Sexual Responsibility.....	63
Sexual Orientation.....	66
Sexual Purpose.....	67
Summary.....	69
Jason Ricker.....	70
Sexual Responsibility.....	72
Sexual Orientation.....	74
Sexual Purpose.....	74
Summary.....	76
Chapter 6: DISCUSSION.....	77
Classroom Practices.....	77
Sexual Responsibility.....	77
Sexual Orientation.....	82
Sexual Purpose.....	86
Obstacles to Eliminating Sex Role Stereotyping.....	89
Classroom Resources.....	89
Social and Cultural Reproduction.....	95
Elements of Truth.....	97
Curriculum.....	100
Adult Apprehension about Children's Sexuality.....	103
Chapter 7: Implications/Recommendations.....	106
Research.....	106
Practice.....	107
Policy.....	108
Theory.....	110
Conclusion.....	112
Works Cited.....	114
Appendix A: Copy of Consent Letter.....	123
Appendix B: Interview Protocol.....	125
Appendix C: Observation Guide.....	126
Appendix D: List of Classroom Resources.....	127

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

One of the only memories I have of school-based sexuality education is being separated from the boys to learn about contraception. Although I was much more comfortable learning about this topic in a sex segregated setting, there was something about the act of separation that clearly marked this topic as taboo. Looking back at this experience, I wondered if the sexuality education classes were sex segregated only for comfort's sake, or if there were other reasons why the boys were not in the room while the teacher explained contraception to us. I also wondered what the boys learned about while we were watching videos and passing around packs of birth control pills. Based on these memories that have stayed with me throughout my high school and undergraduate years, I wanted to explore further the issue of school-based sexuality education and its relationship to gender and sex roles. In my research, I found that not only are the sexes often segregated to learn about sexuality and reproduction, but that males and females are also given separate messages about their role in sexuality.

Research Context

The research on sexuality education presents evidence that historically, young men and women have been taught different values, roles, and behaviours pertaining to sexuality in the school system (Rury, 1987). The most recent literature insists that these differences are still being taught within sexuality education classes today. These differences are evident in three areas which I will explore in this thesis: sexual responsibility, sexual orientation, and sexual purpose.

Sexual Responsibility

Much of the literature maintains that males and females are taught that they are responsible for taking on different roles within their sexual and romantic relationships by portraying men and women with limited sexual attitudes and actions. For example, men are most often portrayed as sexually aggressive, with little ability to be responsible about their sexuality. Women are portrayed as passive and passionless and responsible for controlling men's wild urges (Rury, 1987). Furthermore, these sex roles depicting male-female interactions most often limit sexuality to heterosexual sexual relationships only.

Sexual Orientation

Gay, lesbian and bisexual (inclusively referred to as *queer* within this thesis) students are often marginalized in sexuality education classes (Fine, 1988; Lenskyj, 1990). Queer students are made invisible through repeated and near exclusive attention to penis-vagina sexual intercourse as the apex of sexual activity (Sears, 1992a, p.146). Not only does this focus on sexual intercourse deprive queer students of an educational understanding of sexual activities other than heterosexual sexual intercourse, but it also does not acknowledge that heterosexual sexual activity for pleasure may centre around other sexual activities.

Sexual Purpose

Much of the literature shows that sexuality education narrowly focuses on sex primarily for the purpose of reproduction leaving notably absent discussions about sex for pleasure, particularly for women (Fine, 1988; Greenberg and Campbell, 1987).

The terms sexual responsibility, sexual orientation and sexual purpose describe three areas where generalizations are made about male and female sexual behaviour. Combined, these three areas form a broader picture of the ways in which males and females are generalized to possess certain characteristics and behaviours on the basis of their sex (sex role stereotyping). Given the implications for classroom practices, I found it very interesting that much of the literature on sexuality education suggested that these narrow generalizations of male and female sexual behaviour are abundant within sexuality education classes. However, in examining the most relevant studies to my thesis, I discovered that there are few recent studies on sex role stereotyping in sexuality education classes. For example, there were a flurry of studies published on this topic between 1987 and 1992. Yet in the last ten years, academic attention to sex role stereotyping in sexuality education has diminished. One possible reason examining sex role stereotypes has fallen out of fashion could be the assumption that as more men and women are encouraged to enter non-traditional jobs, similar challenges to their expected role in the bedroom has followed. Yet given the continuing debates on gender equity and sexuality education with few recent studies examining sex role stereotypes, new studies on this topic are needed.

Further, I wanted to know if portrayals of males and females in Canadian sexuality education classroom practices are just as rigid. Yet, recent Canadian research on sex role stereotyping in sexuality education is even sparser. As McKay, Fisher, Maticka-Tyndale, and Barrett (2001) explain, “There is little to no research providing a comprehensive measurement of the content and scope of sexual health education being provided in schools across Canada” and this is “clearly a gap in the research” (p. 132).

Many of the studies I looked at gave a historic view of the larger picture of sexuality education and sex role stereotyping in North America (Greenberg and Campbell, 1992; Lenskyj, 1990; Rury, 1992; Sethna, 1998, for example). Other studies analyzed textbooks and curricula (Beyer et al., 1996; Elliott, 2003; Whatley, 1988). I found there to be a dearth of in-depth qualitative studies of what actually happens in the classroom. In addition to a variety of education and human sexuality publications, I reviewed, in particular, the last five years of the *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* (CJHS) and the last three years of the journal *Sex Education* (the latter has only been in existence for that long) to provide me with an overview of the current studies being published on sexuality in academic journals. In the *CJHS* between 1999 and 2003, 61 articles were published. Although the majority of these articles described Canadian studies, few focused on classroom practices and, therefore, few could make suggestions or conclusions about what actually happens in Canadian classrooms. Further, the five studies that concerned school-based sexuality education did not explicitly address the issue of sex role stereotyping (Benoit, Dragon, Boudreau, & Muhimpundu, 2003; Byers et al., 2003a; Byers et al., 2003b; McKay, Fisher, Maticka-Tyndale & Barrett, 2001; Weaver, Byers, Sears, Cohen & Randall, 2002). The most common topics addressed in the journal articles were HIV/STI prevention, contraceptive use, sexual satisfaction, and gay male sexual behaviour and identity.

During the three years since the inauguration of the journal *Sex Education*, 56 studies were published. Because of the specificity of the journal, all of the articles were relevant to the topic of sexuality education in some form. Many of these studies were qualitative, however few looked explicitly at the topic of sex role stereotyping or at actual classroom practices. Frequently, the articles in the journal *Sex Education* covered topics such as

sexuality education programs across the world, HIV/STI prevention, sexual orientation, and the knowledge, attitudes and experiences of various demographic groups. Some groups that were studied included male and female students of different ethnic backgrounds as well as teachers and parents. The issue of sex role stereotyping was mentioned in several of these articles (Langille, MacKinnon, Marshall & Graham, 2001; Milton, 2003, for example) however, it remained peripheral to the central topic of the articles. When sex role stereotyping was addressed thoroughly, it was in the form of autobiographical narratives describing the teaching practices of college and university professors (Hird, 2003; Scholer, 2002), textbook analysis (Elliott, 2003), and program critiques (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Hilton, 2001). Only one study (Francis & Skelton, 2001) which used participant-observation dealt explicitly with classroom practices by observing how male teachers construct heterosexual masculinity in secondary school classes, but not explicitly in the subject area of sexuality education. Further, there was a lack of Canadian articles in this journal. Given the importance of the implications of actual classroom practices within sexuality education on high school students, a further look into the current Canadian sexuality education classroom is necessary. My study seeks to address this gap in the existing literature by providing an in-depth qualitative study of sex role stereotyping and sexuality education in a Canadian context.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the current classroom practices in sexuality education in the context of research on sexuality education and sex role stereotyping. The major research question I ask is “How does the way sexuality education is taught compare

with the description of educational practices in literature on sexuality education and sex role stereotyping?”.

To address this question fully, I ask the following questions which focus my research to three specific areas of sex role stereotyping:

- 1) How does the way *sexual responsibility* is taught compare with the description of educational practices in sexuality education literature?
- 2) How does the way *sexual orientation* is taught compare with the description of educational practices in sexuality education literature?
- 3) How does the way *sexual purpose* is taught compare with the description of educational practices in sexuality education literature?

Terminology

This study explores sex role stereotyping in sexuality education classes. It is therefore important at the outset to discuss terms that are connected to these issues.

Sexuality education will be used to describe, as a broad category, the school-based classes that formally teach sexuality. There are many other sources that provide sexuality education to youth. Formally, youth may receive sexuality education from health care settings, social service agencies, community and religious groups. Informally, families, peers, websites and the media also may be sources of sexuality education (Health Canada, 2003, p.10). However, the school’s access to nearly every young person puts school-based sexuality education in a unique and important position (Health Canada, 2003, p. 17).

School-based sexuality education classes also may be referred to using other terms, such as family life education, sex education, sex instruction, health/hygiene education, or more recently, sexual health education. I choose to use the term sexuality education because it conveys a meaning that is broader than just reproduction, hygiene or health. Sexuality

education is often assumed to include an exploration of issues such as communication, relationships, sex roles and emotions (Cassell & Wilson, 1989). However, there is disparity between the inclusiveness the term sexuality education intends to convey, and the limited scope the literature indicates is often found in sexuality education classes. As Sears (1992b) explains, curriculum design in sexuality education classes are frequently based on rationality (p.7). These classes assume that students make decisions about their sexual behaviour by weighing the costs and benefits of these activities. The effectiveness of these classes are also usually measured by their reduction of negative outcomes such as sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancies (Sears, 1992b, p.7). Even though there has been a move to use terminology that recognizes an exploration of both the cognitive as well as emotional aspects of sexuality, the curriculum is often restricted to the former. Despite the mismatch that may occur when using the inclusive term sexuality education to describe classes which may take a more limited approach to this subject, I have chosen to use the term sexuality education because its inclusiveness best fits the complexity of sexuality that I explore in this thesis.

Sex and *gender*, in common parlance, are often used interchangeably. Feminist writing tends to divide these categories based on whether they are biological or socially constructed. Sex generally refers to "male and female physiology", that is, to be anatomically and biologically male or female (Mauthner, 1996, p.134). Gender refers to the socially constructed identities of man, woman, masculine and feminine (Murfin & Ray, 2003, p.182). These terms are far from stable. As I describe in detailing the literature in chapter two, each has been contested across many disciplines and each of these terms and the various nuances they represent reflect different theoretical, political, and ideological

positions. I do not deny the complexity of these terms. For the purpose of a commonly shared terminology to describe the phenomenon I observed in this study, I will use sex and gender to denote as much as possible the biologically and socially constructed categories of male and female, masculine and feminine, respectively. However, this simplistic division is limiting and in cases where these terms are insufficient, further explanation will be given.

Sexual orientation, *sexual preference*, *sexual identity*, and simply, *sexuality* are four terms that are often conflated. Their differences are subtle and they are often used interchangeably, yet each term connotes different meanings. Sexual orientation describes the categories of sexual or romantic attraction to another specifically based on their sex: homosexuality, heterosexuality, and bisexuality are all sexual orientations. I use the term sexual orientation instead of sexual preference since the term sexual preference is generally not embraced by the gay and lesbian community because it implies that sexual attraction is a choice (American Psychological Association, 2001, p. 67). While some people debate whether one is born gay, lesbian, or bisexual or whether being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is a choice, this term is rarely used by gay, lesbian, and bisexuals to describe themselves. One's sexual identity, the names we use to define ourselves, usually fall within one of these three categories of sexual orientation. Most people consider themselves to be either homosexual (attracted to same-sex), bisexual (attracted to both sexes), or heterosexual (attracted to other-sex).¹ Male and female homosexuals are often referred to as gay and lesbian, respectively. People with a heterosexual orientation are often called straight. This tidy way of categorizing people into a binary system (with bisexuals trying to occupy a space which some suggest does not exist) is complicated by those who suggest that sexuality is a

¹ Some people may also identify themselves as asexual (not experiencing sexual attraction) or pansexual (sexually attracted to people of all genders including transgender individuals and those who do not fit into categories of male and female).

“continuum encompassing degrees of sexual orientation as well as behaviors and practices” (Murfin & Ray, 2003, p.44). Therefore, in this thesis, sexual orientation will be used when describing specific identities determined by sex-based attraction such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or straight.

Occasionally, I will use the term sexuality when describing broad categories of attraction that are not defined by sex. The term sexuality does not prioritize the sex of the person one is attracted to as the defining point in describing oneself. Broad experiences and expressions are part of sexuality. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles, and relationships” (as cited in Health Canada, 2003, p. 4). These terms are more complicated than briefly described here, and will continue to be explored in chapter three.

Throughout this thesis, I mention the topic of STI/STD prevention. *Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)* and *Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)* are terms that encompass a range of infections or viruses transmitted through sexual contact. Some examples include chlamydia, genital warts, herpes, HIV, and gonorrhea. The terms STI and STD are often used interchangeably. However, there is a recent push to replace the term STD with STI. The reason behind this terminology change is that most STIs are actually infections, and not diseases. An infection occurs when a virus, bacterium, or parasite is present in the body, regardless of whether the person has symptoms or not (FAQs about STDs). A disease, on the other hand, means that a change in a normal state of health occurs where a person’s health is diminished either by showing symptoms or feeling ill (Abedon, 1998). STI, therefore, is a much broader term that includes infections that are asymptomatic

(Health Canada, 2004). Another reason why there is a move to replace STD with STI is because of the greater stigma associated with having a *disease* as opposed to an *infection*. This greater stigma may prevent people from seeking treatment. In this thesis, I will use the more contemporary term STI, except when the participants or the materials themselves explicitly use STD.

Starting Assumptions

This thesis will take for granted that one site where sexuality education should take place is in the public school classroom. It also will take for granted that it is important to challenge the rigid sex roles that may get taught within these sexuality education classes. I will not focus on the debate about whether sexuality education should or should not take place in the classroom. Nor will I focus on the controversy about whether traditional sex roles should be reinforced or challenged. While relevant information pertaining to these topics will be used to illustrate ideas in this thesis, there is already sufficient literature providing ample argument for the necessity of school-based sexuality education, and supporting the move to expand traditional sex roles (see: McKay, 1998; Whatley, 1987). These debates, therefore, will remain peripheral to my arguments. I also take for granted that making sexuality education inclusive to people of all sexual orientations and education emphasizing the link between pleasure and sexuality is beneficial to all students regardless of their sexual orientation or level of sexual activity. The evidence of these benefits is compelling enough that these issues will not be debated within this thesis (Fine, 1988; Pegis, Gentles, & De Veber, 1986). However, it is necessary to explore the broad category of sex role stereotyping and the subsets sexual responsibility, sexual orientation, and sexual

purpose in sexuality education literature. Research on these concepts will be explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The need to deal with gender equity and sexuality education as integrated subjects within schools is repeatedly recognized by researchers (Beyer et al., 1996; Fromme & Emihovich, 1998; Klein, 1987). For example, Lenskyj (1990) in her Canadian study, wrote:

Although there is clearly a need for adolescents to have accurate information about reproduction, contraception and safe sex practices, it is also necessary for sex educators to take questions of gender and sexual orientation into account. This means more than simply segregating classes by gender for purposes of comfort or propriety, and more than dealing with homosexuality only in relation to AIDS prevention. (p. 217)

One aspect of gender equity highlighted in Lenskyj's study and other literature on sexuality education is the reduction of sex role stereotyping (Klein, 1992, p. 9). This thesis will focus its analysis on sex role stereotyping within the broader scope of gender equity and sexuality education. First, a clarification of what is meant by sex role stereotyping is necessary. I turn to the literature on sex role stereotyping to help explain this concept.

Sex Role Stereotyping

Sex roles are the characteristics and behaviours in a particular culture expected of males and females on the basis of their sex. Because these roles are socially constructed, they are based on prevailing values, expectations and stereotypes of a particular culture and thus may differ from one culture to another (Murfin & Ray, 2003, p.182). Further, most feminists argue that the qualities associated with masculinity and femininity in Western culture are not only dichotomous, but also valued differently. For instance, the trait of reason is often associated with masculinity and valued higher than the complimentary trait of emotion, which is often considered feminine (Murfin & Ray, 2003, p.40).

However, the struggle in using the terms sex and gender is that it is sometimes difficult to categorically divide whether a particular characteristic is gender or sex based. For instance, are the high statistics of male violence against women based on their sex, something they cannot control? Or is male violence caused by their gender, being taught that hurting another makes them more masculine? Further, feminists debate about how gendered identities are constructed. For instance, is gender acquired through socialization or does the concept of gender precede socialization because of the limited gender binary systems within our language (Wright, 1992, p. 140)? Some argue that even the category of sex is socially constructed (see Lacquer, 1990), as there are many infants who do not biologically fit simply into the category of male or female, and that forced surgery on these babies represents a social, not biological, expectation (Unger & Crawford, 1998, p. 19).

Gender is further created by its link to sexuality. One common taken-for-granted assumption is that a man is someone who desires a woman, and a woman is someone who desires a man (Wright, 1992, p. 142). Despite the fact that being gay or lesbian does not change one's biological sex, misinformed questions such as "Which one of you is the man?" to lesbian couples or the homophobic attacks on gay men as "not real men" speak to the links made between sexuality and gender. These links are not made solely through negative impositions. The queer community itself has often celebrated its freedom to "play" with gender. For example, the prevalence of doing drag as a form of entertainment in the gay male community, the use of butch/femme roles in lesbian communities, and the more recent creation of the identity "genderqueer" which merges the ambiguity of gender and sexual identities, all draw further attention to the connection between gender and sexuality.

Keeping in mind the impossibility of definitively separating the terms sex and gender, I use the term “sex roles” instead of “gender roles” because these roles are expected of males and females because of their biological sex. *Sex role stereotyping* therefore, is generalizing about the characteristics and behaviours of males and females on the basis of their sex, without recognizing individual differences. Conceptualizations about sex roles have also provided a locus for debate among feminists. Liberal feminists, unhappy about the limitations of these sex roles ascribed to women, sought to change them by expanding the idea of what women are expected to do. They promoted the idea that women could be strong, independent and career-minded. However, some critique this expansion as replacing old sex roles with a wider, yet still fixed, naturalized and scripted space for women (Wright, 1992, p. 402). More recently, feminists critique sex roles by pointing out the instability of these categories and critiquing regulation itself (Wright, 1992, p. 402). One reason for the dearth of recent academic attention to sex role stereotyping in sexuality education could be the shift in theoretical perspectives popular in feminism. It has become increasingly popular to use post-modern theories to examine the instability of categories, while other second wave feminist theoretical analyses of sex roles seem to have fallen out of fashion. Influenced primarily by radical and lesbian feminist theories that developed during second wave feminism (which I will further discuss in chapter three), this thesis continues to use the term sex role stereotyping to critique sex roles as something harmful and limiting to women and men. However, it is worth further exploring the idea of sexual regulation itself, in addition to the discussion in this thesis about the range of sexual possibilities for males and females limited by sex role stereotyping.

Literature describes sex role stereotyping in many ways. Rury (1992) describes it as follows,

Perhaps the most basic [assumption about female and male sexuality] revolved around what has become known popularly today as the “double standard”. Basically, this view holds that sexuality is good—or at least inevitable—for men and dangerous, if not downright bad, for women. (p. 36)

Greenberg and Campbell (1992) write,

Sex-role socialization is sex education. For girls this has been learning to be passive, learning to accept the traditional or male sexual metaphor and to accept the sex-reproduction connection. For boys it has been to learn to be active, to assume control “over” females, and to accept sex as yet another demonstration of personal power. (p. 27)

These two descriptions help illuminate the three specific areas of sex role stereotyping this thesis explores: sexual responsibility, sexual orientation, and sexual purpose, which will be defined and explored further in this review.

Repeatedly, these three concepts are mentioned in literature on sexuality education and sex role stereotyping, albeit using different language. Michelle Fine’s 1988 study captures precisely the problematic nature of how these three concepts are treated within sexuality education. She writes that in public school classrooms we find “the promotion of a discourse of female sexual victimization” (sexual responsibility); “the explicit privileging of married heterosexuality over other practices of sexuality” (sexual orientation) and “the authorized suppression of a discourse of female sexual desire” (sexual purpose) (p. 30). Sears (1992a) uses the same model in his view of what occurs within sexuality education. He says that in the sexuality education classroom, “sexual danger is stressed” (sexual responsibility); “heterosexual intercourse is placed at the apex of the pyramid of sexual desire” (sexual orientation); and that “sexual pleasure is minimized” (sexual purpose) (p. 146).

Again and again, researchers show that sex role stereotyping is harmful to both males and females. As Whatley (1992) writes, “There is enough support for the belief that sex-inequitable sexuality education is not in the best interests of males or females in this society” (p. 94). Klein (1992) summarizes a number of studies (for example, Fine, 1988 and Whatley and Trudell, 1989 as cited by Klein) and concludes that “prevention programs for AIDS, sexual abuse, and teen pregnancy that counteract sex stereotypes, are often more effective than sex inequitable programs and practices” (p. 7).

Now that we have seen examples of how the literature defines and struggles with the terms gender equity and sex role stereotyping, and the reason why addressing these issues in sexuality education is important, the following sections will define and explore the concepts of sexual responsibility, sexual orientation, and sexual purpose.

Sexual Responsibility

As noted above, Fine (1988) examines the problematic occurrence of the “promotion of a discourse of female sexual victimization” (p. 30). I call this “sexual responsibility” because of the two meanings associated with responsibility. Being responsible for something denotes an expectation of one’s role. Being responsible also means to conduct oneself ethically. Under this concept, I will show how literature indicates sexuality education reinforces the following sex role stereotypes:

- a) men are the initiators of sex; women should refuse sex as well as control male sexual advances and
- b) men are inevitably irresponsible, which ranges from being unconcerned about women’s health and well being, to being potential perpetrators of sexual violence; women, therefore are potential victims who are responsible for preventing their own victimization.

As with all stereotypes, these portrayals of male and female sex roles become monolithic representations and models for both genders. As Whatley (1988) asserts, the message often found within sexuality education classes is that women “are responsible for saying ‘no’ to men who ideally should learn ‘proper control’ but are too strongly hormonally driven to be able to stop on their own.” (p. 104). Beyer et al. (1996) echoes these findings in their study of text and topic areas in sexuality education curricula. They found that “males were represented exclusively as perpetrators of sexual exploitation, while females were consistently portrayed as the victims of exploitation, abuse, assault, and rape.” (p. 363).

This system of portraying men as aggressors of sex against potential female victims primarily presents the onus of maintaining sexual responsibility on women. This sex role stereotype has disastrous consequences for women. As Whatley (1988) observes,

Even though it has become less acceptable to place the blame for rape on a woman—what she wore, where she was, her previous sexual experience—sexual assault prevention efforts are still primarily aimed at women, who are now expected to screen out potential rapists among dating partners and to learn some form of self-defense. (p. 101)

The “no means no” campaign in Canadian high schools and post-secondary institutions is another example of placing the responsibility for preventing sexual assault on women. This campaign run by the Canadian Federation of Students began more than ten years ago and continues to be a part of Canadian universities. Although this campaign is primarily directed at men to get them to respect a woman’s refusal to engage in sexual activity, the onus is still on the potential victim to speak up in order to stop unwanted sex from happening, rather than addressing the responsibility of men to initiate and obtain a clear indication of consent before proceeding. This campaign has expanded to include numerous examples of other expressions that indicate *no*, yet each example is still built on the necessity of refusal before

something is considered assault. One attempt to remedy the implication that women must say *something* in order to demonstrate a lack of consent is the campaign's acknowledgement that silence also means no, and that the only thing that actually means yes, is *yes*. However, the campaign still uses "no means no" as the basis of its educational message where date rape is defined as "not understanding no" (Canadian Federation of Students).

This onus becomes even more complex when integrated with race, religion or ethnicity. As Linn, Stein, Young and Davis (1992) explain,

For some women, cultural beliefs have taught them that in order to survive, you don't make trouble; don't speak up if you are harassed. Indeed, for some women cultural beliefs have taught them that the act of speaking up is more shameful than the act of harassment... Many women have thus been faced with the intolerable choice of denying their cultural beliefs or conforming to what is considered a deviant reality... Speak up and you'll be destroyed in one way; remain silent and you'll be destroyed in another. (p. 110)

However, as Bay-Cheng (2003) indicates, despite the documentation of the influence of race on sexuality, most sexuality education classes pay little attention to these factors (p. 70).

Combatting ethnocentrism in the classroom is beneficial to minority students who are often not represented within the classroom, but it also subverts the idea that sex roles are biological through its presentation of different notions of gender throughout the world (Nettles & Scott-Jones, 1987; Kumashiro, 1999). Biological sex roles are often scapegoated as the reason the sexuality of men and women are portrayed differently.

The emphasis on the female as potential victim constructs girls' sexualities. Male sexuality here too is constructed simultaneously. Cusick (1992) explains the sex roles to which boys are expected to conform:

They are expected, by both men and women, to be always ready for sex. They are under tremendous pressure to engage in sex, whether they want to or not, whether they are ready or not. (p. 135)

Because of these expectations of men, most sexuality education is geared to women:

Gender, when it is addressed is primarily about 'young women'. ... In sexuality discourses, young women as victims; young women who can't or won't say no; young women as responsible contraceptors; and more recently, in HIV/AIDS discourses, young women as the initiators of safe sex. (Harrison, L, 2000, p. 7)

This focus on women also has ramifications for the health of young men and therefore also on the sexual partners of these boys. By only investigating adolescent females, it is implied that males do not need to take responsibility for preventing pregnancy or STIs (Fromme & Emihovich, 1998, p. 172).

What can be done about sex role stereotyping specifically in the area of sexual responsibility? Cusick (1992) argues that labeling young men as irresponsible is unfair because the prevailing message from institutions, the media, and parents are that boys do not need to be responsible about sex. She proposes that "boys need to be convinced that sexual prowess does not make the man and that it is wrong to objectify or dehumanize women" (p. 142).

Whatley (1992) in her article on goals for sex-equitable sexuality education proposes that double standards are eliminated. She includes the following two goals on this topic:

- 1) The establishment of common, rather than double, standards of sexual behavior and sexual responsibility, so that males are also held responsible for their own sexual behavior, rather than placing that burden on females
- 2) Education against violence that includes the education of potential perpetrators as well as potential victims. (p. 93)

In these cases where men and women's responsibilities are outlined, the underlying message still remains that sexual relationships occur only between males and females. As explained in the following section, other literature points to sexual orientation as another important topic to be explored in the subject of sex role stereotyping.

Sexual Orientation

The issue of sexual orientation within sexuality education is linked to sex role stereotyping. For example, Grayson (1992) explains that homophobia encourages boys and girls to succumb to rigid sex roles for fear of otherwise being labelled gay or lesbian (p. 175). In reciprocal fashion, these sex roles help keep homophobia alive by maintaining heterosexual behaviour is the only way to be a “proper” girl or boy. Although a small number of sex educators have begun exploring ways to reduce homophobia within their classrooms (McKay, 1998, p. 29), one national American study in 1995 showed that sexual orientation is still “rarely, if ever, addressed in public schools” (Lindley & Reininger, 2001, p. 17). Although we lack Canadian national studies to confirm these findings, there is little reason to believe that studies in Canada would yield significantly different results.

Buston and Hart (2001) explored the many ways that queer identities are made invisible within the sexuality education classroom. They define heterosexist teaching as follows:

Defining sexual activity as *vaginal* intercourse, talking solely in terms of sexual relationships being between males and females, and failing to discuss condom use in terms of anal penetrative sex as well as vaginal penetrative sex. (p. 100)

Lenskyj (1990) added that these examples of heterosexism are even prevalent within progressive sexuality education literature. She says, “even the most progressive sex education literature defines ‘sexually active’ as engaging in heterosexual genital intercourse” (p. 222).

Even when educators do include queer sexualities they sometimes still reinforce sex role stereotypes. For instance, only mentioning gay relationships in the context of HIV prevention or only adding on same-sex relationships to the end of a unit still promotes the

idea that queer sexuality is dangerous, wrong, or otherwise abnormal (Buston & Hart, 2001, p. 96). Further, only discussing gay male sexuality while ignoring lesbian relationships further reinforces the idea that it is men, not women, who have access to sexuality solely for the purpose of pleasure.

It is because of these examples that Whatley (1992) has included the following as another goal of sex-equitable sexuality education:

Deemphasis on dating and marriage as goals for students and the elimination of the heterosexual assumption. Decisions to be without a partner or with a same sex partner or any variation that is not heterosexual monogamy should be respected. (p. 93)

Explicitly including non-heterosexual sexual orientations in sexuality education has two results. The first result of including queer sexualities in sexuality education is the disruption of heterosexuality as the only choice for adolescents. A second result of classes where queer sexualities have been included, “involved an explicit separation of sex and reproduction which foregrounded the option of sex solely for pleasure” (Irvine, 1990, p. 139 as cited in McKay, 1998, p. 23). This separation of sex and reproduction brings us to the third area explored in this thesis on sex role stereotyping: sexual purpose.

Sexual Purpose

Once same-sex sexual activity is included within sexuality education, it is impossible to deny the role of sexual pleasure as one of the purposes of sexual relationships. In our society “the dominant meaning of sexuality has changed during our history from a primary association with reproduction within families to a primary association with emotional intimacy and physical pleasure for individuals” (D’Emilio and Freedman, 1988, p. xv as cited in McKay, 1998, p. 19). However, similar changes in the meaning of sexuality within

sexuality education classes has not occurred. In fact, studies over the last two decades have found that in North America and elsewhere, sex for pleasure, particularly female pleasure, is rarely discussed in sexuality education classes (Beyer et al., 1996; Fine, 1988; Greenberg and Campbell, 1992; J. Harrison, 2000; Klein, 1992; McKay, 1998). Ignoring women's sexual pleasure in North America is founded on a double standard that has existed at least since Victorian times. This double standard holds that men have powerful sexual drives while women are uninterested in sexual pleasure and lack sexual desire (Rury, 1992, p. 36). Many other societies assume that "men, not women, should expect pleasure from sex" and in some countries this notion is further reinforced using drastic measures, such as removal of the clitoris (Klein, 1992, p. 12). Reducing women's sexual pleasure is one of several possible reasons this procedure may be done. In North America, cosmetic surgeons offering breast implants or vaginoplasty to restore vaginal tightness, particularly after childbirth, has become an option for women. Despite risks of losing sexually pleasurable sensations as well as health risks involved with surgery, some women turn to these kind of drastic measures, ostensibly to heighten their male sexual partners' sexual pleasure.

In North America, preventing female pleasure often comes in the form of using scare tactics. So when pleasure is discussed, "it is tagged with reminders of 'consequences'—emotional, physical, moral, reproductive and/or financial (Freudenberg, 1987)" (as cited in Fine, 1988, p. 33). This constant connection between sex and danger once again reinforces the double standard of female victimization when it comes to sex. Ironically, focussing only on the negative consequences of sex may result in the opposite effect desired by sexuality educators—increasing pregnancy and STI rates. For example, perhaps ignoring positive aspects of sexuality such as physical pleasure, emotional intimacy with another, feeling

attractive to others or gaining peer approval can explain poor outcomes regarding reducing pregnancy and STI rates (Levinson, Jaccord and Bramer, 1995 as cited in Fromme and Emihovich, 1998, p. 172).

Although information about consequences of sexual activity such as pregnancy and STIs are necessary and important to include in a sexuality education class, the perpetual pairing of sexual relationships with exclusively negative consequences is one of the ways female sexual pleasure is negated within the sexuality education class. Another way that women's sexual pleasure is denied is through the focus on sexual activity as vaginal intercourse. Previously discussed is how this narrow definition of sex is heterosexist, but in addition, this view limits female pleasure. It does so because women are less likely to have an orgasm through vaginal intercourse than other methods of stimulation involving the clitoris (Lenskyj, 1990, p. 223). This theme is even carried through to diagrams used to teach children sexual anatomy. The clitoris, the only organ in the body whose function is solely for pleasure, is often not included in textbook diagrams (McKay, 1998, p. 148). In addition, while male pleasure is discussed through recognizing the place of erections and ejaculation in the reproductive process, there is very rarely any mention of the responses of the female in the arousal process such as vaginal secretions or orgasm (Diorio & Munro, 2000, p. 358). This absence is common despite the fact that female orgasm actually plays a part in the reproductive process. During orgasm, the muscular contractions of the vagina increase the speed of the sperm through the vagina and the fallopian tubes (Scholer, 2002, p. 79).

Sometimes the connection between maleness and sex-for-pleasure is incorrectly reinforced through a discourse of hormones. Whatley (1988) writes that androgens are often

incorrectly called “the male hormone” (p. 103). She further explains that a frequent misinterpretation about the role of hormones is that since men have high levels of androgens, they have a stronger sex drive than women (p. 104). However, androgens play a part in the normal development of both males and females and therefore calling it a male hormone is a misnomer (Scholer, 2002, p. 77). Further, higher levels of androgens do not mean higher levels of sexual desire. All that is required for a healthy libido is a minimal level of androgens, which healthy females have. Any amount higher than this minimal level does not change the strength of sexual desire (Whatley, 1988, p. 104). Using incorrect information about hormones in sexuality education classes is another way that female pleasure is played down.

Fine’s (1988) vision of a sexuality education class that recognizes the relationship between pleasure and sex would “invite adolescents to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable, grounded in experiences, needs, and limits” (p.33). Whatley (1992) further lists the recognition of female sexual pleasure and desire, from women’s perspectives, as one of her goals for Sex-Equitable Sexuality Education (p. 93). Bay-Cheng (2003) adds that not addressing the sexual diversity of the lives of teenagers may result in several shortcomings. Below is a passage from Bay-Cheng (2003, p. 67) describing these effects (citations in original):

(1) teens will not be informed of the need of safer sex precautions in different forms of sex, such as anal intercourse; (2) SBSE [School-based sexual education] will miss out on the opportunity to present safer and more gratifying forms of sex, such as mutual masturbation (Whatley, 1992); (3) if coitus is treated as “real” sex, teens who are seeking an elevated, adult-like status may be inadvertently encouraged to engage in penile-vaginal intercourse (Netting, 1992).

As Fine (1988) explains, sometimes desire and pleasure *do* get discussed within the classroom:

Despite formal silencing, it would be misleading to suggest that talk of desire never emerges within public schools. Notwithstanding the suppression of this conversation, some teachers and community advocates continue to struggle for an empowering sex education curriculum. (p. 34)

This is precisely the aim of exploring the concept of sex role stereotyping within this thesis.

In this section I have covered the critical aspects found in sexuality education literature about sex role stereotyping. This literature connected sex role stereotyping with the three issues I have chosen to explore: sexual responsibility, sexual orientation and sexual purpose. In the following section, I move from covering the existing research on sex role stereotyping within sexuality education to exploring the theories which influence this study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis is guided by various feminist theories which frames its perspectives. It makes no claims to objectivity because as with all theoretical analysis, objectivity is impossible to obtain. As Brunch (1979) explains:

No theory is totally 'objective,' since it reflects the interests, values and assumptions of those who created it. Feminist theory relies on the underlying assumption that it will aid the liberation of women. (p. 13).

It is important to make clear that one underlying assumption of this thesis is that exploring sex role stereotyping in sexuality education will contribute to understandings that may in turn reduce gender inequities.

If the goal is to reduce gender inequity, then it must first be acknowledged that these inequities do indeed exist. Based upon feminist research, this study will take for granted that sexism and gender inequity occurs throughout women's lives (Brunch, 1979, p. 13). Stacey (1993) further explains the role of feminist theory in dealing with this sexism:

Typically, feminist theory offers some kind of analysis and explanation of how and why women have less power than men, and how this imbalance could be challenged and transformed. (p. 50)

This study chooses the sexuality education class as the arena in which to study gender inequity given that this power imbalance is often enacted through sexuality. As Richardson (1993) explains,

Most feminists would agree that men's power over women, economically and socially, affects sexual relationships; generally speaking, women have less control in sexual encounters than do their male partners, and are subjected to a double standard of sexual conduct which favours men. (p. 74).

Separating and categorizing the feminist theories which influence this study is problematic for two reasons. First, when naming feminist theories, it is implied that each theory is completely distinct from the others. Feminist writing, however, often cuts across

these rigid divisions (Stacey, 1997, p. 57). Second, as Robinson (1997) explains, "to pursue a total theory is mistaken and essentialist, given that to do so inevitably means to generalize and universalize" (p. 2). Feminism, has become *feminisms*, which means that feminist theory has a variety of perspectives and goals (Murfin & Ross, 2003, p. 162). Accordingly, this study is informed by three theoretical bodies which sometimes overlap conceptually, while other times contradict each other— radical feminist theory, lesbian feminist theory, and queer theory. Taken together, these three theories provide a lens through which the issue of sexuality education and sex role stereotyping is viewed.

Radical Feminist Theory

Richardson (1993) explains a main tenet of radical feminist theory: "For many radical feminists, sexuality is at the heart of male domination by which men control and maintain their power over women in society generally" (p. 74). During the period often referred to as "first wave" feminism in the nineteenth century, sexuality was also an important issue of concern. First wave feminists evoked the idea of the "passionless woman" and female sexual purity in order for women to "assert control in the sexual arena" (Echols, 1989, p. 13). However, with social conditions in the mid-twentieth century giving women greater economic independence from men, and the access to reliable birth control, women had the proper conditions in place to advocate for sexual rights without needing to claim a biological predisposition to sexual chastity (Echols, 1989, p. 13). Radical feminists during the late 1960s and early 1970s asserted that their sexuality was to be protected from patriarchal subversion, but also celebrated as a source of women's pleasure. As Echols (1989) explains, "Radical feminists articulated the earliest and most provocative critiques of the family, marriage, love, normative heterosexuality, and rape." (p.13). Radical feminism

recognizes the impact that sexual inequities have on a woman's sex life, but more importantly, it recognizes that inequitable sexual relations impact almost every other aspect of women's lives as well:

It may influence the way we feel about our bodies and our appearance, the clothes we wear, the work we do, our health, the education we receive, and our leisure activities, as well as the relationships we feel able to have with both women and men. (Richardson, 1993, p. 75)

Radical feminist theory informs this study because it places sexuality at the centre of its analysis and demonstrates the importance of recognizing the connection between sexuality and gender inequities.

One critique of radical feminist theory is that it presents all men as responsible for oppressing women, and all women as victims to this patriarchy (Richardson, 2000, p. 64). For example, radical feminism tended to minimize issues of race among women in favour of a universal sisterhood where gender was thought to unite them more than race divided them (Echols, 1989, p. 10). The idea of *universal sisterhood*, that women are united in their oppression, does not take into account the diversity and divisions in the problems and goals of women. Attributes such as race may determine more primary needs than gender in the struggle for social justice for women of colour. Women of colour, therefore, may depend on men of colour for support, before depending on White women who do not understand racism.

Similarly, Maynard (1993) cautions that it is men's gender roles which also need to be questioned, rather than targeting each individual man as inevitably contributing to the oppression of women. She writes, "We must not allow the question of men and masculinity to disappear off the agenda" (p. 120). Instead, we must think of strategies to get men to change and to take responsibility for their actions. This criticism informs this thesis through

its focus on how both men and women are affected by sex role stereotyping and through examining the roles of men and women in addressing these stereotypes.

Despite these variations within the views of radical feminists, most of these women would likely agree that “heterosexuality is a key site of male power” (Richardson, 2000, p. 20). Yet, there was much disagreement among radical feminists on how to approach this site of oppression. Some feminists believed that women’s sexual relationships with men could be used as a bargaining chip for liberation (Echols, 1989, p. 6). However, other radical feminists have argued “if heterosexuality is key to male dominance, feminists should reject sexual relationships with men” (Richardson, 2000, p. 20). Further, disappointed with the failings of universal sisterhood many lesbians desired a new movement conjoining lesbianism and feminism (Echols, 1989, p. 203). As Ross (1995) explains,

Oppressed as women in a patriarchal world, lesbians argued that, as lesbians, they were marginalized by people and institutions saturated with heterosexual bias. This double oppression alone differentiated them, they insisted, from their straight sisters and gay brothers, and underpinned the push for a united lesbian-feminist front. (p. 69)

With this idea in mind, I turn now to lesbian feminist theory.

Lesbian Feminist Theory

Lesbian feminist theorist Bonnie Zimmerman describes heterosexism as the “set of values and structures that assumes heterosexuality to be the only natural form of sexual and emotional expression” (Zimmerman, 1986, p. 15). Lesbian feminism often advocates for *separate spheres*, such as women-only households, schools and organizations, to combat this heterosexism. Some lesbian feminists say that establishing separate spheres is not enough. They argue that it is necessary to completely eliminate men from our sex lives, that is, to be lesbian, in order to disrupt the power imbalance found in heterosexual relationships.

However, what both these ideas have in common is the assertion that relationships with men, sexual or otherwise, can be limiting.

Lesbian feminist theory influences this study, not in advocating the separate spheres for women as the ultimate solution to inequity but instead, by recognizing the political impact of women's relationships with men and the existence of heterosexism in general. This study seeks to change that relationship by examining how diverse sexualities are taught (or not taught) within sexuality education.

Many Women's Studies students subscribe to a progress narrative where older feminist theories are considered "naïve and simplistic" and more recent feminist theories are considered "wise and sophisticated" (Stacey, 1997, p.58). In avoiding this progress narrative, I choose to include two historically influential bodies of work to inform my research: radical feminism and lesbian feminism. The historical context of these two theories are important to understand. However, using these historically influential theories is not enough. Their focus on separatism as a solution is limiting as it does not recognize that heterosexual women will not necessarily choose to end sexual relationships with men. For example, I noted that ending relationships with men may be especially undesirable for women of colour who have joined together with men of colour to fight racism. In addition, avoiding relationships with men as the sole option for social change excludes the possibility of change *within* heterosexual relationships. Some critique the call for women's separate spaces as a way to simply evade patriarchy, rather than engage with it (Echols, 1989, p. 5). As Koedt (1971) points out,

the false implication that to have no men in your personal life means you are therefore living the life of fighting for radical feminist change.... Sex roles and male supremacy will not go away simply by women becoming lesbians. (Koedt, 1971 as cited in Ross, 1995, p. 28)

Therefore my study uses radical feminism and lesbian feminism as just two of the bodies of work which inform my research. In the next section I will explain how queer theory also influences this study.

Queer Theory

It is difficult to define the precise moment in which lesbian feminist theory and queer theory became separate entities. They share a common history and sometimes common goals. According to Richardson (2000), "Many of the radical theories and ideas of the 1970s and 1980s (re) appear in queer theory" (p. 50). Garber (2001) echoes this as she writes,

The debate between lesbian feminism and queer theory... presents a simplistic either/or choice between two terms that are mutually implicated. (p. 1)

Where queer theory drastically differs from radical feminism is through a disruption of, rather than an emphasis on, politics based on identity. As Richardson (2000) explains "queer theory is centrally concerned with the homo/heterosexual binary and the ways in which this operates as a fundamental organizing principle in modern societies" (p. 5). Britzman (1998) continues by problematizing these dualisms through the naming of queer theory. She writes: "Queer theory proposes to think identities in terms that place as problem the production of normalcy and that confound the intelligibility of the apparatuses that produce identity as repetition" (p. 81). In other words, queer theory focuses not on the creation of identities, but on the problematic nature of institutions that continue to present identities as monolithic, static and "normal".

Sexuality education has been a central institution in presenting heterosexuality as normal (Lindley & Reininger, 2001). When gay or lesbian identities are included, they also have been presented as monolithic and are "othered" by tagging same-sex relationships on to

the end of a program or focusing on gay sexuality only in terms of HIV transmission (Buston & Hart, 2001). Therefore, queer theory gives us an emphasis on non-heterosexual identities, while at the same time allowing us to disrupt the putative normalcy of heterosexual relationships. Segal (1997) encourages women to “queer” heterosexual norms (Sullivan 2003, p.127) by subverting: “traditional understandings of gender and sexuality, [and] questioning the ways in which women’s bodies have been coded as uniquely ‘passive’, ‘receptive’, or ‘vulnerable’” (Segal as cited in Sullivan, 2003, p.127).

In this way, queer denotes not an identity, but a position. Because of this, the use of the term queer to represent the identity of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and even straights who identify with antihomophobic politics is common in this view of sexuality (Murfin and Ray, 2003, p.181). Queer theory influences this study by encouraging questions about sexuality education in relationship to sexual interactions of all orientations, and through the examination of the institutions that create these identities.

Since both radical feminist theory and lesbian feminist theory excludes heterosexuality as a site for social change, this section started with including queer theory as a guiding body of work because of its recognition that social change may occur within heterosexual relationships. The attention to the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population within queer theory is just as important. In fact, despite assertions that queer theory has led us away from identity politics, in common usage, the word queer is sometimes used just to replace the numerous identities that are now subsumed in the “gay” community. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual identities can fall under the umbrella term of queer. As Sullivan (2003) says, “It appears that queer does function, at least at times, as a new, and less wordy,

label for an old box” (p. 44). Ross (1995) explains the contradiction presented by the double use of the word queer:

Efforts to describe and analyse contradictions that arise in the process of identity production suggest new possibilities for historicizing and explicating how identity itself becomes a site of multiple and conflicting claims. (p. 231)

Ross’ articulation of the complexity of using and describing terms to reflect sexual orientation/sexuality must be noted as each term throughout this thesis is written in the context of which it applies.

Richardson (1997) summarizes:

Queer is associated with the emergence of a new politics of identity in the 1990's which emphasizes the fragmentation and fluidity of identity.... In part, this shift is associated with the influence of post-modern critiques of earlier feminist and lesbian/gay thinking about gender and sexuality, especially the focus on disrupting binary categories such as woman/man; heterosexual/homosexual; straight/gay". (p. 166)

The research questions in this study are formed around the evidence of the repeatedly and differently valued binary categories. It is the active/passive, heterosexual/homosexual, sexual/reproductive binary within sexuality education that is examined in this thesis.

Consequently, although my research does not specifically disrupt the categories of *male* and *female*, it does disrupt the binary split by forming questions that explore and unsettle the concepts associated with masculinity and femininity, and the automatic coupling of the two. The theories described here guided my initial framework and my chosen research focus. However, the theories employed did not preclude the opportunity for theoretical propositions to emerge from the data itself. These theories helped to order and make sense of the data. At the same time, the data sometimes challenged my understanding of the issue under study, and also challenged the underlying theories informing these interpretations.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Case Studies

The use of case study best suited this project as this thesis covers three important aspects particularly associated with case studies:

(a) define topics broadly, not narrowly, (b) cover contextual conditions, and not just the phenomenon of the study, and (c) rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence. (Yin, 1993, p. xi)

Unlike other methodologies that may be more narrow in focus, a case study can be described as a detailed exploration of one or more cases in which the data collection is in-depth and involves multiple sources of information (Creswell, 1998). Often data collected from multiple cases offers more compelling data which strengthens the research (Yin, 1984). In addressing the research questions presented here, the contextual factors were examined in order to fully understand the data collected. Writing that explains the issues, contexts, and particularities of each case is often called *thick description*. Through writing thick description, based on these contextual factors, information that may occur as background in other studies, took a great importance in this one (Geertz, 1973). For example, thick description in this study included close detail of the daily occurrences in the classroom, actual dialogue between the teacher and students and the context of why the teachers chose to teach the way that he or she did, while still protecting the anonymity of the participants and the school. In this chapter I will further describe the specific methods I used in this thesis to illustrate the appropriateness of case study methodology used in my study.

Official, Intended, and Taught Curriculum

I chose to look at classes in the same grade level within Ontario schools in order to ensure that the *official* curriculum would be similar so I could concentrate the analysis on the *taught* and *intended* curriculum within each class. The official curriculum consists of what is mandated in writing by an authorized body. It is expected that the teachers will teach it, and that the students will learn it (Cuban, 1995, p. 5). What the teacher plans to teach can be called the intended curriculum. It can be defined as “what is planned in the way of aims, content, activities, and sequence” (Eisner, 1985, p. 46). However, both the official curriculum and the intended curriculum may differ from what is actually taught within the classroom. Teachers have the agency, and the privacy, to teach in their classroom in ways that differ from the official curriculum as well as from other teachers in the same school board, or even the same school. In addition, often what the teacher aims to teach may not be what the teacher actually teaches because of time constraints, unforeseen obstacles, or student learning level. The teacher may also simply not be aware that his or her intended curriculum does not match what he or she actually teaches in the classroom. What actually gets taught, and can only be known by those in the classroom, is called the taught curriculum (Cuban, 1995, p. 5).

There are various other categories to describe educational processes. The *learned curriculum* is what students learn, even if it is more limited than what is found in the taught curriculum. In this study, I only examine what the teachers teach, and do not formally investigate what students are learning from these classroom experiences (in a much larger study it would be ideal to investigate the learned curriculum, in addition to the taught curriculum, by examining student perspectives). The *hidden curriculum* conveys the

underlying messages and values found within the school system. It includes decisions such as which religious holidays are recognized with time off during the school year and what types of student clubs are encouraged by teachers. Although my thesis does investigate aspects of the hidden curriculum, its primary focus is on the taught curriculum.

In the context of this study, the official curriculum is mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the District School Board. It is because the taught curriculum may differ from both the official and intended curriculum that I chose to directly observe how and what is being taught in sexuality education classes.

Ethics Procedures

Receiving ethical approval to do research in the school system requires a rigorous set of procedures. University of Ottawa requires all students to obtain approval from the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) by filling out a detailed application listing the ways the researcher will adhere to ethical practices (more on these specific requirements below). I obtained approval to conduct my study on May 5, 2003. In addition, the school board I studied requires a description of the project before allowing researchers to enter the school. This application has two purposes. First, the school must determine if the project meets ethical standards of research and will not put undue stress on the staff or students. Second, this application is used to promote the project within the school board and recruit potential participants. I received approval from the Board of Education on September 29, 2003.

The details of these ethics applications are of the utmost importance as they protect the participants, who generously donate their time and energy, from harm. As Fontana and Frey (2000) explain,

Traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of *informed consent* (receiving consent by the subject after having carefully, and truthfully informed him or her about the research), *right to privacy* (protecting the identity of the subject), and *protection from harm* (physical, emotional, or any other kind). (p. 62)

To maintain ethical standards, I ensured these previous three conditions were met. I made sure the participants were informed about the general nature of my study by explaining that I was interested in observing how their teaching practices connected with the issue of sex role stereotyping. I obtained written consent from each participant after a discussion about what their participation entails (see Appendix A). There is the possibility that participants will modify their behaviour when they are informed about the phenomenon being studied. However, due to the frantic pace and unpredictability of the classroom, the ability to have enough self-restraint and awareness to repeatedly monitor and change one's behaviour is negligible. Further, many would consider deceiving the participants of the nature of the study exploitative. The participants' right to privacy was ensured by hiding identifying characteristics (such as the schools' and participants' names) through the use of pseudonyms. Last, I attempted to protect the participants from harm by giving them several opportunities during various stages of the research to express concerns about participating in this study. Thinking about ethical concerns is important before any of the cases are selected.

Site Selection

The Ontario Ministry of Education requires high school students to complete at least one course in Health and Physical Education in which one mandatory unit is "healthy growth and sexuality". A copy of the research summary I provided to the Board of Education was circulated by the Board of Education to the principals of the school board, inviting them to participate in my study. I received approval from six principals within the school board, and

was given the email addresses or phone numbers of the teachers who teach the grade nine “Healthy Growth and Sexuality” unit in their school. I contacted each of these teachers, and received a positive response from four teachers. Three² of these teachers, Beth Brighton, Bob Thomas, and Jason Ricker, became the three participants of this study.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to enrich the understandings of this study, I use the process of methods triangulation. Stake (2000) explains that triangulation is a process that can be used to clarify meaning and to verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (p. 443). He further describes that because no observation or interpretation is perfectly repeatable, triangulation is a good method to clarify meaning by using multiple perspectives. In methods triangulation, the researcher uses more than one research method (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 212). I use three different methods to collect data: interviews, participant observation and document analysis. Using methods triangulation yields richer and more trustworthy analysis. It also produces a dimension that although important, may rest hidden when using only one research method. As Stake (2000) explains,

Caseworkers seek to see what is ordinary in happenings, in settings, in expressions of value.... What detail of life the researchers are unable to see for themselves they obtain by interviewing people who did see it or by finding documents recording it. (p. 445)

This quote outlines the three types of data collection activities I did: interviews, observation, and document analysis.

² The observations of the fourth teacher, a female teacher at the same school as Jason Ricker, did not provide data especially useful to the thesis. It neither supported, nor refuted, the assertions I make in this thesis. Based on relevancy, I limited the data used in this thesis to the three other teachers I interviewed and observed.

Interviews

To understand the perspectives of the teachers themselves, I interviewed three teachers from two different schools. One male teacher and one female teacher, Bob Thomas and Beth Brighton, taught at Westgate Collegiate and the other male teacher, Jason Ricker, taught at Lawrence Secondary School.³ I interviewed Beth and Jason in their offices, and I interviewed Bob in the corridor attached to the school gymnasium. Each of the initial interviews were approximately 30 minutes long, however, I would ask an additional ten minutes of follow up questions after each observation session. These interviews were semi-structured, using a set of predetermined open ended questions, but adding, modifying and re-ordering questions based on the context of the interview and the daily classroom events (see Appendix B). At the end of each interview, and throughout the daily observation sessions, I gave the respondents the opportunity to elaborate on any of their previous responses, add any additional information they felt I should know, or talk about the research project in general.

Some feminists have argued that all interviews should be collaborative and interactive, rejecting the subject/object model (Burt & Code, 1995, p. 9). However, this prescription lacks in two ways. First, ensuring a collaborative interview is not always practical and exerts “excessive demands” on researchers (Reinharz as cited in Burt and Code, 1995, p 9). Second, while the researcher may attempt collaboration, the research project still ultimately is that of the researcher because the fulfillment of his or her research goals are prioritized over other purposes (Stacey as cited in Gottfried, 1996, p. 15). The interview process in this thesis does not include a collaborative approach, but acknowledges the feminist push to include such interactive practices. At the same time, it is inaccurate to

³ Participant and school names have been changed to protect their privacy

say that the interviewee's statements are theirs alone, untouched by the interviewer. As Kvale (1996) explains, the interviewer's questions "lead up to what aspects of a topic the subject will address, and the interviewers active listening and follow up on the answer co-determines the course of the conversation" (p. 83). Therefore the participants' responses must be read within the context of the conversation between interviewer and interviewee.

With approval from the participants, I recorded the interviews using a digital recorder and transcribed them myself using my home computer. The statements were transcribed verbatim, word for word, even when repetitions that seem normal in the fast-paced conventions of oral speech came across as awkward in the written form. Pauses, emotional expressions like laughter and emphases in intonation were all recorded within the transcript. However, despite every emphasis to accurately represent the participants voices on paper, perhaps the transcription process from oral to written forms should not be considered so much as transcription as *translation*. As Gottfried (1996) explains,

Writing is always an act of translation rather than simply a transcription of women's words. It is neither desirable nor possible to simply represent the "voices" of women. Women's voices are always mediated through the filter of the researcher and conventions of language. (p. 15)

Gottfried here speaks about women's voices in the context of feminist methodologies and the sexist treatment of women as subjects, however, her comments equally apply to representing men's voices. Kvale (1996) echoes these sentiments generally to transcription and cautions against regarding transcripts as *the* solid empirical data in an interview project, as "every transcription from one context to another involves a series of judgments and decisions" (p. 163). Further, he explains that transcriptions freeze a live conversation into written text which despite their fleetingness, gets fixed to be scrutinized and interpreted by the researcher and the public. He writes about this process using the horizon as a metaphor:

The words of the transcripts take on a solidity that was not intended in the immediate conversational context. The flow of conversation, with its open horizon of directions and meanings to be followed up, is replaced by the fixated, stable written text. (Kvale, 1996, p. 167)

These same limitations of transcription in interviews applies to the recording of occurrences within participant observation, the next method of data collection I will describe.

Participant Observation

The bulk of the data I collected came from a series of participant-observation sessions. The purpose of observation is to gather information about the setting that was observed, the activities that took place, and the people who participated in the activities (Patton, 1990, p. 202). For the observation sessions, I sat in on the grade nine “Healthy Growth and Sexuality” unit of the three teachers: Beth Brighton, Bob Thomas, and Jason Ricker. The number of days spent on this unit differed for each class depending on how many days the Physical-Education department set aside for the sexuality education unit. Beth’s unit on sexuality education consisted of nine classes at 70 minutes each, for a total of 10.5 hours of instructional time that I observed. Bob’s unit, also at 70 minutes per day, consisted of six classes for a total of seven hours of instructional time. Jason’s sexuality education unit was shortened by one day, due to the internet not working, from five days to four days at 75 minutes each for a total of five hours of teaching time. Each of these classes were sex-segregated, as are most sexuality education classes. The two classes taught by male teachers contained only male students. The class taught by a female teacher had only female students. During the classes many activities took place such as the teacher lecturing, handing out worksheets and showing the class films, all which were a part of the observation sessions. I also interviewed each of the teachers before commencing the participant

observation and asked them questions throughout the observation period. During this observation period, I took field notes which consisted of sketches of the setting, written descriptions of the activities within the room, and quotations or descriptions of the substance of the teachers' comments. In addition, my own comments such as feelings, reactions and initial interpretations were noted as is common in case study procedures (Merriam, 1988). These observations were recorded on the Observation Guide (see Appendix C).

These notes were taken by hand in a notebook divided vertically into two sides. I wrote about the actual events of the classroom on the right side of the page, and I noted my own initial comments on the left side of the divided pages. After each class, these notes were typed up using my home computer with my own initial comments written directly into the description of the classroom activities differentiated by using a different coloured font.

The role of the participant observer can vary in the degree of participation (Patton, 1990, p. 217). In the sessions I observed, I acted primarily as an observer with my participation limited to passing out worksheets, going on a class walk, or donating money to one of the charities for which the class was collecting money. The remainder of the time I sat at the back of the classroom as inconspicuously as possible. The purpose of my being in the classroom was known to both the teacher and the students who were given a sheet describing my study prior to the actual observation period. Due to the vast amount of activity and dialogue occurring in the classroom, it was impossible for me to record every occurrence. When pacing was slow, I recorded all the details, however, when the classroom pace quickened, I focused my note taking on mentions of sexual responsibility, sexual orientation, or sexual purpose.

There are many advantages of participant-observation. The first, pertaining to my study in particular, is that the best way to know what is happening within the classroom is to view it. Asking a participant to recount the occurrences may mean that left out is a) information that the participant is unaware of and b) sensitive information a participant is reluctant to give (Patton, 1990, p. 203). As Patton (1990) explains,

Observations permit the evaluator [or observer] to move beyond the selective perceptions of others. Interviews present the understandings of the people being interviewed. Those understandings constitute important, indeed critical information. However, it is necessary for the researcher to keep in mind that interviewees are always reporting perceptions—selective perceptions. By making their own perceptions part of the data available in a program, evaluators [or observers] are able to present a more comprehensive view of the program being studied. (p. 204)

However, as explained before in the description of my interview methods, these observation sessions are faced with similar problems of selective interpretation and the freezing of live conversation into the static, dissected quotation.

Documents

The third method I use is document analysis. Although the bulk of the data I used are from participant-observation and interviews, the documents I used were also important. I collected from the three classrooms any handout that was distributed to the students. These handouts included diagrams, worksheets, tests, or assignment descriptions. A list of these documents can be found in Appendix D. These documents provided insight to the texts available to teachers to teach sexuality education as well as what is actually taught. At the end of the unit, a student may be left with no permanent record of the class except for what was distributed to him or her. Included in this document analysis were the films shown to

the class, despite their aural rather than written form. I used similar methods of data analysis on the films by recording in written forms descriptions of the images and text.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed in a constant comparative method in which the categories are developed through coding the material within the transcripts, observation sessions and textual analysis and comparing them. Tuckman (1999) describes the constant comparative method which I followed. It is:

A search by a researcher for key issues, recurrent events, or activities that then become categories of focus. Further observation looks for incidents that reflect the categories of focus to determine the diversity of the dimensions under the categories. Such incidents are continually sought and described, guided by the categories, in an effort to discover basic social processes and relationships. (p. 402)

Charmaz (2000) further explains the different comparisons made when using the constant comparative method:

(a) comparing different people (such as their views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences), (b) comparing data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, (c) comparing incident with incident, (d) comparing data with category, and (e) comparing category with other categories. (p. 515)

This process is not a series of steps but occurs and reoccurs all at once, where the researcher continually returns to each of the steps (Bogdan & Bilkin, 1992, p. 74). To follow this constant comparative model, I read through the interview transcripts, observation notes and document notes several times to look for recurring events and patterns. I then started developing categories to describe the issues and events described in the notes. Some events fit more than one category. These categories provided the structure for the content of my study to be explored and described. In this method, the analysis and the coding often occurs

simultaneously because ultimately the categories shape the analytical frameworks (Charmaz, 2000, p. 516). Beginning with the development of spontaneous subquestions during the interview stage, analysis permeates the entire data collection process. Bogdan and Bilkin (1992) explain that when using a constant comparative method, “analysis begins early in the study and is nearly complete by the end of the data collection” (p. 73). Ryan and Russell (2000) summarize,

No matter how the researcher actually does the inductive coding, by the time he or she has identified the themes and refined them to the point where they can be applied to an entire corpus of texts, a lot of interpretive analysis has already been done. (p. 781)

Given this simultaneous coding and analyzing, one could conclude that coding *is* analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994 as cited in Ryan and Russell, 2000, p. 781). The constant comparative method makes no attempt to prove theories nor demonstrate universality of the analysis which makes it well suited to the case study method and this study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Feminist Accountability

Many feminists acknowledge that while doing qualitative research presents someone’s experiences as something other than their own, these experiences rarely speak for themselves and require analysis and interpretation (Burt & Code, 1995, p. 9). However, this interpretation cannot be left unqualified lest they are taken as a truth by trumping whatever interpretations the participants have about their own experiences. Burt and Code (1995) insist that feminist accountability means that the participants remain active in the research to the extent that the results of the study are available and accessible to them (p. 9). The interpretations I put forth in this thesis will be distributed to the participants upon request

and is here acknowledged that participants may hold different interpretations than the ones presented here. In this study, I explore the issue of sex role stereotyping and welcome dialogue with readers and participants about alternative interpretations of the data. Some researchers use several interpreters of the data collected in order to maximize the possibility for alternative viewpoints (Kvale, 1996, p. 208). Because this study took place in the context of a master's program, I acted as the sole interpreter. However, the richness of this study could have benefitted from the analysis of more than one researcher.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Case Context

Metroville⁴

The Canadian city of Metroville is large and culturally diverse. It has over one million residents. Many museums and galleries dot the city. Metroville boasts a highly educated workforce. In addition, families in Metroville had a high median income compared to other Canadian cities in 2001.⁵ Still, nearly 15 per cent of its residents live below the low income cut off (LICO) threshold.⁶ Metroville is home to several colleges, universities, technology schools and professional institutions.

Educational System

In Canada, the educational system is a provincial responsibility. Developing the official curriculum, assigning diploma and certificate requirements, and creating lists of approved textbooks and resources are some of the duties that belong to the Minister of Education at the provincial level. Determining school board funding is also one of the tasks of the Minister with the aid of the Ministry of Education.

In Ontario, there are 72 district school boards which are made up of 31 English-language public boards, 29 English-language Catholic boards, 4 French-language public boards, and 8 French-language Catholic boards (Government of Ontario, 2005b). Out of these, there are about two million students (both elementary and secondary) who study in English and 100 000 students who study in French (Government of Ontario, 2005a). There

⁴ Pseudonym

⁵ City website, 2004

⁶ Statistics Canada, 2001

are also special educational facilities that operate under the province's school boards such as in hospitals or correctional institutes.

The school boards have many responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities include managing the funding allotted by the province, hiring teachers and other staff, helping teachers improve their teaching practices, and approving schools' textbook and learning material choices based on the list approved by the Ministry of Education.

At the school level, the principal is responsible for managing the budget assigned to their particular school, selecting textbooks in collaboration with the teaching staff, maintaining school discipline and student behaviour, and evaluating teacher performance.

My study examined the teaching practices of teachers. In Ontario, teachers are responsible for preparing lesson plans and teaching classes, evaluating student work and progress and maintaining classroom discipline.

As mentioned before, the curriculum is a provincial responsibility. It is divided into two sections: the course expectations and the course profiles. The course expectations set out what the students are expected to know at the end of a unit. The course profiles contain a more detailed list of activities that were developed to help the teacher find activities that satisfy the course expectations. However, because the activities in the profiles are not mandatory and the teacher may choose to use whatever content, activities, and resources they wish, it is the sole responsibility of the teacher to determine the best way for their students to meet the course expectations. This freedom means that there can be discrepancies among Ontario classes regarding how and what is taught in sexuality education. Despite these differences, the following section outlines a more specific description of sexuality education classes in Ontario.

Sexuality Education Program

I chose to focus on the sexuality education unit that is taught in grade nine because students are required only to take Health and Physical Education (where sexuality education is taught) until grade nine. After grade nine, the course is optional. The grade nine course that contains the sexuality*education unit is called Healthy Active Living. There are three types of courses available to high school students: academic, applied and open courses. Academic courses teach the “essential concepts of a subject and explore related concepts as well” (Government of Ontario, 2000). These courses tend to be more abstract, yet still focus on practical components as needed. Applied courses focus on the essential concepts of a subject and illustrate these with many concrete examples and practical applications. Healthy Active Living is an open course which means that it is appropriate for all students.

The course description is as follows:

This course emphasizes regular participation in a variety of enjoyable physical activities that promote lifelong healthy active living. Students will learn movement skills and principles, ways to improve personal fitness and physical competence, and safety and injury prevention. They will investigate issues related to healthy sexuality and the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and will participate in activities designed to develop goal-setting, communication, and social skills. (Government of Ontario, 1999)

The sexuality education unit falls into the Healthy Living strand within the course. This strand

addresses the knowledge and skills that students need to make informed decisions related to healthy growth and sexuality, mental health, and personal safety and injury prevention. The topics included in this strand are “healthy growth and sexuality”, “substance use and abuse”, “personal safety and injury prevention”, and “healthy eating”. (Government of Ontario, 1999)

Within the strand, the sexuality education component is called Healthy Growth and Sexuality and has the following specific expectations:

By the end of the course, students are expected to:

- identify the developmental stages of sexuality throughout life;
- describe the factors that lead to responsible sexual relationships;
- describe the relative effectiveness of methods of preventing pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (e.g., abstinence, condoms, oral contraceptives);
- demonstrate understanding of how to use decision-making and assertiveness skills effectively to promote healthy sexuality (e.g., healthy human relationships, avoiding unwanted pregnancies and STDs such as HIV/AIDS);
- demonstrate understanding of the pressures on teens to be sexually active;
- identify community support services related to sexual health concerns. (Government of Ontario, 1999)

The School Board

The school board in which this study took place is one of several school boards in this area. The District School Board serves a large area in Ontario. During the 2003/2004 school year, over 70,000 students were enrolled. Of these students, approximately 26,000 students were enrolled in secondary schools across the city. They had approximately 1,500 teachers distributed among the 30 secondary schools that fall within the board's jurisdiction.⁷

The Schools

My study took place in two different schools: Westgate Collegiate and Lawrence Secondary School. Westgate has approximately 900 students enrolled and is located within a suburban residential neighbourhood. Their school profile lists "respect, diversity and achievement" as the core values of their school. Having both an English and French program, a day care program, medical and counseling services on site, new computer labs and several spaces for different types of physical activities, Westgate offers many resources. Their use of the school mascot and the avid student participation in clubs and extracurricular

⁷ District School Board document

activities led me to believe that there was a good sense of school pride possessed by the staff and students.

Lawrence S.S. was the other location I observed for this study. This downtown school has a long established history as one of the oldest schools in Metroville. It currently houses approximately 1000 students. Tradition and excellence are the characteristics which the school repeatedly presented on its website. Lawrence S.S. is known for its gifted program but it is also proud of helping students who need extra help through its Special Education Resource teachers.

Cases

Beth Brighton

Beth Brighton was the first teacher at Westgate Collegiate that I had the opportunity to speak with. A teacher in her late 30s and the mother of two children, Beth has been teaching for fourteen years. She has a friendly and direct manner. She expressed that she had always wanted to become a Physical-Education teacher and that teaching sexuality is one of her favorite units. She explained that she enjoys the rapport that develops between her and her students when talking about topics that involve a certain amount of trust. She told me that her teachers' education at a nearby Ontario university was very practical and she gained a lot of ideas from that program on how to teach sexuality education. She continues to adapt these ideas to suit her current classes and curriculum. When listening to Beth talk about her teaching, Beth exuded the same pride that was evident in the school. I could sense the seriousness with which she took her teaching through her interviews. She remarked several times about the volume of information that exists about sexuality and how difficult it is to stay current when new material continues to be produced. However, she tries to stay current through reading material from magazines and newspapers, talking to colleagues and friends and paying attention to current trends in the lives of her students.

Westgate Collegiate, where Beth teaches, is one of the few schools that has its own classroom devoted to health education, which is not shared with any other subject. The classroom was set up with individual desks facing the front chalkboard where there is a large desk, and a television. To one side of the classroom there was a bookshelf with pamphlets on different issues relating to sexuality. On the wall there were a few health related posters

dealing with drugs and alcohol. The main headings of the posters were visible from any location within the classroom. The first poster heading read, "'No thanks' is an answer". The second poster had "Is drinking getting in the way of living?" as the main heading. The third read "My dad had a bad day at work, I've had a tough day at school". The main message of each of the posters were to encourage refusing taking drugs or drinking alcohol. None of the posters had to do with sexuality.

The class

Between December 2nd and December 12th, 2003, I had the opportunity to observe Beth's sexuality education unit at Westgate Collegiate. The class itself, a girls-only grade nine physical and health education class, had 30 students enrolled. Culturally diverse, the majority of Beth's students were White or Black. There were also a few East Asian students in the class. The students themselves were talkative, often having quiet (or not so quiet) conversations during class lectures. However, Beth was quick to ensure that they did not disrupt the rest of the class by asking them to be quiet, or making sure that late-comers have a good explanation. In the first class on December 2nd, Beth explained to the students how they will be evaluated for the health unit. She told the class their grades will be based on presentations, participation and worksheets. She talked about the health clinic located in the school and explained to her students that the health clinic is available for them for a variety of reasons. Beth told the class whether they have a headache, or need condoms, the clinic is available for their use. After introducing the unit, Beth gave the class a worksheet called the "Teen Pregnancy Quiz". She went through the multiple choice answers with the students and interjected with information about the numbers of male and female teenagers sexually active at different ages. She asked the students to think about their own values by putting up

statements on the overhead such as “It’s okay to have sex if you’re in love” and asked the students what they think about these statements. She then moved on to explain the life cycle of sexuality from before birth, through childhood to early, middle and later adulthood. Beth explained several events that she said occurs during these time periods. For instance, starting a family happens during middle years and a losing a partner through divorce or death happens during the later adulthood stage. Beth also indicated that these were generalizations as not all of these events happen during everyone’s lifetimes, and some of these events happen at different time periods than she was indicating. She explained that during middle adulthood, not all couples decide to have children and that it is not just in the later adulthood stage that someone can lose a partner; it may happen earlier.

On December 3rd and 4th the students did library research on their topic for their poster presentation. The librarian explained different computer search strategies available to the students. The students then chose who they wanted to work with as well as their presentation topic. They were allowed to pick from a selection of topics such as pregnancy, puberty or sexually transmitted infections, or come up with their own topic. On December 5th, a substitute teacher covered the class on the reproductive system, which included the external reproductive organs of the female and a sheet called “vocab challenge” that described the function of the male and female reproductive organs. On December 8th, a grade 11 girl who acted as the class peer helper went over the answers to the “vocab challenge” sheet with the class. Beth continued on to cover the topics of pregnancy and birth control with the class. She started by comparing the pregnancy rates between countries such as the United States, England, France, Sweden and Canada. She gave statistics on abortion and answered students’ questions on these statistics. Questions included how much do

abortions cost and why have the numbers of abortions gone up in recent years. Beth then placed a series of cartoons depicting birth control methods on the overhead, and explained how they worked plus their advantages and disadvantages.

On December 9th, Beth arranged for two University of Metroville medical students to come in to talk about body image. These two women led the students in a series of activities that explored food groups, eating disorders as well as how to maintain a healthy weight. On December 10th and 11th, the students had the opportunity to present their poster presentations that they researched in the library the previous week. The 3 minute presentations focused on many topics: puberty, birth control methods, pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), HIV/AIDS, menstruation, menopause, STIs, the children of unexpected teen parents, sexual harassment and relationships. Following the presentations on the 11th of December, Beth showed the television show *The Miracle of Birth* which started by showing how the egg and the sperm join using microscopic images and ending with a graphic presentation of a woman giving birth. On December 12th, a substitute teacher took over the class while the guest speaker Beth invited, a police officer named Sergeant Craig,⁸ presented the topic of sexual assault. In the following section I will illustrate how during these classes the themes of sexual responsibility, sexual orientation, and sexual purpose were explored.

Sexual Responsibility

Beth told me in our first interview that it is very important to make sure the girls in her class understand that they are the only ones truly responsible for their bodies:

They are part of the decision making process. They should not be forced to do anything they don't want to do and they are responsible for their own bodies, and no matter what happens, they still have the ultimate say. And to

⁸ Pseudonym

know that they have power over what happens to them. That they have a choice, in everything involved in sexuality. (Interview with BB, Page 4)

Taking responsibility is necessary, she explained, because the reality is that boys will not be responsible for the girls' well being:

Guys are going to say anything to get you in bed and it's true, because we've all had experiences with.... Not all guys are but a lot of times they will and these are some of the lines they'll use and you go "I've heard those lines". (Interview with BB, Page 4)

In talking about responsibility, Beth identified two areas where men's sexual responsibility is lacking: respecting their partners' boundaries, and taking health concerns seriously. In the first of these two areas, Beth told me that it is natural and normative for men to think about sex all the time,

I've also talked to my male friends about what it was like when they were teenagers and other teachers. And y'know, people have said to me "Yah! Y'know when we were that age, we were one big hormone! That's just the way it was and you're thinking about it [sex] 99 percent of the time and that's it and that's why we acted the way we did... That's just the way we do. (Interview with BB, Page 6)

She said that this biological predisposition for male teenagers to constantly think about sex leads some men to disrespect or ignore women's boundaries. She said that it is important to work with the women on how to deal with these sexually aggressive men:

And you have to realize, that's just men, that's just one of those things and you know we just have to find a way to deal with it and some guys are better at dealing with it than others. So we talk about different strategies... Strategies for women. Y'know, how to [deal with it] if a guy is really aggressive with you. (Interview with BB, page 6)

The police officer Beth chose to come to speak to her class on the topic of sexual harassment reinforced this idea of men's aggressive sexual conduct as normative. He asked the class:

How many of you are in a situation with sex where you didn't want to? How many people have said no to have it ignored? How many people had a

boyfriend who said, “Give me a blow job”? I’m sure there are people here who have, and if you haven’t, I’m sure you will one day. (PO, BB, Dec 12)

Boys’ responsibility for their sexual conduct was rarely talked about in Beth’s class. However, girls were not completely excluded from being portrayed as irresponsible and sexually aggressive. Whereas boys’ sexual aggression was presented as normative, girls’ sexual aggression was portrayed as possible, but exceptional. For example, Sergeant Craig had this to say in introducing the topic:

I’m going to focus on assault in relationships. Most of the girls were put in a position where they were uncomfortable- I’m talking about boys here but whenever I say boys, it can also be girls. (PO, BB, Dec 12)

Beth tells her class “Guys use a line ‘it [pregnancy] can’t happen the first time’. They’re lying to you. It can happen, it does happen” (PO, BB, Dec 2). She repeats this statement a second time during the class “Guys will use the line that it can’t happen the first time, that everyone is doing it” but this time adds “Girls will use that line too, not just the guys”.

As mentioned earlier, the two areas where boys were presented as irresponsible were respecting their partner’s boundaries and taking health concerns seriously. Beth explained to me that one of the things that boys really need to know about was how to take better care of their bodies and take more responsibility for their health:

It’s funny, because men are never as responsible for their health as women are. Women tend to be more informed... guys need to know more about women’s health. And their own health. They don’t know as much about prostate cancer and testicular cancer and they don’t do self-exams and stuff that they should be doing. (Interview with BB, Page 5)

She insisted that it is important for males to know about birth control and STDs and to take responsibility for their actions.

The guys definitely need to know about birth control and STDs and that they’re responsible just as much as the girl is. (Interview with BB, Page 5)

Beth told me that the male students need to know they are just as responsible for birth control, however, she simultaneously presented men as heedless. For instance, she mentions to her class that if they have sex with boys, the boys will try and use the ineffective withdrawal method:

Guys use this line because they say they don't have sensation with a condom. What can happen? If you have a 200lb guy on top of you and he says he'll pull out, oops, he forgot, oops, too late. (PO, BB, Dec 8).

Sexual Orientation

There were a few examples when same-sex relationships were explicitly mentioned. In the first class, Beth explained the sexuality life cycle from infancy to later adulthood. The overhead sheet she used in conjunction with this topic had a picture of a heterosexual, White, married couple on it which was used to exemplify and guide the stages of the family life cycle. As she used this overhead as a guide to explain the family life cycle, she added, "it's also acceptable to stay single, also acceptable to choose a same-sex partner" (PO, BB, Dec 2).

The only other time that homosexuality was explicitly mentioned was during Sergeant Craig's presentation. He told the class, "I know many of you are sexually active, maybe with young men or possibly young women" (PO, BB, Dec 12). He quickly followed this statement by adding that same-sex relationships are okay in Canada because "it's not illegal" (PO, BB, Dec 12). His comment appeared to be a disclaimer along the lines of a Seinfeldian "Not that there's anything wrong with that", officially stating that it is okay to have a same-sex relationship, even if it is only because it isn't against the law.

Sexual Purpose

In her classes, Beth tried to make sex and sexuality seem a pleasurable part of life. She talked about having sex in a positive way in two main areas: when one is comfortable with one's own body and when it is done as an adult.

In explaining how the diaphragm works, a student asked how to remove it. When Beth responded removal is done by using a finger, the students unanimously yelled "ewwww" displaying their discomfort. Beth responded by saying, "Obviously if you're not comfortable with your body, it's not good [for you to feel that way]", (PO, BB, Dec 8). Later when I asked her about the link between the girls being comfortable with their bodies, and sexuality, Beth elaborated:

Well, as I said before, if you're not comfortable with your body, how can you be comfortable with sex? And so much of that is linked to self-esteem, but in order to make good decisions, you have to feel good about yourself. I really want to get across that sexuality is natural, a part of life always. (Asked after PO, BB, Dec 8)

Beth even introduced the idea of experimenting with different types of condoms: "Novelty condoms are not made [to prevent] pregnancy, like glow in the dark or with tastes, just to spice things up a bit" (PO, BB, Dec 8).

The idea of sex being natural during adulthood also is focused on in her class. She told her students that sex is "something both people should enjoy as you get older, sex becomes more enjoyable. It's a part of life, when you are ready and not before you are ready." (PO, BB, Dec 8). She made sure to tell them that sex is a normal and healthy experience for adults. For example, she gave the statistic that in Canada, 77% of males and 73% of females in college are sexually active then said, "that's not bad, it's past the age of

consent”. (PO, BB, Dec 2) However, she does not give the class the information that 14 is the current age of consent in Canada (Department of Justice Canada, 2004).

Talking about sex being a natural part of adulthood was a major theme in Beth’s class. Interestingly, when talking about sex during the teenage years the idea of it being natural to have sexual feelings was not discussed. Instead, a discussion on why teenagers do not wait until adulthood to have sex is connected with earlier comments about sexual responsibility. For example, when one of the girls in the class asked, “why can’t people just wait to have sex?”, Beth redirected the question back to the class. She got varied responses such as curiosity, pressure, using a substance like drugs and alcohol, and one student quietly suggested because they’re horny. Beth either ignored or did not hear the comment about being horny as she responded by saying, “More often girls [have sex] because most often guys take advantage of girls, not always, but usually” (PO, BB, Dec 2).

Summary

For Beth, sexual responsibility meant that girls must be responsible for themselves because they cannot depend on boys to behave responsibly. Men are sexually aggressive (although at times, women may be this way too) and must learn to take responsibility for their actions in terms of their own health and how they deal with birth control. Same-sex sexual orientations get mentioned in Beth’s class, even when resources depict only heterosexual couples. Although same-sex relationships are not a main focus in discussions that take place in Beth’s class, same-sex relationships are acknowledged. Beth makes sure her class knows that sex is a natural part of life, and makes clear that sex can be healthy and enjoyable. She mentions this only in relationship to adulthood leaving out what sexual purpose may mean to teenagers.

Bob Thomas

Bob Thomas, like Beth Brighton, also teaches at Westgate Collegiate. During our initial phone conversation, he seemed happy and excited to talk about his work with me. A father of three children, it was obvious in both the interviews we did, as well as in the way he taught the grade nine boys' class, that he felt passionate about the material he was teaching. He approached the class with a sense of humour and seemed to have a very positive rapport with the students.

Bob taught the sexuality education unit in the same classroom as Beth. Because this classroom is solely devoted to health education, all health classes would take place in this room. The classroom was set up in the same way as Beth's class: individual desks facing the front chalkboard, teacher's desk and television. The classroom also contained a bookshelf with pamphlets on the topic of sexuality, and health related posters that encouraged refusing taking drugs or drinking alcohol.

The class

From November 19th to 28th, 2003, I observed Bob Thomas' class. The sex-segregated class had 31 boys enrolled, most of them were White, although there were a few students who were Asian, South Asian or Black. Bob said that there were quite a few Muslim students in the class. Unlike the talkative pupils in Beth's class, the pupils in Bob's class always listened intently and asked questions frequently throughout his lectures.

During the first class I observed, Bob covered the stages of sexuality as well as anatomy/physiology. He began by describing to the students the stages of sexuality from birth to adulthood. Next, he handed out charts of male and female reproductive organs and

had students label the diagrams and explain the function of each part. The sheets he gave out with the male reproductive system showed the internal and external organs. The sheet he gave out that depicted the female reproductive organs had only the internal parts. The next class on November 21st, Bob began by answering anonymous questions. Bob had a shoebox at the front of the classroom. During class time, students were asked to write down any questions they have on a slip of paper and place it in the box. These questions were to be anonymous and the students were explicitly asked not to write their names on the slips of paper. They were also able to add questions to the box before or after the class throughout the week. During this class, Bob drew questions out of the box that asked questions such as “What age is appropriate to have sex?”, “Can two women get each other pregnant?”, and “What is phone/cyber sex?” Bob responded to these questions and occasionally the students interjected with further questions. Bob sometimes responded by relating the question to an experience in the life of someone he knows and at other times deflected the questions back to the students to give suggestions. After the questions were answered, Bob showed a film titled *Sexually Transmitted Infections [STIs]: What You Should Know* (Green & Holohan, 2003). On November 25th, Bob lectured on the different contraceptives available, and then showed a film titled *Considering Your Options* (National Education Association Health Information Network (NEAHIN)/ Carter-Wallace, 1998) about responsibility. On November 26th, Bob used the class time to continue answering anonymous questions from the question box. On the 27th, a pop quiz was given to the class about the materials covered so far. At the end of the quiz, the boys were happy to be told that the quiz was not going to be graded, and that it was given just to motivate them to start thinking about the upcoming test. Bob explained the format of the test, and then used the rest of the class to lecture on

concerns about men's and women's anatomy, lifestyle and health. For example, in talking about men's concerns, he explained and defined impotence, nocturnal emissions and sterility. He also talked about penis size and steroids. In talking about women's concerns, he talked about pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) and the many types of cancer that women can get. During the class on November 28, Bob covered characteristics of a good relationship. He gave them a few hints about the test that would take place the beginning of the following week.

Sexual Responsibility

Bob made a clear statement regarding his idea of sexual responsibility. He told the class:

In my day, responsibility was thought to be with the female. Women could get pregnant therefore it was her responsibility. But, two people are involved so two people are responsible. If you are choosing to be sexually active, you are choosing to be responsible. (PO, BT, Nov 25)

He continued to speak about men and women's sexual conduct that explored the idea of responsibility when it comes to initiating sex. Similar to Beth's class, Bob told the class that it is not always the male pressuring the female and that it can happen the other way around. He dismissed the idea that only men can be sexually aggressive by telling the class, "not always the male pressuring the female, it goes both ways" (PO, BT, Nov 28). However, while Beth's class did not use any examples to show how men felt pressured or resisted sex, Bob tried to dismantle the stereotype of men always wanting and pushing for sex by portraying men in varying positions of power within a sexual relationship. For instance, he told the class that, "A lot of times women feel pressured to have sex, but men feel that way too with so many media images of what a relationship should be like" (PO, BT, Nov 21). In

explaining the characteristics of a good heterosexual relationship, he emphasized the need for security for both the male and the female partner. He told the class that it's okay to say, "Can we wait?". You can say to your partner 'I'm not sure I can handle an unwanted pregnancy. Not sure I can handle the trauma or guilt that comes with accelerating this relationship sexually'". Bob was unique in his mentioning that women can pressure men, as well as talking about the pressure men may feel to have sex.

However, Bob also represented males as sexually aggressive in several examples.

He told the class:

No love, no glove goes the saying. But men would push and women would weaken and give in. (PO, BT, Nov 25)

In another example, we can see how the response to a question posed by a student contained messages reflecting the male as aggressive/female as victim stereotype. A student asked if having sex while drunk or stoned is more pleasurable than having sex while sober. Bob's response differed based on whether the participant was a man or a woman. Bob said that if a man has sex while drunk it may mean he is unable to get an erection. However, if a woman has sex while drunk, Bob comments:

Some women had sexual activity while drugged because they were given the date rape drug. They didn't remember anything and people have taken advantage of them. (PO, BT, Nov 26)

Further, despite saying that women and men are equally responsible for birth control, Bob gave the class a couple of examples of what a woman might do if she has to rely only on herself for contraception. He told the class "A woman might use the IUD [Intra Uterine Device] if they have a partner who doesn't want to wear a condom" (PO, BT, Nov 25). Of course, this method of birth control does not protect against STIs or HIV. He later mentioned the female condom as an option. He told the class, "There is also the female

condom. If a man doesn't want to take responsibility, the women might want to use a female condom" (PO, BT, Nov 25).

The films too presented sexual responsibility as different for males and females, when it comes to the consequences of sexual activity. The films shown presented different images of responsibility for males and females. For instance, in one film called *STIs: What you should know* (Green & Holohan, 2003), a group of students gather to discuss sexuality issues. A female in the group says, "it's hard to say no" while a boy responds "I would never push a girl to go farther, I wish she would just tell me so". (PO, BT, Nov 21). These portray, once again, the woman as refusing sex to a guy who always wants it, and in the role of sexual gatekeepers (Sethna, 1998, p. 59). In *Considering Your Options* (NEAHIN/ Carter-Wallace, 1998), the film begins by showing a boy typing an email to his girlfriend, inviting her over because his parents are away for the weekend. The animated computer comes to life and interrupts the boy's email to teach him about responsibility. This film presents both boys and girls in various stages of taking responsibility for getting contraceptives. However, in its in-depth look at four teenagers (two male and two female), the only one who suffered negative consequences was the female who got pregnant. She takes the camera through her daily life focusing on the many difficulties and hardships she has had to face. The film does not indicate the types of consequences facing the father of her baby; no mention of him or his consequences exists within the film (PO, BT, Nov 25).

In another example, five teenagers (three girls and two boys) discuss the practice of withdrawal. The film outlines that pregnancy is still possible even when the male removes his penis from the vagina before ejaculation in an attempt to prevent pregnancy. In this scenario, we hear two girls and one boy speak about their experiences. Both of the females

got pregnant through using the withdrawal method. The boy, was the result of his parents using the withdrawal method. All three of these youths, male and female, experience the consequence of unintended pregnancy, yet the film chooses not to show any male teenager who uses the withdrawal method himself and unintentionally gets his female partner pregnant.

Sometimes attributing certain characteristics to males and females can mean that factual information is left out. In the film *STIs: What you should know* (Green & Holohan, 2003), the announcer had this to say: “AIDS- It’s fatal and has no cure. You could have it and don’t know it which is true of all STDs. The virus is in semen and blood” (PO, BT, Nov 21). However, the virus is also in a woman’s breast milk, and in her vaginal fluid which the film neglected to mention, presenting men as the only carriers of STIs and HIV and thereby reinforcing the male as perpetrator, female as victim metaphor.

Sexual Orientation

Bob mentioned to me that a lot of the topics he would like to cover are not in the curriculum, but are necessary to include in order to create interest. Specifically he mentioned watching a program on transsexualism and homosexuality that he found fascinating. When I asked him about covering homosexuality and sexual orientation, he said to me,

I make sure that I cover it [homosexuality] in my classes sometimes just to create a little bit of interest in the classroom as well because um at this age group, students are very curious... So we begin the unit by talking about how the various control groups influence our ideas and opinions and then when we, I introduce them to things like sexuality in terms of lesbian, gay relationships, transsexuals, it opens the door for discussion and for some they realize that they have some preconceived opinion without even getting into the issues. (Interview with BT, Page 5)

He certainly did not shy away from addressing the topic of homosexuality or transsexualism when the students asked. Whether he was explaining to the class that “cross dressers are not mentally retarded” and that “they need our support instead of our scorn” (PO, BT, Nov 19), or explaining how lesbians can use artificial insemination to get each other pregnant (PO, BT, Nov 19), topics that are traditionally considered taboo became okay to talk about in Bob’s class. Similarly to Beth, Bob used the example of a traditional heterosexual life cycle, guided by a worksheet developed by a Canadian organization for the grade nine and ten sexuality units, to describe the developmental stages of sexuality. Bob said that during puberty, “closeness to same-sex friends, and an attraction to opposite sex occurs” (PO, BT, Nov 19). Bob used a worksheet to describe the characteristics of a good relationship. Most of these characteristics could be applied to both heterosexual and queer relationships, however, all the examples Bob used to illustrate these characteristics were of male-female relationships (PO, BT, Nov 28). And later, when talking about steroids Bob said, “You get the body you’ve always wanted to attract the members of the opposite sex only to be sterile or impotent in the bedroom” (PO, BT, Nov 27).

Sexual Purpose

Bob, like Beth, told his students that men are always thinking about sex. In talking about later adulthood he said, “At this age for men, it’s not like they are 18 when that’s all they think about” (PO, BT, Nov 19). He mentioned obtaining pleasure several times whether he was answering a question about phone and internet sex, talking about using condoms that are extra thin because they are more pleasurable, or showing affection and intimacy in other ways other than sexual intercourse (PO, BT, Nov 21, 25). Bob explained

to me during the interview that he does not value an approach that is exclusively clinical. He said,

Some of the videos that we've managed to acquire, um, go through human sexuality as if it was a medical procedure, done in a hospital somewhere. And uh, they don't approach sexuality um with any kind of emotional, or intimacy, it's just a clinical act that is done for procreation and it's described in that fashion. Where it seems clinical and methodical, almost like it's a medical procedure. You do this, then this, then this is what happens and y'know it tends to be rather orchestrated and stale and it's hard to really get the kids to understand that there's intimacy involved, that there's creativity involved, when it appears to be kind of a clinical process. Where you do step one, step two, step three...I try and stress with my students that sexual activity is an extension of intimacy, not just for procreation. (Interview with BT, Page 7)

Similar to the way he presented responsibility to protect against pregnancy and disease as part of the males' duties, he presented pleasure for females as part of her life as well. In talking about the problems with the rhythm method he said, "If the mood is there and they [the woman] can't stop themselves, they may go for it" (PO, BT, Nov 25). He continued talking about birth control in relationship to a woman's need for pleasure and how it may enhance or deter from it. He explains that using a diaphragm, "a woman could place it inside, go out for dinner and dancing, then come home and enjoy sexual activity" (PO, BT, Nov 25).

Even though Bob's answer for preventing disease and pregnancy was similar to the other teachers I observed— abstinence, he demonstrated that it is a good way for the male to be responsible as well as have pleasure. For example, he told the class that even though men may feel pressured to have sex, "Abstinence, is the best way and you can still be intimate, romantic and have a good time and still be abstinent" (PO, BT, Nov 21). These comments began with a discussion about responsibility, but included emphasizing pleasure.

The worksheets used in these classes are also relevant to how sexual purposes are taught. The typical worksheets teachers use from organizations like the Ontario Physical and Health Association (OPHEA) and Curriculum Services Canada to show the female reproductive organs are split onto two different pages. The first page depicts a diagram of the female *internal* organs which includes the fallopian tubes, the cervix and the ovaries. The second page depicts the female *external* organs including the labia and clitoris. Bob made sure to stress to his students the need to label the parts on the diagrams for both the male and female reproductive organs. However, while the diagram that Bob used for the male reproductive organs contained both the internal parts such as the vas deferens, cowpers gland and testicles, as well as the external parts such as the penis and the scrotum, he only distributed the female diagram that contained the internal organs. Not giving his class the diagram of the female external organs is significant because the parts that are largely responsible for female pleasure and orgasm are only found on the diagram of the external organs. Whereas, the body parts responsible for male pleasure and orgasm are contained in the same diagram as the internal organs, and given out to his class.

Summary

For Bob, sexual responsibility means that both male and females have responsibility toward each other. He emphasized that men too may feel pressure to have sex. Similarly to Beth, he also represented males as sexually aggressive in several examples. The films also portrayed women as the victims of irresponsible males. Bob clearly wanted to include sexual orientation and homosexuality in his classes. Although at times relying on resources meant that heterosexuality was the focus to the exclusion of other sexual orientations, Bob still tried to include information about same-sex relationships. Bob used several examples

illustrating that one sexual purpose is pleasure. Many of these examples combined responsible behaviour with the need for sexual pleasure and intimacy for both men and women.

Jason Ricker

Jason Ricker was the youngest teacher that I interviewed and observed. He had been teaching at Lawrence Secondary School for the last four years. The class that Jason taught was an all-male gifted class. Most of his students were White with only about three visible minorities in a class of thirty. The students were very well behaved. They listened attentively and also made constructive comments throughout the class.

The sexuality education class took place in an outside portable, although this arrangement may vary each year. When not being used for sexuality education classes, other subjects were taught in the portable. Occasionally, sharing the portable with other subjects posed problems as the chairs would need to be rearranged every class after another subject had taken place. There were a few posters on the wall relating to other subjects, but the classroom was mostly sparse. It was set up with all the seats facing the chalkboard at the front of the class where the teacher's desk sits.

The class

I sat in on Jason's grade nine boys class from March 29th to April 2nd, 2004. In the first day of class on March 29th, Jason introduced the unit and explained the schedule for the rest of the week. He led the class in a discussion of what sex is and some of the social and health risks of having sex. He showed the video, *The Truth about Sex* (Shapiro, 2000) and gave the students statistics on the reported cases of different sexually transmitted infections

for the city of Metroville. On March 30th, a different class needed the portable to do testing, so Jason's class moved to the computer lab to do an in-class assignment. The assignment involved finding information on HIV, sexual assault and relationships using the internet. Unfortunately, the school's access to the internet was not working that day so Jason used the class time to take the boys on a walk in order to show them the path they will be taking when they start the running unit. On March 31st, the first activity the boys had to do was label the male and female (external and internal) sheet diagrams as best they could. A student with the correct answers walked around after the class had completed the sheet to make corrections. The boys then worked on a sheet titled "The journey of the sperm cell" which illustrated the journey of the sperm cell through several steps from the first step of being produced in the testes to the last step of entering the vagina. The next sheet on contraceptives called, "Methods of Pregnancy Quiz" was taken up. On April 1st, Jason gave the students the "sexualityandu" website for more resources and had the students work on the "Pregnancy Impact Worksheet". The questions on the sheet asked the boys to think about things such as what would their immediate reaction be if they got a girl pregnant, who would they tell, and how would pregnancy affect their relationship with their partner, friends and parents. Another worksheet called "STI (yuck)" was taken up. The last exercise of the day involved asking for twelve students to volunteer to go up to the front of the classroom. Getting the chance to move around seemed to inject some excitement into the class at the end of a long day. Each student who volunteered was given a card that listed one of twelve steps of using a condom properly. The boys were asked to try and put themselves in order of the steps that should be done when putting on a condom. For example, the first step in using a condom properly is to check the expiry date on the condom and the last step is to remove

the condom from the penis after ejaculation. The students who observed helped the volunteers holding the cards by giving suggestions until the boys were standing with the cards in the correct order. On April 2nd, the last day of the unit, Jason displayed and discussed different contraceptives. A test was given out that included questions on the journey of the sperm cell, the ramifications of having sex, diagrams and STIs.

Sexual Responsibility

Similarly to Beth, Jason identified two different areas relating to sexual responsibility: respecting the boundaries of sexual partners and protecting one's health. Jason spent a lot of his class time talking about the emotional and physical consequences of having sex for both girls and boys. He told me that he teaches that sexual responsibility is something that both women and men must take. However, candidly, he told me that the health consequences are not the same for boys as they are for girls. When I asked him what he thought was important to teach women, he responded:

You don't want to say, in most cases when you're teaching sex-ed, you don't want to say the responsibility... You want to make sure the responsibility is the same for both, but in reality, the consequences for girls can be much more dire... obviously for pregnancy and STDs if they get them it can have some or infections and things like that, it can have some consequences on their fertility so it's really important that they are really assertive and stand up for what they want to do and what they don't want to do because bottom line is it's their health... (Interview with JR, Page 4)

Jason further continued to describe how taking drugs and alcohol may increase these health risks for a girl. When he turned to talk about how drugs and alcohol may affect the situation that boys may find themselves in, his comments turned to boys' lack of attention to women's boundaries, more seriously called sexual assault or date rape:

The way I've talked to them [the boys] about it is that you do stupid things when you're under the influence and the consequence for you as well as the

person you are doing it with, there's date rape, consent, and all that kind of thing. And really, they have to look at that consent isn't there if someone is inebriated... So they have to be aware of that so if they do get themselves into that type of situation they can, well, there's legal ramifications... (Interview with JR, Page 4)

In the interview he focused on the health consequences for women, and the legal consequences for men, supporting the research on sexual responsibility that insists that women are portrayed as victims of men's sexual irresponsibility. However, going against the literature, Jason only talked about this dynamic in the interview. In the classroom, he presented health consequences as important for both boys and girls to pay attention to. He did this by telling the boys how their urethra could get infected from unprotected sex from a woman and how they could get herpes from kissing (PO, JR, Mar 29). He also encouraged the boys to get regular medical exams and use condoms if they are giving oral sex to protect themselves from STIs (PO, JR, Apr 1).

Jason also talked about the social consequences of having sex, which neither Bob nor Beth addressed in their classes. He asked many questions that dealt with the social consequences for a boy who has sex, and even pushed the students to expand their thinking by not focusing only on health consequences as the only reason to take sexual responsibility. He asked the class to think about how they feel about sex, encouraged them to ask themselves if they feel comfortable with their naked body and directed the boys to think about how it is important to trust that their sexual partner won't laugh or spread rumours about them (PO, JR, Mar 29).

Sexual Orientation

Jason told the class that sex can be “girl on girl, guy on guy, or guy on girl” when students say that gay sex is another type of sex (PO, JR, Mar 29). He also mentioned at one point that one should,

Go get checked out if you have a medical condition or if you notice it on yourself or your partner, her or him or whatever the situation may be. Even if you’re not sexually active you should get it checked out. Some may not even show like HIV so you should get it checked out if you have any questions. (PO, JR, Apr 1)

At other times, heterosexual sex is assumed, even when discussing sexual activities other than intercourse. For example, in a discussion about how to avoid STIs during oral sex, he tells the class “You can use a condom and cut it open if you’re giving oral sex” which is a popular way of turning a condom into a dental dam for performing oral sex on a woman (PO, JR, Apr 1). He continues to talk about oral sex only in terms of male-female sexual activity.

Similar to other classes, Jason uses examples that both reinforce and disrupt heterosexism within his class.

Sexual Purpose

Jason does not shy away from talking about pleasure and sexuality in terms of activities other than reproduction and sexual intercourse. In one discussion, he had the class define what “sex” is, and continued to talk about different types of sex:

Jason: What is sex?

Student 1: Fornication for the purpose of reproduction.

J: Can someone explain that in laymen’s terms?

Student 2: It’s when a guy likes a girl and the bird flies into the bee’s mouth and then makes honey.

J: Uhh... Can someone dumb it down? (No response). Okay, let's start with the term fornication. What does that mean?

Student 3: Sex.

Student 4: But there's different kinds of sex for things other than for reproduction.

J: Okay, but in his definition?

S4: The penis goes in the vagina until ejaculation.

J: Penis is inserted in the vagina. Erect. Until ejaculation which leads to reproduction. But there are other sexual activities. What else to produce a sexual response in someone?

S: Oral sex... Gay sex... (*laughs*).

J: Right. Sex can be girl on girl, guy on guy or guy on girl.

S: Hands.

S2: And using someone else's hands.

S3: Masturbation.

J: Yes.

S: Kissing.

J: Kissing.

S: Depends on how you defined sex. And its definition has evolved over time.

J: Yah. You can come up with your own definition. Different activities have different risks along the spectrum. With sex on one end, and kissing and holding hands on the other. (PO, JR, Mar 29)

This conversation moves the issue past reproduction and even health concerns to talk about pleasure. For instance, on the test he included the fill-in-the-blank question, "The (blank) is the highly sensitive organ on the female responsible for female orgasm," to emphasize the importance of the clitoris (Sexuality Test- PPL10Q). He also talked about how students can protect themselves when having oral sex. He explained that flavoured condoms can make giving oral sex safe *and* more pleasurable,

Flavored condoms are good for oral sex if you choose to do that. Tastes better than spermicide. If she doesn't want to perform it because of the taste, this makes it more pleasant" (PO, JR, Apr 1).

He also had discussions about the sexual double standard about reputation if you're a girl or a guy who has sex. One of his students said,

S: It's different for guys and girls. If you're a guy who has sex with a bunch of women It's like, "yah... guy!". But If you're a girl you're called a whore.

J: Is it like that?

Students: (calling out) Yah!! (PO, JR, Mar 29).

It is interesting that during the interview, Jason told me that pleasure does not come up in his classes. Yet it seems as though pleasure is spoken about quite a bit, both through his questioning but also from the students' own standpoint. Although this study is about how teachers teach, it is worth taking a look at some of the answers students gave on Jason's test answering why a student would not abstain from sex:

sex is fun
 pleasure
 teens are notoriously horny
 Everyone loves sex, especially teens
 Without sex, people get moody
 hormones
 curious
 sex strengthens your relationship, the most effective way to show love. (PO, JR, Apr 1).

Summary

Jason taught his class that both males and females must take responsibility for their sexuality by making clear that there can be emotional and physical consequences for both boys and girls who have sex. Similar to the other teachers, Jason uses examples that refer to homosexuality but also reinforces heterosexism in his classroom on occasion. His approach to sexual purpose recognizes that teenagers will have different types of sex, because of the pleasure involved.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Classroom Practices

When I started doing the primary research for this thesis, I expected to find data that reinforced the messages found in most of the literature: men would always be portrayed as aggressive; women would always be portrayed as victim; and only heterosexual sexual relationships for the purpose of reproduction would be taught. However, I was surprised when the practices of the three teachers I observed reflected a far more complex picture of sex role stereotyping than the literature on sexuality education suggests. Certainly, there were cases when the taught curriculum reinforced studies that concluded that sex role stereotyping occurs within sexuality education classes (Beyer et. al. 1996; Cusick, 1992; Fine, 1988; Fromme and Emihovich, 1998; Greenberg and Campbell, 1992; J. Harrison, 2000; Klein, 1992; Lenskyj, 1990; Lindley and Reininger, 2001; McKay, 1998; Sears, 1992a; Whatley, 1988). Importantly though, all three of the teachers also challenged these sex role stereotypes either in their teaching, their verbalized intentions, or both. This study provides evidence that even within teachers' own investment in dominant values, through their teaching they are able to enact agency or provide alternatives to traditional sex role stereotyping. The following cross case analysis highlights the main areas where the data from the cases reinforce or challenge the literature.

Sexual Responsibility

In each of the cases I observed, the teachers tried to promote messages that disrupt the sex role stereotype regarding responsibility. They challenge the idea that boys are irresponsible and always push girls to have sex with them. For example, all three teachers

presented boys pressuring girls for sex as the most common pattern, but each teacher also stated that the pressure can be reversed with girls pressuring boys.

In Beth's class, for example, Sergeant Craig began his lecture on sexual harassment by telling the class that he is going to be talking about boys putting girls in a position where they're uncomfortable; but he quickly added, "Whenever I say boys, it can also be girls" (PO, BB, Dec 12). Similarly, Beth told the class "most often guys take advantage of girls, not always, but usually" (PO, BB, Dec 2).

Bob also uses examples to show that girls can also pressure boys. In his class on November 28th, Bob described the ten characteristics of a good relationship. He explained that security is very important and that you have to feel secure to tell your partner you want to wait if they are pressuring you for sex. He adds, "Not always the male pressuring the female, it goes both ways" (PO, BT, Nov 28). He also tells the class that "A lot of times women feel pressured to have sex, but men feel that way too" (PO, BT, Nov 21).

Jason told me "[guys] shouldn't be pressuring the girls and the girls shouldn't be pressuring them" (Interview with JR, Page 5). What is interesting about all of these comments is that they directly challenge sexuality education literature that says that it is women who are portrayed as the victims of male pressure. For example, in the study of teaching materials by Beyer et al. (1996), males were exclusively portrayed as perpetrators of sexual exploitation and women were consistently represented as the victims of the men. In all three classrooms I observed, it was acknowledged that men could be the targets of unwanted pressure from females. Whatley (1987) writes that the underlying assumption in formal sexuality education is that "The woman as victim must be on guard against hormonally driven male predators... Rarely in sexuality education in the schools is it

implied that females might be capable of both desiring and exploring sexual pleasure” (p. 65). Fine (1988) repeats this idea: “The discourses of violence and victimization both portray males as potential predators and females as victims” (p. 32). However, each teacher I observed made explicit verbal assertions that boys feel pressure too, and that it can be girls who are the instigators of this pressure.

What is interesting about this presentation of both boys *and* girls as capable of asserting sexual pressure is it uses a discourse of victimhood for both boys and girls. Instead of challenging sex roles by focusing on sexual empowerment for women, sex role stereotyping is challenged by presenting boys as not always desiring sex and being pressured to have sex. Levine (1992) gives an example of how this finding in classroom practice can also be found within sexuality education curricula which aims to correct sex role stereotyping:

As for gender, the abstinence-only curricula continue to exhibit what Michelle Fine described... the peer doing the pressuring is male; the refuser-delayer is female. Some mainstream publishers set out to fix this bias in the 1990s. “Reducing The Risk,” for instance, employs a novel approach: It names one of its fictional couples Lee and Lee, who evince no obvious gender traits and take turns aggressing and thwarting aggression. In Lee and Lee, the ideology of chastity has trumped women’s liberation. Now boys are expected to desire as little as girls. (p. 129)

The classrooms I observed offered challenges to what the literature suggests. Yet, the classroom is a place that is undoubtedly complex. While the teachers’ behaviour occasionally challenged some conclusions reached in sexuality education literature, there were other situations where the teachers did in fact reinforce sex role stereotypes about responsibility.

Despite all three teachers teaching that it is possible for men to feel sexual pressure from women, ultimately it was women who were presented as victims of men’s sexual

irresponsibility. This victimization was presented in one form as a threat to women's physical health by emphasizing the toll of unwanted pregnancy and STIs on women. In another form, this victimization was presented by focusing on situations where women's consent to sexual activity was unattained or ignored.

For example, Beth told me explicitly during the interview that females, in particular, need to be taught "that they should not be forced to do anything that they don't want to do". She also mentions that discussing strategies for dealing with men who are sexually aggressive is really important in her class (Interview with BB, Page 6). In her actual classroom practices, Beth tells her class that boys will use any line to get them to have sex without a condom. She said, "They say they don't have sensation with a condom. What can happen? If you have a 200lb guy on top of you and he says he'll pull out, oops, he forgot, oops, too late" (PO, BB, Dec 8). Her choice in bringing in a police officer to talk to the girls about sexual assault and sexual harassment furthers this notion that sexual victimization is inevitable because it focuses the discussion on what the girls should do if they are sexually harassed or assaulted.

The actual frequency of sexual harassment and sexual assault on women by men will be further discussed later in this chapter. Here, it is important to examine what messages are conveyed when inviting a police officer to discuss sexual harassment and assault with a girls' grade nine class. How would the message of sexual harassment and assault be different if a woman came in to teach a self-defense class, a social worker came in to speak about power dynamics in relationships, or a man from the White Ribbon Campaign came in to talk about what men are doing to stop violence against women? Each of these other guest speakers would convey different messages about sexual harassment and assault such as the

right of women to protect themselves from harm, the social factors which create inequitable relationships, and that male sexual aggressiveness is preventable.

Beth's class was not the only one in which the inevitability of men's sexual irresponsibility was promoted. Bob spoke about female contraceptive devices as particularly good options for females if they are with "a man who doesn't want to take responsibility" (PO, BT, Nov 25). Also, many of the films presented women as the major victim if they had sex with a man who did not wear a condom. The idea that sex is all that male teenagers can think about, was first told to me during Beth's interview, and then again repeated by Bob to his class (PO, BT, Nov 19; Interview with BB, Page 6). This limited view of male teenage sexuality as biological and inevitable reinforces the hormonal arguments that men cannot control or be responsible for their own sexuality.

In Jason's case, his explanation that males and females need to be aware of certain consequences aligns with the women as victim and male as aggressive sex role stereotypes. He told me during the interview that teaching sexual responsibility is necessary for both males and females, but in different areas. For females, he said, it is important to protect themselves against STIs and getting in a situation they do not want to be in. For males, he also thought that health was an appropriate concern. However, in addition they need to be aware of "legal ramifications" of forcing sexual activity upon a partner. I am not suggesting here that the reality of sexual assault by men against women should go unacknowledged. This is a real concern and thus complicates the task of not presenting women as victims to male sexual aggression. This paradox will be further elaborated on later in this chapter. This topic is complex, and teachers need to address the complexity. By presenting sex role stereotypes while simultaneously challenging them, the teachers have begun to articulate this

complexity. They may or may not be aware of these competing discourses within their teaching, but the very existence of this competition signals the creation of a space for challenging sex roles within an authoritative discourse of female victimization/responsibility and male aggression/irresponsibility.⁹ This site of resistance to these authoritative discourses gives hope to the goal of gender equity in sexuality education.

Sexual Orientation

Literature on sexuality education and homophobia consistently points out that heterosexism is alive and well within the sexuality education classroom. Buston and Hart (2001) indicate that the focus on reproduction in sexuality education has meant it is heterosexist by definition (p.96). Lenskyj (1990) says that a lack of school role models disadvantage gay and lesbian students. Teachers themselves indicate that the topic of homosexuality is mostly absent from sexuality education classes. In a national American survey of secondary school health teachers, researchers found that “the subject of homosexuality/sexual orientation is rarely, if ever, addressed in public schools” (Lindley & Reininger, 2001, p. 17). McKay (1998) asserts that this absence, unfortunately, is not accidental. He explains,

In many cases, the absence of homosexuality in the sexuality education curriculum represents a willful attempt to marginalize or ignore any conceptualization of human sexuality that does not fit the heterosexual norm. (p. 161)

Yet again, this literature appears to present an oversimplification of how sexual orientation is addressed in sexuality education as at some point all three teachers I observed included gay, lesbian, or bisexual students into the scenarios they use as teaching examples.

⁹ Thank you to Dr. Judith Robertson whose insights helped me elaborate on this discussion

Beth mentions to her class that it is acceptable to choose a same-sex life partner. Bob told me explicitly during the interview that he wants to introduce his students to the topic of gay or lesbian relationships. In his classroom, he answered questions on transsexualism and lesbian relationships. Jason used examples in his classroom that did not assume his male students had only female partners. He stated to the class that sex can be “girl on girl, guy on guy, or girl on guy”.

Frequently, when one of the teachers addressed homosexuality, he or she used an additive approach. This approach is one of four approaches Banks (1993) outlines in terms of integrating multicultural content in classroom practices. These four approaches: contributions, additive, transformation and social action evolved after civil rights groups in the 1960s targeted textbooks for its low representation of visible minorities and women (p. 197). Although more ethnic groups and women now appear in textbooks, their representation is limited to information and heroes selected using a mainstream criteria, presented from a mainstream perspective, yet discussed in separate, “special” units, topics and parts of textbooks (p. 197). These four approaches were conceived to describe *how* multicultural content is integrated in the classroom, because of the limited approach that occurred when representing visible minorities and women in textbooks. Even though these approaches were developed primarily to describe the integration of multicultural content, they can effectively be applied to describing the integration of queer content in the classroom as well.

The first level of integration, the contributions approach, focuses on heroes, holidays and celebrations of particular cultural groups (Banks, 1993, p. 199). This approach is popular among teachers because it is very quick and easy to do. Although this approach

does make discrete cultural elements visible, it only offers a superficial understanding and can actually reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions by providing monolithic accounts of particular cultures.

The additive approach is the second level of integration. In this approach “content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure” (Banks, 1993, p. 199). This is the approach the cases I observed most often used when integrating queer content. While the content of the classes was not restructured to be inclusive, homosexuality was tacked on to the end of a discussion. For instance, Beth used a sheet that uses a heterosexual couple as the example of the sexual life cycle, and then added on that it is also acceptable to choose a same-sex partner. Bob also used a sheet titled “Developmental Stages of Sexuality” which had life stages stemming only from a heterosexual life experience. For example, the sheet listed, and Bob repeated, that during puberty “closeness to same-sex friends and an attraction to opposite sex occurs” (PO, BT, Nov 27). He added to the discussion the possibilities of queer relationships only when prompted by students. Jason also alternated between examples that used only male-female sexual relationships as the norm, and including the possibility of same-sex relationships.

Because restructuring the whole unit from a non-heterosexist perspective would take “substantial time, effort, training, and rethinking of the curriculum and its purposes, nature and goals” (Banks, 1993, p. 201), the additive approach to teaching has the benefit of allowing the teacher to easily add queer content into the existing curriculum. However, using this approach may be problematic in several ways. First, the unit still uses heterosexual sexualities as the main orientation. Adding queer sexualities can further marginalize queer students as being “abnormal” and leaves much of the curriculum

irrelevant to their concerns. Second, adding on same-sex relationships without taking the time to fully explore their meaning can lead to students failing to develop an understanding required to treat this topic with maturity. Adding on that “it’s acceptable” to have a same-sex partner, without fully integrating these sexualities within the taught curriculum, can cause students to laugh or make fun of queer relationships, because of the lack of understanding they have. Banks (1993) explains that the additive approach can be, however, an excellent stepping stone to the transformation approach (p. 201). He explains that in the third approach, the transformation approach, “the fundamental goals, structure, and perspectives of the curriculum are changed” (p. 203). This approach enables students to “view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from several perspectives and points of view” (Banks, 1993, p. 203). Although this approach may be more difficult to implement because of the amount of work necessary to revise the taught curriculum, there are many advantages to using the transformation approach. This approach helps to empower marginalized gay, lesbian, and bisexual students who are now integrated within the entire unit. It helps reduce homophobia by making queer identities normalized within the unit to provide heterosexual students with a more comprehensive understanding of sexual orientation. Finally, it helps all students understand the perspectives and views of others (Banks, 1993, p. 209).

The fourth approach, the social action approach, takes all of these steps further to actually involve students in the issue they are studying. Students are asked to clarify their own values, make decisions, and take action to help solve social issues (Banks, 1993, p. 199). For example, students may be asked to write letters to newspapers about the representation of gays and lesbians in the media or to collect money to support a queer youth group. Banks (1993) explains that this approach involves the students in a way that helps

them develop a “sense of political efficacy” (p. 205). I would argue that they not only develop a political efficacy, but their actions may also actually change the world, or at least their school environment. However, this approach, like the transformation approach, takes a lot of effort, planning, and time on behalf of the teacher. It also is controversial and teachers may be reluctant to embark on a form of political action in such a heated social issue (Banks, 1993, p. 205). Similar to the other issues pertaining to sex role stereotyping, there are many obstacles which hinder the teachers from completely integrating homosexuality within the taught curriculum. Some of these obstacles have been covered in this section, and further obstacles will be discussed later in this chapter.

Sexual Purpose

The literature I reviewed repeatedly suggests that sexual pleasure is rarely, if at all, discussed as a sexual purpose in sexuality education classes. Fromme and Emihovich (1998) explain that sexuality education curricula fail in addressing positive motivations to have sex such as sexual pleasure (p. 172). Whatley (1988) mentions that in sexuality education, discussions of sexual pleasure and desire are almost completely absent. Fine (1988) does explain that it is misleading to suggest that desire is never talked about within public schools. However, she asserts that these occurrences are rare. It seems the account of classroom practices in literature on sexuality education inaccurately describes the actual classroom practices of teachers as monolithically ignoring sexual pleasure. Although the teachers I observed largely focused on the negative risks associated with engaging in sexual activity, there were occasions when all three teachers focused on positive aspects of sexuality such as pleasure.

As described earlier, Beth expressed to her class that sex is a normal and healthy experience for adults. She also told the class that sex is “something both people should enjoy as you get older” (PO, BB, Dec 8). Bob also talked about pleasure with his class. As he explained to me during the interview, avoiding a clinical approach to sexuality education by including intimacy in the discussion about sex was something very important to Bob. He illustrated this intimacy very well as previously explained through the many examples and anecdotes he gave to his class that included pleasure. Jason had his class come up with definitions of sex that included types of sex not only for reproduction but also for sexual pleasure such as oral sex. On the exam he included a question about which body part in the female is responsible for orgasm. The teachers all attempt to talk about sexual pleasure in different ways whether it is in talking about how sex should be enjoyable, talking about different situations where people have sex for pleasure, or in talking about different non-reproductive sex acts. The fact that each of these teachers talked about sexual pleasure is very interesting given that many studies (for example, Beyer et al., 1996; Fine, 1988) suggest that sexual pleasure is not talked about and sex is talked about only as connected to reproductive processes. The literature review in this thesis seems to demonstrate that the multitude of messages about sexual pleasure that are presented in sexuality education classes are ignored in favour of presenting a simplistic account of classroom practices.

All three teachers I observed do talk about sexual pleasure in a few occasions, yet as much of the literature predicted (for example, Bay-Cheng, 2003; Lenskyj, 1990), all three teachers also caution against having sex because of the risk of pregnancy or disease. In fact some of the time pleasure is talked about only when tagged with reminders of negative consequences as Fine (1988) described. For example, Beth emphasized that sex is a part of

life but quickly adds, “When you are ready and not before you’re ready” (PO, BB, Dec 8). Jason’s discussion on different types of sex quickly turned to considering the physical and social risk of having sex. Of course these connections need to be made, as whenever sexual activity occurs between two people, there are real risks of contracting a sexually transmitted infection or causing an unintended pregnancy. Yet, there is a range of sexual activities that are pleasurable and need not be sacrificed because of potential risk. For instance, masturbation or mutual masturbation, and rubbing or kissing bodies are activities that present little risk of STIs yet these activities were barely mentioned in the classroom. What is even more interesting is that both boys’ classes heard much less often about the connection between sexual pleasure and health risks. This observation reinforces studies (Beyer et al., 1996), which found that within sexuality education curricula male desire is emphasized over female desire (p. 363). In the girls’ classes, every time sexual pleasure is mentioned, so are the health risks.

This difference in the way that boys and the girls are taught can be linked to the literature in sexuality education which asserts that women are less likely to hear about their entitlement to pleasure within sexuality education classes (Fine, 1988). Therefore, even though pleasure is indeed addressed within the girls’ class, it is done so each time with a cautionary note. This has been previously noted by researchers who assert that when female desire or pleasure is spoken about, it is paired with reminders of potential emotional, physical, reproductive and/or financial consequences (Freudenberg, 1987 as cited in Fine, 1988, p. 33).

It seems here that despite the naturalness of sexual activity, sexual pleasure is still minimized while danger and risk is maximized. Essentially, in sexuality education sex is

taught as something that is dangerous, for both boys and girls. There are many reasons why presenting sexual pleasure as something natural and normal for both boys and girls who are discovering sexuality for the first time is difficult to do, and often done only with emphasizing danger. It involves a larger social picture of how our society views sexuality, and in particular, teenage sexuality. A discussion about teenage sexuality will be more fully explored in the following section

Obstacles to Eliminating Sex Role Stereotyping

While the teachers often attempted to challenge sex role stereotypes in their classroom, there were several obstacles that may have prevented teachers from consistently challenging sex role stereotypes within sexuality education classes. Some of these obstacles were more predictable as they concerned areas such as resources and curriculum. Other obstacles, such as the elements of truth, revealed themselves only through a detailed examination of the collected data. The five obstacles that will be described here are: classroom resources; social and cultural reproduction; elements of truth; curriculum; and adult fear of children's sexuality.

Classroom Resources

As described in the previous chapter, many of the resources used in these classes facilitated sex role stereotyping with regard to sexual responsibility. In Beth's class, for instance, she showed the television show *The Miracle of Birth*. This show described the egg and the sperm by using language parallel to the sex role stereotyping ascribed to females and males. For example, the show talked about the sperm needing to "break through and penetrate the egg", ascribing the sperm with the stereotypical male characteristic of

aggression and the egg with the stereotypical female characteristic of victimization (Miracle of Birth). This anthropomorphism has already been documented by academics such as Emily Martin (1991, p. 489).

In the film *STIs: What you should know* (Green & Holohan, 2003), which was shown in Bob's class, women's susceptibility to unwanted sex is constantly reinforced. One girl in the film expresses regret about having engaged in sexual activity: "I should have just said 'no', why didn't I?". Another girl says, "I don't even want to have safer sex for a long time" to which the nurse responds by saying "I think that's an excellent decision". Later still, a girl says, "It's hard to say 'no'" (Green & Holohan, 2003). Also in this film, the narrator says, "AIDS- It's fatal and has no cure. You could have it and don't know it, which is true of all STDs. The virus is in semen and blood". This last example is particularly subtle as it is important because of the factual information that *isn't* mentioned. The virus is also in vaginal fluid. However, it gives the impression that one can only be infected through sexual contact with men's fluid. This is once again an example where males are portrayed as dangerous and capable of infecting a female victim as the potential for female to male infection goes unacknowledged.

In the video *Considering Your Options* (NEAHIN/ Carter-Wallace, 1998) which was shown to Bob's class, similar sex role stereotypes are presented. Although the film begins by trying to teach a male character about responsibility, females are portrayed as having to face greater consequences from unprotected sex. They are also the only ones in the video who give examples of being pressured to have sex without a condom. Once again, we can see through the resources used, it is difficult to get away from reinforcing sex role stereotypes.

The video shown in Jason's class included a variety of messages about sex roles. Similar to the other videos available to the teachers, *The Truth about Sex* (Shapiro, 2000) used examples that portrayed sex role stereotypes. One of the females in the film told the camera, "Be careful with sex because it can be emotionally powerful for girls". A male responded by saying, "Most guys are horny and will take it anyway they can get it". These messages represent the same stereotypes as the other films. However, there are other examples in this film that portray contrasting images to those stereotypes. One girl tells the camera that girls are more into sex than the boys actually think, and another boy tries to dismiss the idea that boys want sex all the time. All of these examples illustrate how films have the ability to reinforce or challenge sex role stereotypes. The many images of women as victims to male sexual aggressiveness in films used by schools pose an obstacle to teachers educating against sex role stereotyping with regard to sexual responsibility.

The worksheets used in the classroom can also limit or encourage sex role stereotyping about responsibility. The worksheet called "Pregnancy Impact Worksheet", used in Jason's class, which addressed the consequences of teen pregnancy, illustrated these consequences for both boys and girls. The worksheet listed questions for the students to think about after discovering that they, or their partner, are pregnant. Questions such as "Where can you go for help?" and "How could this affect your relationship with your partner? Parents? Friends?" are gender neutral and pose an unplanned pregnancy as something that impacts both partners in a relationship. On the test, Jason also included a question asking about the impact of teen pregnancy on both the mother and the father.

Beth used a worksheet titled "Teen Pregnancy Quiz" with her class. This sheet focused only on the repercussions for women who get pregnant and not on their male

partners. For example, some of the questions are, “What percentage of teen mothers don’t finish high school?” and “Of all pregnant teenage girls, how many marry the father of the child?” (Teen pregnancy quiz). Of course, this sheet was used for a girls’ class and therefore needed to be relevant to girls’ concerns and lives. However, a sheet that considers only the consequences of getting pregnant for girls reinforces the stereotype of women as victims. The consequences for boys who impregnate their sexual partners, such as the social stigma, financial responsibility, having a fetus aborted, or becoming a father against their wishes, are not mentioned.

Many of the resources used were heterosexist. For instance, when Bob showed *STIs: What you should know* (Green & Holohan, 2003), only one way of transmitting STIs were mentioned: sexual intercourse. No other sexual activity is mentioned in the film, such as oral sex, or sex between two men or women. In Jason’s class, *The Truth about Sex* (Shapiro, 2000) presented no experiences of lesbians or bisexual women. There was, however, one man in the film who identified himself as a gay male.

The worksheets also tended to display either heterosexism or homophobia. For instance, in Jason’s class, one of the sheets he gave out titled “Journey of the Sperm Cell,” follows the journey of the sperm cell from production in the testicles, to entering the vagina. This path assumes that the sperm cell will always be traveling during intercourse with a woman. The worksheet does not consider that the same process occurs during masturbation, oral sex, a wet dream, or intercourse with a male partner. Specified only later within a test question is it qualified that this is the journey of the sperm cell during fertilization. Also listed under the worksheet “The Male Reproductive System” are the functions of the male reproductive organ. The second function listed is the “Transfer of sperm and its nutritive

and protective fluids out of the male and into the female (hopefully) reproductive systems”. It is unclear what the word “hopefully” is meant to qualify. Is the intention of this sheet to casually mention that it is hoped that the sperm will enter a female, and not a male? Or is the language in this statement intended to reflect that in order to reproduce, the sperm will hopefully enter the reproductive system of a female? By using words so casually in this worksheet, regardless of intention, heterosexism will remain one interpretation. Although none of the worksheets explicitly acknowledged same-sex sexual activity, Jason did distribute a list of important phone numbers that contained the phone number of a local queer organization offering support and social groups to queer teens.

Students are presented with conflicting messages when a teacher says one thing, and a worksheet depicts another. In Beth’s class, Beth tells her class that being in a same-sex relationship is acceptable, but the sheet she uses to describe the family life cycle adopted a traditional heterosexual relationship as the model upon which this life cycle is based. Sometimes the worksheets are even more blatant in their heterosexism. In Bob’s class, the sheet he gave out describing the developmental stages of sexuality actually listed that during adolescence, a “closeness to same-sex friends” and an “attraction to the opposite sex” occurs. It is difficult to find a more explicit display of heterosexism. However, these statements are not surprising considering other inappropriate statements on the worksheet. For example, including the “development of an informed adult moral conscience based on experience and moral teachings of the church” as an aspect of adulthood, does not take into account the cultural diversity of the students. These materials are not only outdated, but also provide a single authoritarian heterosexist discourse which make it difficult for teachers to address the current social picture of students’ lives, which may include same-sex

relationships. However, as shown, the teachers do try to interrupt those resources which encourage sex role stereotyping. Again, these teachers simultaneously call on a multitude of discourses.

The worksheets that included data relevant to the topic of sexual purpose portrayed a variety of messages about sex role stereotyping. The majority of the worksheets used in the classes focused on sexual risks and reproduction, however, there were also worksheets on healthy relationships. No worksheet explicitly addressed sexual pleasure as a sexual purpose, but messages about sexual pleasure as one purpose of sexual activity were subtly included. For instance, in Jason's class, one set of worksheets on the male and female reproductive systems listed the function of the penis for males, and the clitoris for females, as responsible for orgasm. The diagrams Jason handed out to his class also depicted internal and external organs of females, including the clitoris. As explained earlier, the external organs of the female, which include the clitoris, are often omitted from diagrams or not distributed to students. He also drew special attention to the function of the clitoris in producing orgasm by having a test question that asks which organ is responsible for female orgasm. However, this attention to female pleasure was not consistent in all of the classes. In the fill-in-the-blank sheets Beth distributed to her class on the male and female reproductive system, ejaculation and orgasm were listed as functions of the penis. However, the word orgasm never appears on the sheet describing the female reproductive system, despite its role in reproduction. In Bob's class, he only distributed a diagram illustrating the internal parts of the female reproductive organs. Therefore, no mention of where the clitoris is located was made to his class.

Further, even when diagrams of the external female genitals are given to students, simply the naming of these parts as *reproductive organs* invokes a “non-pleasure heterosexual conception of sexuality” (Elliott, 2003, p. 135). As Elliott explains, this naming reflects:

The vagina’s exclusive treatment as a topic in reproductive biology, and implying that it is a technical functional body part, to be understood purely in terms of “hard science”. Vaginas are in a way de-sexualised when exclusively examined as part of the reproductive process. (p. 135)

Further, by not separating the terms *vagina* and *vulva*, many young people use the word describing their internal genitalia to represent their external genitalia. Again, “representing a vulva as a vagina encourages the idea of purely reproductive functional female genitalia” (p. 140).

By showing examples of resources that either challenge or depict sex role stereotypes, we can see that it is difficult to be consistent in teaching sexuality education in sex equitable ways. Do resources and institutions create a culture filled with sex role stereotypes, or does a sexist culture create institutions that continue to promote sexism? This chicken or the egg question makes it difficult to reach any type of satisfactory answer. However, it is necessary to recognize the larger picture of living in a sexist culture as an obstacle to teaching sexuality education free from sex role stereotyping.

Social and Cultural Reproduction

The suggestion that our personal and societal values influence our teaching is often referred to as “social and cultural reproduction” (Parsons, 1959). As Shamai and Coombs (1992) explain,

In this sense, the school reproduces society’s social structure and cultural assets. Social and cultural reproduction theory leads to the concept of the

relative autonomy of schools, in which schools are seen as part of society and controlled by it. Thus, schools are a severely limited institution. Although schools exhibit some autonomy in that they do not completely reproduce the dominant culture, they have to conform to the values, morals and structure of society. (p. 757)

Given the sex role stereotyping engrained in our culture, these values are threaded throughout educational institutions which make avoiding sex role stereotyping in the classroom difficult. For example, when Bob explained the “later adulthood” stage of the sexual life cycle, he told his students that the bodies of people 65 years old and older still work sexually, but not as fast. He then added, “Women are not as attractive as they used to be; men don’t respond as quickly as they used to” (PO, BT, Nov 19). In a society where media constantly pushes anti-aging and beauty products for women, and Viagra and ways to achieve sexual virility for men, these comments echo the social and cultural values of North American society.

Many feminists further recognize this binary as evidence of the active/passive split expected of males and females where men *look* (active) and women are *looked at* (passive) (Measor, Tiffin & Miller, 2000, p. 94). Even when a special emphasis is placed on changing teachers’ attitudes towards sex roles, one study showed their behaviour did not change (Kelly, 1985). This cultural reproduction may occur even when teachers wish to challenge sex role stereotypes because they do not recognize the dominant societal values influencing their teaching. For example, Kehili (2002) explains Lees’ 1993 classification of three political stances in relation to the teaching of sexuality education: conservative, liberal, and feminist. Kehili explains that the conservative framework presents sexuality as unchanging and in a natural social order (p. 216). The liberal model of teaching aims to supply students with accurate information for the students to make their own choices. However, this model

does not recognize that even so-called neutral information is often loaded with hegemonic values which do not recognize contextual factors of sexual relationships (Kehili, 2002, p. 216). Kehili explains that only the feminist stance is presented by Lees as able to achieve equity because it recognizes and seeks to challenge “common-sense assumptions, particularly in matters of sex-gender inequality” (Kehili, 2002, p. 216).

Cultural reproduction poses a great obstacle because it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid these influences. When raised in a culture that promotes sex role stereotyping, undoubtedly, teachers’ own values and therefore their teaching will be influenced.

Elements of Truth

“But men *are* sexually aggressive!”

Despite recognizing that sex role stereotyping can be unfair, many people will insist that sex role stereotypes exist because they contain an element of truth. Some may even argue that challenging some sex role stereotypes, such as that men are sexually aggressive, will be harmful for women. Do all stereotypes contain an element of truth? Or is the common belief that all stereotypes contain an element of truth an erroneous assumption leading to the continued reinforcement of sex role stereotypes? In looking at obstacles to teaching sexuality education in gender equitable ways, it is important to address the reality of gendered relations in our society and how they may fit into the sex role stereotypes that are present in sexuality education classrooms.

In North America and throughout the world, male aggression toward females is prevalent. One study found that 37% of Canadian women has experienced at least one sexual assault since the age of sixteen (Roberts, 1994, p.1). Another study on sexual

harassment found that “young women are much more likely to be victims of sexual harassment, especially in the more severe forms of unwanted physical attention, than their male counterparts” (Linn, Stein, Young, & Davis, 1992, p.115). Further, sexual harassment is almost always perpetrated by males (Bogart, Simmons, Stein and Tomaszewski, 1992, p.192). These statistics make it difficult to ignore the complexity of teachers’ statements that include sex role stereotypes. For example, when Beth tells her class that “most often guys take advantage of girls, not always, but usually” (PO, BB, Nov 19), it may be a generalization but looking at current statistics about sexual assault, we can see that there is more than an element of truth to the stereotype of male victimization of females. This issue deserves attention as a real concern.

Another obstacle limiting teaching of gender equitable sexuality education is that it is true that a significantly higher proportion of the population is heterosexual. Some may argue that because the majority of students are heterosexual, the majority of class time should be given to exclusively heterosexual relationships. However, where this argument fails is that other subjects are not proportionate to the population they teach. Students in a history class with the majority of the student population being part of a visible minority, will still learn about the history of White people in North America. Classes with no Jewish students in it will still likely learn about the Holocaust. Similarly, we cannot divide the subject matter of a classroom to proportionately reflect its students. We must create a curriculum that is truly inclusive of all its students and reflects diversity in its choices of material. I will further elaborate on inclusive curricula when talking about the curriculum as an obstacle for gender equitable sexuality education.

Another example of the element of truth obstacle is the real risk of STIs and teen pregnancy. Although this thesis critiques sexuality education for using risk as a scare tactic to get students to avoid sexual contact and sexual pleasure, there are indeed real risks in having sexual relationships. McKay (2000, p. 130) gives statistics from Dryburgh's 2000 study which explains that each year in Canada, over 42, 000 women between the ages of 15 and 19 become pregnant each year. McKay (2000, p. 130) further cites a 2000 study by Health Canada which notes that rates of common sexually transmitted infections, such as chlamydia, are highest among teenagers and young adults.

Therefore, it is not suggested in this thesis that talking about risks and consequences is avoided altogether because there is truth to the argument that sex can have negative consequences. However, perpetually focusing on the negative consequences of sexual pleasure in classroom discussions is also problematic. Echols (1989), points out that choosing to emphasize sexual pleasure, sexual danger, or both has been a struggle for feminists past and present (p. 15). Some feminists may argue that *fundamental* to feminism is that women are victims to patriarchy. They may insist that people who deny women's victimhood do so in a backlash against the founding basis of feminism. Indeed, this has been the case in several articles which look at the way education and other societal institutions are failing boys and men, and juxtapose it against the success of girls and women in education and society in general:

Researchers must critically examine hegemonic masculinity and not simply in terms of the "What about the boys?" discourses that are gaining increasing pre-eminence in educational discourses. (L. Harrison, 2000, p. 7)

However, other feminists think that a discourse of women's victimhood is disempowering. This assertion can be seen through the language change of *sexual assault victim* to *sexual*

assault survivor. This thesis recognizes both of these competing discourses in feminism as valid, yet chooses to focus on the eradication of the women-as-victims mentality due to its overwhelming presence in the classroom as cited by sexuality education literature. Further,

Ironically, in our indiscriminate portrayals of teenage girls as sexual victims, we may be failing to teach them about genuine sexual autonomy and consequently ensuring that they will be victims. (Raymond, 1994, p. 132 as cited in Bay-Cheng, 2003, p. 65)

It is the assertion of this thesis that it is necessary to provide sexuality education which balances these two truths by highlighting the various tensions they pose.

Curriculum

As described earlier, in Ontario classrooms teachers may teach their classes using the materials, activities and resources they choose. This freedom means there are differences in the taught curriculum of each teacher. In looking at the case studies of the classrooms of Beth, Bob, and Jason, we can see how the classes differed from one another. The only consistency in the curriculum of all teachers in Ontario is that they use mandatory course expectations to plan the activities in their classrooms. Because of the differences in the taught curriculum, which has been the focus of this thesis, only the mandatory course expectations for all students in Ontario will be addressed here.

These course expectations do not contain anything specifically on sex role stereotyping. This absence goes directly against one of the philosophies of effective sexuality education, according to the “Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education” (Health Canada, 2003) which lists that effective sexuality education should encourage:

critical thinking about gender-role stereotyping. It recognizes the importance of gender-related issues in society, the increasing variety of choices available to individuals and the need for better understanding and communication to bring about positive social change. (p. 8)

Some teachers may interpret some of the course expectations as an opportunity to discuss sex roles. For instance, the course expectations “demonstrate understanding of the pressures on teens to be sexually active” and “describe the factors that lead to responsible sexual relationships” could create a space for sex role stereotyping with regard to responsibility to be addressed (Government of Ontario, 1999). However, not only could the issue of sex role stereotyping be ignored because of an official curriculum which does not acknowledge the need for addressing it, but these two course expectations could motivate teachers to actually reinforce sex role stereotypes. For example, Bob told his class that the two people involved in sexual intercourse must both be responsible. Yet he followed this statement by saying that “men would push” for sex and “women would weaken and give in” actually reinforcing the idea that men *do not* take responsibility for their actions (PO, BT, Nov 25). Without having the curriculum mandate how to talk about the specific pressures that men and women feel, and a mandate to debunk sex role stereotypes in sexual relationships, the teachers are left to teach whatever they wish. All of the teachers chose to teach in ways that both reinforce and disrupt sex role stereotyping. My observations demonstrated that when teachers exercise discretion, sex role stereotypes are not *consistently* challenged. Revising the curriculum could result in greater consistency.

Whereas the official curriculum does explicitly mention sexual responsibility as an important topic for students to understand, the Ontario curriculum does not explicitly indicate that the topic of sexual orientation should be included in a sexuality education class. Teachers may not mention anything at all about sexual orientation because it is not addressed in the course expectations. For example, Bob told me,

[The] curriculum is lacking because it doesn't cover same-sex relationships, or sexual relationships at all. It's really just male and female anatomy, sexual intercourse, STIs and birth control, and that's it. (PO, BT, Nov 19)

In the classes I observed, sexual orientation was addressed but only in an additive approach to the regular curriculum. With mandated guidelines absent, the teachers are presented with a challenge in translating their intended curriculum to the taught curriculum. The result is that teachers use an additive approach where the basis of the sexuality education material remains mainly aimed at heterosexual students with a short acknowledgement of queer students tacked on to the end of a discussion.

The official curriculum in this case does not mention the topic of sexual pleasure to be a part of the grade nine sexuality education course. Instead, it demonstrates a point of view that sexuality is primarily a health concern. It says that students should:

demonstrate understanding of how to use decision-making and assertiveness skills effectively to promote healthy sexuality (e.g., healthy human relationships, avoiding unwanted pregnancies and STDs such as HIV/AIDS) (Government of Ontario, 1999).

However, the "Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education" (Health Canada, 2003) emphasizes that healthy sexuality is not limited to the absence of disease, and goes beyond just "healthy relationships" as one of the positive goals of sexuality education. It describes teaching "self-esteem, respect for self and others, non-exploitive sexual relations, rewarding sexual relations [and] the joy of desired parenthood" as some of the goals of sexuality education (p. 7). This document does qualify that it is difficult to reach a definition of sexual health education that is universally agreed upon because of one's own personal experiences, culture, religion and other factors that create diversity in our views of health (p. 6). It therefore has adopted the above goals for sexual health, but notes that it must remain open to different understandings of this concept. Nevertheless, it does select these items as

positive goals for sexuality education, and broadens the scope of the current course expectations. A limited official curriculum leaves the important topic of pleasure to the discretion of the teacher, which can result in sex role stereotyping. Although teachers did not indicate controversy as a barrier to sex equitable education, research may contribute this as a concern. For example, the concept of “defensive teaching” (Trudell, 1992, 1993 as cited in Kehili, 2002, p. 217) helps illustrate how teachers will try to best negotiate their ideal teaching practices with reducing potentially uncomfortable or controversial moments which may result in consequences such as parental complaint. Mandating these controversial topics be addressed helps unburden the teacher of these personal vulnerabilities. The idea of teenage pleasure is not just politically controversial but historically constructed as dangerous. I explore long-held beliefs about children’s sexuality below.

Adult Apprehension about Children’s Sexuality

“What questions regarding child and teen sex have preoccupied Americans over the past two centuries? Mainly, *whether* and *when*. And what are the answers? *No* and *later*, when they are married or at least ‘mature’” (Levine, 1992: xxxii)

The idea of sexual pleasure being a natural and healthy part of all our lives is still contentious in Canada. Many sexual health educators would assert that sexual pleasure is part of our lives from birth until death (Sears, 1992b, p. 26; Myerson, 1992, p. 150). As Goldman and Graham (2001) go further to explain,

Humans are sexual not only from birth but from when they were developing in the womb. Sexuality is a concomitant characteristic of being human. Sexuality is with us from conception to death. (p. 197)

However, other people would like to believe that sexuality is something that begins after the teenage years (Sears, 1992b, p. 26). Many argue that the idea of “childhood innocence” is something that was created by adults to control children’s sexuality. For example, Foucault

argued that it has only been in recent centuries that childhood sexuality has begun to be “isolated, examined, and viewed as sinful” so that adults may control it (as cited in Heins, 2001, p. 20). He called this process the “pedagogization of children’s sex” and described the development since the 18th century of conceptualizations of children’s sexuality as simultaneously present and absent. He asserted that parents, families, educators and doctors construct children’s sexuality as both inevitable and natural, while paradoxically dangerous and contrary to nature (Foucault, 1990, p. 104). Frayser (2003) continues this argument and explains that it was during the 19th century that sex became the marker to distinguish between the stages of childhood and adulthood. She writes, “children were innocent (i.e., not sexually aware or experienced) and immature while adults were sexually experienced and mature” (p. 263).

These fairly recent conceptualizations that childhood should be a period absent of sexuality continues to be held by many today. Frayser further explains the expansion of these ideas about childhood, “The perception of danger associated with childhood sexual activity has extended to the interpretation of sexual activity during adolescence” (p. 268). Conceptions about adolescent sexuality gets translated into classroom teaching that reinforces that sex is something only for adults. For example, when a student in Bob’s class asked what is an appropriate age to have sex, Bob first replies, “The law says that under 16 is a criminal offense” (PO, BT, Nov 21). He then tells that student that he should wait until he is ready to be responsible. On another day, he tells the class that it is in the *adult stage* of the sexual life cycle when sexual intercourse first becomes a possibility (PO, BT, Nov 19). Beth also tells her class that between 73 and 77 per cent of college students are sexually active and how this isn’t bad “because it’s past the age of consent” (PO, BB, Dec 2).

Further, these teachers avoid mentioning the actual age of consent, which is 14 years of age for vaginal intercourse, and 18 for anal intercourse (Department of Justice Canada, 2004). Well-known feminist Kate Millett says, “Adults have been all too effective, not only in poisoning sexuality but also in preventing children from understanding or experiencing it” (Millett, 1984, pp. 218-219, as cited in Sears, 1992b, p. 26). Sears (1992b) also questions the denial of the sexual expression of youth on the premise of “protecting children” (p. 27). The social picture of how teenage sexuality fits into our ideas and values can constrict teachers from emphasizing the positive aspects of sexuality with their students.

CHAPTER 7: IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The observations drawn from my study reveal the complex nature of sex role stereotyping in sexuality education classes, as well as the obstacles that can impede social change. In this chapter, implications and recommendations in the areas of research, practice, policy and theory will be addressed.

Research

This study has implications for further academic research on the topic of sexuality education and sex role stereotyping. Although this study was designed to explore classroom teaching in relation to literature on this topic, this thesis has implications for the literature itself. The literature I reviewed continually indicated that sex role stereotyping frequently occurs in sexuality education classrooms. To a large extent, the study bares out these assumptions. However, educational research has been narrow and generalizes its findings of teacher practice as largely monolithic. What this thesis suggests is that teachers challenge sex role stereotypes more often than the academic studies indicate and that how sex role stereotyping gets taught in the classroom is more complex than the literature makes it appear. The evidence that classroom practices differ from what the research indicates happens in the classroom is limited to the cases I observed. Because this study only focuses on three classrooms, a larger study must take place to determine if these findings are widespread. Even in the few cases I studied, patterns of complexity emerge. Imagine what further insight could be obtained by additionally focusing on the learned curriculum of the students in these classes and the implication of the teachers' sexualities in the classroom.

Further, studies on sex role stereotyping and sexuality education should be qualitative and classroom based to get an accurate understanding of how teachers are

actually dealing with the topic of sex role stereotyping in their sexuality education classes. These studies should be open to complexity that may appear in classroom practices and should take into account any sites of resistance within the classroom, obstacles (practical and theoretical) in challenging sex role stereotyping, and “polyvocal discourses” of teachers (J. Robertson, personal communication, April 15, 2005) if they occur. These new Canadian studies would remedy the outdatedness of the many studies on sex role stereotyping in sexuality and the dearth of studies examining the Canadian context.

Practice

This study also has implications for the way sexuality education is taught. There are many things to consider when teaching such a complex topic as sexuality, particularly in sex-segregated classes. The teaching of boys’ and girls’ classes must reflect the intricate picture of sexuality that has been explored in this thesis, and the relationship between gender and society. For instance, how violence against women and sexual pleasure are discussed are related to both the complexity of sexuality as well as the relationship between men and women. In these classes, these teachers sometimes taught in ways that challenged sex role stereotyping, and sometimes their teaching reinforced sex role stereotyping. Therefore, it is necessary to help teachers find ways to explicitly address this complexity and learn how to translate an intended curriculum free of sex role stereotypes to their taught curriculum.

One way to help teachers address this complexity is by establishing proper training for teachers teaching sexuality education. Only 24% of physical and health education programs in Canadian faculties of education provided pre-service teachers with compulsory training in sexual health education (McKay and Barrett, 1999, p. 95). Further, teachers must teach sexuality education in ways that are truly inclusive of queer students. All of this

teaching must be within the context of the diversity of the urban Ontario school system. Classes must be taught in ways that are inclusive, not only to queer students, but also to students of colour, immigrant students, students with disabilities and a myriad of other qualities which make up the student body. Also, none of these identities are isolated variables, and many students will belong to more than one category. Trying to teach in ways that warmly accept these differences will be challenging, however, they are necessary to the success of gender equitable sex education. Undoubtedly, having a curriculum that spells out this goal would aid this attempt.

Policy

The official curriculum must include challenges to sex role stereotyping within its mandate. It should clearly explain what teachers are expected to teach regarding sex role stereotyping, and furthermore indicate that equitable approaches to sexual responsibility, sexual orientation and sexual purpose need to be reached. The Ontario Ministry of Education and Training produced a document outlining guidelines for policy development and implementation of principles of anti-racism and ethnocultural equality within Ontario school systems (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993). This policy outlined core objectives of a curriculum that is equitable in terms of race and culture. It included the following objectives:

- To develop or modify curriculum to reflect in an equitable way a culturally and racially diverse society
- to ensure that the cultural and racial identities of all students are affirmed in an equitable and appropriate way by learning experiences in the school
- to identify bias and discriminatory barriers in existing curriculum structures, policies, programs, and learning materials. to enhance teachers' abilities to use biased materials constructively to develop students' critical thinking about racism.

- To reflect the diversity of staff, students, parents, and the community in all areas of curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation, and in the membership of curriculum committees. (p. 33)

This policy is an excellent step towards equity and of benefit to school staff and students of all cultures. It further could be expanded by building on this foundation for social change by creating an additional document that is inclusive to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. If the words *cultural* and *racial* are replaced with *sexual*, here exists an excellent basis for a policy of antiheterosexism for Ontario schools. This document would list as goals:

- to develop or modify curriculum to reflect in an equitable way a sexually diverse society
- to ensure that the sexual identities of all students are affirmed in an equitable and appropriate way by learning experiences in the school
- to identify bias and discriminatory barriers in existing curriculum structures, policies, programs, and learning materials. to enhance teachers' abilities to use biased materials constructively to develop students' critical thinking about heterosexism.
- To reflect the sexual diversity of staff, students, parents, and the community in all areas of curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation, and in the membership of curriculum committees.

One limitation of such a document would be that this policy isolates defining characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender, while these categories not only intersect, but also define one another. Perhaps a single policy which recognizes this complexity is necessary for truly and expansively reflecting these categories. Further, promoting a cross-curricular approach to sexuality would give students the opportunity to view sexuality in social, historical and political contexts rather than just in the context of a Physical-Education class.

Other policy issues concern resources and budgets. Even though there are videos and other resources on the market that are gender equitable, the budget for purchasing new

resources is often small. As Bob told me, they have to use free resources that are given to them because of their limited budget. Having resources that specifically avoid sex role stereotyping about responsibility, include topics and information relevant to queer students, and address the goal of sexual pleasure as one purpose of sexual activity, would lessen the burden of teachers who currently must compete with inadequate resources.

It is also crucial for the objectives of education to be made explicit in sexuality education. There is a struggle in dealing with the topic of sex role stereotyping. Should we prepare students for the existing world, or should we use education to change the world? According to the 1959 Tyler Rationale, the most influential set of ideas about how to make a curriculum as cited by Walker and Soltis (2004),

Our actions (means) must be adjusted to our objectives (ends). Tyler's model requires us to make our objectives public and explicit from the start, so that we and everyone else can see whether we have succeeded or not in our attempts to realize them. (p. 60)

I would argue that the curriculum should address both the existing world, as well changing the world. The curriculum must be explicit about this goal in order to facilitate its implementation and monitor its success.

Theory

The questions just discussed regarding the aims of education should be applied to feminist theory. Do we educate in order to rid the world of its sexism and homophobia; or, should we prepare women and queers for the current world by equipping them with tools to survive and succeed in a sexist and homophobic environment? Feminists are often divided over this same debate as alluded to in the earlier discussion about women's victimization versus women's empowerment. Deciding to allot energy and money to protecting women

from men, or on changing men's behaviours, is continually negotiated. Many feminists would acknowledge the need for funding shelters, sexual assault help lines and counseling services to help women who have been victims of men's violence. Yet change is impossible without funding anti-violence education, rehabilitation programs for men who have sexually assaulted women and organizations such as the White Ribbon Campaign that seek to promote men's responsibility in ending violence against women. This struggle becomes more complicated when realizing that not all feminists are convinced that men can change their aggressive "nature". Understanding the different approaches to this question has implications for feminist theories.

In this study, I primarily focused on social constructions that result in sex role stereotyping. However, I only touch on how these constructions are made. As explained earlier, queer theory is more concerned with the existence and construction of identity itself, rather than an examination of those identities that have been created. Similarly, this thesis puts forward the opportunity for researchers to take up how sexuality education creates a space for constructing discourses about sexuality. The act of separating boys and girls classes and putting sexuality education in a Physical-Education class instead of a History or Geography class, all help in the construction of discourses which intertwine with the issue of sex role stereotyping. For example, if sexuality education were taught in a History class, the changing notion of childhood sexuality could be looked at across time to dismiss the idea that children have a "natural" innocence. Teaching sexuality education in a Geography class would give teachers the opportunity to mention that masculinity and femininity have different meanings throughout the world challenging the idea of biological, static sex roles. Further theorizing in this area would complement and advance the work done in this thesis.

Conclusion

This thesis began as an exploratory study to address the gap in the literature on sexuality education and sex role stereotyping. With few academic sources documenting the actual classroom practices of teachers, studies on sex role stereotyping being increasingly outdated, and Canadian research on this topic almost entirely absent, I had expected that this thesis would fill in some gaps in our knowledge. However, what I did not expect to find was the complexity of teachers' actual classroom practices and their many attempts to challenge sex role stereotypes.

This finding not only provides insight into the power of teachers to subvert dominant notions of sexuality that are contained in society and their ability to enact agency even within their own submersion in authoritative discourses, but also the incompleteness of the picture sexuality education literature paints for us. Its generalizing, monolithic, and often negative portrayal of sexuality education makes invisible the positive classroom practices and equitable discourses occurring in Ontario schools. I hope that my demonstration of teachers playing with and pushing boundaries of equality will be a source of hope for those invested in creating an equitable educational system, as well as for the boys and girls who are the life of these classrooms. I have begun to engage in a discussion of the obstacles to eliminating sex roles, highlighting the sometimes paradoxical ways in which they operate. I further made recommendations in the area of research of sex role stereotyping and sexuality education, teacher practice, government policy and feminist and queer theory.

As with all research that uncovers new findings, my research leaves us with more questions to be explored. How do teachers view their own practice in terms of sex role stereotyping? What do students retain from such teaching practices? How can teachers'

classroom practices change when embedded in cultural values that support rigid sex roles?

These questions need to result in further discussion, exploration, interrogation and problematization. The hope is that future researchers conducting studies on this topic will not accept what comes at face value but continue their search under the covers.

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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

How long have you been teaching sex-ed?

How long have you been teaching at this school?

When you did teacher's college, did you get any training in how to teach sex-ed?

What do you remember about taking sex-ed, when you were in high school?

If you had to pick 3 key messages you would want your class to come away with after the unit, what would it be?

What are some important things that boys need to know?

What are some important things that girls need to know?

Can you tell me the pros and cons of teaching a class that is co-ed or sex segregated?

How might teaching a girls class present different challenges to you as a teacher?

How might teaching a girls class make things easier for you as a teacher?

What methods do you use to teach sex ed?

What factors do you think about when deciding how to teach the class?

What are some of the challenges of teaching a diverse student population?

Does the issue of pleasure ever come up in your classes?

Anything else you want to add?

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION GUIDE

Participant Observation

Teacher:

Date:

Time:

School

Class topic:

What content is taught?

What methods are used?

How are the methods delivered?

Notes:

APPENDIX D: LIST OF CLASSROOM RESOURCES*Worksheets*

Anatomical Illustration No. 6 (Bob distributed Nov 19, 2003)

Anatomical Illustration No.10 (Bob distributed Nov 19, 2003)

Developmental Stages of Sexuality (Bob distributed Nov 19, 2003)

Female Reproductive System (SE-7): External View (Jason distributed March 29, 2004; Beth distributed Dec 5, 2003)

Female Reproductive System Diagram (SE-6) (Jason distributed March 29, 2004; Beth distributed Dec 5, 2003)

Journey of the Sperm cell (Jason distributed March 31, 2004)

Male Reproductive System Diagram (SE-10) (Jason distributed March 29, 2004; Beth distributed Dec 5, 2003)

Phone Numbers (Jason distributed March 30, 2004)

Pregnancy Impact Worksheet (Jason distributed April 1, 2004)

Sexuality Assignment (Beth distributed Dec 3, 2003)

Sexuality Test- PPL10Q (Jason distributed April 2, 2004)

STI (yuck) (Jason distributed April 1, 2004)

Teen Pregnancy Quiz (Beth distributed Dec 2, 2003)

The Female Reproductive System (SE-9) (Beth distributed Dec 5, 2003)

The Male Reproductive System (Jason distributed March 29, 2004)

The Male Reproductive System (SE-11) (Beth distributed Dec 5, 2003)

Audio Visual

Green, S.E. and Holohan, E. (Producers). (2003) *Sexually transmitted infections: What you should know* [Motion Picture].

Miracle of birth. [Television Series]

National Education Association Health Information Network / Carter-Wallace. (Producer). (1998). *Considering Your Options*. [Motion Picture].

Shapiro, A. (Producer). (2000). *The truth about sex*. [Motion Picture]. United States: AIMS Multimedia