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The Power of Heteropolarity and Its Effects on Sexuality Educators

Masters of Arts in Education

Thesis

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*This thesis is dedicated to my parents,
Allan, Bryn, Frances and Leslie,
without your constant
emotional, financial and intellectual support
this would not have been possible.
Thank-you!*

The Power of Heteropolarity and Its Effects on Sexuality Educators

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Abstract

Current research in sexuality education has focused on the curriculum content and its ability to reduce rates of teen pregnancy and the transmission of STDs (Hiller *et al*, 1998; Holland *et al*, 1992; Getty & Bannan, 1993). Only a limited amount of research has begun to focus on the role of the sexuality educator and how he or she contributes to the curriculum's effectiveness (Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993; Greenberg, 1989; Schultz & Boyd, 1984). A review of the literature reveals a tendency within sexuality education to practice what is known as the heteropolar imperative. Heteropolarity is described by Wilton (1985) as the inseparability and co-dependency of gender and the erotic within society; it is the assumption that heterosexuality is natural, proper and right. Heteropolarity is also concerned with the relationship between the biological, the moral, and the ideological in the realm of human sexuality. The current study examines the social forces that effect sexuality educators and limit their curricula to heteropolar imperatives. The study adds to the knowledge base of what is known about the current social control of teachers in their planning and implementation of human sexuality curricula.

The study follows a naturalistic research design and involves interviews with five sexuality educators from a variety of organizations in the Ottawa-Carleton region. The participants volunteered for the study and were chosen based on purposeful sampling (Creswell, 1998). Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection and included questions that probed the experiences of the teachers and provided a personal account of their history in teaching human sexuality education. Data were transcribed and analyzed to discover patterns and themes within each participant's personal narrative, and the patterns that exist among participants. Through participant interviews, I found that the heteropolar imperative within sexuality education is maintained through a set of external and internal barriers that block the educator's ability to implement a comprehensive sexuality curriculum. These barriers to sexuality education have been identified as the gatekeepers of sexuality education and include the interconnecting variables: students, classroom teachers, colleagues, principals and administration, time, and personal issues with the educator. Results have implications for the design and implementation of future teacher education programs and sexuality curricula.

1.0 Introduction

The issues and questions that surround human sexuality education are sensitive in the North American education system. This sensitivity, coupled with the many systems working to control sexuality education, plays a major part in shaping and limiting access to comprehensive sexuality discourses. Obstacles to implementation are frequently anticipated due to sexuality education's history of controversy among parents and the community (Croft & Asmussen, 1992). The ideologies of The New Right and essentialists are pitted against permissive, interactionalist and feminist approaches to sexuality education, in a struggle to control the sexuality of the next generation. This challenge has led to much debate over the nature and path of current human sexuality education programs. Unfortunately, the needs of children are often left out of this debate as different ideological stances pressure their way into the curriculum. This fight for moralistic control has come into conflict with children's basic human right to accurate and comprehensive education (McKay, 1997). Society must begin to question not only the information presented in human sexuality curricula, but the systems by which this knowledge is implemented and reinforced. Unfortunately, it is not always the most effective curriculum that is implemented, but the one that serves a particular agenda.

In the past, research on sexuality education has focused on the role of the student and the effectiveness of sexuality education at curbing risky sexual behavior in adolescents (Hiller *et al*, 1998; Holland *et al*, 1992; Getty & Bannan, 1993). In recent years, researchers have begun to realize that not only the curriculum, but also the educator is important in the effectiveness of sexuality education programs. While many studies have looked at teacher characteristics as

contributing factors in the performance of human sexuality classes (Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993; Greenberg, 1989; Schultz & Boyd, 1984), researchers are now only beginning to look at how educators are affected by social pressures related to teaching knowledge about human sexuality. What is important is to begin to look at how educators are affected by personal and social factors, and how these factors effect teachers' perceptions of sexuality education. Croft and Asmussen (1992) state that educational efforts have been unable to provide youth with the skills they need to handle complex developmental tasks at a young age, leaving many adolescents unprepared to deal with the consequences of sexual behavior. It is the aim of the current study to look at how different systems and discourses work on educators to shape the planning and implementation of their sexuality curricula and how this affects the efficacy of their teaching.

The study was carried out using a naturalistic inquiry research tradition. This approach is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as an alternative to positivist research designs and in their book, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, they set down the basic framework of axioms for a naturalistic study which was followed by the current study. In a naturalistic inquiry the researcher is concerned with the following points: the researcher should be aware that there are multiple realities and at times these realities will diverge, making prediction and control impossible to attain; the researcher is not a passive recorder but an acting influence on the researched. In naturalistic inquiry, generalization and causal linkages are not the focus of the research, rather there is an emphasis on a working hypothesis that is aware of the ever changing state of all entities. Finally, naturalistic inquiry sees research as value bonded and the following is a corollary of this bond: the researcher makes a value statement when he or she chooses the research question, methodology,

research paradigm, substantive theory and context. The axioms listed above are intended to guide a naturalistic study. With this in mind it is important to note that a naturalistic inquiry is not a static research method but acknowledges the growing and changing process that occurs during research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Current research has named the educator as one of the most important factors in the efficacy of sexuality education (DeGaston *et al*, 1994; Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993; Schultz & Boyd, 1984). The attitudes and beliefs of the educator effect his or her choices for curriculum inclusion as well as how to teach information. Related to this is how comfortable an educator feels about teaching the sensitive issues surrounding human sexuality. Educator support, erotophilia-erotophobia, and level of knowledge are all contributing factors to an educator's feelings about instructing a human sexuality class (Yarber & McCabe, 1984). Erotophilia is defined by an individual's association between positive emotions and sexuality, and erotophobia is defined by an individual's negative associations with sexuality. Although researchers have studied some of the factors affecting educators, they have yet to look at the social systems and discourses that directly influence educators and shape their curricular choices. This would mean taking into account the role of texts, prepackaged curricula, administrative, parental, student and community pressures, and educators' prior learning experiences.

Many scholars and researchers suggest that the majority of children are receiving inadequate sexuality education (Diorio, 1985; Haffner & Goldberg, 1997; Holland *et al*, 1992; Hiller *et al*, 1998). Sexuality is defined by the dominant class (Golden, 1988) and so is education, therefore, children are receiving only "dominant class" knowledge about sexuality. Sears (1991)

stated that the school culture reflects that of the larger society and that it socializes girls and boys into their presumed heterosexual destiny. Researchers report that children are taught a white, middle-class, male standard that leaves out pluralistic views of sexual behavior (Myerson, 1986; Wilton, 1985). It is also suggested that this view supports abstinence, and limited safer sex approaches over all other alternative forms of education. Problematically, this limited curriculum marginalizes and silences the voices of gays/lesbians, women, the disabled and minorities by not including them in the education. Being sexually different in this environment, which supports and perpetuates sexual sameness, can exact a heavy tole on students falling outside of heteropolar norms (Sears, 1991).

Human sexuality education is further limited when sexual behavior and functioning are taught under the guise of science. This leads to children being taught biology, anatomy and reproductive functions and leaves out discourses on pleasure, empowerment and gender equality. Many educators hide behind the scientific facts of biological determinism in order to keep sexual education scientific and to minimize controversy over sensitive issues (Myerson, 1986; Whatley, 1988). Even though teachers may not support the primacy of “scientific findings” they perpetuate its importance when they don’t question science in the sexuality education classroom (Whatley, 1987).

While there are government mandates on what should be taught about human sexuality, there are no strict guidelines and there is little support for educators. Freedom in curricular choices creates a space for educators to be silenced or empowered by different sexuality discourses. Unfortunately, all too often sexuality educators are affected by the dominant class and

simply become reproducers of the sexual status quo (Whatley, 1988). Even when educators try to teach controversial topics, they may feel the pressure of the dominant class and become fearful of reprisal for their curricular choices (Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993; Lenskyj, 1990; Rust, 1994). It is the purpose of this study to look at the forces working on educators both at personal and social levels that influence their beliefs about sexuality education. By analyzing the forces that shape educators' perceptions the research may begin to help educators, administrators and researchers understand how sexual knowledge is produced and reproduced in the school system. With this analysis the research may be providing others with the foundation to move beyond the discursive limits of the dominant class into a more pluralistic and democratic approach to sexuality education.

It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words and if I were to paint the word sexuality it would then inspire a thousand more pictures. It would be a landscape filled with mixed emotions of joy, sensitivity, fear, violence, insecurity and too many other emotions to list. Sexuality is a sensitive and even taboo area in society because it represents humans at their most vulnerable point, naked and exposed reacting to pure emotions. Sexuality is composed of love, trust, our body, our gender, our self-esteem and dynamics of power, and how these different variables come together will determine how accepting or closed an individual is to sexual expression. Before individuals can truly understand their personal stance on sexuality education they must visit the meanings and emotions they have attached to sexuality in their own lives. In order for the reader to situate him/herself within the sexuality education debate he or she must first become aware of her/his own feelings toward sex, sexuality and sexual expression. When a

place is found within these words then the reader will be better able understand the issues discussed in this study and the reactions the material may evoke.

Zoldbord (1998) suggests in her book *SexSmart: How Childhood Shaped Your Sexual Life and What To Do About It* that as adults, sexuality is defined by the primary relationships established as we are growing up. The conditions of these relationships, loving, unavailable or abusive, will establish an individual's capacity for becoming involved in sexual relationships as adults. The journey toward building a positive sexual self-esteem grows out of experiences with sexual expression and ability to navigate the way through sexual barriers and engage in positive experiences. What is important to note is that we will each create our own picture of human sexuality based on experiences and how we negotiated the many variables existing in our sexual histories.

How we frame our stance on sexuality education will also be determined by early life experiences and how we, and those around us, approached our own sexuality and sexual expression. Although an attempt has been made to distance the emotional effect of sexuality from the research data this is not entirely possible. When the information presented in this study is read the reader must be cognizant of how sexuality is constituted in his/her own life and how this relates to his/her stance in the debate for and against comprehensive sexuality education in the school system.

1.10 Statement of Problem

1.11 Heteropolarity

Heteropolarity is described by Wilton (1985) as the inseparability and co-dependency of

gender and the erotic within society. That is, the assumption that heterosexuality is natural, proper and right. Heteropolarity is also concerned with the relationship between the biological, the moral, and the ideological in the realm of human sexuality. Although the term was originally drafted to discuss issues relating to AIDS education, I wish to take it one step further for the purpose of this study to discuss all sexuality education.

I would like to suggest that heteropolarity is at the root of many current problems in human sexuality education. Heteropolarity implies the belief that sex=vaginal penetration=heterosexual sex; it excludes all other forms of sexual expression in discussions on options for sexual expression. Often, in society, female sexuality has been defined as the “other” or in terms of the male, and from this stemmed the assumption that heterosexual intercourse is the proper expression of sexuality (Whatley, 1987). Heteropolarity also encompasses the traditional gender roles equated with heterosexual sex: the woman is chaste and the man has an insatiable sexual appetite due to ravenous hormones. Sexuality curricula which support heteropolar norms teach that women are reproducers, and that women are not sexual, while the males are the sexual beings (Whatley, 1987). Heteropolarity refers to society’s conceptions of what proper sexual behavior should look like. Many of the beliefs of heteropolarity have become so deeply ingrained in society’s traditional sexual beliefs that they are viewed as facts, and are rarely challenged. When practices such as homosexuality, contraception, and masturbation are raised they come into conflict with the primacy of heteropolar norms.

The term heteropolarity gets at the root of the problem facing current sexuality educators. Educators feel pressured to accept the views of heteropolarity and are pressured to reproduce the

ideas of the dominant culture. When educators question the assumptions of heteropolarity, they may feel external and internal pressures, and threats to their professional integrity. Berne and Huberman (1995) assert that school officials take calculated steps in ensuring that disruptions are minimized by the implementation of sexuality curricula. The systems of pressures working against educators may originate on many levels from many different sources. They can be as obvious as parental complaints and peer pressure, and as subtle as feeling uncomfortable with various topics of education. What needs to be studied, then, is the relationship between these various systems of influence and how they work together to effect and to limit the information taught in human sexuality classes. In this study I wish to look at the systems or discourses that support heteropolarity and how these systems are maintained in the belief systems of educators. Most importantly, I wish to look at how social forces work on human sexuality educators and their curricular choices.

Communication is an interconnected social, cognitive and linguistic enterprise. The language of communication, both spoken and written, defines discourses in society (Hatch, 1992). Within the system of communication constructed for knowledge relating to human sexuality exists the heteropolar imperative discourse. It must be noted that in the current study, the heteropolar imperative does not represent a static definition of the forces which support and perpetuate a heterosexual discourse. Rather, the heteropolar imperative is an evolving discourse with multiple definitions. How the heteropolar imperative is defined by, or relates to an individual, depends on that individual's personal life history. That is, for each individual the heteropolar imperative will work in different ways. For some, the imperative will be internalized and reproduced in their

educational practices; for others, the imperative will be rejected and will exercise social pressure on the individual. These are only two possible ways that the heteropolar imperative may exist for an individual. However, there is an infinite number of ways that the imperative may surface and effect an individual. For the current study, participants who have had a variety of experiences within the heteropolar imperative were interviewed. The study was not limited to those who consciously impose the imperative or to those who have unconsciously adapted the imperative. Rather, I examined different representations of the heteropolar imperative by interviewing individuals who are situated in different spaces within or outside of the heteropolar imperative. By doing so I hope to illuminate how the different experiences of the participants define, redefine and shape their experiences as human sexuality educators.

1.12 Educator Perceptions

I was interested in examining the actual experiences of pressure from various systems or discourses that influence human sexuality educators. Therefore, the current study attempts to engage human sexuality educators through in-depth interviews as a way of investigating the main research issues. Although there exists a large body of information on human sexuality discourses, little research has explored the beliefs, perceptions and concerns of the educator. And although literature exists that points to the pressures working on sexuality educators, few studies have focused on understanding the issue as their primary objective. What the literature has done is provide a framework for questioning educators about their experiences.

The experiences of educators are important to this avenue of research for many reasons. Most importantly, the educator's place in the education system is unique because he or she is the

closest representative of the school system to the actual students. This means that educators have direct contact with the needs, attitudes, behaviors and experiences of the students. Educators are also close to the administrators and principal. This leaves educators in the middle of the controversy of what should and shouldn't be taught in the classroom. Such positioning places educators, and how they relate to and differ from other role groups, in a unique and vulnerable position. Perhats *et al* (1996) describe a system of diffusion where a series of steps or stages are used to evaluate the success of health programs in a school setting. In their study, the opinions of educators, principals, administrators and parents differed greatly on issues of sexual health promotion. The researchers cite the uniqueness of the relationship that exists between the student and other groups as an important factor in this difference. It is therefore important to focus on educator thoughts, attitudes and behaviors because they serve as a medium of knowledge between the students, the administrators and sometimes the community.

The choice to use educators as the main source of data for this study also relates to their unique position in the literature. Although there is a strong body of literature pointing toward the failure of abstinence-only programs (Edwards, 1997; Whatley & Trudell, 1991), and safer-sex discourses (Diorio, 1985; Holland *et al*, 1992; Whatley & Trudell, 1991), such approaches continue to dominate discourses in sexuality education. Within the literature there are ample examples of alternate sexuality discourses, alternates that may prove to be more effective than abstinence-only and safer-sex curricula in educating adolescents. Unfortunately, these alternates seem to be negated due to their more permissive attitudes toward adolescent sexuality. Sexuality curricula are not designed with a positive approach to sexuality. Rather, they put emphasis on

danger, as opposed to pleasure and the normal role sexuality plays in our lives (Brick, 1991). Interestingly, although educators know there may be better forms of education than those being offered, educators may continue to jeopardize the welfare of adolescents by offering incomprehensive programs. Controversy exists between liberal and conservative ideologies, and educators may be in-between, or on either side of this debate. Whatley (1987) suggests that schools have become a dumping ground for larger social problems and that it is the teachers who are expected to carry the burden and deal with the issues. Unfortunately, many teachers are not prepared to deal with the issues. The curricula are reduced to formulas for teaching values and the responsibility to “just say no” is placed on the students (Whatley, 1987). Attitudes and behaviors of educators play a unique role in children’s formulation of sexual knowledge. The sexuality education gap exists between what is available to teach children about sexuality and what educators are teaching them.

1.13 Comprehensive Sexuality Education

The comprehensive approach to sexuality education teaches information about human sexuality, provides opportunities for adolescents to question, explore and assess sexual attitudes, helps develop interpersonal skills, and helps adolescents develop responsibility and make informed choices about sexual behavior (SIECUS, 1991). This comprehensive approach comes in conflict with abstinence-only programs which tend to substitute opinion for fact, report insufficient or inaccurate knowledge, use scare tactics, ignore the real life situations of students, and support gender and cultural stereotypes (Whatley & Trudell, 1991).

A comprehensive approach to sexuality education provides students with age-appropriate

material that will in turn allow students to make rational decisions about their sexual health.

Silverstone (1991) defines the phrase “comprehensive sexuality education” as an approach to education that moves beyond the cognitive domain to include affect, communication skills, listening and clear assertive expression. This type of education will help students make educated decisions about their sexuality and sexual expression.

Educators who work to provide comprehensive sexuality curricula try to present multiple perspectives in the classroom and provide an education that is relevant to all students.

Information on taboo, sensitive or marginalized issues is not left out but is dealt with in the classroom. This attempt to provide a space for all students to learn helps to normalize the experience of minority students or those adolescents with varying forms of sexual expression.

Silverstone (1991) believes that comprehensive sexuality education can increase a student’s understanding of democracy because it encourages them to search for ways that individuals and the community evolve toward understanding, equality and freedom.

2.0 Literature Review

In this section, I will attempt to review two bodies of literature that relate to the position of human sexuality educators within the education system. The first part of the review will focus on information that relates to the different systems of knowledge construction, or discourses, that work on human sexuality education. I will look at the different discourses and ideological issues that effect sexuality education. For the second part of the review, I will examine the various factors that effect sexuality educators directly. That is, the various educator characteristics, available texts, curricular choices, and administrative factors that effect how a sexuality educator

plans and implements his or her program. Hopefully, the study of these two bodies of literature will identify the forces behind the heteropolar mandate.

When you look at discourses on human sexuality, there is a tendency for them to be dichotomous: essentialist vs. anti-essentialist, biological determinism vs. interactionist, abstinence vs. safer sex, permissive vs. restrictive, and The New Right vs. Progressivist. Although each set of opposing opinions carries some commonalities, each group also has its own distinct characteristics. What is common is that each group is in ideological opposition with the other and is fighting for the power to educate adolescents on what it believes to be the “facts” of human sexuality. Reiss (1995) outlines five major approaches to sexuality education and believes that each ideology falls under one of these categories: it should not occur, it should promote sexual health, it should promote personal autonomy, it should promote responsible sexual behavior, and, it should take place within a religious framework. In his article Reiss (1995) supports a pluralistic approach which integrates all of the categories and suggests that all schools should identify which approach they favor in order to scrutinize the validity of their own approach.

Diorio (1985) states that essentialists define sex as a biological drive and this drive is inherent in the human organism. This drive is acted out in a rigid, well defined set of behaviors, with a defined intent and type of partner. The essentialist view believes sex is constant throughout society and culture, and without accepted variation. This essentialist view accepts and disseminates the primacy of heteropolarity in sexual culture. The essentialist does not take social issues into account when discussing sex and defines it as heterosexual copulation and nothing else. The essentialist view of sexuality education supports abstinence and biological determinism. The

beliefs of biological determinism are firmly planted in curricula that presents “facts” about anatomy and physiology, pregnancy and childbirth, STDs and teen pregnancy (Whatley, 1988). Biological determinism is a subset or tool of the essentialist education, and uses “scientific fact” as its main support. That is, essentialists use scientific facts of biological determinism to maintain and reproduce their views of human sexuality. The fact that sex hormones are often delegated as male or female is a tool of biological determinism and is highly incorrect (Whatley, 1987). Most often essentialists use information on hormones which reinforce the concept of limited and limiting sex roles. By using biological determinism, essentialists report that men have higher sex drives and this leads to men being uncontrollable and dominant over females (Whatley, 1988). Essentialists hide behind the scientific basis of biological determinism because they believe science is not easily challenged and that it adds to the strength of their approach.

Related to the essentialist approach is a restrictive ideology of human sexuality education. McKay (1997) defines this approach as casting human sexuality in a negative light and argues that sexual behavior needs to be subjected to strict legal, social and moral controls. Restrictive ideologies report a narrow set of sexual behaviors as morally acceptable and argue that any behaviors outside of this set are unnatural, immoral and destructive to the person, society or both. Klein (1987) believes that this approach to sexuality education teaches that sexual activity which cannot lead to procreation should be illegal, that it is immoral and just not right. Klein further states that the belief of women as valued “reproductive” property also stems from this restrictive education that denies women sexual knowledge and discourages them from controlling their reproductive capabilities. This view proposes that sexual relations should take place only in light

of a married and monogamous relationship where procreation is the intended purpose. The restrictive approach rejects homosexuality, masturbation and pre/extramarital affairs. This ideological stance also negates the use of contraception and safer-sex approaches and favors abstinence before marriage. The restrictive approach to sexuality, like the essentialist, tries to define and limit viable means of sexual behavior. A restrictive approach is grounded in traditional, patriarchal heterosexist and religious values and attempts to control and limit access to alternate sources of sexuality education. This approach to sexuality education makes the assumption that sexual intercourse is the primary means of sexual expression, which comes from the view that sexual activity should only be for reproduction, and in turn limits the options teenagers have for sexual activity (Whalley, 1987).

In her article, "Sexuality Education: The Politics of Discourse", Dunwoody (1995) describes the workings of The New Right and their attempts to limit human sexuality education. The New Right promotes abstinence-only education, encourages traditionally held beliefs, and makes links between shame, guilt and sexuality. This ideology reinforces gender stereotypes and puts women as the victims or in defensive roles. Dunwoody (1995) states that this kind of approach to sexuality education leads to the silencing and disempowering of adolescent sexual voices. Not only can this kind of education silence youth, but it does so without any lasting positive benefits. Berne and Huberman (1995) reported that in five studies of three major abstinence only programs, the results showed that the programs had no lasting effect on students one to two years later and that their maintenance of abstinence was no different than that of a control group who had received no program.

When studied together, you can see the similarities between these traditional approaches to sexuality education. They generally reinforce gender stereotypes, teach a narrow version of human sexuality and link sexual expression with guilt and shame. Unfortunately, these traditional approaches to human sexuality education seem to be the most pervasive. Ward and Taylor (1991) argue that the programs currently in place in the school system create or maintain an ethnocentric bias and assume heterosexuality. They believe the lack of attention paid to this has silenced the concerns of minority adolescents. Sexuality education programs support heteropolarity, and when taught in the classroom, reproduce a traditional sexual agenda. What I will focus on is how these discourses effect sexuality educators and how they apply pressure to continue teaching particular constructions of knowledge.

On the other side of the ideological debate are more liberal approaches to sexuality education. According to Diorio (1985), anti-essentialists define sex as the product of social institutions and cultural rules. The views of the anti-essentialists are more accepting of alternate forms of sexual expression and endorse comprehensive sexuality education curricula. They suggest that changing social settings and diverse cultural views define an individual's beliefs, and that there is no rigid version of human sexuality. This approach relies on an interactionalist approach to the formation of sexual personalities. Myerson (1986) states that an interactionalist approach acknowledges that sexuality is the result of complex interactions between biological, physiological and cultural influences. Unlike biological determinism, interactionalism sees biology as only one factor affecting the development of a sexual identity. Interactionalists recognize that sex is a physical act to which society ascribes, thus giving it social relevance. Anti-essentialists

and interactionalists believe in comprehensive forms of sexuality education that discuss more than plumbing, prevention and abstinence. These discourses approach human sexuality with the understanding that sexual behavior can be pleasurable, and does not have to conform to any one type of behavior or formula.

Individuals with permissive ideologies move beyond restrictive sexual definitions to define sexual behavior as a pleasurable aspect of life. McKay (1997) describes this approach as seeing sex as enjoyable, and permissive ideologies include intimacy, physical pleasure and recreation as forms of acceptable sexual behavior. Permissive ideologies look harshly upon those who view sex as a restrictive set of behaviors and they endorse masturbation, oral sex and other forms of non-coital sexual activity. This ideological approach also accepts homosexuality and premarital sex as valid forms of sexual expression. Selverstone (1991) states that this kind of sexuality education provides information necessary to maintain physical health and aids in responsible sexual decision making.

When anti-essentialists and interactionalist practice are combined with permissive ideologies, this creates a progressive approach to human sexuality education. Dunwoody (1995) states that a progressivist approach educates adolescents on issues of birth control, decision making, dating relationships, and sexuality. These different discourses come together to form a comprehensive approach to human sexuality education. What is important here is how these different approaches, ideologies and discourses work on sexuality educators. That is, the role these ideologies play in government mandates for sexuality education curricula, what kinds of sexuality texts are published, who gets funding for sexuality education research and how sexuality

information gets disseminated in the school system. It is also important to look at how these ideologies influence administrative groups, parental lobby groups and community action groups. Each side is fighting a battle to win over the educator, who then may provide one particular approach to educating the students. By advancing their opinions, they are able to control the sexual education of adolescents and in turn the knowledge and behavior of the next generation (McKay, 1987).

One of the most influential factors affecting sexuality educators, as the literature shows, is that sex and sexuality education is defined by the dominant class (Golden, 1988). From this follows the idea that there is pressure on educators to teach the discourse of the dominant class, in this case heteropolarity. Myerson (1986) states that knowledge about sex is socially constructed and that the interpretations society gives sex reflect the ideologies of the dominant group. In the current society, this means teaching a heterosexual imperative, traditional gender roles and the biological primacy of sexual behavior. Many authors suggest that this approach is unnatural and they criticize it based on its relation to practices of sexual domination by the dominant group (Golden, 1988; Greenberg & Campbell, 1989; Rosser, 1986).

This dominant ideology can be seen throughout sexuality education from prepackaged curricula to textbook images. Pollis (1986) found that the majority of images in sexuality texts showed young, white adults with trim bodies engaging in heterosexual sex. These images neglected to mirror the lifestyles and sexual behaviors of minority individuals. Ward and Taylor (1991) go further and assert that most of sexuality education is biased because it is based on theories of adolescent development derived only from a white-middle class experience. When

only limited perspectives are addressed in sexuality texts, an educator's ability to access alternate sources of knowledge is reduced. This results in the educator reproducing the norms of the dominant class, rather than creating pluralist opportunities for learning in the classroom.

Many authors report that the ideas of the dominant class are so ingrained in society that they are not questioned. Golden (1988) states that the dominant model of sexuality is so pervasive that people are unaware that they are being taught this information. This is reflected in the idea that the heteropolar norm is accepted as natural and "just the way it is", rather than listed as one possible organization of sexual behavior. The culture is permeated with issues of compulsory heterosexuality, so much so that even when educators teach issues of homosexuality they are from a heterosexual perspective. Wilton (1985) believes that alternate sexuality discourses are not taught because they threaten the primacy of the dominant norm. That is, he believes that the power-base of society lies in the reproductive, heteropolar family and that issues of homosexuality, masturbation, and birth control are not taught because they fall outside what is required to safeguard and perpetuate this norm. Sears (1991) suggests that when sexuality is discussed in health or biology classes, even in this setting heterosexual imperatives are at work. The unquestioned acceptance of the beliefs of the dominant class effect educators because they have incorporated or internalized these beliefs, or they are not given support for teaching alternatives to this approach.

The social construction of sexuality has implications for educators and their ability to teach sexual knowledge that falls outside the society's dominant norms. McKay (1997) believes that the moral conceptualization of human sexuality presented in formal education plays a role in

defining the sexual norms of future generations. These man-made sexual conceptions may limit an adolescent's ability to accept a wide variety of sexual practices. For example, Greenberg and Campbell (1989) argue that equating sex and reproduction was a man-made act. This connection has served as a taken for granted ideal and goal, taught through sexual education, that reproduces social norms. Educators may feel pressure from many factors to reproduce these sexual norms. Whatley (1987) states that belief in biologically determined sex roles is constructed through sexuality education and the emphasis placed on heredity and biology rather than socialization.

If the control of sexuality education is looked at as a process, a picture of the systems that influence sexuality educators can be constructed. The process begins with society's dominant class and their definition of sexual norms. These norms are carried down and become socially accepted and defined as natural. These norms are reproduced when educators teach only the views of the dominant class. In the final step adolescents accept these norms and incorporate them into their belief system. Throughout this process there are various systems that work on people to continue the beliefs of heteropolarity. The final section of this review focuses on the individual pressures that influence educators and their choice to reproduce or challenge the sexual norms of society.

One of the most powerful forces working on sexuality educators is the support they feel from other groups in the education system (Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993; Schultz & Boyd, 1984). The support of administrators, principals and the schoolboard strongly affects the educator's planning and implementation of human sexuality curricula. These different groups can be referred to as the gatekeepers of sexuality education. That is, they are groups that are in position to

influence and pressure sexuality educators in their planning and implementation of curricula, and in turn influence the sexuality education of adolescents. The cooperation, support and guidance a sexuality educator receives are central to the type of program taught.

Studies have shown that participatory decision making between gatekeeping groups is associated with more successful health programs (Perhats *et al*, 1996). That is, those educators who receive support from other role groups are able to teach more effective programs. Perhats *et al* (1996) took an in-depth look at the role different groups play in the planning and implementation of health programs. They describe a Diffusion Innovation theory as defining the system of support that occurs between the various role groups. This system is made up of a series of steps or stages describing how a curriculum is implemented, and at each step the success of the program can be evaluated. The researchers describe this model as occurring in four stages: awareness and concern, adoption, implementation and institutionalization. Their study considered the role of different gatekeepers at each stage and what they found was that educators, parents, principals and administrators may all have different feelings about the effectiveness of health programs. This incongruency also leads to problems when different groups feel that the curricula should emphasize different issues. Sexuality educators experience conflict when higher level role groups do not provide support for teaching of controversial sexual issues. If educators do not feel support, they may not be as effective as those educators who do feel support. What Perhats *et al* (1996) concluded was that accurate perceptions and mutual agreement between role groups facilitated change and educators' reactions to change, which in turn leads to more effective teaching.

Many sexuality educators feel limited support for the inclusion of non-normative or “controversial” sexual topics. Therefore, sexuality educators may limit the topics they include in the curriculum to avoid negative sanctions by other role groups (Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993; Whatley, 1988). Studies have shown that educators who have a concern over lack of community support are less effective in educating students (Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993). The research states that instructional effectiveness is reduced by minimization of sexual information as a means of reducing negative repercussions. Fear of reprisal from parents and administrators is also a limiting factor for educators. If educators are unsure how these groups may react to a topic, they may opt to censor it from the curriculum. Some suggest that this problem may be solved by teaching educators the skills to become advocates of sexuality education (Schultz & Boyd, 1984). This would allow educators to learn skills that would make approaching parents and community leaders easier.

An educator’s fear of repercussions from the information presented in classrooms also extends to community factors. The educator who has great concerns over a backlash from teaching may avoid or minimize controversial references. This dilution of the curriculum will decrease the effectiveness of student learning in the area that was decreased (Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993). The fear of reprisal may not only come from community outrage, but from legal issues as well. Lenskyj (1990) points out that in Ontario educators must report any incidents of child abuse or sexual abuse for children under the age of 16. If educators fail to report abuse, they face the possibility of substantial fines. Educators in Ontario may reduce the instruction about sensitive issues in a sexuality program in order to lower the chances of children reporting cases of abuse.

Educators in Ontario are also forced to reduce conversation on homosexual behavior to abstract examples in order to avoid being accused of encouraging illegal acts in minors (Lenskyj, 1990).

Educators take a personal and professional risk when they teach sexuality education. Sexuality educators have previously been accused of being sexual deviants due to their interest in human sexuality (Rust, 1994). Those educators who teach sexuality education may have their personal and professional reputation tarnished by allegations from external sources (Rust, 1994). Once again, this fear of controversy constrains topic inclusion in sexuality courses. School organizational factors mixed with the fear of backlash may also lead to the dilution of sexual topics in order to maintain the status quo.

Educators not only have to feel support from the community, they must also feel comfortable with themselves. Sexuality educators are more effective when they feel comfortable with the sexual information they are teaching (Greenberg, 1989). Whatley (1988) reports that even though many educators are unaccepting of the views of biological determinism, they continue to teach this approach because they feel uncomfortable opposing scientific data. Educators may also feel discomfort with the language used to teach sexuality education. Often emotion is associated with the language and content of sexuality courses and educators may find it hard to separate emotional effect from informational conduct (Greenberg, 1989). Facts and issues may become distorted and inhibit logic because of the emotions evoked by sexuality education. Greenberg (1989) suggests that sexuality educators must become comfortable with sexual language in order to teach effectively.

Like educator comfort, other internal factors are at work in determining an educator's

effectiveness. One of the most important factors is the educator's attitude toward teaching sexual information (Schultz & Boyd, 1984). An educator's attitude toward personal sexuality, individual readiness, personal sexual feelings, sexual behavior code, and body image all effect the success of instruction (Greenberg, 1989). Those educators who feel more positively about their own sexuality may feel more prepared to teach and this results in more effective educators (Schultz & Boyd, 1984). The most effective educators are those who are comfortable with presenting sexual information in a variety of settings using a wide range of techniques (Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993). These educators are more effective because they have a better chance of influencing the students and providing lasting sexual knowledge.

Greenberg (1989) states that sexuality educators must possess several characteristics in order to be effective. These characteristics are: acceptance of sexual thoughts and desires, acceptance of self and body image, tolerance of ambiguity, a sense of humor and a desire to teach. These factors are important because those educators who are not accepting of their own sexuality may add discomfort to the classroom environment and produce discomfort in their students. Studies have also found that erotophobia-erotophilia is an important factor in determining how an educator rates the importance of topics to be included in a curriculum (Yarber & McCabe, 1984). This rating attempts to measure a person's fear or acceptance of sex. Yarber and McCabe (1984) report that this variable determined what topics educators included in their course plans and how comprehensively they taught the various topics. Yarber & McCabe (1984) also rated educators' attitudes toward their own sexuality as the most important variable affecting topic inclusion in the curriculum.

A study done by DeGaston *et al* (1994) showed that educator attitudes must match the course objectives in order for the program to be effective. They stated that training programs must address the incongruity that exists between educator attitudes and course objectives, in order to reduce ambivalence and controversy in teaching. They also state that when selecting sexuality educators, administrators must take care to choose those with supportive and enthusiastic outlooks. The educator's philosophy and degree of commitment must fit in order for the objectives and outcomes of the program to be met. It is the job of the educator to create a healthy and honest learning environment where the fluidity of sexual behavior and identities can be depicted (Sears, 1991). Unfortunately, more often than not, educators focus on heteropolar norms, creating a hostile environment for marginalized youth.

In this review I have looked at the different systems and discourses that effect sexuality educators in their planning and implementation of a sexual curricula. That is, how restrictive ideologies, which promote abstinence and oppressive sexual habits, are pitted against permissive ideologies, which promote sexual freedom, to control the sexuality of adolescents. I have also reviewed the various personal and social factors that effect sexuality educators. That is, I looked at how factors like educator attitude, fear of repercussion, community and administrative support and personal sexual feelings can influence and guide an educator's ability to effectively teach sexuality education. What I suggest is that there are many forces working on sexuality educators and that these factors effect their ability to provide adolescents with a comprehensive sexuality education. It is the main objective of this study to identify the systems behind the heteropolar imperative in sexual education and how they relate to an educator's attitudes and perceptions.

My goal is to examine the various factors that come together to limit or expand children's access to human sexuality information through the educator.

2.1 Research Questions

The focus of this study is the unique position that educators occupy within human sexuality education and how this position is influenced by the social forces that structure the heteropolar imperative. The study will inquire into the following:

- 1. What are the different social forces i.e., discourses, agents, groups and texts that work on educators to reproduce or oppose the heteropolar imperative in sexuality education?**
- 2. What effect does the heteropolar imperative have on the practices of sexuality educators?**
- 3. How are the forces behind heteropolarity related on a larger social level?**
- 4. How do educators feel about heteropolarity, and what are their perceptions of the effect it has on their teaching?**

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is influenced by two different approaches: post-structuralism and a feminist progressivist discourse. These approaches have been chosen because they each have individual strengths, which when brought together create a strong framework for studying human sexuality education. These approaches question traditional views of human sexuality by analyzing issues of power, knowledge, language and the role of feminism in the current society.

When carrying out a post-structuralist analysis, researchers look at the role of language/discourse and the unconscious in the constitution of subjects. This is important for the

current study because it highlights how different sexuality discourses may effect educators and how they plan their courses. It takes an in-depth look at how social forces work on educators to uphold and reproduce traditional sexual morals in the education system. Post-structuralists argue that educational literature has the ability to limit meaning when textbooks present meanings as defined and fixed (Cherryholmes, 1988). These fixed meanings do not allow for alternate practices in sexuality and limit sexuality information in the classroom by reproducing the ideologies of the dominant class. Post-structuralism argues that meanings are not fixed but are constantly changing, shifting and deconstructing over time (Cherryholmes, 1988). This has special relevance in today's human sexuality discourses because restrictive ideologies believe that sex, sexuality and sexual behavior can be rigidly defined, while permissive ideologies believe that sexuality exists only within the changing social relevance that occurs over time and different places. A post-structuralist approach has been chosen for this study because it questions how social and political institutions produce and reproduce sexual knowledge.

Post-structuralism maintains that there are rules that govern discourse and that these rules are anonymous and establish who can speak, when they can speak, and with what authority (Cherryholmes, 1988). This directly relates to this study's goal which is to find out how power structures influence, control and manipulate educators in their teaching of sexuality information. Post-structuralism is also important to the current study because it attempts to reveal how power helps to shape individual subjectivities. That is, it reveals how different ideologies operate invisibly and visibly through expectations and desires to control the sexuality education of adolescents by influencing sexuality educators.

As mentioned earlier, the language of human sexuality is wrapped in emotion and is sensitive to many educators. Post-structuralism argues that meaning is associated with the values of a given language (Cherryholmes, 1988). In this study I will be looking at the role of language and how the values and emotionality attached to words used to describe sexual objects and behaviors can limit an educator's ability to effectively discuss issues of sexuality education. Educators may have trouble voicing words like penis, vagina or masturbation due to the emotional and sensitive meanings society has attached to these words. Related to this is who composes meaning and how it is composed. If meaning is composed through what the speaker intends, what the text asserts, and what the reader infers, then in terms of education much of the meaning about sexuality exists in the relationship between the educator and the student. This highlights the need to interview educators in order to understand how sexual information is reproduced in society and how sexual knowledge is represented in the language educators use in the classroom. By studying educators, I hope to be able to get one step closer to understanding the construction of knowledge and how educators themselves construct and reproduce sexuality information.

Post-structuralism has been chosen for this study because it has a unique ability to question the practices of educators and their role in reproducing dominant ideologies. It can be argued that when an educator chooses one curriculum over another then he or she is giving that discourse a higher value than others, which in turn plays a role in power arrangements and the production of knowledge. This, too, has significance to the current study because it takes a critical look at how curricular choices play a role in shaping the sexual status quo. Overall, post-

structuralism plays a critical role in this study because it helps to analyze the systems of power at play in the formation of sexual knowledge. Post-structuralism provides the structure in which researchers can begin to critique dominant sexuality discourses and understand the role they play in shaping the current sexuality education system.

A feminist progressivist discourse on human sexuality that approaches sexuality education from a framework that accepts multiple perspectives within the classroom was also used for the study. Defined by Dunwoody (1995), she states that this approach has four basic tenets: the redefining of the concept of desire, the redefining of the concept of culture, calls for the inclusion of community voices, and the positioning of educators as transformative intellectuals. The fourth tenet is the most salient to the present study because the idea of an educator as a “transformative intellect” emphasizes the role of the educator as more than a reproducer of knowledge, heteropolarity and the sexual status quo. It puts the role of the educator in focus and moves away from the social forces that wish to limit the resources of human sexuality educators. This approach recognizes the importance of individual educator characteristics and works to eliminate the deskilling of educators that occurs through prepackaged human sexuality curricula. It encourages creativity and the voice of educators as well as the entire community. Feminist progressive theory was chosen for this study because it struggles against the role of patriarchy and hegemonic culture that is currently the practice in most sexuality classes. Most importantly, this approach works to disrupt the controlling social forces and heteropolarity; it highlights the influence of social forces and questions their approaches, influences and power on human sexuality educators

3.0 Methodology¹

3.1 Research Tradition

As mentioned in the introduction the study was conducted using a naturalistic research tradition. The naturalistic tradition puts an emphasis on multiple realities and research that takes place in a natural setting. I will now outline some of the important characteristics of a naturalistic study and how they were used in the current study. The following paragraphs are summarized from the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) in their text entitled *Naturalistic Inquiry*.

Research for a naturalistic study is carried out in a natural setting, rather than in a contrived laboratory setting. This is important because it puts an emphasis on the notion that human realities consist of complex dynamics which can not be understood in isolated laboratory experiences. This is extremely important for the current study due to the sensitive nature of human sexuality issues. The home and office setting of the personal interviews gave participants the freedom to explore issues and emotions without the restrictions of a traditional positivist research setting.

Naturalistic inquiry also realizes that the researchers are the primary data gathering instruments and that unlike positivist instruments they actively interact with the research participants. This is an important aspect for my study, as the subtle nuances of experiences and feelings surrounding human sexuality education are discussed and understood. The researcher, unlike a questionnaire or mechanical gauge, has the ability to interact with the participants to

¹ I would like to acknowledge Dr. J. Robertson for assisting me in the clarification of my ideas and language throughout this section. I would also like to thank her for allowing me to use her own research proposal as a model for this section.

probe and evaluate the meaning of the interaction. The use of the human instrument is also important in recording and valuing the knowledge given by research participants. In the interaction between the investigator and the respondent, there is an opportunity to record the subtleties of the educator's knowledge and use it as part of the holistic approach to research. In the current study, this is extremely important as the focus is on personal experiences. The information that is presented by the participant is grounded in experience.

Naturalistic inquiry also follows methods of purposeful sampling in order to increase the use of multiple perspectives and voices in the research. In the study, purposeful sampling was employed to ensure that research participants from multiple perspectives were given voice in the study. During the selection process of the participants, much time and effort was spent ensuring that the participants represented a cross-section of the community of sexuality educators. Participants were chosen based not on the length of their teaching, but on the basis of their differing teaching positions. In order to elaborate the process of purposeful sampling and its implementation in the current study, I will highlight some characteristics of each participant.

Christina's story introduces us to a community educator's perspective and information on how educators outside of the school system are related to when teaching sexuality education. Dina's story highlights the problems that educators face when dealing with homophobia both in the classroom and in their personal lives. Her story also reveals information on the issues facing a sexuality educator working within the public school system. Roger's story presents both a male and religious perspective on community education. He highlights some of the gender issues at play when teaching human sexuality. Gillian works as a community educator dealing with sexual

violence, abuse and rape. Her story informs us of the cultural myths surrounding sexual violence and her story reveals a narrow, painful aspect of sexuality education. Finally, Peter's story provides information on sexuality education and ableism, while conveying the problems that can exist when teaching sexuality education at college.

In terms of the research design and methodology, naturalistic inquiry chooses to use inductive data analysis within an emergent design. Inductive analysis allows the researcher to highlight the relationship between the researcher and the researched. It also allows the researcher to make subtle analyses about the setting of the study and the mutually shaping influences that take place in the research setting. Naturalistic inquiry puts an emphasis on an emergent design which flows with the research process. A design is not set down *a priori* but is allowed to take shape through the experiences of the researcher. The use of inductive data analysis with an emergent design allowed the current study the flexibility needed to research the sensitive issues surrounding human sexuality. Themes of the study surfaced through my analysis of the voices of the participants, a process which was facilitated by these techniques. The use of an emergent design allowed for subtle changes to the design in order to optimize the experiences of the participants and provide a more finely nuanced analysis of their information.

Finally, in a naturalistic inquiry the findings of the study are given an ideographic interpretation. In this interpretation, conclusions are drawn from the data rather than law-like generalizations. The research stands in the reality of the one research setting rather than being generalized to realities outside of that setting. This is also related to the application of the findings. In the naturalistic inquiry tradition, the findings of a research study cannot be applied to

all other settings because the nuances of each setting will alter the results.

3.2 Research Participants

The current study was based on five volunteer participants recruited from the Ottawa-Carleton region. The sample included educators who are teaching in a variety of public, private and religious classrooms in the region. Both male and female participants were recruited without regard to their socioeconomic background, cultural affiliation, religious affiliation or sexual orientation, in order to add multiple perspectives to the interview process. Educators were asked to volunteer for the study and were chosen based on their experience teaching human sexuality in the classroom. In order to recruit candidates, I extended information about the study in teacher education classrooms at a university. After visiting these classrooms I posted information about the study in university buildings and bulletin boards. I invited interested participants to contact me. I also contacted local community groups involved with sexuality education through e-mails containing basic information on the study. Educators who felt that they had experiences, comments or perspectives to contribute to the research project were invited to participate. All five of the individuals who contacted me and showed interest in the study were invited to participate and no potential participants were eliminated.

3.3 Representation of Research Material

Following the tenets of feminist research, all of the interview segments included in the following sections have been written using the language of the participant and reflect, as closely as possible, the words used by the participants in the interviews. Participant quotations were altered only for clarity and these alterations have been marked with parentheses. Each quotation is

followed by its date and source in order to reference the material to the origin of the data.

In order to maintain anonymity for the participants all names have been changed and replaced with pseudonyms. All other references to work or school experiences have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality so that participants will not be recognized through their affiliations. Where possible I have tried to change the names of community groups and organizations to names that reflect the work done by the organizations.

3.4 Analysis

Creswell (1998) advocates a “holistic approach” to qualitative research that incorporates multiple perspectives in the complex narrative derived from the main research questions. In the current study I will move one step further and incorporate a feminist tradition into the research. With the introduction of feminist research, I become responsible for how I present the life story of the participant to the reader.

When conducting any research, it is easy to focus on the larger picture and reduce the importance of the nuances of the human experience. This glossing over of the distinct aspects of a life story is contradictory to feminist research. While conducting feminist research, it is also important to make sure that the research process does not get lost in the analysis of minute details. It is the responsibility of the researcher to balance the need to accurately tell a life story with the desire to gain some larger relevance from the story.

When creating a theoretical picture that transcends the original data I must begin to question how the unique life experience of the participant fits into a larger world picture. With this comes the introduction of post-structuralism. With the introduction of post-structuralism, I

begin to question the different social structures and discourses at work on the data collected, the analysis and the new theoretical framework I have created. The current research project represents my attempt to incorporate all of these factors into research on the socio/cultural systems that work on educators to limit student access to comprehensive human sexuality curricula.

4.0 The Individual Case Studies

Individual case studies were chosen for their ability to highlight the unique characteristics of research participants while providing a strong interpretive framework for a broader theoretical picture of the research. In the following pages, the case studies of five distinct life histories are presented. In each case study I will discuss the life history of the participant and his or her experiences as human a sexuality educator. During the discussion, I will highlight the particular pattern of social/cultural influences that influence the educator in the teaching of human sexuality education. Following the presentation of the separate case studies, I will attempt to provide the larger picture or commonalities that exist between participants. In approaching the data this way, I hope to illuminate both the unique aspects of each case and the larger framework which links the five cases.

4.1 Gillian²

Gillian works as a community educator providing workshops on sexual violence prevention through the Rape Trauma Center³. Gillian had shown an initial interest in joining the

²Pseudonym

³Pseudonym

study when I made a presentation in her M.A. class, but was unsure of her eligibility because she was working as a rape trauma educator and not directly as a sexuality educator in the school system. I met with her several weeks later to conduct a preselection interview that would probe her experiences as an educator and to decide on the type of contribution she could make to the research study. I was eager to have Gillian participate because she had shown enthusiasm and a genuine desire to partake in the research project, but I wanted to make sure that her experiences were appropriate for the research study. As she began to recount her experiences as a rape trauma educator at different schools, it was obvious that her story would be valuable to the project.

Gillian and I met twice over the next two months to discuss the research project. Both times we met in her office at the Rape Trauma Center. Although we originally chose to meet in Gillian's office for convenience, it resulted in an opportunity to gain an understanding of her work environment. The informal and homey feel of the office was provided by the old red brick building that makes up the Rape Trauma Center. It is set back from the street and shaded with many trees and provides a sense of warmth and genuineness that carried throughout Gillian's interviews.

Gillian first became involved with sexuality education with her work at a women's shelter in Quebec. At the shelter, she was responsible for a variety of services, but community educator was not her specific title. Gillian became a full-time educator when she accepted her current position at the Rape Trauma Center as their public educator and this time it was specifically stated in her job description that she was to conduct community outreach programs. Gillian engages a

variety of high school students and other adolescents and her work consists of giving presentations at a variety of schools across the city to teens between the ages of 14 and 18. The Center favors a participatory approach to education and they prefer to teach small groups, although this is not always possible.

Gillian's teaching is informed by a feminist perspective and this is congruent with the approach of the Center. As an educator, Gillian tries to talk about sexual violence within culture and how socialization creates a specific template for males and females that perpetuates this violence. Through her teaching, Gillian hopes that she can breakdown the misconceptions surrounding sexual violence. She hopes to teach her students that sexual violence is not an illness, that is not related to hormones, but that it is a direct result of social communications. Gillian is also concerned with the aftermath of sexual violence and provides information on the Center during her presentations. She tries to make women feel comfortable with the idea of approaching the Center for help. She emphasizes a woman-centered approach that gives women choices and as much information as possible in order to make informed decisions. Gillian's objectives are to dispel myths in the classroom and to give power back to those women who have been touched by sexual violence.

As Gillian answered my questions she discussed a barrage of personal, societal and cultural pressures that defined her experiences as an educator. As I worked through the information, these pressures began to build a framework in which to reference her experiences as a sexuality educator. The organization for which she worked (the Center) helped to define her classroom goals and provided support for her teaching. Teachers and students both exerted

pressure on her separately, but they also came together to create a school or classroom culture which influenced her teaching. Larger social pressures mixed with time constraints arose as major limitations in her workshops. Finally, personal issues were seen as both a limiting and supportive factor in her teaching. Over the next few pages, I will try to outline these pressures and illustrate the major issues or themes embedded within Gillian's story.

The Students

It was clear that the well-being of the students and their access to correct and comprehensive education was the primary goal of Gillian's teaching. Her continuing concern for the welfare of the students is a source of support that she draws upon in order to overcome other pressures that work against her teaching. She works to create an open and safe learning environment for students to explore issues surrounding sexual violence and rape in order to maximize the effectiveness of her presentations.

And what we do, I guess one of our objectives is, our main objective in doing public education is to dispel myths. Because the problem with sexual assault is how there are so many myths about it out there...So we try to go in and counter some of those ideas that are out there that are harmful to women and those ideas that perpetuate the problem, they cause sexual violence to some degree. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Gillian feels that there is a responsibility on the part of the presenter to speak to the needs of the students. That is, her job is to provide information that will increase the overall welfare of the students with whom she works. Unfortunately, sometimes the students are not willing to accept the material, especially when it is contrary to the heteropolar norms the students possess. During her interview I was surprised to hear that Gillian felt resistance from the students and that they could be a limiting factor in her teaching. The literature on sexuality educators had not listed

students as a boundary to human sexuality education. In fact, I had come to believe that only the educators presented the boundaries to students. As she spoke about the presentations, it became obvious that at times students could be a source of both reinforcement and crushing opposition.

When I asked her to describe the pressure from students in the classroom she replied:

...well they will either not say anything and then you feel like you're speaking to people who aren't even present or they will, I mean there are situations where I felt people have very deliberately sabotaged the discussion in terms of either bringing in a whole other issue and letting the discussion go there. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Her statement illustrates how sexuality education can be limited by the willingness of students to accept the sensitive nature of the material. Gillian felt that many of the students were unable to handle issues of rape and sexual violence so they dealt with it by trying to side track or suppress the presentations. Issues of rape and violence are taboo subjects within heteropolar norms and this creates a challenge for Gillian when discussing these issues with students who are unwilling to question their beliefs. Gillian explained that students may reject the information she presents or challenge its validity in an attempt to suppress their discomfort with the issues she is raising. This pressure can effect Gillian and she will stay away from sensitive areas that students are not ready or willing to discuss. This is an example of student pressure that leads to the reproduction of heteropolar norms by not being able to question social norms and possibly adapting another outlook on human sexuality.

Well sometimes depending on the group and how I feel certain things will be received I may leave out some of the more controversial facts or stats or studies or whatever. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Another example of student pressure occurs in discussions on homosexuality and the homophobic reactions that surface when discussing male on male sexual violence. It is possible

that students resist and act up in order to suppress the issue and limit any further conversation on the topic. This is problematic because Gillian has a genuine desire to provide students with comprehensive information, which includes gay and lesbian issues, but students may not always be willing to receive her message. The homophobic reactions of the students show how students take an active role in suppressing information on marginalized groups that question heteropolar norms.

...we certainly recognize that it (violence) happens in same sex relationships and in fact for men who are survivors of sexual violence it is most often in situations with other men...well, we have a reaction every single time we say that, there is a real homophobic reaction. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Gillian describes the student's unwillingness to discuss certain issues as both a frustration and an opportunity. Early on in her teaching she felt anger and frustration when misogyny or homophobia crept its way into the classroom discussions. Gillian now believes that when these stereotypes arise in the classroom it is a prime opportunity to dispel myths and challenge the beliefs of the students. Gillian feels that by confronting the discomfort felt by students she can overcome their adherence to heteropolar norms and better educate them. For Gillian, the students will remain both a motivation and limitation to her teaching and she credits her own strength as a means for overcoming this limitation.

Like I am more, just a lot more secure in the information and the approach that I take in handling those situations. And when they do come up, instead of getting a knot in my stomach I will say "that is not uncommon, that is a really prevalent attitude or myth or whatever" and just take that and not judge it but sort of with a little bit more distance. I guess I am looking at the big picture now. Interview #1, 04/10/99

The Teachers

Gillian tells me that classroom teachers are responsible for putting in requests for

presentations and although the teacher is the instigator of the presentation, the motivation for doing so varies. Gillian says that she receives support from many of the teachers, but she feels that teachers sometimes work against her goals. She tells me that teachers bring her in for a variety of reasons. Some teachers feel that she can best handle the topic; others feel uncomfortable with the topic, and some call her in so that the unit is covered and it can be crossed off the curriculum. The attitude and motivation of the teacher, including their level of support, will effect Gillian's presentation. If a teacher is only calling her in out of convenience, then he or she will not provide the same level of support as teachers who call her in because she is a specialist in the area. The initial teacher/educator relationship will set the stage for the presentation and determine how comfortable Gillian feels in the classroom.

...the teacher sort of frames that (classroom atmosphere) and I think sometimes the teacher that calls us in to do this is just thinking "you know what, this is just a unit I don't have to worry about it, it gets done." You know it's not coming from a place of wanting their students to have this information, or caring about this issue, it's just a matter of checking that off their curricula. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Gillian's description of the educator/classroom teacher relationship is an example of the subtle pressure that teachers exert on her and the information she presents in class. The lack of enthusiasm that a teacher conveys toward the topic will limit the comfort she feels going into the classroom. It is obvious to Gillian when teachers do not want her there or have called her in for their own convenience. The lack of support she feels from teachers in this kind of situation can take away from the classroom presentation. The teacher's inability to teach the topics Gillian discusses, or even deal with them on a personal level, will effect the ease with which Gillian approaches the topics in the classroom.

Although some teachers may bring Gillian in because they don't want to teach the topics themselves, others refer to her because she is a professional in the field. When Gillian talks about providing this type of presentation, as a professional, she says that it tends to outweigh the negativity felt from other teachers. When teachers invite her to make a presentation because they have identified problems in the classroom, or they need professional advice, then Gillian feels that her services are appreciated and this leads to a more positive classroom environment. By focusing on these types of positive classroom experiences, Gillian shows an ability to draw from the positive and minimize the negative in order to overcome outside pressures.

And then there is also the situation that comes up when teachers call us because they are aware of a situation...They realize that maybe they don't have the skills to deal with that or they are not comfortable enough to bring it up themselves so they ask us to come in. And that is good. Interview #1, 04/10/99

The initial pressure that Gillian feels from the teachers usually occurs during the first contact. In a phone conversation teachers may try to set parameters on what Gillian can bring up during the presentation in an attempt to minimize controversy over the material she will present. Often, teachers will try to define what Gillian can and cannot discuss in the classroom in an attempt to stay within heterosexual norms defined by the school administration. Most often they will try to limit the scope of the discussion and ask her to stick to heteropolar perspectives, leaving out gay and lesbian issues.

People tend to, a few times the teachers have said that we don't want this raised in our discussion, in the discussion that we do. Interview #2, 05/07/99

Gillian explains that teachers, especially in the Catholic Board, will frequently ask her not to discuss abortion or homosexuality. Before even setting foot in the classroom, she is asked to

limit information to heteropolar norms. Often if she doesn't agree to this demand, she is unable to present and bring any level of information into the classroom. This is problematic because Gillian does not want to compromise the goals of her organization, nor does she want to limit the students' access to information. Gillian tells me that these types of situations are usually resolved by referring the teacher to a better suited organization or by agreeing to not bring up certain issues in the discussion, but explaining that she will answer any questions raised about the issues.

I guess the compromising I make is that I'm not going to make it a point to raise but if it comes up I'm not going to not say anything... Like I just tell them that is something (abortion) we would support. Interview #2, 05/07/99

Having discussed with Gillian how teachers can limit sexuality educators in the classroom I was surprised to hear that Gillian is not asked to leave things out or tailor her curriculum on a regular basis. I was sure that most of the teachers would ask her, before going into the classroom, to limit her curriculum. Gillian explained that this doesn't occur often, since, teachers who have a conservative outlook choose not to invite her at all to make presentations on sexual violence and rape. This is an example of how teacher limitations working on sexuality educators can be expanded outside of the classroom, and how Gillian sometimes cannot even make it into the schools to conduct her presentations.

Human sexuality education evokes strong feelings, especially when discussing sexual violence. Gillian is aware of the societal myths about rape, and through her work she tries to contribute to decreasing these myths. Unfortunately, at times teachers will work against her and will unconsciously perpetuate these myths during her presentations. Gillian further explains that teachers will sometimes intervene and challenge her statements about the nature and determinants

of sexual violence. Gillian noted that some teachers feel free to question statements that go against their own beliefs about sexual violence, which can create an adversarial classroom environment. One of the videos Gillian uses to start classroom discussions shows a dramatization of a date rape. Often, teachers interject during the discussion and question the use of the video.

...and so the teachers often will say to us “but what was she (the girl in the video) doing there in the first place, you know why isn’t she using her head?” And I think their intention is to say to young women to sort of be careful or be aware of their surroundings. I mean their intentions are good but at the same time they are really perpetuating myths and blaming and that sort of thing. So we are challenged like that all of the time. Interview #2, 05/07/99

When discussing the pressure she feels from classroom teachers, Gillian states that the teachers aren’t consciously or purposely trying to derail her presentation, but rather they are trying to stay active in the classroom and their teaching role. The teachers are simply exploring or trying to infuse their beliefs into the classroom and this can be problematic when these beliefs are not similar to Gillian’s. The teachers may not be intentionally trying to subvert Gillian’s presentation, but the authority of the presenter is being undermined. Although she admits that this may not be a malicious act on the part of the teacher, she also explains that some teachers will consciously exert pressure on her in the classroom, usually by challenging her or by cutting short her discussions and activities, in effect taking control of the classroom away from her.

They will cut discussions off and say let’s move on, you know how teachers sort of rap things up, give a summary statement. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Paradoxically, Gillian views teachers both as a source of support and pressure. Although she does feel pressure from them sometimes, she believes that they provide a valuable opportunity to reach the students. At times, classroom teachers make her job more difficult, but they also

provide her with support through continuing presentations and positive feedback. Gillian explains that her experience as a presenter has enabled her to turn negative pressure into an opportunity to question societal myths.

The Classroom Climate

In the preceding pages I have discussed the role of the student and teacher independently. However, at times this has been a false separation. When Gillian discusses the pressure she feels in the classroom it comes from a combination of student and teacher influence, because each they makes up a relationship that exerts a mutual pressure that effects how the other reacts to certain situations. Since each school is made up of a distinct administration, staff and mandate, schools will vary and so will their cultures. The administration usually defines the role of the teachers, who in turn influence how the students will react to Gillian's presentation, even before she sets foot in the classroom.

...so that (teacher attitude) really influences how the discussion goes with the students and how receptive the students are to it. They get a sense from the teachers and obviously there are teachers who tell the students right at the beginning when they are introducing us, tell their students "you know you are going to be tested on this." Interview #1, 04/10/99

This type of comment by a teacher may not directly influence Gillian, but it has an impact on the students and how they will receive the presentation. One example of the classroom teacher influencing the students is when he or she tells them they are going to be tested on the material, therefore creating a strained classroom environment. Teachers can also alter the students' reception of Gillian's presentations by consciously or unconsciously letting the students know how they feel about the topic or issues being discussed. Gillian stated that when the teacher has a

positive outlook, the students are more attentive. If the outlook is negative, the mood of the presentation can be unreceptive or even hostile.

I mean we go into some classes where everyone has their head down and the teacher sort of makes us feel like we are an imposition and they are not there willingly. I think their minds are made up even before we get there that this is going to be some presentation by the feminists you know. So I mean we, there are certain schools that, the energy that you walk into certainly varies and differs from school to school.

Interview #1, 04/10/99

Differing school atmospheres will effect the comfort and ease with which Gillian presents the material in the classroom. It is one of her goals to create a safe place for students to explore the sensitive issues surrounding sexual violence, but this can be difficult to achieve when the school environment is not conducive to this style of teaching. According to Gillian, often it is the school culture that creates subtle pressure limiting her teaching ability to express information effectively. Whether it is the reactions of students or teachers, they work together on her and the type of material she presents and how it is presented in the classroom.

Gillian explains that it is not always easy to describe, or pinpoint, sources of pressure within the schools. That is, although she can discuss instances of teacher or student pressure there is also a subtle pressure that comes from her interaction with the school. It is quite possible that Gillian feels this pressure because she is viewed as an “outsider” who has come into the classroom to question well-ingrained societal beliefs and taboos. If students, and teachers, are not willing to open themselves up to challenge heteropolar norms, then Gillian may feel unwelcome. At the end of the interview when asked if she wished to add anything, she attempted to further describe the pressure she feels:

And I guess you know from what we have been talking about I guess my summary is that yes, we feel pressure. But it's constant and it is a subtle thing so it's not those

situations where people say to us “don’t say this” or “we will only let you speak to our class if you don’t bring these things up,” but those are exceptional. But there is a constant, subtle resistance to hearing us and to the whole feminist approach and all of that. I mean we definitely feel that this is something that we are facing to some degree or another every single time we do a presentation. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Larger Social Pressures

The nature of Gillian’s presentations is defined by a larger social need to educate students about sexual violence and abuse. Gillian hopes that as children learn and understand the myths and facts associated with sexual violence, they will learn to protect themselves and others. In order to do this, Gillian must be aware of what is going on in the larger social environment. Unfortunately, like other social behaviours, rape and sexual violence get represented in different ways and with varying degrees of urgency and interpretation. Some perspectives on these issues may seem more important at one time than at others. Gillian must bring these important perspectives to the classroom and make students aware of the current issues surrounding sexual violence and rape.

...but then because it’s (sexual violence) an issue that people have different reactions to at different times, depending on what is present in the media, what other influences are going on. Like there was the whole consent case in the Supreme Court recently. So when those things are there, or the date rape drug, or there was the drunkenness defense a couple of years ago, when those issues are around we obviously have to address them. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Larger social issues will determine the topics Gillian will cover in her classroom presentations, and also the way the topics will be presented and received by the students. Gillian felt that how the media present the issues surrounding sexual violence helps to create a template for the student’s receptivity to these topics. Students will enter the class with preconceived notions that have been shaped by the media, family and peers. This will effect their ability to

accept the information she presents. Gillian describes the subtle pressure she feels to deal with current issues as neither a negative or positive force but a defining factor in the issues she teaches. She believes that she must present her material as an alternative to information adolescents receive in pop culture and provide students with the tools to critically assess information. Because Gillian's main concern is for the welfare of the students, she believes that staying informed on information is a necessity in order to provide useful classroom education.

Not all the pressure she feels from the larger social environment is neutral. The myths and scare tactics associated with social violence also play a role in Gillian's teaching. She must work against the social script associated with sexual violence in order to separate facts from myths. In the classroom, she may be openly challenged because she tries to combat myths that are widely and socially accepted and taught. Girls are often told not to walk alone at night, or to stay away from the bushes or strange looking men in order to avoid being raped. Gillian tells me that these scare tactics do not work, and can create a false sense of security. Such advice puts the blame on the victim. When Gillian tries to dispel these myths, she may be met with resistance because she is working against a commonly accepted discourse.

...you know this person (Paul Bernardo) was so demented and so screwed-up and that so seldom happens. But in the eyes of the public it makes us feel safe and makes the students think that it is out there and it is not in their school and their community and within their friends, their group of friends. We do, that is very much what we try to do is dispel that and make them aware that it's your classmates that are doing this. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Gillian often feels resistance to what she teaches, because she is, in effect, trying to dispel social myths that have become deeply ingrained social discourses. Gillian also finds that the feminist perspective of the center can be problematic because of the commonly held

misconceptions about feminism. At times, students or teachers will label Gillian's presentations as feminist and dealing only with women's issues. This perception can close down the classroom environment for both males and females. The social myths surrounding feminism are compounded with the resistance to the myths Gillian is trying to dispel. Students and teachers often tend to stand up for the myths and this can create a difficult classroom situation because Gillian becomes at odds with the people she is trying to help. The overwhelming influence that these discourses have on students will put pressure on Gillian, because students are unable to question these discourses and accept the information being presented.

..then there is the whole man hating myth and the idea that, the reactions that we notice as far as that goes from the defensiveness of some of the males in the class or even the girls defending the males in the class like saying "well not all men are this or that." And we say of course not all men, that's not what we're saying. That whole perception, the whole mythology about what a feminist who works at a rape trauma center. So we are coming up against that all of the time. Interview #1, 04/10/99

The Organization (Rape Trauma Center)

Gillian feels accountable not only to the students she teaches, but also to the ideals of the Rape Trauma Center. Her teaching must adhere to the mandate of the organization. Gillian must ensure that her presentations provide information that will contribute to meeting the goals of the center. Gillian agrees with the ideals and goals of the Center, and her belief system is in tune with theirs, making the Center a strong support system for her presentations. When Gillian enters the classroom, she is the messenger for the goals of the Center which she shares. This is conducive to a healthy working environment. The positive support she receives from the Center allows her to overcome some of the negative pressure she feels from different groups.

...in my situation I am not really accountable to anybody but this organization...you

know sometimes I feel pressure from, coming from the school, or the teachers, or whoever to offer a certain slant on things. And there is a pressure to do that which I don't do because it goes against what my goals are, not to teach something else.

Interview #2, 05/07/99

Gillian describes the Center as an important source of support for her teaching because it acts as a buffer between her own goals in teaching and the pressure she feels from outside sources to stray from these goals. The mandate and ideals of the Center provide a framework for her teaching that she will not compromise to please the needs of classroom teachers. When teachers ask her to change her presentation, or to leave out information, she is not left alone to defend her position. She can use the mandate and goals of the Center to defend her position. The support of the Center allows her to justify her goals and her attempts to meet these goals in the classroom, and to bring down the barriers created by outside forces.

Time

Although Gillian did not discuss the boundary of time at great length during our interviews both Gillian and I believe that time is a fundamental factor in teaching. Time, or lack of it, creates pressure to trim down a presentation to the bare facts in order to "cover" issues during the allotted period. Gillian is frequently asked to come into a classroom for only one period and asked to address all the material she can in this short time span. Gillian finds this time constraint frustrating, because it does not allow for comprehensive discussions and can prevent her from reaching her classroom goals. Although Gillian is angered by the time constraints placed on her, she is grateful for any time allotted to her, since she is aware that some adolescents receive no information at all on sexual violence in the school system.

We tell them that we are just covering very briefly some of the issues, but there is so much more that we can't get to but we have information on it should they be

interested. I sort of leave that opening so that they can access other stuff. I mean we don't even talk about child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, like there is just so much we could be doing that we need to be doing that we never get to. It's really frustrating. Interview #2, 05/07/99

Time constraints not only limit access to general information, but also to controversial or less mainstream issues, such as homosexuality. When time is limited then Gillian feels unable to discuss gay and lesbian issues. Gillian begins by addressing taken-for-granted mainstream issues, then hopes that she will have enough time to discuss those issues that are more relevant to marginalized youth. Unfortunately, time constraints compounded with student resistance leaves little room for discussions on non-heteropolar topics.

We do talk about it (homosexuality) probably most of the time, there are times where we don't get to it and that's probably because we run out of time or whatever. Interview #2, 05/07/99

The time limitations imposed on Gillian are frustrating to her, and they create a subtle, but imposing pressure on her teaching. She would like more time to deal with gay and lesbian issues or sexual violence. But by limiting her time with the students, the schools are creating a barrier. Many of the students in Gillian's groups will only receive forty-five minutes to an hour's worth of education on sexual violence, and many of them wish they had more time to discuss these issues.

I asked them (the students) two things that I thought were revealing in terms of what you are getting. One was, do you think sexual violence is talked about too much or not enough and a lot of them said not enough. And, would you like to have another presentation? And very often they said yes. Interview #1, 04/10/99

Time is especially important to presenters like Gillian who are only allowed to speak to classes when scheduling permits. The time allotted for her presentations determines the scope of the material covered and limits her ability to meet her classroom goals. The information she is

able to transmit to students is defined by the time that the teachers allow her to make her presentation, which in turn puts pressure on Gillian to choose very carefully the issues she will cover in the classroom. When classroom teachers and school administration decide to allot more time to these important topics, they will then allow students at risk for sexual violence and rape to receive information they need to protect themselves. This approach to education ensures that these topics are dealt with, rather than assuming the information will be delivered in some other venue. In a society so dependent on time, this limitation is one of the most powerful factors impacting on the students' access to information.

Personal Issues

So far in the discussion I have looked at the many external factors that effect Gillian and her teaching of sexual violence and rape. I must now turn the conversation inward and look at how Gillian, and her own life experiences, effect her own teaching. One of the most important areas Gillian discusses about herself, as a limiting factor, is her level of comfort with the topics she presents. When asked if she felt discomfort with the topics she teaches she said that her comfort level had changed over time, increasing with the experience she has gained.

I may have initially felt discomfort but at this point I don't. Just because I have done it so many times. And yeah, at this point I am quite comfortable. Interview #1, 04/10/99

The comfort that Gillian describes comes from knowing what to expect in the classroom and knowing how to deal with the issues. As she became more familiar with classroom situations, Gillian explains that she felt more at ease with her teaching and the reactions she got from students. Originally, her inexperience with teaching was seen as a barrier to her presentations but with time she has overcome these boundaries. As Gillian gained experience as a teacher, and

became comfortable with the information, she found ways to decrease the tension she felt and increase the ease of her students. Gillian has overcome personal boundaries, becoming a strong educator. She is now able to turn uncomfortable situations to her advantage and create a learning opportunity. With her increased experience, Gillian noted a change in her own attitude toward teaching, students and the problems that may arise in the classroom.

I remember feeling really frustrated and really angry and really nervous about people, participants, you know the students or teachers saying something that perpetuates a myth. I guess I misunderstood my role and it was because I thought I was there to make them see it differently. I thought in facilitating this discussion I should have somehow not let that happen, not let those issues come up or be raised. But of course now I see it completely differently, now I see it as a good thing, I see it as an opportunity. Interview #1, 04/10/99

A lack of comfort with topics comes not from inexperience in the classroom. It may also stem from a lack of familiarity with the material. In our conversations, Gillian told me that she still feels discomfort with certain topics, specifically, teaching in a multi-cultural society where she must incorporate information from a range of backgrounds. Because she has limited knowledge of violence and rape as related to cultural differences, she feels uneasy presenting these issues or ill-prepared presenting to do so.

I am a limiting factor when it comes to cultural differences. I find at times I am holding back because I don't want to alienate anyone and I don't want to, and you know make it seem applicable to them or anyone like that. Interview #2, 05/07/99

Gillian mentions that she receives little information on cultural issues. She also feels that she was provided with little information on teaching sexual issues in her Bachelor of Education program. Prior to her experience teaching sexual violence and rape, Gillian completed her teaching degree. She is a certified teacher. When asked if her education had prepared her to deal

with some of these issues she was quite sure it had not. A lack of pre-service education can be limiting, if it does not provide teachers with the support or preparation they need to adequately deal with the sensitive nature of human sexuality education and this may lead to limiting their efficacy when dealing with these issues.

I didn't come across it (sexuality education) in my year in the program. That's interesting because I think I'm just realizing that for the first time, that there wasn't any section on sex education and how to present it...I wasn't prepared for it from the course work I had done in the program. Interview #1, 04/10/99

I have left the discussion on Gillian's personal pressures to the end of her case study because I think it is important to discuss her personal strengths in relation to the external boundaries to her teaching. Even when she feels pressure in the classroom, from teachers and students, she is able to see this as an opportunity to open minds and confront heteropolar norms. Gillian uses her experience and dedication to overcome many of the boundaries to a comprehensive curriculum, in and out of the classroom. This strength, combined with support from the Center, allows her to actively confront many of the social barriers to sexual violence and rape awareness. Although time limitations, cultural issues, and social issues may still work against her, these factors have not daunted her efforts to educate students and bring awareness of sexual violence and rape into the classroom.

4.2 Christina⁴

⁴Pseudonym

I was introduced to Christina after sending an e-mail to Informed Sexuality Services⁵ of Ottawa- Carleton asking for volunteers from their in-school education program. Christina promptly replied to my request and explained that she was the Community Outreach Educator for the city and had a wide range of experience within the local school system. Christina would make a perfect candidate, and although she was eager to participate in the study, several weeks passed before we had a chance to meet. I had been conducting my study in late April and early May and I had unknowingly tried to schedule interviews during the busy season for sexuality educators. In some cases, it took days or even weeks for Christina to get back to me because she was spending most of her time in the schools conducting her presentations.

I met Christina at the Informed Sexuality Services Ottawa Carleton (ISS) office for our first interview. The office is located at the side of the building, and little light gets into the main room where there are couches, books and a number of prophylactics free to visitors. I was surprised upon my arrival to find out that Christina is not much older than I am, in her middle to late twenties, which put me at ease. I was encouraged by her friendly smile as she showed me the way to her office, a brighter and larger room, to conduct our interview. Christina's pleasant personality shone through the interview and gave me a brief glimpse into how she might make her students feel during her presentations.

Christina first became involved with sexuality education when she was hired by ISS as their Community Outreach Coordinator. She describes this experience as a "baptism by fire" because she had no previous experience with human sexuality. She had completed her B. Ed at

⁵Pseudonym for community organization that provides comprehensive information on human sexuality, options counseling and community outreach programs.

the University of Ontario⁶. She felt the program had taught her to teach, but not to deal with the specifics of sexuality education. When Christina began her work at ISS she took on the job of restructuring their teaching modules and creating a basis for the outreach program. Christina describes her first experiences as challenging to her comfort level, but now feels that time and experience have allowed her to become comfortable.

Christina is in charge of training volunteers and coordinating the presentations they give at local schools and community groups. Most of the presentations are given to grade 9 students and above and occur in gym class. Christina and her volunteers go to the schools on a regular basis and they have become part of the curriculum. Christina uses discussions, never lectures, in her presentations, which puts an emphasis on student involvement and activity. Christina explained that she tries not to be “scary”, but to present the information in a way that challenges yet informs her students.

After my interviews with Christina I took interest in joining her program as a volunteer to conduct seminars within the school system. While awaiting the next training session for the volunteers, I had the pleasure of accompanying Christina to the Human Sexuality Conference at an Ontario university. This two-day trip gave me time to get acquainted with Christina outside of the research environment and go beyond her answers to my research questions. During the trip, we discussed current issues surrounding sexuality education. Christina had an opportunity to elaborate on issues we had discussed during our interviews and to introduce new issues that we had not discussed. My time with Christina allowed me to understand her commitment towards

⁶Pseudonym

her job and how she engages the current issues surrounding human sexuality education. At the conference, Christina spent her time in workshops that would assist her in areas that she was still unfamiliar with or needed more clarification. She showed an interest in gaining information that would assist her in implementing several modules she was currently planning.

During our interviews, Christina showed a sense of comfort with the questions and the topics she was discussing which allowed me to dive right into the interviews. During the interviews, she talked about the role of students, teachers and the classroom climate they create and how it affects her teaching. She explained how principals and the institutional goals of the school can limit her presentation. Christina told me that she finds the ISS office to be a support center for her and her personal pressures. Finally, time and the community are both sources of pressure that effect her teaching. Over the next few pages I will discuss, in detail, how Christina is affected by these forces.

Students

Christina is similar to the other participants in that she wishes to present the students with accurate and comprehensive human sexuality information. When entering a classroom, Christina's main goal is to spark an interest in the students and gain a positive rapport that will carry her through the presentation. The goal of getting students involved in the activities is not always easy for Christina and student participation is especially important because she incorporates a lot of activities and role plays into her presentations. Christina feels challenged at times to get the students involved and feels pressure from inattentive students. A lack of responsiveness to her teaching is a subtle form of rejection that can greatly effect Christina's

comfort and therefore the presentation.

Probably the biggest challenge is getting the kids to really listen and to know if what you are doing is working. You are never sure if they are just sitting there. Because a lot of the times they are really quiet and they are taking it in, and then other times they are really quiet and it's just not happening at all. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Student lack of attentiveness is a passive pressure that can limit Christina's outgoing personality. She is genuinely concerned for the students' well being and would like the same consideration from them toward her teaching. Throughout our interviews, Christina expressed how much fun she has in the classroom, and how much she likes the admiration she receives from students. She feels this is often the driving force behind a successful presentation. Christina feels that her outgoing personality has a positive effect on the students, but believes that it may also make her more susceptible to subtle forms of resistance from the students.

Christina tells me that students not only exercise pressure in a subtle way, they also actively challenge her in the classroom. At times, Christina worries about the more sensitive or taboo topics she discusses and how students will respond to the sensitive issues being raised. Often, when she discusses issues that students don't accept, they will confront her and question the topic, making it hard to effectively present the information. If students are unable to deal with certain information, it makes it almost impossible for Christina to continue to present material in this area. The resistance presented by students, and Christina's subsequent change of topic, will limit the information being presented, keeping the presentations within socially accepted norms and values. What occurs as a result of this pressure are self-affirming levels of information in the classroom, with the more open or progressive students receiving the most complete information.

Some of the kids will get like that (resistant) when we do healthy relationships

because they think they know everything. It doesn't get lecturing but it does get preachy, "If your boyfriend ever hits you or treats you badly you leave him." I try not to make it that way and I bring in movies but sometimes the kids get a little defensive. Interview #2, 05/11/99

The third form of pressure, with respect to the students, according to Christina, comes from the students' cultural differences and a related desire not to learn about human sexuality education. Because schools have become multi-cultural, educators have to deal with a wide variety of religious and ethical codes, making sexuality education even more complicated. Students with restrictive and differing sexual beliefs from either dominant or minority religious/ethnic contexts present a challenge to Christina when she tries to get them involved in the discussion. She feels she has limited access to information on repressive sexual cultures. This is also problematic because Christina is sensitive to the needs of the students and relies on their feedback to evaluate her effectiveness. Christina's presentations can be affected by the inattentiveness or disapproval of students who cannot relate to heteropolar sexual education.

There are some kids, especially the new Canadian Muslim kids, they have a really hard time. Some of them have to leave the class and other ones are just really uncomfortable. You know that they are taking it in and that they want to know the material but there is a huge conflict going on. So they will be sitting there with these huge eyes the entire time I have my plastic uterus out. But then I will go "do you have any questions" and they will just close down completely. Interview #2, 05/11/99

When Christina comes to a classroom she must take into account the prior knowledge of the students. Christina tells me that she never enters a classroom assuming that all of the students are having sex and that they know everything about it. She waits for cues from the students to tell her what kind of information she should be presenting. This means that her rapport with the class is important. Both the positive and negative feedback from students will determine the

scope and pace of the presentation.

We take what the kids know and where the kids are and build on it from there. So if we go into a grade 9 class, we do the basic same stuff we do for the grade 12 class because we are assuming that the grade 12's have a little bit more experience but we never go in with any assumptions at all. We never say everyone in the class has had sex so blah, blah, blah. Or no one has had sex and continue from there. We always start from the basics and we build, and we build on the questions they ask. Interview #1, 04/20/99

One of the major factors which determine Christina's presentation is the preparedness of the students to deal with certain issues. This can be seen as both a limitation and a freedom, depending on the level of the students and the type of information they are willing to accept. If the students are not willing to discuss all of the issues that make up a comprehensive education program, Christina will feel pressure to limit her curriculum and goals during the presentations. This may result in Christina limiting the marginalized or minority youths' access to information, because she is dependent on the majority to define the needs of the class. Christina tells me that she notices a difference between schools and the comfort level of students and this will directly effect the material she presents to the class.

If we go into the community organizations, we do a lot of the boys and girls clubs, then we are basically free to go in and do whatever we want. And it is totally different from the schools because the kids are a lot more open and they are really relaxed about it. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Christina tells me that she enjoys working in the alternative schools, outside of the public school system, because she believes that the students are more relaxed and accepting of the material. It is also possible that students in these groups will be more willing to accept controversial information because they are generally made up of students outside of the mainstream school system. The ease of these students with accepting more liberal information

will also effect her own ease in teaching sensitive topics. She says that not only the ease of the students but the level of sexual experience the students have, will effect how her topics are received by students.

Christina explains that although students can present barriers to her teaching, they can also be a source of support. The students are given evaluation forms to rate how much they liked her teaching and if they enjoyed the presentation overall. The evaluations are important as they are a deciding factor as to whether or not Christina will come back to make more presentations to their class or the school.

If they (students) like us (ISS) we come back. So a lot of the schools will have me back for more than one day. So we get positive evaluations from students. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Christina's concern for the students was obvious throughout our interviews. The needs of the students are a driving force behind her classroom experiences. At times she may feel pressure from some students, but this is countered by the support she feels from the majority of students she has taught. Although there have been times when she felt resistance to the sensitive nature of her presentations, this has not overcome her desire to present the students with comprehensive and accurate human sexuality education.

Teachers

Christina is a community educator. This means that her role is defined by the needs of the community. In most cases, this need is defined by the teacher or group leader who invites her into the classroom. Consequently, in effect Christina is asked to tailor her curriculum so that it corresponds to the needs of the person who makes the initial contact. ISS has a wide range of modules and activities that can be presented in the classroom, and teachers call to request specific

areas. If the modules deal with sensitive topics, often she will be asked to either include or leave out certain issues during her presentations. Christina tells me that teachers often ask her to leave out discussions on abortion, homosexuality or birth control. The pressure from the teachers may go against Christina's goals in sexuality education, and support heteropolar norms, but often she will succumb in order to at least have the opportunity to provide the students with some information.

We get like "don't talk about these things" and "do talk about these things." Some teachers are really specific and they say you can come into my grade 12 class but you cannot give out condoms. And condoms are pretty much a standard that we have. But if the teachers say don't, I'm not going to deprive these kids of the information just because I feel that they should get condoms if they want them. So that gives a lot of structure, what the teachers want. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Not all of the pressure that Christina receives from teachers is negative. Although the teachers ask her to leave out certain issues, they also ask her to develop new modules. Christina tells me she is frequently asked to cover areas like healthy relationships and self-esteem. Based on the large number of requests for these topics Christina has implemented new curricula. In that case, Christina sees teachers as a positive source of pressure to create new modules and more opportunities to speak to students.

So a lot of it (presenting) has been on demand. Self-esteem was something we didn't have at all and I had a lot of teachers asking for it so I invented it. So it's kind of based on what they want and what I see from the kids. Interview #2, 05/11/99

It is obvious that Christina teaches because she is concerned with the welfare of the students. Unfortunately, she feels that this is not always the case with classroom teachers. Christina explains that at times she feels teachers call her into the classroom because they are unwilling to deal with human sexuality issues. The attitude of the teacher and the reason why

Christina is being called into the classroom will have an effect on how Christina feels toward the presentation. Christina describes the classroom experience as positive when teachers invite her because they feel that she can best deal with the topic and not because they don't want to teach it themselves.

It's real funny because you'll see that some teachers are really cool and with it, and will get into it and then others just call us in because they don't want to touch it. And I guess the curriculum says it has to be six hours and some teachers will call us in to do almost all of the entire six. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Although some of her experiences with teachers are negative, many are just the opposite.

Christina describes the teachers as being polar in their reaction to human sexuality education.

While some teachers create pressure on Christina through their negative attitudes, it is the positive teachers that Christina recalls the most. She talks about being encouraged by those teachers who call her in because they really want a professional to deal with the issues to ensure students are getting the proper education.

Some of them (teachers) say "I can teach it, I've got it, I just want you to cover it again and make sure that I am not missing anything." Because they only teach it once a year and we teach it all of the time. These are the classes I really like because the kids know a lot of stuff. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Christina is affected by the reasons that teachers call her into the classroom and the more positive the reasoning behind their need for her presentations the better she will feel about teaching the students. According to Christina, it is not only her comfort level that is important. The comfort level of the teacher is important also. Like the students, if the teacher is unable to deal with the material Christina is discussing, he or she will try to minimize the amount of information presented on a given issue. Teachers may attempt to regain control over the

classroom to guide the scope and direction of the presentation.

You can tell who is comfortable with the information and who isn't because they will be like.....We are doing a scout group next year in November, and she's a teacher, and she's saying "I have had people come into my class and it just wasn't appropriate so when you talk to the scouts, we're boys and girls scouts, and I just wanted to make sure that everything is O.K. and you don't say anything." And some of the teachers who are really prudish will say "do you use all the real anatomy words for everything?" Interview #1, 04/20/99

Teacher comfort is a subtle source of pressure affecting Christina and her classroom presentations, but the pressure from teachers is not always that indirect. Christina tells me that teachers will often interject during her presentations and try to gain control of the class. Teachers who call her in to teach the sensitive topics will try to "take back" their class when she is dealing with less threatening topics. This direct form of pressure frustrates Christina, and will also effect the direction and scope of her presentation.

I've had some teachers just jump in and take over. Which I am like "why did you call me in if you don't want me to do it?" When you do things like healthy relationships and self-esteem, I guess they are more comfortable with those topics, then they are with something like birth control...And they will decide the second activity isn't quick enough and they want to get to the good stuff right away and they will jump in and hijack my whole class. I've had two teachers do that to me and I didn't go back to either school afterward. Interview #1, 04/20/99

This direct form of pressure from teachers affects Christina and her presentations. By taking control of the classroom, the teacher undermines the authority of the presenter and her rapport with the classroom. The teacher's need to take over the classroom had a negative impact on Christina and her teaching. Not only did it effect the presentation she made to two classes, it also limited the students' access to further information as she did not return to the classroom.

The discomfort that teachers feel may limit Christina's teaching in two ways. They may

ask her to leave out information, and prescribe to heteropolar norms, or they may not even call her for a presentation. Christina explains that ISS has a reputation for being a pro-choice, liberal organization and this often results in teachers not calling them. These same teachers will call in the public health nurse as teachers are not able to deal with the liberal stance of the organization. Teachers may also choose to invite public health nurses in to the classroom because of the validity they bring due to their involvement in the medical or scientific community. As mentioned earlier, sexuality education is often taught under the guise of scientific fact so that it is more accepted by the community. Public health nurses are often thought of as more acceptable than ISS because they are members of the medical community and are thought of as more conservative than ISS. Christina tries to minimize this problem by attempting to adhere to the classroom goals of the teachers. Although, some teachers will not call her in at all, she feels that those who do are more willing to deal with a comprehensive sexuality education program and step outside the bounds of heteropolarity.

And most of them (teachers) are pretty comfortable if they call us because we are a little bit more risqué than the health department. Because people still have visions that Informed Sexuality Services says “just go have sex and we will give you an abortion, we will just fix it for you.” The ones who call us are generally O.K. with it... The ones (teachers) that are really, really hard call the health department and bring in nurses because they think nurses are a little bit more credible than we are.

Interview #1, 04/20/99

Christina describes the teacher as a main source of control over her access to students and the type of information she presents to them. The control may take the form of curriculum limitations, denying access to students, or controlling presentations. Christina often feels pressured to stay within the boundaries of heteropolar norms and she will not step outside these norms for fear that it may completely limit her access to students. Christina has learned that

teaching sexuality education means having to balance the needs of the students with the requests of the teachers, while keeping as close as possible to her classroom goals.

Classroom Climate

The classroom climate develops as a result of student and teacher interaction. This pressure cannot be defined by the teacher or student alone but works as a result of the unique relationship that exists between the two. Pressure is exerted indirectly on Christina through the actions of the teacher, and his or her effect on the student, and then through the actions of the students. The pressure may be the result of statements made by the teachers or passively, by their mere presence in the room during the presentation. During interviews, Christina spoke at length about the role of teachers and how their presence affects the actions of the students.

I think the teachers have a lot to do with that (student comfort), the kids don't, it's not that they don't trust the teachers but it's still a teacher and you can run into the teacher at the grocery store when you're with your mom. Your teacher writes your report card, your teacher will tell the guidance counselor things. And there's a lot of anxiety about how much you can trust your teacher. Interview #1, 04/20/99

The pressure that teachers exert over students because of the teachers' power and authority leads to students closing down during presentations and being unable to discuss openly and honestly. Although teachers may not be consciously aware of this pressure, their presence remains a controlling factor in the classroom. Students may be unwilling to disclose information or ask questions that go outside of socially accepted norms for fear of teacher intervention. This creates pressure on Christina because she is cognizant of the effect teachers have on students and how their presence can limit the students' ability to accept and discuss material. Christina reports that the teachers will often stay in the classroom because they don't feel safe leaving a stranger

with their class, as they are unsure of the range of information that will be presented. In schools where Christina returns many times over the year, teachers become more comfortable with her presence and may even leave her alone with the class. This gives Christina a chance to discuss issues with students freely, away from the pressure of the classroom teacher.

So some of the schools that I come in every couple of months they (teachers) will leave. The kids get louder because the teacher is gone and they chat more, so discipline becomes a bit of an issue where it wasn't before. They will say stuff and they are like, "don't tell Ms. Smith". Interview #1, 04/20/99

Christina suggests that it is not just the presence of teachers that limits the conversations, but the presence of their peers and students fear of any information they disclose getting around the school. Peer pressure limits the students' ability to question heterosexual norms or ask questions that may label them as outside of socially accepted norms. Christina feels that students worry that if they discuss taboo areas, or show interest in the information, they will be labeled. Students may minimize the amount of interest or receptivity towards a given issue to avoid being associated with taboo areas of human sexuality. Students with little information on human sexuality may also avoid asking questions because they don't want to look inexperienced or uninformed about sex.

They are not really forthcoming with any information because their teachers are there, their peers are there, and it will get all around the school whatever they say even though they say nothing will leave these walls, it leaves the walls. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Christina states that fear of public betrayal or disclosure acts on the students in their freedom to openly discuss issues related to human sexuality. Students will feel pressure from others to ask questions and disclose information that solely exists within the boundaries of socially acceptable conversations on sexuality. This pressure creates boundaries which limit Christina's

presentations and her attempts to create a safe and open learning environment.

The relationship that exists in the classroom between the teacher and student is different wherever Christina teaches. She explains that the comfort that students feel with each other and the reason the students are together will effect the classroom climate. If the students come together because of shared interest or concern, they may react differently than students in the public school classes. In these smaller groups, students may not be limited by dominant social norms because the group itself is defined by a social need that is common between the students and distinct to their group.

And the community groups are interesting because depending on where you go, the kids know each other socially and don't feel this competition like in schools and don't feel that their reputations are going to get spoiled. And a lot of them have come together because they are an "at risk" group of youth in the area. Interview #1, 04/20/99

This increased level of comfort creates a more open teaching environment for Christina. Christina explains that she enjoys teaching in these groups because there is more freedom and openness in her presentations and discussions. When the fear of ruining your reputation or crossing socially prohibited boundaries is lifted, the students are better able to discuss some of the more sensitive issues that Christina raises in her teaching.

Classroom climate can also be affected by the gender of the students in the presentations. It has long been a debate in sexuality education whether or not it should be taught co-ed or in segregated classes. Christina enjoys teaching in both environments and feels that both have their pros and cons. She also mentions that students will often divide themselves along gender lines. This gender division creates barriers when discussing sensitive issues relevant to one gender and not the other. Male students may have trouble discussing issues of masturbation, erection and

nocturnal emissions, while girls may be embarrassed talking about menstruation and pregnancy in a co-ed classroom.

You don't get the questions if they (genders) are together that you get when they are separated. Like you don't have girls saying "Well I've found I have trouble putting things in my vagina." Interview #1, 04/20/99

This gender division creates barriers to her teaching and her ability to cover sensitive issues, especially with the male students. Although she believes that many issues should be covered co-ed, she is aware of the boundaries that gender creates. To avoid this problem, facilitators from both genders are chosen to do presentations. By bringing both male and female presenters to the class, and by segregating when necessary, she feels that she has overcome the gender barriers.

If we are doing a mixed group I do like having two facilitators one being male, one being female. Because I find that people will ask their same gender questions more easily. Guys never ask questions when I am by myself, like personal questions.

Interview #2, 05/11/99

Principals

Although principals may not directly exert pressure in the classroom over Christina, they do exert pressure over teachers and what they can teach in the classroom. Christina did not spend a lot of time discussing the role of the principal, but it was obvious from what she said that principals do play a role in limiting her classroom teaching. This form of pressure exists because teachers are directly responsible to the principal and have to respect any specific curricular limitations imposed. According to Christina, when some teachers call to invite her to do a presentation they specifically mention the principal as a source of concern over the issues presented in the classroom. Christina believes that the limitations or restrictions imposed by the

teachers are the direct result, in many cases, of pressure from the principal.

And then the teachers would call and say “we don’t want you to do a presentation on birth control, we want you to do it on teen pregnancy. Because if you do it on birth control my Principal won’t like it. You can make [the information session] it on birth control, but just call it teen pregnancy [education].” Interview #1, 04/20/99

Here is an example of the indirect pressure exerted on Christina by the school principal.

The principal creates the guidelines for what can be taught in the classroom and acts as a gatekeeper between the classroom and the community. Therefore, principals may define what topics the teachers will be allowed to ask Christina to present, and these are usually limited to heterosexual norms. Much of the literature supports this gate-keeping process in human sexuality education. Although teachers may want to introduce more comprehensive or progressive curricula, they are bound by the guidelines of the principal. Teachers depend greatly on the support of principals and are not willing to step outside the approval of the principal for fear of the consequences. This results in limitations on Christina’s classroom access and the scope of issues she can cover during her presentations.

Institutional Goals

Working as the community educator for ISS means that Christina has the opportunity to teach at a variety of schools and community group centers. What she has found is that the type of school-- public, Catholic, private or alternative⁷-- will determine whether or not she is called in and the type of presentations she will give. The mandate of the school and institutional goals of

⁷ Alternative schools in this context refer to schools with special programs for students identified as having problems in the traditional public school system. High numbers of kids from the streets or that have been recognized as an “at risk” population of adolescents attend these schools.

the schools determine the orientation of the presentation. The type of school and the social environment often define what is and isn't acceptable to discuss when dealing with human sexuality education. Christina describes differing levels of involvement based on the needs of the school and its willingness to deal with the sensitive nature of human sexuality education.

We don't feel any support from the Catholic schools, whatsoever. But the public schools are beginning to, the alternative schools make referrals from one to another... it's starting but it's not really, really there. Interview #2, 05/11/99

When the goals of the institution are restrictive this creates a barrier for Christina and comprehensive sex education. Some schools will not even consider inviting Christina, because of the reputation that ISS has toward sexuality education. Although this may be a boundary for the more restrictive schools, it is also an important factor in the more permissive schools. In the alternative schools, where unhealthy sexual practices is a risk, ISS is welcomed because of its open view on sexuality. Christina says that she can feel the difference between these schools and that she enjoys the alternate schools for their open and accepting teachers and students.

We also do a lot of the alternative schools because of Informed Sexuality Services reputation and our pro-choice stance. We are not welcomed in Catholic schools; in English Catholic schools, we can go into the French schools with the French program, but not at all in the English schools. Interview #2, 05/11/99

One main reason for the difference between schools is the larger distance that exists between the community and parents for alternative schools in comparison to the public and Catholic schools. The students in the alternate schools are often run-aways or students with special needs and this creates a unique situation. Principals and teachers may be less concerned with the role of parents, who in many cases may be physically or emotionally absent, allowing the schools more freedom in its education. The fact that many of the children are on the street, or

have suffered sexual abuse, may also increase the need for comprehensive sexuality education. In the public schools, and especially the Catholic schools, less permissive attitudes toward sexuality are taught because of fear of reprisal from the community and parents. Each type of school where Christina makes a presentation has its own ideas of what is socially acceptable to discuss in terms of human sexuality. In our conversations Christina revealed that in alternative schools many students are already sexually active, engaging in sexual activities with multiple partners, S&M, and same sex relationships, making heteropolar norms less applicable and therefore ineffective. In the Catholic schools, the need to adhere to heteropolar norms is more pronounced and therefore limits ISS's access to the students.

And even though the bishop has said that Informed Sexuality Services cannot come into the schools, we can in the French schools. So anything we do if the English schools get a whiff of it, the English Catholic schools, then there are letters to principals and there are letters to all kinds of people. We do get letters from some of the public school teachers and we have some church groups aren't completely supportive of us and that has happened a couple of times that we will get letters from people that weren't actually in the room during it but they will be like " well my kid heard at school that Informed Sexuality Services passed out condoms" so they will write letters and that kind of stuff. And we aren't kind of use to that, those who aren't supportive. Interview #2, 05/11/99

This type of adversarial and resistant reaction to the ISS presentations is just an example of the involvement of the community in the public and Catholic school boards and how it affects the institutional goals of sex education. Not only will the type of school dictate where she can present, it will also dictate what she can present. Christina also has the opportunity to speak to community groups and organizations and she describes them as being liberal and permissive because the health of the children is one of their main goals and this allows her to step outside of heteropolar norms.

I find that the community organizations are really, really, really supportive. They will supply them with condoms, with sponges, with anything they need. The coordinators will take the kids to the sexual health center which is something that never happens in the schools. Interview #2, 05/11/99

Institutional goals are defined by the type of school and its mandate and this will effect the support Christina receives from the school. Although the goals may be set down by the administration, and reinforced by the principal, ultimately these individuals are responsible to the community and to the parents. The distance that exists between the school and community/parents will influence the scope and permissiveness of the sexuality education students receive. It is Christina's hope that more schools begin to adopt liberal institutional goals in order to insure the sexual health of their students.

Time

There are many factors that determine whether or not Christina is invited into the classroom and what she can cover, but one of the most influential barriers is time. Although teachers may set curricular guidelines even before she enters the classroom, the amount of time she is given with the students will determine the depth and scope of the presentations. Not only does time influence the amount of material she can cover, but it will determine the relationship that exists between Christina and the students. Since Christina may only get to spend 45 minutes with a class, time becomes a barrier to forming a strong relationship with the students. Due to the sensitive nature of her presentations, rapport with the students is an important factor in building a trusting and open classroom environment. The lack of time with the students can greatly effect how issues are covered during the presentations.

And I think a lot of it is just dynamics. I find it really hard. It's not like when you

are teaching in a classroom and you have the chance to get to know the kids over the full year and you learn how to work with them. I come in for 45 minutes and I am talking about extremely personal things and then I am gone. So then there really isn't a lot of time to establish a bond or any kind of trust or anything. Interview #1, 04/20/99

The scheduling of Christina's presentations can also influence the outcome of the presentations. If Christina makes a presentation on Monday morning or prior to another school event, students may be less responsive to her teaching, which makes it hard for Christina to establish a good working relationship with the students. Christina feels that teachers should be more careful when they schedule presentations, in order to make sure that students will be able to engage in a productive dialogue.

It's really hard because it depends a lot on when you go in. If you go in on Monday morning and you are the first period, it's like pulling teeth regardless of what I do because they are all tired and they don't care and they are not comfortable with the topic. Interview #1, 04/20/99

The barrier of time is a multi-faceted limitation to Christina's presentations. The amount of time she is given to do a classroom presentation will effect her presentation on many levels. Time is an important commodity in establishing trust with students and building an open classroom environment. Time is important because it will determine how much information Christina can provide to students. When she is limited by time, the depth of the presentation and the issues covered are also affected. Finally, time can be a barrier when teachers do not consider issues in scheduling and how the timing of the presentation will effect its reception by the students.

Organization (Informed Sexuality Services Ottawa-Carleton)

At times Christina describes the ISS reputation as limiting her access to some schools and

classrooms. The liberal stance of the organization, which often questions heteropolar norms, leaves it open to criticism from more restrictive schools and teachers. Although the ISS reputation may be limiting, the organization itself is the reason Christina is in the classroom and this provides her with a system of support both in her teaching and curriculum planning. In fact, Christina feels the ISS office is her main source of support, and she describes it as a sort of buffer from some of the negative school or community pressure she may receive. This system of support is important to Christina because it validates her work and gives her the strength to take on the various barriers to her presentations.

I feel support from the office for sure. My E.D. is fantastic; she will back me up on anything. She just sort of goes, “you do education, I trust you,” and she will be there for it. And from our volunteers and our board--because they know that I know the mandate and so I wouldn't stray from that. Interview #1, 04/20/99

The mandate provided by ISS is another important support factor for Christina. The mandate sets down the type of education she must provide while working for ISS and allows her to resist requests from schools or teachers that may go against the mandate. Because Christina's views toward sexuality education are similar to those of ISS she can refuse to do presentations that go against her own goals because they are also in conflict with ISS's goals. The support of the organization is important because it keeps her focused and provides a strong base for her teaching.

If they asked me to tailor the curriculum without sacrificing our mandate I can do that. If it involves not being pro-choice, or not being gay positive, then we say, “sorry we cannot come in.” That happens a lot with our theater groups in the schools. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Although Christina came to ISS without any formal training in human sexuality education,

in the last year it has grown to be an important issue in her life. Her growing concern for the health and welfare of her students can be seen in the work she does in curriculum development and implementation. The ISS provides the basis for her work and the support needed to educate students. Christina feels that the support of ISS and its members provides her with an invaluable tool in providing students with comprehensive and accurate human sexuality education.

Personal

Teachers and principals may determine Christina's in-class involvement with human sexuality education, but Christina herself is an influencing factor in her teaching. Her comfort level, prior learning experiences, and adherence to or rejection of heteropolar norms will determine how she approaches her goal of educating students about human sexuality. Although Christina works for ISS, and must abide by its mandate, she also has her own goals and approach to human sexuality education.

I think my goals would be to provide the people with the information and the resources they need. That even if they don't remember every single birth control method and the effectiveness and all that stuff that they have some idea that these things exist and that they know who to call to get it. And that they are not afraid...So my education is all about trying to make it easier for kids and to let them know that there are a lot of groups out there that will help them and we're not going to make fun of them and make it more difficult for them, we are just going to help them out. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Not only will Christina have her own goals in teaching, but she will also have a different way of presenting information to the students. One thing that Christina is most concerned with is the comfort level of the students. She is aware that human sexuality is a sensitive area for teens and that it may be difficult for some students to discuss. Christina tries to lower the anxiety level in order to breakdown the potential barrier to her presentations.

I try to be really relaxed and friendly and not uptight and to take everything in stride...I always try to be really approachable, as approachable as I can get so that they don't think that I am going to judge them or anything that they can't understand. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Christina also credits her young appearance, along with her relaxed approach, for the way that she is able to gain the trust of the students. She explains that she did not always feel completely comfortable with her teaching, and that it took time and experience to relax in the classroom and create an open dialogue with the students. Since Christina had no experience with sexuality education when she came to ISS, her lack of knowledge of human sexuality was a large barrier for her to overcome. She had to become a student before she could begin to teach, and this took tremendous time and effort. Once she developed a working knowledge of the material her comfort level rose and she was able to tackle her own barriers to presenting comprehensive education.

And so I am getting a lot more comfortable with it. In the beginning I learned my material and if you strayed beyond my material I was really unsure what was Cosmopolitan magazine- fact and what my friends and I discussed and what was real, actual fact. So I was really worried about that. So now I am trying to broaden my horizons in sexual health education and learn everything possible. So I am a little bit, I am getting more comfortable with it." Interview #1, 04/20/99

Originally, Christina was a barrier to her own teaching because of her lack of information on human sexuality. She has begun to overcome this barrier by learning as much as she can about the topic, which in turn has increased her comfort level. Early on in her teaching, she avoided discomfort by leaving out certain topics with which she was not familiar or which created internal discomfort. Christina has made a conscious effort to overcome this obstacle so that she does not limit the knowledge she passes on to students.

I think comfort is really important and the areas that I am not comfortable with I made an effort not to go there. At the beginning it was areas like different types of orgasms and things. And now I am getting more comfortable with talking about it just because I know the information. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Christina's felt her discomfort with human sexuality was partly due to her own sexual upbringing. She felt her family and social environment as she was growing affected her ability to teach human sexuality. If a teacher is raised in an environment where heteropolar norms are taught and accepted, later on in life this view will also have an impact on how the teacher deals with issues of human sexuality in his or her own classroom.

But yeah, I think it took me a little while to get used to talking about human sexuality because I grew up in a family where we didn't call the body parts by their real names, so this was a big stretch for me. So yeah, probably I am limited a bit by just sort of like by my values and I blush when I talk about certain things. Interview #1, 04/20/99

Teachers may not only be affected by their family views, but they may also be affected by the formal sexual education they received in grade school or in teacher education programs. Christina does not remember receiving any training in her pre-service program that would have helped her for her position at ISS. The lack of broad based teacher training leaves teachers unprepared to deal with the sensitive issues, including child sexual abuse and masturbation, that make up comprehensive human sexuality education. In addition, the teacher's program focus throughout pre-service training effects teacher readiness and knowledge about sexuality education.

I did primary/junior [teacher education] so we never touched on anything relating to human sexuality. Interview #1, 04/20/99

The human sexuality educator is the most important factor in bringing comprehensive

sexuality curricula to the classroom and questioning heteropolar norms. Educators define the education and work against personal and social barriers to bring information to the students. Christina is an example of an educator who has overcome her own boundaries within sex education to provide students with some of the information they need to stay healthy. Christina and ISS represent a more liberal and permissive side of human sexuality education, and their own goals work against the more restrictive and heteropolar views that exist in society. At times this permissive stance creates a barrier to her classroom involvement, but she is undaunted and continues to lobby for more acceptance and understanding of sexual education in the public school system.

4.3 Dina⁸

I was truly lucky to come upon Dina to participate in my study. I recruited Dina through the help of a colleague of hers to whom I spoke during a graduate student symposium at the University of Ontario⁹. He took one of the flyers that I was distributing at the poster presentation, and said that he would pass it on to her. The following weekend I was excited to receive an e-mail from her expressing interest in participating in the study. After answering some initial questions about the purpose and goals of the study, Dina decided to join. We quickly made plans to meet, and over the coming weekend I would interview her at her home.

Dina is the head of the Physical Education department at a local high school and has taught human sexuality education for the last thirteen years. Although her level of involvement,

⁸Pseudonym

⁹Pseudonym

and the types of curricula she has taught, have changed over the years, she remains dedicated to teaching sexuality knowledge openly and honestly. Her experience is extremely important to the study, since she is the only participant who works full-time as a school teacher. Her approach to sexuality education is centered around her students and their individual needs. She tries to ensure that the topics she covers for each class have been individualized to meet the unique needs of each class. Although she follows the curricular guidelines for Ontario, she uses her experience and listens to what students want as a tool for her curriculum planning.

When I first spoke to Dina, she identified herself as a lesbian and expressed interest in the study's focus on sex education and sexual orientation. She told me that it was important to her to participate in the study, because she believes that educators must discuss more gay and lesbian issues in the public school system. By adding her perspective to the research project, she felt that she was taking an active step in bringing gay and lesbian issues to the forefront in sexuality education. It is important to note that although Dina was open with me about her sexual orientation, this is not the case in her school. Although the faculty, administration and some students are aware that she's a lesbian, she is not openly out within the school. As we sat in her living room, her cat regularly joining the interview, we discussed the struggles and triumphs she has had throughout the years as a teacher. Her partner sat in on the interview.

I was nervous during our first interview, as it was my first interview for the study and was unsure of myself. I believe that Dina's teaching experience helped to relieve my original tension and her openness about her own sexuality allowed me to discuss the topic without holding back. The outline of the system of pressures that effect Dina are similar to the other participants in some

respects. but differ in others due to the fact that she is a classroom teacher. Dina feels both positive and negative pressures from students and is focused on their well being. Like the community educators, Dina also feels pressure from teachers but they are also her colleagues and friends. She also feels pressure from principals, but depends on their support to achieve her curricular goals. Dina describes receiving both positive and negative support from the community and the parents. Finally, Dina discusses the role she plays in her teaching and her access to human sexuality information.

Students

As a high school teacher, Dina has the opportunity to build a rapport with her students over a couple of semesters or even a couple of years. This creates a situation that is unique in comparison to community educators because she has time to get to know the needs of the students over a longer time period. Dina is focused on tailoring her curricula to the changing needs of her students and she tries to increase the knowledge base of the students in order to help them make healthy decisions. Dina must then focus on the needs of each group to provide them with healthy sexuality education.

I focus a lot more on what students feel about themselves and what is important in their lives and based on that I say O.K. let's look at issues around sexuality and how important it is that you have sex at 14; or is your education more important? And is this something that you want to do and what are the healthy choices. Interview #1,

04/04/99

Dina attempts to meet the needs of the students by allowing them to pick the topics they are interested in learning about. This allows students to express their own personal needs and obtain the information that is most important to them. By letting students take an active role in constructing the curriculum Dina is making sure that they contribute to their own education. This

contribution will lead to greater student interest and response because the topics will be relevant and not solely defined by the teacher and administration. However, this approach to curriculum inclusion can also be problematic if the needs of marginalized youth are not met because they exist as a minority in the classroom. Too often their voices are silenced by the needs of the majority. Therefore, a balance must be reached between the requirements of the minority students and the expressed interests of the majority in order to meet the needs of all students. Although this approach can be problematic, Dina must be commended for her ability to listen to the needs of the students and put their health and welfare first in the sexuality education she provides.

I always give them a survey a few weeks before the health units and ask them what they want to talk about. Some years they pick the exact same topics: birth control, healthy relationships, pregnancy, stuff that we did in grade 9. And I will say “girls we did that in grade 9” but they say “you know what, we were too young and we want to do it all again” and they love it. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Student dialogue is important to Dina because it lets her know what the students want and allows her to provide the right information. Dina focuses not only on what the students want, but also on their feelings about her teaching. She is concerned with the support she receives from students and this will help direct her in her future teaching. Because Dina is so focused on the needs of her students, the positive and negative feedback she gets will act as a determining factor in her future teaching and how she covers certain topics. Student response, and the subtle pressure it exerts on Dina, will influence her teaching because student support or rejection of topics determines how she will feel about teaching the topic in future classes.

Often I like to get feedback from the kids and find out what they like and didn't like. And if I've done a good job I hear about it from the things that they really liked and appreciated. And so that is positive. Interview #1, 04/04/99

I feel support from the students...I think I actually feel a little bit of pressure from them as well if they feel dissatisfied, if they felt certain issues should have been talked about more. Interview #2, 06/02/99

Like most of the community educators, Dina tells me that the changing multicultural environment of the school has an effect on her teaching. While Dina tries to incorporate the needs of the students into her teaching, she feels that because the students have different racial, cultural or religious backgrounds that this poses more of a problem. The problem stems from the fact that she is unaware of their specific needs, and may lack knowledge on how their culture approaches human sexuality. Resistance to her teaching may occur when she covers topics that cross these cultural boundaries and create discomfort in the students. Dina worries about this boundary because she would like to provide all of her students with the information they need to make decisions about sexuality and worries that her approach may offend some students and lead to them rejecting the material.

I think one of the challenges that I haven't talked about is the classes are becoming more multi cultural in nature and I think I have a lot to learn about how to make it meaningful for a variety of kids no matter their background. And how I could learn to incorporate that and to help other kids that are struggling with that as well.

Interview #2, 06/02/99

Cultural differences are not the only student variable that will effect Dina's teaching, gender also plays a role in the students' response. Dina feels that students will have different reactions to the material and to the presenter based on the gender of the students and the educator. She finds that male students tend to be more comfortable with male presenters and that male presenters can create barriers to female students expressing themselves about gender specific issues like menstruation, physical maturation and teen pregnancy. She believes that it is important for the females in the class to be taught by female educators so that they can feel free to ask

questions about the menstrual cycle and the female sexual response cycle without fear of embarrassment. Dina attempts to minimize this problem by matching the gender of the presenter to the gender of the students, in hopes that the topics will be covered openly and honestly. Of course, this can still be problematic when congruency between students and presenter is not possible.

There is a difference with a male presenter because it is an all girls class and it has a certain atmosphere and a certain feeling of safety that's not the same when it's a man, even if he is a great guest speaker it's still, there is a tension and a holding back that doesn't happen when it is a female facilitator. Interview #2, 06/02/99

When students feel tense about openly talking about sexuality, they are unable to openly discuss and accept the material being presented and this can halt the learning process. Dina explains that gender becomes an issue when discussing information that challenges traditional gender roles or expectations. This boundary is especially pronounced when she teaches about sexual violence because resistance from male students can become an issue in the classroom. The male students, and even some of the females, may feel threatened by traditional concepts that surround sexual violence and Dina's attempts to question these gender roles. Dina tries to overcome the resistance male students may feel when discussing sexual violence, because she does not want to cut them off from the class discussion or lay blame on them simply because they are male. Student resistance to the presentation and analysis of traditional gender roles can be problematic because it brings into question deeply ingrained beliefs that students may not be ready to challenge.

When it comes to harassment the guys automatically feel more defensive. Although I do try hard, and I tried harder in recent years, obviously boys are assaulted and harassed as well, however the vast majority are women. But I do try to give a

balanced approach... so there is a certain defensiveness that is a little bit hard to get past sometimes. Interview #2, 06/02/99

Dina's sexual orientation has, at times, been a salient issue with her students and their responses to her teaching. Although she speaks positively about the student support she receives, she does feel some resistance because of her sexual orientation. Homophobic students may resent her being their teacher and students questioning their own sexuality may distance themselves from her for fear of being thought of as gay through association. When Dina discussed student pressure about her sexuality, the discussion centered around a difficult time in her teaching career when she was outed by some of her students.

So this particular year I had a group of grade nines and I knew that there was something going on because there are three kids that weren't playing. Like they would change and then they would stand in the middle of the gym in the middle of the game and just walk or stand. And I had to talk to them a number of times and I'm thinking "what the hell is going on, there is something really odd going on." So I was already sort of suspicious because they didn't seem to be, like kids usually respond to a teacher one way or another. But I wasn't getting a response that I expected. What happened then was that I talked to them and I talked to guidance a bit about it. And then the first parent teacher interviews came up and in kind of rapid succession what happened was one of the parents of one of the kids came in for an interview and said that the reason their daughter is mis-behaving is because she thinks you're a lesbian. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina describes this time as a lonely and frustrating time in her teaching career. The pressure she felt from students had an impact. She realized the negative social status the students had attached to being gay or lesbian. Dina felt that the situation was not dealt with very well, because the students were removed from her class without a formal explanation and without an attempt to challenge the homophobic views of the students. After many months of coming to terms with what had happened, Dina began to actively work for more homophobia and tolerance

seminars in the school system. She was aware of the message that students were sending about their intolerance for gay and lesbian teachers, and she felt that the school system had to take a more active role in questioning the beliefs of the students. At this time the students' inability to accept her sexuality caused a major disruption in her career and limited her ability to reach them. Dina worked to break down this student barrier and saw it as an opportunity to bring more acceptance into her school.

Although being outed was difficult for Dina, she has taken many positive steps as a result. As previously mentioned, she began to plan more homophobia seminars. The seminars have now been extended to full day seminars on healthy sexuality, homophobia and acceptance. What is also important is that Dina has become a positive role model for her gay/lesbian students. Both of these steps illustrate Dina's strengths as an individual and a teacher. Coming to terms with sexual orientation within the school system is a sensitive and even dangerous undertaking for both teachers and students. Dina's ability to rise above the controversy and turn the situation into a learning experience illustrates the strength of her character. Dina feels that the resistance felt from homophobic students is not as important as the strength she provides to students who may be dealing with their own problems related to sexual orientation.

The gay kids know and that's really important to me that they have that, and know that if they really wanted to, they could come talk to me. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina discusses her students fondly as both a source of support and as a main focus in her teaching. Her efforts to provide them with the information they need is based on their requests and not solely on curricular mandates. Dina's student-centered sexuality class supports a student-driven curriculum, and this creates a positive and influential learning environment. This type of

curriculum will help ensure student interest and allow for more focused sexuality education.

Although she may feel pressure or resistance from students, she has become confident in herself and her teaching. Her confidence has allowed her to take steps to overcome the negative reactions toward her sexual orientation and turn them into a positive learning experience.

Generally speaking, they (students) feel that they can express themselves and I found that the impact of the sexual education unit on the whole climate is remarkable really. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Colleagues

Teachers can be greatly affected by the working relationship they have with their colleagues. Teachers will exchange material, information and techniques, but what is most important is the support a teacher feels from her colleagues. Dina tells me that the most influential and lasting colleague relationships occur when you begin teaching. When a new teacher begins to plan and implement the curriculum, he or she relies on the opinions of colleagues to guide them. For Dina, two early colleagues influenced her teaching and still have an impact on her approach to human sexuality education.

When I first started working at Mumford¹⁰ [high school] I was with this crazy woman who, she was pretty open-minded and actually I didn't feel like I was limited in what I could talk about. But the second woman that I worked with, we taught most of the Phys. Ed and she was a born again Christian. I used to hear some pretty interesting stories from kids in her class about the section and the way she approached it. That has an impact on a young teacher. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina's collegial experiences as a young teacher were important in shaping the teacher she has become. Her curricular experiences with her two early colleagues have affected the areas she will cover in sexuality education and the comfort she feels with these topics. Although she has

¹⁰Pseudonym

grown as an educator, and has overcome many boundaries to teaching human sexuality. she will always be affected by these early teaching experiences. Young teachers rely heavily on their colleagues to inform them of the school culture and what is and isn't acceptable to teach. Colleague influences are especially important when discussing human sexuality education because teachers usually receive little formal training in the area. Lack of training will leave new teachers relying heavily on the opinions of others for guidance in their approach to sex education. The impressions that educators form early on in their teaching will also carry throughout their careers, making initial colleague experiences important.

Well we (her colleague) were in the same office and we would talk about the sorts of things we were doing, the kinds of resources she used you know. And it definitely has an impact, because [I would think] she's not talking about that so I shouldn't.

Interview #1, 04/04/99

The influence of colleagues can be extremely important when it comes to what is and isn't discussed in human sexuality classes. The silencing of taboo issues creates a barrier to comprehensive sexuality education and makes it difficult for teachers to speak up when they do not share colleague perspectives. When other teachers aren't discussing marginalized issues it may be hard for teachers to overcome the silence and disrupt the acceptance of heteropolar norms. Although teachers like Dina may want to discuss complex and difficult issues, they may feel pressure to stay within the accepted social boundaries that exist in a given school.

In terms of abortion it's a very controversial issue and I think that the born again Christian lady might have had a little bit to do with that. Because her approach was so different it made me realize how touchy the subject was. So I guess I am a bit of a chicken about it.

Interview #1, 04/04/99

Although Dina describes herself as being different from her colleague, she still silences her discussion on abortion because of her colleague's view. The strength of colleague relationships is

illustrated in the above quote, since Dina did not share the views of her colleagues, yet she put them before her own. This silencing of one's opinion is a powerful boundary to human sexuality education which can occur due to the controversial nature of the subject and the personal investments teachers bring to teaching. It is easy to silence young teachers who may hold differing opinions because they are so dependent on the opinions of their colleagues. By exerting subtle, conserving influences on new teachers, the school culture remains the same and heteropolar norms are reproduced in a new generation of teachers.

The support of colleagues is not only important to Dina when making curricular choices, but also for day-to-day social interactions. A school is a small community and teachers depend on colleagues to be friends and provide support when needed. When Dina was outed by her students, she needed support from her colleagues and although a fellow teacher came to her defense it was a false sense of support that provided little comfort. Her partner Marion¹¹ describes the reactions of Dina's colleagues:

And I remember the teachers sort of commending themselves for defending you and what they were defending overall was that you were not a lesbian; [in this way] they [thought they] came to your defense. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina's colleagues may have been attempting to support her, but it was not the kind of support she needed. By defending Dina by saying that she was not a lesbian, her colleagues had denied her sexuality and made her invisible. Her colleagues' defense of her sexuality was in fact an insult which further added to problem. When they denied that Dina was a lesbian, they too were propagating the idea that there was something wrong with homosexuality. Although Dina's

¹¹Pseudonym

colleagues may have had the best of intentions, they provided little support or comfort. Dina is still not openly gay in her school, but it was this experience that brought her own sexuality to the forefront. After this experience, she decided to make sexual orientation an issue in the school system through the implementation of workshops on homophobia.

I had to go and talk to all of the grade nine teachers and say that we would like to plan this workshop, and that it was part of the course, and that the workshop would be happening on these days. They didn't have to do it and so two of the teachers refused out of nine. And one of them was a man I considered my best friend and the other was a Born-Again. Also surprising was there was this one woman, who I hadn't talked to very much and she was amazing...And then the thing with my best friend who wouldn't have it, because if his son was in the class he wouldn't want him to. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina still values the support of her colleagues, but she is no longer silenced by those who would create barriers to her teaching. Although she is upset by the resistance of some teachers, she is more optimistic about those who provide her with support. Dina's experiences as a sexuality teacher shows how easy it can be to silence marginalized perspectives in the human sexuality education classroom. The school environment allows for teachers to be strongly influenced by colleagues and this can result in limited student access to sexuality information. When teachers bring their own sexual taboos into the school, they effect other teachers both actively and passively through curriculum planning and implementation. Dina's experiences are important for the study because they illustrate the barriers which effect her teaching and self-expression. Dina recognizes the boundaries to sexuality education, and the damage they can cause, as she has had to confront many in her own life. Although her early teaching colleagues still influence her, she is aware of the importance of sexuality education and works to give voice to controversial or marginalized perspectives within human sexuality education.

School Administration

The support of colleagues is important to Dina, but it is the administration that has the final say in what she can and cannot teach in her classroom. Teachers must report to their department heads and principals before they tackle any controversial topics in the classroom, and for this reason Dina describes the support of the administration as one of the most important factors in teaching. Seeking the support of the administration can sometimes be complicated and frustrating, but it is crucial. The administration works as a barrier between the teacher and the community and it is important to gain their support so that the teacher has support in dealing with the community or parents. With the support of the administration, Dina can cover issues without fear of personal repercussions from parents or the community.

If the principal is supportive and the head of the department is then you are O.K. If the department head is supportive you can probably do a lot of stuff even if the principal doesn't know as long as you are careful about it. Interview #2, 06/02/99

The administration acts as a gate-keeper to comprehensive sexuality education. If the department head feels that heteropolar norms should be reproduced in the school system, then the teacher feels compelled to abide such guidelines. Even when the department heads have more permissive opinions, teachers may still be limited by the final say of the principal. The social standards of the administration will act as the defining factor in the type of sexuality education taught in the classroom. This type of gate-keeping process can be arbitrary and left solely to the discretion of the principal. If the principal is unwilling to bring more comprehensive issues into the classroom, then teachers feel blocked and will pursue these topics only at their own risk. This can be extremely frustrating for those teachers who wish to question heteropolar norms in human

sexuality education. The teachers will be silenced and remain so until a more progressive principal comes into the school and allows the material to be covered.

I think six or seven years ago I wanted to bring in speakers into my classroom on homophobia so I went to the head of the department and said that I would like to do this. And he said that he really felt it was a bad idea but that he would check with the principal and get back to me. So the department head checked with the principal and he said “no, you can’t do that” and I said “okay this is bullshit it’s in the guidelines and if it had been a speaker on birth control or relationships I would have been able to do it.” Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina’s attempts to bring gay and lesbian issues in the classroom is an excellent example of the gate-keeping process at work. Dina was not allowed to bring controversial perspectives into the classroom, even though she explained that the information was included in the government’s curricular mandates in place at that time. During our interview Dina related her own distress with this administration and how she felt that their personal judgements had affected curricular decisions. If the administration is unwilling to challenge its own homophobia, this becomes a barrier to providing students with information that will challenge stereotypes. This gate-keeping process leads to the reproduction of heteropolar norms in the school system and Dina feels this pressure from the administration to stick to such norms. The heteropolar norms of the administration are especially problematic for Dina because she does not fit into these norms. The administration is not only denying her students access to information, but they are denying her ability to create conditions of change— conditions in which she has deep investments. She feels little support from this kind of administration and has felt negative pressure from them over her thirteen years of teaching experience.

Over the years principals have had an impact on what we can talk about and also who the department head is and he was a pretty conservative guy that I worked for

years. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Not all of Dina's experiences with the administration have been negative. Dina discussed many principals who supported her goals and allowed her to discuss sexual orientation, in reference to homophobia education, in the classroom. Now that Dina is a department head, she is relieved from some of the pressure because she has become part of the gate-keeping process. She tells me that her promotion and the support of more liberal and progressive teachers has allowed her to become a more effective teacher.

And I had a new principal again and he is great so I feel a lot of support from him. We have got a great principal, so I definitely feel support from the administration. I feel comfortable talking about it to them when issues come up. Interview #1, 04/04/99

The positive support Dina now feels from the administration has allowed her to overcome many of the boundaries she faced early on in her teaching when trying to present a more comprehensive curriculum. When approval for teaching about homophobia was finally given to Dina, it allowed her to bring important information to the students. Not only does the support from the administration effect what Dina will teach, it affects how she feels about teaching. With the support of the administration, Dina can explore topics in the classroom that are important to her, such as homophobia. Acknowledgment of gay and lesbian issues by the administration now gives Dina a voice in the classroom to teach acceptance and awareness about sexual orientation.

Resources

Access to resources has played a important role in the development of Dina's teaching ability. Like comfort, access to resources increases with classroom experience and this affects the quality of teaching. In the beginning, Dina had little access to information that supported her

goals in human sexuality education. Without access to these types of resources, she had to rely on the little information she could find and on the resources suggested to her by other teachers, which meant that she was reduced to teaching heteropolar sexuality education.

So what I taught as a young teacher is what I was told to teach. So older teachers would give me their resources and basically it was a bit about birth control, a little bit about relationships, sort of values education. Interview #1, 04/04/99

As a new teacher, Dina was limited in the beginning by her access to resources, the supporting documents to teaching which provide both information and a sense of credibility. Without teaching material, teachers may not be comfortable in presenting sexuality information. If teachers have little access to information on marginalized issues, then they may be limited in their capacity to teach these issues. Dina feels that resources provide ideas and concrete information that support the goals of the teacher, and without them the information may not be covered. Resources are especially important when you are dealing with controversial information, because they provide a framework of support that exists outside of the teacher.

Like I said, there weren't very many resources, although it was in 1992 the department came up with some binders on sexuality and then we had some resources. So that was helpful. Interview #2, 06/02/99

Dina says that her comfort with teaching has increased with her access to more comprehensive resources. She explains that with experience comes the ability to recognize good teaching resources that will support her goals in the classroom. Sexuality education materials help to increase her comfort with teaching because they provide her with information and teaching strategies. Dina's effectiveness as a teacher has increased with access to information and she identifies this as one of the key factors leading to her increased comfort level.

And I found that as I got a little bit more used to it (teaching sexuality) and did it a few more times it was O.K. Plus I had some good resources from Peel Board and this helped with my teaching. Interview #1, 04/04/99

As mentioned earlier, the lack of access to information at the beginning of a teaching career can be limiting. Dina says that although she received limited resources from her colleagues, she was fortunate because she received information in her B. Ed program. Unlike the other participants in this study, Dina feels that she received some training in university on how to teach human sexuality education and was exposed to human sexuality resources. Although her access to comprehensive information was limited, the information she received helped her to prepare to teach sexuality.

We had Prof. R, who wrote the textbook; he had some great resources in the way of teaching health and sexuality...[but] absolutely nothing on homophobia, but I think that he had more up-to-date resources than a lot of the teachers when I went into the school. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Access to information is not only limited by the amount of resources but by the type of resource available to teachers. Human sexuality education can be difficult to teach because educators must engage in a language that is usually reserved for the bedroom and teachers may be uncomfortable using words like masturbation, vulva and penis. Dina believes that you must approach sexuality education with a frank, sensitive teaching style that acknowledges the problems linked to the words used in sexuality education, words that do not have the same social relevance as those found in math and English. Dina also believes that you must limit lecturing and increase the time spent on activities and group discussions. Unfortunately, it may be easier to find resources that support a lecture style format of teaching than a more open and progressive approach. Although Dina looks for resources that support her style of teaching, she must rely in

many cases on the use of textbooks despite their unpopularity with students.

We have a couple of reference texts and we use them a bit and they are the least popular part when we use them. It becomes unreal it is not a personal thing. Interview

#2, 06/02/99

If students are not interested in what is being taught, then they may not engage with or retain the information. The reference textbooks are also problematic because they subvert Dina's goals by not supporting an open learning environment for students. Textbooks present information in a factual and scientific manner, which can make the information boring, de-personalizing, de-contextualizing and abstract to some students. Unfortunately, Dina must use these textbooks because they present the biological basis of human sexuality that is needed for further learning about safer sex and other issues. What textbooks do not present is discourses on sexuality and pleasure, homosexuality, abortion and other controversial issues. By leaving this information out of textbooks, the publishers are reproducing heteropolar norms, providing teachers with no information or support for these issues.

Access to information is key for teachers when they are teaching topics that they are unsure of or feel uncomfortable teaching. If a teacher has to go out and find resources, or even develop a new curriculum, then he or she may leave sexuality issues out of the curriculum. Providing teachers with information and resources enables them to overcome their boundaries and provide more effective sexuality education. Since Dina is a department head, she is in a position to provide her colleagues with the material resources they need to teach a more effective sexuality curriculum and by doing this Dina has allowed educators to teach areas that they were once uncomfortable with and unable to teach.

There is a teacher that doesn't feel comfortable teaching sexuality and when I ask him if he has done it he just shakes his head and says "yes."...Generally speaking what I have done is sent my colleagues to this sexuality workshop and I brought in these resources. What I have noticed actually is a change in him, he is using, he is a pretty stubborn kind of guy, but given the resources he teaches it. The resources are right there and other people are teaching it at the same time. Interview #2, 06/02/99

Parents/Community

Schools are public institutions, therefore they must respond to the needs of the community and are open to criticism by the public. Community and parental involvement is important because teachers are responsible for educating students based on the needs of a community. If a parent is upset or unhappy with the education a child is receiving, the teacher may be held indirectly responsible. This meant that teachers must worry about what they do in the classroom and how the information they present will be received by parents and the community. Although this is a source of pressure for Dina, she describes it as an indirect pressure on her teaching.

Parents aren't directly involved obviously, but indirectly. You know the odd time in parent teacher interviews I might chat with them. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina told me that this pressure is only indirect because most calls or complaints are directed to the principal before she has to deal with them. The principal will act as a buffer between the teacher and the community, making principal support important. Dina does not worry about community and parental complaints because she seeks out the support of the principal before she teaches a sensitive topic. Not only is principal support important when dealing with community complaints, but adherence to curricular mandates that are authorized by the provincial government will also validate Dina's work. Dina feels that if she is covering information that has been defined by government standards, then she does not have to worry

about any negative reactions by parents.

I am aware of discussions and complaints, parents write letters complaining but I try to define my curriculum based on ministry guidelines. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Principal support and curricular mandates play an important role in providing Dina support when dealing with issues that cause community or parental complaints. This support allows Dina to cover issues without fear for her job. What is also important to note is that if she does not have this support for teaching more controversial issues, she may be limited in what she will teach for fear of complaints from the community. Parents who do not hold liberal or progressive views on sexuality education may complain if homosexuality, abortion and safer sex are discussed in the classroom. If Dina does not have curricular or principal support for these issues then she will find herself in trouble. Therefore, Dina may be limited by principal and curricular support when it comes to dealing with community complaints.

Many of the complaints that the school receives occur when Dina brings in guest speakers who discuss abortion and homophobia. Parents who have heteropolar views on human sexuality may be upset when their children are taught issues about sexuality that are outside of their own value system. Parents sometimes complain and try to create barriers to Dina's teaching through their complaints.

Back during the workshops we had this man, oh he was unbelievable. He wrote a letter to our principal and he was appalled that he hadn't been told that his daughter was going to be at this workshops and had he known he would have definitely not let her. And he pursued this all the way up to the chair of the board. I think he was trying to get something done, I don't know what he thought he was going to get done when it is in the curriculum. Interview #2, 06/02/99

The father's reaction to Dina's workshop is an excellent example of how the community

tries to exert pressure on the schools to reproduce heteropolar norms in the classroom. In this case, Dina was not worried about the complaint because she had the support of the principal and the curriculum as authorized by the Board of Education and the Province of Ontario. As mentioned earlier, the principal acts as the medium between the school and the community, although the community may still manage to restrict Dina's curriculum if they are able to influence the principal. Consequently Dina is indirectly influenced by the community, because the principal may only be willing to give her support on issues that he or she feels the community will accept without complaint.

Although some members of the community will complain, Dina tells me that the community can also be a source of support. Dina feels support from her peers in the community including members of Informed Sexuality Services, the health department and gay and lesbian groups. These special interest groups give Dina support by providing her with information and guest speakers on sexuality education. These groups specialize in human sexuality education and bring with them credibility and a professional approach that helps to increase knowledge and awareness in the classroom. For Dina, the involvement of community members in the classroom is helpful to create a progressive and comprehensive human sexuality education.

I have support from friends in the community; I mentioned [a person who] works for the youth services bureau and [who] has helped. And my links to Informed Sexuality Services and from the health department. It is the kind of thing where they are so much more with it so that's helpful. Interview #1, 04/14/99

Personal

Human sexuality is a taboo area that is difficult to teach. This is even more salient for Dina because of the added pressure coming from issues surrounding her sexual orientation. Dina

has worked to overcome society's pressures to conform to heteropolarity and she strives to teach sexuality education that reflects the diverse needs of students. Her ability to overcome barriers has come from experience, knowledge, comfort and her own personal strength. Dina finds strength in her desire to create an open learning environment for her students and to provide them with the information they need to make healthy behavioral choices.

I wanted the classes to have an impact on them so it forces them to think about what is important in their lives. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina is committed to her students and their well-being and remains focused on this during her classroom teaching and her attempts to provide comprehensive sexuality education.

Alternatively, abstinence-only sexuality education is often taught through fear and scare tactics, driving material into the students' heads rather than creating a safe learning environment (Edwards, 1997; Whatley & Trudell, 1991). A policing approach to sex education is usually ineffective and creates negative stereotypes around sexual expression. Dina overcomes this boundary to education through a personal approach that breeds trust and honesty. Beyond lectures and textbooks, she has been able to create an effective learning environment.

My classroom uses a lot less writing and more talking. A lot of role-playing, more guests, more active things. Like assertiveness training which they have a lot of fun with. So I do those kinds of assignments. I give them more experience so they have to take what they talk about and actually go out and try it and then write reflections on how they tried to be assertive. They don't actually have to be successful; they just have to try to do it and have it as part of what they are thinking about. Interview #1, 04/04/99

When Dina uses active, reflective teaching strategies in the classroom, she allows students to explore topics that are important to them and this creates a more relevant experience. This type of open environment may also help to encourage healthy attitudes about sexuality and

possibly add to the students' sexual esteem (Rust, 1994; Rosser, 1986; Greenberg, 1989). Dina is not only open in her teaching practices but she is also tolerant of the discussions that are raised by the students. That is, she is much more accepting of the attitudes and ideas students have about sexuality than are some of her other colleagues.

I would say I am far more tolerant of the kinds of stuff kids will come up with than my colleagues. Because I know they have to say that stuff and express whatever they believe to express so they can get on and really talk about what they think.

Interview #2, 06/02/99

Dina's acceptance of the remarks made by students is an example of her own tolerance with human sexuality. Dina allows students to explore their sexuality openly in the classroom because she is secure within her own sexuality and she is aware of the students' needs for self-expression. Dina feels that this tolerance for discussions on sensitive issues surrounding human sexuality allows her students to build self-confidence and self-awareness. Dina explains that she acquired this comfort level through experience.

The list of things that I am uncomfortable with has gotten shorter. If you had done this interview nine years ago I would have listed virtually every single topic in sexual education. But now I don't, I think because I've heard it all I know what to expect. So that has kind of narrowed down to things that are more personal to me.

04/04/99

Interview #1,

Dina feels that experience is one of the most important factors in her gaining comfort with teaching human sexuality. The discomfort that she felt in the beginning began to change as she became more familiar with the information and gained access to new material and teaching techniques. In the beginning Dina relied on the guidance department and resources provided to her by her colleagues. As Dina gained experience in the classroom her focus changed and she moved away from her original influences and began to define her own goals teaching human

sexuality.

When I first, in my first few years teaching I was probably quite typical of the other teachers. I never had, we had small group discussions but I didn't do things like role-playing, I didn't do a lot of experiential sort of things. The good stuff has come over the years by trial and error and seeing what the impact was. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Dina has been able to move beyond her original influences and expand her knowledge base within human sexuality education. With this new information and teaching techniques comes a comfort with teaching students about human sexuality. Not only has Dina been able to expand her teaching techniques but she can now discuss a wider variety of topics. According to Dina, it is a combination of defining her own curriculum, as well as gaining knowledge and comfort that has allowed her to create an effective learning environment.

So I suppose my focus has changed. I am far more comfortable then I used to be talking about almost anything. Of course I know more so that makes it easier to talk about all sorts of things with them. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Coming out has been important to Dina, since it has increased her own comfort, but it may also have increased the comfort of gay and lesbian students. Teachers are often presumed to be heterosexual by default, so gay and lesbian students may feel teachers cannot understand them. When Dina came out, she was finally able to become a positive role model to her students. This role model position is important to Dina and is an example of her dedication to her students.

Dina's ability to become a role model demonstrated her strength to step outside of societal norms.

To become a positive gay influence is working on me and I think that it is important to be a role model and so lots of the gay kids know that I am out. Interview #2, 06/02/99

Dina shows amazing strength in her ability to be gay positive in a society that is so hostile toward homosexuality. Not only has she had the ability to be open about her own sexuality, but

she has also worked to bring sexual awareness to her school. Dina did not always receive support or encouragement from the administration, but she persevered in her efforts to bring homophobia workshops into the school. This kind of initiative and strength is important when teaching sexuality education in order to overcome the heteropolar norms society tries to enforce on today's youth.

Obviously, the administration didn't understand how my outing should have been dealt with and that's when I decided to get the workshops going. And so I talked to the principal and she was very good, she said "oh yeah, that would be a good idea." Like maybe she could have thought of that. But she said fine. Interview #1, 04/04/99

Although Dina has gained a sense of comfort through her coming out, it still puts some limitations on her teaching. In our interviews, Dina mentioned several times that she felt it should be the job of a heterosexual teacher to bring homophobia issues into the school and not hers. She believes that it should not be her job to teach tolerance of homosexuality because it can often be seen as self-promoting and subsequently negated. Dina tells me that she must be aware of her own sexuality and how it will effect the acceptance of homophobia workshops. Dina is also aware that her own sexual orientation may effect the way the workshops are received, so she doesn't reveal to the students that she is the one who actively plans them. It is unfortunate that Dina's sexual orientation plays a limiting factor in her teaching despite her ability to overcome many of the other barriers which she has had to face in her teaching of sex education.

I think that there is a lot of pressure to be careful because you don't want to be seen as recruiting anyone. So I think that they are being very cautious in the education system. It's O.K. now to talk about homophobia but you don't want to talk about being homosexual. Interview #2, 06/02/99

Dina's story is an example of one person's ability to overcome society's confining

definition of human sexuality. It is quite possible that Dina was able to overcome these standards because she lives outside of society's heteropolar norms. What is important is that Dina exemplifies teaching goals and strategies that help to create a positive and effective human sexuality environment. When I first met with Dina, I quickly realized that her participation would bring rich data to the study since she feels that sexuality education is so important. Although Dina is not outside the bounds of social influence, she has made a conscious effort to increase her own awareness and her understanding of students and colleagues. Dina represents a growing number of individuals who believe that in order to keep children healthy educators must provide them with information to make decisions on their own.

4.4 Roger¹²

All of the participants had been chosen for the study by the time I was introduced to Roger at the Informed Sexuality Services office, where I was interviewing Christina. In the beginning I was reluctant to add a fifth participant to the study, for fear that it might be too much for me to handle. When I began talking with Roger, I realized that his experiences would be quite valuable to the study. Roger is a work-at-home dad who has two school-aged children. He is currently working on his Masters of Social Work at Carleton and has taught sexuality education through the Unitarian church and ISS. As I discussed issues with Roger, I realized that we had a lot in common in our beliefs on human sexuality education and our own career goals. He displayed sensitivity mixed with the strong will to resist the social pressures surrounding human sexuality education. I knew that his experience was unique, and I was eager to add him to the

¹²Pseudonym

project and begin our interviews.

Roger's initial experience with sexuality education came from his work at the Unitarian Church where he was a religious education teacher who taught the Church's classes on sexuality. He describes the Church's approach to sexuality as being open and progressive with an emphasis on humanistic experience. The curriculum is forthcoming and leaves no questions or topics untouched. The goal is to prepare the pre-pubescent youth for the changes that will be happening to them over the next couple of years. Roger describes this experience as positive and believes that it has greatly impacted his teaching and approach to sexuality education. After working for the Church, Roger began to volunteer at ISS as part of his course work for the M.S.W. in social work. Although he describes his experience between ISS and the church differently he reflects positively on both settings and the opportunities he has had to teach sexuality education.

I met with Roger both at the ISS office and at his home to conduct our interviews. He spoke self-consciously, yet richly about his experiences as a sexuality educator. Roger describes himself as a "no holds barred" sexuality educator and this came through as he discussed his own experiences. He believes that time is a major constraint to proper sexuality education and describes this as one of the main barriers to his teaching. He is driven by the needs of the students and feels that he has had both support and pressure from administration and colleagues in the past. Roger feels that teachers can be both helpful and hindering in the classroom but cites his own personality as a means to overcoming these barriers.

Students

Roger has an open and progressive view of human sexuality and believes that children

should be given access to comprehensive information. This permissive attitude about education has carried through in his work for the Church and ISS. Roger believes that fully meeting the needs of the students should be the main focus of his teaching. He believes that educators must provide students access to comprehensive material so that they can become informed decision makers.

When I have a feeling about what I should be doing and that is giving, especially young people, the most complete quality information they can have. I believe they are the decision makers, it is their volition that is going to govern what happens to them. And as much as possible I want to transmit information to them. Interview #1, 04/22/99

Roger feels that often, as adults, we limit students by allowing our own discomfort to govern the type of information chosen to be discussed in the classroom. He finds that his open approach to sexuality education creates positive learning experiences for the students and helps them develop a healthy outlook on sexuality. Roger's dedication to the welfare of the students is apparent both in his approach to teaching and in the reaction he receives from students. He tells me that students are supportive of his teaching and he derives personal satisfaction from his role as a sexuality educator.

There are things that happen in just about every classroom presentation where you know the kids will say something and you will be like, wow I touched that person or they are really on the ball with that. Interview #2, 06/10/99

Roger feels that the rewards from teaching come when he knows that students have walked away from a presentation with the information they need to make informed sexual decisions. Roger's focus on providing students with comprehensive information works in direct opposition to those who would limit student's access to information. He feels that it is his responsibility to provide students with information in spite of social taboos or heteropolar norms.

Although Roger talks about some of the forces that have worked against him, seldom during our interviews does he talk about these forces being able to overcome him. Roger feels that his gender may have an influence on how he is received by students and teachers.

Personally I get a lot of positive attention because I am a male doing this and there are very, very few males in sexuality education. Interview #2, 06/10/99

The lack of male sexuality educators may be a contributing factor in the positive support Roger receives from students. Male students may find it easier to ask Roger more personal questions. They may feel uncomfortable asking female presenters the same questions. It is also possible, as Roger suggests, that students afford him more respect because he is a male educator. Although Roger does receive support from students, the support he receives may depend on the topics he is teaching. When Roger covers topics with which students are uncomfortable, there may be negative reactions to his teaching. When students were presented with information on masturbation, gay and lesbian issues and information on sexual violence, he stated that they sometimes reacted or acted up in the classroom. Roger felt that this was a way that discomfort with a topic that is socially taboo is sometimes expressed. A negative reaction may occur when students try to separate themselves from the material in order to make sure that everyone in the class knows that they are separate from the information. Roger is aware that students may not always accept the information he presents, but he tries not to let these reactions limit his teaching. Roger feels that to limit his information because of heteropolar reactions would limit access to information for those who are interested in marginalized issues.

You know students, if you mention a guy going down on a guy, you get “GROSS!” But if you mention a girl taking semen in her mouth you get “GROSS!” as well. You know that there is not the same degree of receptivity in every individual in your

class. But you don't care about that, you are interested in the ones that are either confirmed in their sexual orientation and it's not heterosexual or they are questioning it. And you just want them to have some support within what you are saying. Interview #1, 04/22/99

Roger's direct approach to dealing with taboo issues in the classroom is an important one when trying to overcome barriers to comprehensive sexuality education. Teachers need to be aware that although unpleasant, student reactions will sometimes limit other students' access to information. This can occur when students are made to feel uncomfortable when asking questions or if the teacher leaves out material for fear of a student reaction.

You know each individual student is going to have their comfort level and when you are addressing a group you can't minimize the topic to deal with everybody's comfort level. And I think part of the job in sex education anyway is to challenge people's comfort level. Interview #1, 04/22/99

Like Gillian, Roger sees student discomfort as an opportunity to question social norms. Roger feels that by questioning the social norms of sexuality, students will be better equipped to question these norms themselves and make their own decisions. This approach to education is another way by which Roger is able to overcome the heteropolar norms that limit his teaching. It is important to note that Roger is aware that discomfort can be a barrier and that students feeling uncomfortable with the information being presented can limit their receptivity to the material. So while Roger questions and pushes the comfort level of students, he pays careful attention to how much they can handle.

So there are times when people are obviously a little bit uncomfortable with the topics I am talking about. I won't push that, I won't push past the point that are able to tolerate it. Interview #2, 06/10/99

Roger's own comfort level with sexuality education may have an effect on students'

responses to his teaching. Roger felt that his own acceptance of a wide variety of forms of sexual expression created a conceptually confirming framework for many students. Although Roger's students were not interviewed directly, he stated that he felt acceptance and support from the students which provided affirmation for his style of teaching. Roger's desire to create an open and challenging learning environment is an excellent example of a progressive sexuality classroom. Although Roger has felt pressure from his students, he has overcome this pressure by questioning the discomfort of students and helping them develop outside of heteropolar norms.

Teachers

When we began to discuss the role of the classroom teacher, Roger expressed little concern for the pressure colleagues may try to exert over him. In fact, Roger seems quite indifferent to teachers and their effect on his presentations. I find this response interesting in light of the information provided to me by the other participants. Unlike Gillian and Catherine, Roger views the role of other classroom teachers as quite benign with respect to his teaching.

Usually what they (teachers) do is greet me, tell me what the setup will be, what things are going to be like. Usually they won't say a lot in the classroom during the presentations, sometimes they will be very helpful and sometimes you want them to stop because you want to get back on track. And then afterwards just sort of [provide] a synopsis of how things have gone and thanking us for coming. Interview #1, 04/22/99

Roger's indifference towards the classroom teacher may be due to the fact that he has never felt pressure to tailor his presentations to the needs of the classroom teacher. Unlike Catherine and Gillian, Roger has not been asked to exclude sensitive issues from his presentations in the classroom. Roger believes that he may have been exempt from this pressure due to his gender and the privilege that is unconsciously afforded to males in society.

You know I wonder [about] gender dynamics sometimes. Because 90 percent of the teachers are female...I'm a guy and when I come [into the classroom] I bring in that huge cultural weight of male privilege and a lot of females are still very reluctant to challenge the authority of a male. Interview #2, 06/10/99

Although Roger feels he has had little pressure in the classroom I asked him to discuss how he would feel if he encountered this pressure. Roger feels that any attempts to limit his curriculum would be limiting the student's access to information. He says that he would be reluctant to comply. He is aware that being asked to limit presentations is a way of limiting students' access to comprehensive information and this goes against his own goals. It is important to note that because our conversation was only hypothetical, it may have been easier for Roger to stand strongly within his convictions than if he had actually been confronted with the issues we were discussing. Roger himself admits that he is not exactly sure how he would react if the situation actually arose.

I don't know realistically what I would do if I were to walk into a situation and someone would say "you are going to talk about contraception but you're not allowed to talk about abortion at all." I don't know if I would agree to it. I mean that's like saying I want you to come in here and give people the facts but not all the facts. Interview #1, 04/22/99

Roger is extremely aware of the role social pressure plays in limiting access to information. Although he is only speaking hypothetically, he shows an awareness of some of the barriers that exist in the classroom that limit teaching of comprehensive education. What is also important here is Roger's justification for not wanting to limit his curriculum. Roger believes that often the limitations put on sexuality education are arbitrary. He questions the validity of presenting only a limited number of facts and wonders why one set of facts should have priority over another. By calling into question the validity of limitations to sex education, Roger is asking

people to justify why one set of information should have priority over another. and this is crucial in creating a progressive classroom. Roger believes that he would challenge those who would try to limit him and ask them to justify the limitations they were attempting to impose.

If you have problems with what I teach, as a teacher or as a parent, or whoever, write it up in my evaluation and tell me why it is wrong. I mean if you expect me to modify health information because of your own personal feelings, my feeling is that the onus is on you to justify that. Interview #1, 04/22/99

The idea that Roger presents here is an important one because it calls into question those who would limit sexuality education and tailor it to their own opinions or value systems. When educators ask those in power to justify why groups are being marginalized, then they bring the issues to the forefront and help to give voice to those who have been silenced. This type of action will allow sexuality educators to bring conflicting perspectives into the classroom and begin to question the taboos that surround human sexuality.

Although Roger tells me that he has not been asked to tailor his curriculum he says that he has had to contend with some teacher influences. Most often these influences are interruptions by teachers during his presentations. Sometimes teachers will interject while Roger is teaching and add their own information to the presentation.

You'll be talking about a topic and they will be almost like another student, come up with a story and they start telling their story and you're sort of looking at your watch saying "O.K. this has gone on for five minutes I would like to get back onto the material." Interview #1, 04/22/99

Although Roger doesn't believe this is done maliciously, he finds it can interfere with his presentation. Interruptions by teachers can limit the amount of time Roger has to discuss the material he has to cover and it can ruin the flow of the presentation. Roger believes that in spite

of their storytelling, teachers are a source of support for his presentations. Roger feels that, generally, teachers have only provided him with support and that they have contributed to his teaching. He speaks of negative influence only hypothetically, and speaks fondly of the support and encouragement he receives in the schools.

And when I've done teaching in the schools. I've had tremendous support from teachers. I simply haven't had any bad or negative reactions, or have anyone come and try to pull the rug out from underneath me. Interview #2, 06/10/99

Organizational support

Roger's first experiences with teaching sexuality education took place in the Unitarian church when he was a religious education teacher. Roger describes the Church's approach to sexuality education as progressive and comprehensive. That is, the Church covers a broad amount of material that is aimed at teaching pre-pubescent adolescents what they need to know about the changes that will be occurring in their bodies during puberty. Roger tells me that the Church has an open and accepting approach to all forms of sexual expression and teaches this through their program.

The Church's whole approach to sexuality education is to teach young people that their sexuality is a gift of creation and it is something for them to take joy in and it should be a positive part of their lives and it should not have any shame or guilt attached to it. Interview #1, 04/22/99

The Unitarian's open and accepting stance on sexuality education provided Roger with positive support in his teaching. Because Roger's views on sexuality are in line with those of the Church, he felt only encouragement and support for his teaching. The progressive views of the Church went against heteropolar norms and helped to develop Roger's open stance toward sexuality education. The support Roger felt from the Church came from many sources within the

Church and allowed him to teach without barriers. Although it is the administration in the Church that oversaw his teaching, Roger also felt support from the Church community.

I really never had the experience of feeling a lack of support from anyone that I work with in teaching. I'm thinking of the sexuality program I've taught at the Unitarian Church, tremendous support from the congregation, administration and parents and the kids. Interview #1, 04/22/99

The Church provided Roger support through encouragement and training. As mentioned earlier, training to teach sexuality education is an important factors in an educator's effectiveness. When an educator is provided with training and information, he or she is able to teach with increased comfort and this will effect how the material is accepted by students. When a teacher is comfortable with the material, he or she is able to pass this comfort to the students and this may increase the effectiveness of the class. A teacher who does not receive support may have trouble planning and implementing the curricula. The training Roger received helped to overcome any discomfort he may have felt when teaching the sensitive issues of human sexuality.

I expressed interest in doing the sexuality program, I went to a 24-hour training program that is held over an intensive weekend and I was certified to teach this program. Interview #1, 04/22/99

The support provided by the Church does not end when the training is complete, but continues on through the sexuality curriculum they provide to their instructors. By providing a curriculum for Roger to follow, the Church is ensuring that all of the goals of the education program are met. The Church also provided Roger with resources to be used in his teaching and this further supports the classroom goals. The curricular and resource support provided by the Church is important because it provides a framework for sexuality education that is not solely dependent on the educator. This framework guides the teacher through the program and ensures

that topic inclusion is not arbitrarily based on the attitudes of the educators.

There are 15 to 17 sections of the original “about your sexuality program”, and then the update makes it 20. The goals of the program are to provide comprehensive, honest and open sexuality education for young people around the junior high level.

Interview #2, 06/10/99

Although the Church provides training and guidelines for instruction, some teachers may still feel uncomfortable with the topics being presented. Roger states that the Church feels strongly about the sexuality education program and its goals in creating a safe learning environment. He says that although the Church will try to find educators who are comfortable with the subject, this does not always happen. Since Roger’s views on sexuality are similar to the Church’s views, he had no problems complying with the use of the curriculum and its resources, but this was not the case for all of the church’s educators.

And there have been churches that simply do not use the film strips. Coming out of the educational directorate office have always been statements like “if you are uncomfortable using the visuals perhaps you should begin to question whether or not you should be teaching this program, whether your comfort level is enough to allow you to teach this program with the positive impact we want it to have.

Interview #2, 06/10/99

Roger’s opinion on the limitations that teacher discomfort puts on effective teaching is similar to what the Church believes. He believes that educators children’s access to information shouldn’t be limited by teachers’ discomfort with topics. Roger has worked to overcome the barriers that discomfort creates in order to ensure an effective classroom environment.

Although Roger mentions the tremendous support that he has received from the Church, he also reveals a time when this support changed. During a recent conference on the “about your sexuality” curricula, developed by the Church for the sexuality education program, Roger learned

that the Church was planning to change an integral part of the program. The “about your sexuality” program included photographic pictures of couples, from various sexual orientations (including gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples), engaging in sexual intercourse. Roger felt that these pictures brought a realistic touch to the program and enabled adolescents to gain a clear understanding of exactly what happened during intercourse. He was upset to find that the Church was planning to replace the photographs with cartoons or drawings in the new version of the program. Roger made a strong plea to the committee not to take this step, but found that he was no longer receiving the encouragement he once felt from the Church.

So I challenged them and basically found that I received no support for that position on the committee, which included the head of religious education programming for the entire church. So I followed it up to see where it was going and it looked very, very strongly that there was not going to be support from the committee on the continued use of the photographic visuals. Interview #1, 04/22/99

Roger was both shocked and upset by the changes proposed and by the lack of attention paid to his plea. Roger tells me that by changing the photographs the Church is going against its original mandate to create an open and honest learning environment. He feels that by removing these photographs the Church is compromising its position and is bending to heteropolar norms which try to disguise or reduce explicit teaching materials. Roger feels that the Church no longer stands by its previous statement that if someone is uncomfortable with the teaching, that person should question whether or not he or she should be teaching. Roger continued to lobby for support and got the community and other teachers involved in his campaign. What he found was that even although the community continued to support him, it was not enough to overcome the barriers created by the administration.

And we just received such negativity and such flack from Boston about this, and what it comes down to is that the head of the Church, the president of the Church, who is supposed to be this big progressive liberal humanistic organization, says “Oh well. It was developed back in the 70's when we were all nice and liberal.” There was a lot of heat generated from that and in the end he basically stomped out the resistance and said “no this is the decision that has been made and this is what is going to happen, too bad.” Interview #1, 04/22/99

The lack of support Roger felt from the American leaders within the Church was hard for him and he indicates that it was the only time he has not felt support for his teaching. What is important is that Roger was aware of the barrier to a comprehensive education and tried to overcome the movement toward a more limiting sexual education. Roger sees the Church's movement as a regression from their open and honest stance. Although he is sorry for this movement, he still views his time at the Church as a positive influence on his teaching. He sees his experience as a religious educator as an important factor in his career development that carried on beyond the Church's classroom.

What the experience in the Unitarian church did was enable me to cover topics with a very positive, a very humanistic approach, a very personal approach. Let's not talk about gender orientation, let's not talk about sexual orientation, let's talk about you and how does this effect your life, what decisions are you going to make. Interview #1, 04/22/99

Before concluding this section on organizational support, I will speak briefly about Roger's experiences as a public educator for Informed Sexuality Services of Ottawa-Carleton. During interviews, Roger spent little time discussing the types of organizational support provided to him by ISS but describes the experience as positive and supportive. He describes his time with the organization as beneficial and says that they provided him with support through their training, the resources they provided, and the support provided by the administration.

Time

Roger believes that the lack of time dedicated to sexuality education limits access to comprehensive information. Several times during our interviews he discussed the frustration he feels when he is asked to do a presentation but is only given forty-five minutes to an hour to cover a large amount of material. During his time at the Unitarian Church, Roger didn't feel constrained by time and this allowed him to cover topics in detail and to his satisfaction. When he moved to ISS Roger was afforded less time with the students and this limited the detail and scope of his presentations.

The main difference is the amount of time that you have to engage the students. The Unitarian Church was September through the end of May, two hours a week, so you have a long time, you can cover topics in depth. We were able to do things like self-esteem and relationships. In the schools we get a maximum of three hours. Like I am going to be doing a presentation for instance next week and they want me to do four presentations in the morning and they are going to be 45-minutes each. This means I've got 15 minutes for each topic, so how much am I going to get across?

Interview #2, 06/10/99

Roger's frustration because of the limited amount of time he is given to talk about the many issues that surround human sexuality is obvious. Because Roger believes so strongly in the value of sex education, he is troubled by the lack of time afforded to this area. He feels that the needs of the children are being overlooked and that teachers are only concerned with getting the area covered, not with the quality of the coverage. The time constraints placed on sex education will not only limit Roger's presentations, but also his ability to respond to the needs of the students. Students will have questions, but there will not be enough time to answer these questions, plus cover the material that Roger has been asked to present. In situations like this, Roger tries to modify his presentations and meet the needs of the students.

I did a marathon presentation last month for W. high school that was ridiculous. There was like 45-minutes to cover everything and four out of the five groups had thousands of questions. They could care less about what I had come to talk about, they wanted to know about this, that or any other thing. And I spoke to that, that is what they needed to know. Interview #2, 06/10/99

This is Roger's way to overcome the barriers that are created by the lack of time given to sex education in the public school system. It is usually the classroom teacher who defines what will be covered during the presentations and often this is limited to heteropolar norms. It is usually also the school teacher that defines how much time Roger will have to cover issues during his presentation. Roger is aware that time constraints often define his ability to cover more sensitive or marginalized issues. Although Roger realizes the importance of bringing gay and lesbian issues into his presentations, the lack of time allotted to him will result in these issues being left out of the conversation.

Gay and Lesbian issues have been engaged in only slightly and that is basically a time limit thing. You know you are asked to come in and do safer sex, naturally you have opportunities there to mention "okay, if you are a guy and if you are going down on a guy here's what you do." If you are asked to come in and do contraception there are very few possibilities. Interview #1, 04/22/99

The fact that Roger is aware that time restraints can be used to limit information to heteropolar norms prepares him to question these norms. Roger believes that providing marginalized teens with information is extremely important, given the relationship between these youth and teen alienation, pain and suicide. He tries to bring their perspective into the classroom in order to provide them with information and to normalize their experience. When taboo issues are not discussed because of a lack of time, Roger believes that educators are sending a message to these students that their issues are not important. Roger believes that when educators only

present heterosexuality in the sex education classroom, educators are only providing one option to teens. Roger tries to overcome this prescribed heterosexuality by including information that is relevant to multiple sexual orientations. When information that goes outside heterosexual norms is presented to students, then they have a better chance of moving outside of the negative sexual constraints of society.

Although Roger is aware of the time limits put on sexual education, his awareness is not enough to overcome them. He can try to add multiple perspectives to the classroom situation or respond to the specific needs of the students, but this is all still bound by time. Without sufficient time, Roger is only able to scratch the surface of the most important issues. Roger believes that sexuality education is limited by time because of two factors: teacher anxiety and the reduced importance placed on the topic. Because people are uncomfortable discussing sexuality, they reduce its importance and the time allotted to the subject.

I think it is because it's just sex education and they don't see it as important. Sex gets down on the bottom of everyone's list. First of all because people are uncomfortable with it and second of all it is just sex, it is not one of the real issues of life. And then you're just sticking your head in the sand. Interview #2, 06/10/99

Personal

Roger feels that he is not limited by his own discomfort or negative feelings about sexuality, and that barriers to his teaching exist only outside of himself. Unlike many teachers, he says that he covers a variety of topics despite social norms or boundaries. Roger strives to bring openness into the sexuality classroom and attains this through the acceptance of his own sexuality. Despite Roger's positive personal feelings, he may still be limited by those around him who do not share this acceptance.

I think being at this stage of my life, in the middle of my life, I think I have worked through a lot of my issues so that the challenges aren't so much internal challenges. The challenges really are wanting to say a lot, like wanting to spread my own values around sexuality and realizing that there are limits to what I can do both in terms of time and what is appropriate. Interview #1, 04/22/99

Roger's discussion on external boundaries frames the idea that social barriers can limit even those individuals with positive and progressive attitudes on sexuality education. Although Roger believes strongly in an open and accepting classroom environment, this is not always possible because of external social pressures. It is easy for society to limit Roger's access to students because he is working on a volunteer basis and if teachers do not agree with his approach, than he will not be invited to make presentations. Roger feels this pressure and wishes that he had more opportunities to teach and spread his own values on sexuality education.

My personal commitment hasn't changed over time, my sense of reward from doing it, if anything has increased. My opportunities to do it is something that is bothering me because I would like to be doing it more. Interview #1, 04/22/99

It is frustrating for Roger to have been trained in human sexuality education, and to be sex positive, and not be able to spread this message in the classroom. In a society that is filled with negative and harmful messages about sexuality, it is unfortunate that Roger is not given more opportunities to discuss sexuality. It is possible that educators may feel threatened or uncomfortable with Roger's open stance and this is why he is limited. Roger feels that because he questions social norms, he may not be as accepted as other teachers who stay within heteropolar norms and who do not question taken-for-granted sexual discourse. Roger believes that society's views on sexuality are limiting and negative, and his goals in education are to combat this discourse.

My goals are framed by my feeling that there is not really a lot of positive things in our society around sexuality and I think that there should be and that's a starting point for me. There is an awful lot of talk, an awful lot of hype, and an awful lot of marketing of sexuality but in terms of being a good positive experience that is a crucial part of people's lives and at a crucial part of people's development I don't think that there is an awful lot of that. Interview #2, 06/10/99

Although Roger may have barriers to overcome on his way to the classroom, he believes that he has overcome many of his own limitations in offering comprehensive sexuality education to students. Roger believes that through his experience, training and self-exploration, he has achieved an openness that will allow him to discuss a variety of sensitive topics. Roger believes that by allowing students the time and space to explore their own sexuality and their options for sexual expression, they will be better equipped to make informed decisions that are healthy and valid for their own forms of sexual expression.

You know when it comes to sexuality I am a disclosure sort of person. I don't think that there is anything off-limits to talk about. If someone asks me a question about a sexual activity that's considered to be deviant¹³, I'll talk about it, I'll discuss it. If that's what you need to know then let's talk about it. Interview #2, 06/10/99

Roger is excited about his ability to bring comfort to the sensitive area of human sexuality education and discusses the possibility of becoming a sex therapist. Roger's sex positive attitude is important and the work he does will be invaluable to the growing movement of educators who are pushing for a more comprehensive sexuality education system. By being aware of the barriers that exist in society, Roger is able to actively work against these limitations. Roger brings an important perspective to the study because of his awareness of his limitations, and by sharing his story he provides support for other teachers who are in the same position.

¹³This term refers to activities deemed to be deviant by the general population (i.e. homosexuality, masturbation) and not clinical deviance (i.e. pedophilia, bestiality).

4.5 Peter¹⁴

I was first introduced to Peter when he was a student of mine in the faculty of Education at the University of Ontario. He had enrolled in a class on gender equity and had spoken openly about his work as a sexuality educator. When it came time to recruit participants, I was interested in adding his perspective to the study. Peter's experiences with teaching human sexuality are unique because he has done it in a variety of capacities. Peter's story is also interesting because he began his preparation to become a sexuality educator at a young age and has been involved in the field for the last 20 years.

Peter's first student was himself. In late adolescence, Peter was involved in an accident that resulted in him becoming a quadriplegic and restricted to a wheel chair. During this time, Peter was maturing and like all boys that age, sexual expression was high on the list of priorities. Peter tells me that most doctors were of little help to him when it came to understanding his capacities and limitations for his own sexual expression. Then along came Sue Johansson, sexuality expert, and host of the "Sunday Sex with Sue" show. She was introduced to Peter in the hospital and they quickly became friends. Sue provided Peter with the information she had on sexuality and spinal injuries, but this was still not enough for the growing adolescent. So Peter began a journey of self-education that would later lead to his own consulting company which would take him across North America doing conferences and presentations.

When Peter joined the study, he had taken time off from consulting and was going back to school to get his teaching degree. At the time, Peter was also taking a break from his job at

¹⁴Pseudonym

Ottawa college¹⁵. While he was at the college, he taught a class on sexuality education and most of our interviews focused on this experience. Peter has a dynamic personality and a playful spirit which he brought to my classroom and to the interview process. His open and far from shy attitude made the research process easy and productive. I was glad Peter had agreed to join the study. He has a unique perspective on his interactions with students, faculty and other teachers and how his own approach to sexuality education has shaped his experiences.

Students

Peter's experience with teaching sexuality education is different from the other participants. His students were in a college level social work program and so were much older than the adolescents who form the majority in the public school system. What is interesting is that despite this age difference, the behaviors were similar. That is, Peter's students showed their discomfort with his teaching by acting up in class or through other subtle forms of resistance.

But within the class itself you have such a diverse group, age group, you have people in their 50's and sometimes older and they don't want to hear all of this. So basically they are sitting there and plugging their ears and singing and humming.

Interview #1, 04/14/99

Although adults are often considered more mature than adolescents in their ability and capacity to listen and reason, when discussing human sexuality education this belief is challenged. The students' open resistance to Peter's teaching is more blatant than the adolescents discussed in the other stories. Here the students showed resistance that was not masked by acting up or outbursts, but resistance that was open and specific. Peter tells me that students would question their need for the information he was presenting and felt that he could not teach them anything

¹⁵Pseusonym

they didn't already know.

With the Ottawa College experience again older learners, people that really didn't want to be there, it was a compulsory course. They were like "you're wasting my time, I already have three children." Interview #1, 04/14/99

What is different from the younger learners is that older learners may feel more comfortable in questioning Peter and his classroom goals. The older learners have also moved through the awkward stage of adolescence and are more able to question their need for the information being presented. By stating that they "already know everything," the students are foreclosing possibilities to bring new information about human sexuality education into their practice. Sadly, Peter feels that these students were given the chance to question their own understanding of sexuality and become more open, but refused the opportunity. What is also frustrating to Peter is that the reactions of a few students inhibited the other students who wanted to learn more.

They wouldn't show up to class, they would just show-up for the minimum so they wouldn't get a fail and the others, who were younger, wanted to know everything and felt that I was holding them back because I could not give the answers they wanted. Interview #1, 04/14/99

This point is important because it displays how students can be limited by the discomfort of others. It also shows how groups with heteropolar norms can work to limit the knowledge of those who wish to learn more outside hegemonic social standards. Peter mentions that another reason for the resistance was because many students did not want to be in the class. According to Peter this was difficult for him because he was used to teaching at seminars and conferences where all of the participants were willing and excited to hear about his teaching. By making the sexuality course compulsory, the administration created a resistant environment that limited

Peter's teaching.

Part of the problem with the course that I taught was that the people weren't there by choice. So when you are in a human sexuality course that is optional then you will find, at least I did in the course that I took, people were there because they wanted to be there and they wanted to learn. But when you're forced to go there, and which is what these people felt they were, a lot of them didn't care. They didn't want to be there. It ruined the atmosphere. Interview #2, 04/29/99

According to Peter, many of the students were there simply to fill the requirement, not to learn. The course was set up to cater to the needs of these students. Peter felt pressure to teach "the facts", and these "facts" usually included only a heteropolar view of sexuality. He felt that students were happy to just receive what they perceived to be basic information, and when he presented information outside these confines, he was met with resistance. When Peter discussed the role of the textbook in his classroom, he explained that it supported the need for heteropolar facts expressed by the resistant students. Although there was a section on alternate sexual orientations, Peter was not allowed to cover this unit, reducing any possible resistance by the students.

A lot of the people really liked the text. And then again they wanted facts and they got facts and the book has a lot of them in it. So they enjoyed the text for that reason. As far as negative reactions to the text, the main was the person who objected to having those things in there about gay, lesbian or bisexual. Interview #2, 04/29/99

Peter felt pressured not only by the different age groups in the class, but also by the cultural diversity that existed within the group. When a variety of cultures are brought into the classroom, the educator must be aware of the differing customs and beliefs held by the various cultures. This diversity is problematic for Peter because he is only familiar with a view of human sexuality congruent with dominant Christian and Jewish beliefs. Because Peter has little

knowledge of cross-cultural perspectives on sexuality, he felt that he was limited in what he was comfortable discussing. He did not want to offend or silence anyone by his lack of information or provide inaccurate answers to questions.

So it is a lot of pressure in the classroom, that diversity, and as far as the multiculturalism that's where I felt personal pressure from not knowing. At first, just not being knowledgeable myself. Interview #2, 04/29/99

Diversity in the classroom existed not only at an age and culture level, but also in the attentiveness and interest the students took in the course. Peter often felt that he was restricting those students who wanted to know more because of the resistance of the other students. According to Peter, he felt pressure from the younger students to provide more comprehensive education, but there was equal pressure against comprehensive education from the older students. This left Peter in turmoil over how to teach and who to please during his lessons. Unfortunately, often the more reserved students won and Peter had to teach within the confines of heteropolar norms. Peter also told me that he would try to overcome these limitations by providing students with information outside of class.

And I felt bad for the younger students, so I had to try in the middle ground and even then you feel pressure from the younger ones because they want to hear more and from the older ones who don't want to hear anything, and the middle ones who don't care. Interview #1, 04/14/99

Peter's summary of the different levels of student engagement illustrates how deeply students can effect teachers and other students. Peter found that those students who wish to know more will push for comprehensive information, while those with restrictive views will resist the information. This fight for control over the sexuality classroom left Peter in the middle of the battlefield. How the teacher deals with these issues will depend on other factors like the

administration, job security and the support of colleagues.

Administration

When Peter worked at Ottawa College, he was given a course outline, course goals and text. These were provided by the administration, and Peter was instructed to teach within these guidelines. By defining the curriculum for Peter and the other teachers, the administration was trying to ensure that all sexuality classes would be equal and offer the same information. Through their control of the course outline, the administration restricted the amount of comprehensive sexuality information that would be presented in the classroom which, limited Peter to teaching heteropolar norms. This form of control is referred to as *deskilling* and is described by Dunwoody (1995) as the process by which administration removes all creative and expressive capacity from the teacher by implementing well-defined and restrictive classroom goals. Peter was frustrated by these restrictions because they were in direct conflict with his own personal goals.

It's not the same as other courses at Ottawa College. In the human sexuality course you're told what you could and couldn't say. So you were not allowed to. I could talk about birth control, but I couldn't give details or my opinion obviously. I guess basically I had to stick within society's values and tell them that these [types of] birth control are available, this is what you want to use, think about it or talk about it with your children. But I couldn't give my personal beliefs on it because you're not allowed to talk about your own [beliefs]. Interview #1, 04/14/99

It can be argued that the censoring of Peter's thoughts and opinions was an attempt by the administration to ensure that the classroom discussion remained within the boundaries of a heteropolar discourse. Peter was even more frustrated because he was aware of the limitations being placed on him, yet he was unable to confront them. He felt that control over his classroom

was maintained through the gate-keeping process established within the administration where the upper echelons of the hierarchy defined what would and would not be taught in his classroom.

Peter defines this process as being arbitrary and relying heavily on the opinions and beliefs of the Dean and superiors. That is, Peter's curriculum was defined by the values of the upper administration and what they felt needed to be taught in the classroom.

I'm not sure who it was, either the Dean or she was told by the people above her. I'm not positive how that worked. That's where I got the outlines from, so I'm assuming that's where they came from. She was very narrow, she was very restrictive showing films from the 70's of people having intercourse or showing body parts. You know they wouldn't let you bring in any updated materials. I wanted to show a movie that was fairly explicit that they wouldn't let me show because it was too explicit. And was really on sexuality and it was more up-to-date so I couldn't show it. Interview #1, 04/14/99

What is interesting is how Peter was restricted to heteropolar norms even when he was teaching adults, many of whom already were married and had children. Some would argue that it is not valid to limit knowledge presented to children (McKay, 1997), but that it is usually due to the right of parental consent and the fact that the educator is dealing with minors. Therefore, it is surprising to see limitations placed on an adult education where parental consent is not an issue. Since it is generally believed that adults are mature, able to form intent and make their own decisions and judgements, one would think that such restrictions would be unnecessary. What these limitations show is the strength of the heteropolar discourse and how deeply ingrained it is in adult learning and behavior.

Peter was not only restricted in the types of birth control he could mention but he was also limited in his conversations on marginalized issues. According to Peter, there was resistance from the students and the administration for any discussion on gay, lesbian, or bisexual issues.

Although the information was discussed in the social work program, it was not acceptable for him to teach knowledge about same sex relationships. This is just one more example of administration's attempts to limit what Peter is teaching and the students' access to comprehensive information. Not only does it marginalize the gay and lesbian students, but it may create problems for the students when they encounter gay and lesbian youth as social workers. By not presenting the information during their formal training, some students, who are future social work professionals, may be left unprepared to deal with these issues in the real world. Peter was upset with this lack of preparation which he felt would lead to the perpetuation of heteropolar norms.

I didn't feel support from anyone in the hierarchy and I don't know where it starts. I think it's from the very top. I'm pretty sure it's the president these days, or his committee or board or whoever makes decisions says "this is what you can and cannot teach" and this filters down through there. So I have a feeling in the social services, or family studies department, which is where I was, that they are pretty open about everything. There is talk about gays and lesbians and homosexuality, all different types of sexuality and acts. But when it comes to teaching it's just not allowed. It's almost, it's not even written, it's just sort of there, and as I said before, if it's not on the sheet you don't teach it. Interview #1. 04/14/99

The subtle but pervasive pressure that Peter describes was a limiting factor in his teaching. His unwillingness to go against the administration, and the unwritten rules, confined him within the sanctioned goals set down by the school hierarchy. Although Peter describes this pressure as unspoken, at other times during the interview he mentions that such governance originated in the system of evaluation that exists with the school. That is, Peter must stick to the curriculum and course goals, because throughout the semester he is evaluated and his progress is checked. Peter says that it was this system that kept him within the guidelines. He was unable to teach with the

joy and pleasure he usually feels when educating at conferences or giving lectures.

You stick to the agenda as much as possible and I had to do the same thing at Ottawa College, certain things had to be covered. We would stray off into areas within the topic, I think we were talking about anatomy and physiology and that we would stray off into other aspects of it...but you had to... three times a semester... report back to and let them know where you were in your objectives and if you weren't on schedule then they would ask you why. So there were three tests a semester and most things had to be on those tests, so we were limited to sticking to the plan. Interview #1, 04/14/99

The goals of the administration exerted an extreme amount of pressure on Peter and his usual classroom goals. The pressure was so intense that Peter was unable to teach the course the way he wanted, with the openness and humor he taught in seminars, and he was restricted to the reproduction of heteropolar norms in the classroom. Teaching heteropolar norms was particularly hard for Peter because he does not fit into the normalized discourse about sexuality and is often thought of asexual. In his consulting work, Peter fights against these norms and tries to educate people about alternative forms of sexual expression. It was because of this conflict in teaching that Peter decided not to teach another sexuality course at Ottawa College.

Job Security

I have discussed the role of the administration in limiting Peter's teaching, but it is also important to mention why Peter did not fight against the administration. Throughout his interview, Peter told me that he stuck within the guidelines for fear of losing his job if he crossed the line in his teaching. The administration can set down guidelines, but they must trust the teachers to follow them and for Peter the administration ensured that these guidelines would be followed, through regular testing. Peter also worried about the reactions of his students and the possibility that they may go to the administration if he went too far outside of the guidelines. This

monitoring of the sexuality education teachers frustrated him and took the joy out of teaching.

Therefore, the administration was successful in limiting Peter's teaching, since Peter was unwilling to risk losing his job at the time.

It is the pressure of wanting to keep your job, for one, and wanting to, when I do the public school thing and the Ottawa College thing, you know the guidelines. They are clear so you know you can't go beyond them without getting in trouble. And I am now at the point at Ottawa College that I would do it without, if you want to fire me, go ahead. I wasn't at that point in 1995. So as far as Ottawa College goes if I got the opportunity again I would go in and I would teach whatever they (students) wanted to know. But you always know that the pressure is there, you know if you are going to step over boundaries then be prepared to get a call. Interview #1, 04/14/99

The fear that the administration instilled in Peter is an example of how heteropolar norms are allowed to be reproduced in society. Peter said that the requests of the administration were at odds with his own personal goals, and he had to suppress his own feelings, and this allowed the administration to create barriers to comprehensive sexuality education. Although the other participants mentioned that they needed support from the administration, none felt it to be a threat to their careers. This extreme form of governance is bound to keep a teacher within the limits of heteropolar norms unless she or he has have the financial means to survive without a job.

This pressure to stay on track within the curriculum not only applied to the course outline, but to all of the material discussed in class. According to Peter, he was often unable to answer students' questions because the questions were beyond the information he was told to discuss. Once again, this frustrated Peter because he was not used to being so limited in his discussions. His experience with his consulting group did not place these barriers on his teaching and he felt unfulfilled by his teaching.

If I got in trouble, and when I got called in, they said "basically I told you that you

would do this, and I understand that you were asking for answers to this question or that question, and you are reminded not to go out of these boundaries and stay within this and don't go out." And it pretty much was a threat that I would be let go and at the time I wasn't prepared to be let go and so I just said okay." Interview #2, 04/29/99

04/29/99

This threat to Peter's job was an active move by the administration to limit the information to which his students had access in the classroom. What the administration could not do was limit the information that Peter presented outside of the class. Peter would try to fulfill the needs of the students by giving them the answers to their questions during breaks and outside of class time. But Peter is a strong individual and he was not ready to give up on his classroom teaching and, despite the warnings, he continued to push the boundaries in the classroom. Because Peter is aware of the heteropolar norms in society, and exists outside of them himself, he wanted to actively work against them and he did this courageously through his teaching.

If I'm in the school system and I have to limit myself and I have to do it then okay, I mean obviously I want to keep my job. I'll do it but I'll stretch it as far as possible and I'll discuss it with them to give me a rationale why. I really wouldn't want to teach if I couldn't be as open as possible. Interview #2, 04/29/99

Colleagues

When Peter was at Ottawa College, he was not the only instructor who taught the human sexuality course. Although Peter did not talk about his colleagues a lot during the interviews, he mentioned that they provided him with support for his goals. He explained that many of the teachers felt the same way he did and wished that they could go outside of the outline provided by the administration. Peter describes his colleagues as a positive influence on his teaching and feels that he derived support from their common beliefs.

The other human sexuality teachers that were there were very supportive and we all basically wanted to do the same thing...there was a set of us that was fairly young

and wanted I guess, not to be radical, but actually get the real message across. So when we met in the cafeteria, that sort of thing, I got support from them. Interview #2.

04/29/99

As mentioned earlier, the support of fellow colleagues can be vital to human sexuality educators and effect their classroom goals and teaching. The support provided to Peter by his colleagues, gave him an opportunity to vent the frustrations he was feeling with the barriers being imposed to him by the administration. Although Peter felt support from his colleagues, in their need to push the barriers set down by the administration, this support did not go further than the cafeteria. That is, Peter feels that he worked harder than the other instructors to overcome the boundaries placed on him and that his colleagues were willing to discuss change, but not to take action.

I pushed the limits more than they did and I got in trouble more than they did. I don't know if they got in trouble because they had been teaching a lot longer than I had, the two of them worked full-time, maybe when they first started they pushed it. But when I joined they were set in their ways pretty much. They wanted to see things change but they weren't making and statements; they were just happy with the way things were. Interview #2, 04/29/99

This statement is an example of how Peter felt that even those teachers who wished to push limits can grow complacent and accept the limitations they have been given. Although Peter felt intellectual support for his desire to change the program at Ottawa College, he did not feel active support from his colleagues to make a difference. During our interview, Peter told me that if he had stayed on to teach the course, he would have tried to make an active difference by getting all of the instructors together and approaching the administration. Unfortunately, Peter was too dissatisfied with his teaching to pursue another teaching position, although he was approached by another school.

Personal

Peter feels that his strength in personality and character makes him an effective sexuality educator. Peter has overcome great difficulty in his life and achieved much through his teaching, consulting and lecturing. Peter feels his straightforward approach to sexuality education allows him to cut through barriers and create a classroom environment that teaches sexuality as being natural and fun. This acceptance of human sexuality comes from his search to understand himself and how his means of sexual expression were affected by his accident. Peter's open acceptance of sexuality at a young age has allowed him to embrace this positive attitude toward sexuality throughout his life span.

I got involved in sexuality education because when I had my accident I was never told anything. So I thought I would learn as much as I can and then go out and talk about it. In the 1980's I sat down and formed a company. Interview #1, 04/14/99

Peter's frank approach to sexuality education is what makes him such an accomplished teacher. He feels that he talks about sexuality with ease and that this comfort allows others to feel comfortable and to understand that there is nothing wrong with discussing sexuality. It is Peter's goal in sexuality education to bring this trusting and understanding attitude to all of his students, and to overcome the social taboos that exist around sexual expression. Peter wished to confront heteropolar norms in order to provide students, and all people, with the information they need to make personally satisfying and healthy decisions about their sexuality.

My goals would be to be as open and honest as possible and show the children and adults not to be afraid to ask questions and to explore themselves and the whole notion of sexuality. So just the good things, not the bad things that people see as so negative and a heavy topic which it really shouldn't be. It is one of the more important things that we should be sharing and talking about as we develop. Interview #1, 04/14/99

This honest and accepting approach to sexuality education is important because it takes the shame and misunderstanding usually associated with sexuality out of the classroom. Peter hopes that he can help children develop the same positive attitude he has about sexuality. Peter also believes that sexuality education should be a lifelong process that begins when you are young and doesn't end, but continues throughout life. This approach is apparent in his choice to be both a grade school teacher and a lecturer where he can discuss sexuality with all age groups. Peter not only tries to maintain a positive attitude toward sexuality, but tries to teach it through a variety of teaching techniques that allow learners to engage the sensitive topic.

Everyone has said that they really enjoyed my teaching because I try to throw a lot of humor in it because it is a very sensitive topic for people and humor seems to break the ice a lot...I try humor, I try role-play, I've tried almost anything that will work, a lot of group work, discussions especially so people can discuss their own ideas. Interview #2, 04/29/99

Peter has pushed the limits in his sexuality education classes because he wants his students to learn more than the mainstream sexual values. Peter wants to push the limits of what his students understand. He wants to present them with alternatives to heteropolar knowledge. Part of this drive to push the boundaries comes from his own existence outside of heteropolar norms. Society often views people who are outside of the social norm as asexual, especially those with physical disabilities. Peter states that because he is in a wheel chair, many people believe that he is asexual and incapable of sexual expression. This social stereotype does not limit Peter and for the last twenty years he has actively worked against this assumption of asexuality. It is this awareness of the limitations society places on sexuality that drives Peter to question heteropolar norms in his teaching.

We (people w/disabilities) are left out of sexuality education because we are asexual.

It's never mentioned in any textbook that I have seen. I have thought about writing my own because there is just nothing out there. You can't find it, you may find a chapter, but it is so vague they might as well not have it there. Interview #2, 04/29/99

It is hard to present the complexity of a person through a few stories or quotes derived from a series of interviews. This process is especially difficult as concerns Peter's story, because I have known him both as a student and as a research participant. The fact that Peter is a quadriplegic is important to understanding his perspective on sexuality education and how he became involved in this field of education. Many times, while I was writing his story, I felt frustrated and blocked by my inability to label him as disabled, there is nothing "dis"-abling about Peter, he is one of the most "able" people I know. I have tried to refer to his "disability" through reference to his "accident" but this still does not do him justice. The fact that Peter gets around in a wheelchair provides the opportunity to understand how he exists outside of dominant discursive conceptions of sexuality. Society often thinks of people who are not athletic, trim and beautiful as asexual and not deserving of the same sexual pleasure that the "beautiful people" experience. Peter has fought against this sexual discourse to provide the understanding that all humans are sexual beings with the right to engage in sexual expression. Although Peter's goals in sexuality education have been blocked at times, this has not diminished his strength to continue on and challenge the social taboos surrounding human sexuality education.

4.6 Overall Framework

In the preceding sections I introduced you to the participants involved with the research study and how their stories came together to form the basis of this paper. The current study has attempted to create a framework will help administrators, teachers and policy makers understand the social and cultural barriers that work on human sexuality educators to limit their sexuality

curricula within heterosexual norms. Gillian's story helped to define the complications of working as an educator dealing with sexual violence, abuse and rape and how students may resist attempts to reject commonly accepted myths about these issues. Christina's story introduced the community educator's perspective. She discussed how the progressive nature of organizations like Informed Sexuality Services can support the movement toward comprehensive sexuality education and how this progressive stance can also create controversy with more conservative teachers and principals. In Dina's section of the study the problems that educators face when dealing with homophobia both in the classroom and in their personal lives were discussed. Her story helped to explain how damaging the heteropolar imperative can be on teachers and the student body. Roger's story presented a male perspective on community education and its ability to bring comprehensive sexuality education into the classroom. His story also introduced a religious perspective on sexuality education and how his church's stance has become more restrictive over the years in response to community involvement. Finally, Peter's story provided information on sexuality education and ablism, while conveying the problems that can exist when sexuality education confronts adult bias and power at the college level.

Now that I have discussed each case study individually, it is important to discuss the findings in the form of a larger, overall framework. This framework will incorporate the similarities found between participants and serve as a possible basis for comparison of other systems or discourses within human sexuality education.

In the sections of this study which discuss the individual participants, I tried to highlight their life experiences as a way of defining the different discourses or systems that influence each participant. This approach allowed me to use the participants' own words as a way of describing

the pressures they feel and how it affects their teaching. Within the case studies I was able to explore the system of pressures and discourses which affects the subjective experiences of each participant, while also identifying some commonalities among them. The participants identified similar groups or discourses that have an impact on their teaching, and it is these groups that will form the basis for the discussion on the overall framework.

Students

The participants' views regarding the students were extremely important for two reasons: first, the students are the main reason for the education process and therefore a central focus in the educator's motivation for teaching and, secondly, students can be a major hindrance to the education process. The fact that students hinder the education process is of major interest because it is an unexpected finding that seems to be absent from much of the literature on sexuality education. Researchers usually report that students want to learn and are eager to gain information on human sexuality (Croft & Amusen, 1992). Although it is possible to speculate on many reasons why this new finding surfaced in the current study, I will suggest that it was due to the nature of the study and the information being focused on by the researcher. That is, unlike the other studies, which focused on the role of the teacher out of the classroom where there are no students, the current study had educators report on their interactions in the classroom giving the participants a chance to discuss student involvement.

The participants described the students as expressing resistance to sexuality material mainly in three ways: through acting up in class, being a non-participant, and by only doing what is needed to pass the course. DeGaston (1994) suggests that this resistance occurs when there is an incongruence between the students, teachers and the goals of the sexuality curricula. That is,

the information that teachers want to give the students is incongruent with the student's ability to accept the information, making education almost impossible. This difference creates a less receptive teaching environment where students are unable to accept the material being presented because of the dissonance it creates in their own beliefs about sexuality. The participants noted that this resistance occurred mostly when discussing material that challenged heteropolarity and presented information outside accepted social norms. By showing their resistance, actively or passively, students were able to both sabotage the presenter's ability to teach the material and minimize the material being taught.

Student inability to deal with more the taboo issues of masturbation, homosexuality, and sexual violence, can create a barrier to sexuality education. If students are only willing to accept mainstream information, educators end up reproducing heteropolar norms which go unchallenged because of student resistance. The participants stated that they constantly evaluated the reactions that course information created in students, which in turn affected the material they covered in a given class. A circle of closed information was the result. That is, the material teachers covered in the sexuality class was affected by the reactions of students, and educators made changes to comply with student ability to accept information. Rust (1994) states that students enter sexuality courses with varying degrees of opinions, beliefs and information which can effect their ability to respond to course content. The participants in the current study agree with this finding and suggest that student prior knowledge, and resistance to material can be a hindrance in offering comprehensive sexuality education.

Although the participants may have felt pressure from students to stay within heteropolar norms, this did not stop their attempts to question the thoughts and beliefs of the students. The

participants actively challenged the information that made students uncomfortable in order to expand the sexuality education and provide information outside of heteropolar norms. The participants stated that getting the attention of the students, and maintaining it, was one of their greatest challenges when they attempted to question social norms. Getty and Bannan (1993) suggest that students are often aware of the limitations that sexual/gender stereotypes impose, but they consistently choose not to challenge these limitations.

The participants attempted to counter the sexual stereotypes and myths held by students by providing information that would dispel or refute these ideas without breaking the trusting and safe environment necessary for effective education. The need to question opinions and conflicting views on sensitive or private knowledge in an open learning environment creates boundaries for sexuality educators. Educators create emotional dissonance in the sexual/gender beliefs of students when they question norms that lay at the center of their own gender/sexual identity, and this may create resistance in the students, and a less effective learning situation. The educator must then try to (re)build a rapport that will facilitate the learning of a more progressive sexuality education, through conditions of trust, dialogue and openness. This process of breaking down student intolerance can be a barrier to effective sexuality education if the educator is unable to eliminate resistance and challenge the thoughts and beliefs of students.

When adolescents walk into the classroom, they each have their own histories and experiences with sexuality education. Therefore educators will feel different levels of support and resistance from students based on past learning experiences. Educators must be constantly aware of the different backgrounds, and must adjust their teaching to suit the needs of the individuals in the class. Although the participants felt that it was necessary to challenge the resistance from the

students, they were also aware that they must pay careful attention to the levels of resistance in relation to personal history. That is, educators were aware that past cases of abuse or different cultural or religious beliefs would increase the students' vulnerability and receptivity in relation to the issues being discussed. The existence of multiple histories and experiential realities within the classroom can be a challenge to educators because teachers must be aware of, and actively deal with, different comfort levels. Edwards (1997) tells educators that they must be aware of the established beliefs and attitudes that students bring to the classroom. He states that students come into programs with their own previous knowledge, family values, cultural values and their own experiences and fears. Educators must be aware of differences between students and make sure that lessons and discussions are sensitive to individual needs. Teachers also need to expect and accept that learning about sexuality will elicit deeply felt convictions and emotions in students. If teachers are not aware of the various levels of ability that students possess to discuss the topics comfortably, they will create too much discomfort in some students while barely challenging the thoughts of others.

Prior learning experience can be a barrier to comprehensive sexuality education and is especially important when discussing sexual multiculturalism in the public school system because educators have not been provided with access to information on how various cultures in Canada approach sexuality and sexuality education. Without this information, educators may not be able to present a curriculum that is relevant to all students, and this leads to a sexuality education that neglects the needs of both mainstream and minority cultures. Educators must find a way to balance the beliefs, fears and stereotypes of all students. What is even more problematic, as reported by Ward and Taylor (1991), is that minority adolescents tend to not listen to the advice

of adults who don't share their particular perspectives. So even if the educators gain more information on ethnic and religious groups in relation to sexual practices, this knowledge may be useless if the students are unable to accept the material from cross-culture educators.

It is important to note that although the participants discussed the students as possible obstacles to comprehensive sexuality education, they also listed them as sources of support. The participants told me that the students were the main reason for their teaching and that their safety was central to their educational goals. Attentiveness of the students and active class participation is considered positive reinforcement by the participants and it helps them achieve their classroom goals. For the participants, the students who engage them in the classroom remain both a source of support and resistance. How this support or resistance is translated in the classroom can represent either an obstacle or a facilitator for educators in their pursuit to bring comprehensive sexuality education into the classroom. Of course, effective sexuality education depends mainly on the ability of students to engage actively with the material.

Classroom Teachers/Colleagues

The effects of the classroom teacher on sexuality educators can be broken down into two separate groups, the classroom teacher who works with guest speakers and, the colleague of the sexuality educator. For both groups, the support of fellow teachers and colleagues is important to their approach and implementation of comprehensive sexuality education. Schultz and Boyd (1984) suggest that sexuality teachers perceive only limited support from their colleagues and this limited support will then influence the emphasis they place on controversial issues and the type of information they present in the classroom. Although both groups can exert similar pressures on sexuality educators, there are distinct differences between the two groups. The major reason for

the difference in pressure is due to the unique challenges attributed to the type of relationship that exists for the teacher with the two groups. I will begin this discussion by highlighting the role of the classroom teacher and his/her interaction with guest speakers.

Sexuality educators have to contend not only with the attitudes of students, but also with the attitudes of teachers. Significantly, this relationship is not discussed extensively in the literature on sexuality educators. One possible reason for this is that much of the research is conducted with classroom teachers and not guest speakers, leaving the experiences of “outsiders” out of the literature. In the current study, I have worked with educators from a variety of backgrounds, highlighting their different interactions. Such interactions effect how diversity in the groups exert and receive pressure.

The participants related that one of the most important issues for them, as sexuality educators, was the support they received from classroom teachers for the material they present. Sexuality educators often feel limited by the classroom teachers because of requests to leave out more sensitive or controversial material from their presentations. These requests to tailor the curriculum to the specifications of the teachers are one way that classroom teachers can limit sexuality education to heteropolar norms. By defining the parameters of education for the guest speakers, they are able to keep control of the classroom and ensure that the norms they support are reproduced in the classroom. Heteropolarity thus results from a policing of the curriculum by teachers. If the guest speaker does not agree with the views of the teacher, they are not allowed to make presentations and therefore access to information is limited. Educators frequently have to compromise their goals or mandate in order to have access to the students. In the current study, the educators did not completely abandon their desire to bring comprehensive sexuality

education to the students. They defend this position by stating to teachers that they will not present information on controversial topics like abortion and birth control, but will answer questions if asked. This compromise, while on one hand courageous, can be seen on the other hand as a limitation to comprehensive sexuality education. It only allows information to be presented at the student's request. There are problems that stem from this approach. For example, shy or self-conscious students may remain silent, unable or unwilling to disclose private concerns in public. Additionally, students from marginalized groups are often afraid to ask for information. They fear reprisal and therefore they remain silent. Sears (1992) states that naming oneself as part of a minority constructs an identity for a person that is defined by what one is not, part of the majority. In terms of sexuality education, often this can lead to students from minorities being unwilling, or unable, to ask for information that will set them apart from the majority and therefore silences their requests for information.

The participants stated that the motivation behind the classroom teacher's invitation to the classroom was linked to the level of support they received for their presentation. The participants stated that classroom teachers called them in for a number of reasons including the following: the teacher felt uncomfortable with the topic; the teacher wanted a professional to teach the subject matter; the teacher had no interest in the topic and wanted someone else to teach it; the teacher was forced to ask; and there was a distinct problem in the classroom which needed to be addressed. The classroom teachers who were asking for professional help or who had a distinct problem to address rated as the most helpful and supportive, while those who did not care or felt uneasy with the topic were less supportive and more problematic for the participants. Teacher motivation and commitment to sexuality education can be a facilitator or barrier to the educator's

classroom goals.

The level of teacher support, or resistance, that the guest speaker receives begins with the initial invitation to do the presentation, and then continues into the classroom environment. In the classroom, the teacher can exert pressure on the educator through passive or active behaviors: interruptions during the presentation, side-tracking the conversation, perpetuating myths, or by providing little disciplinary action for student outbursts. Sexuality educators feel that they need behavioral support from classroom teachers in order to ensure the success of the presentations and to maximize student involvement. When active support was not provided for the educators, the teachers became a barrier to the presentations. The teachers often acted as barriers when they were unable to confront and deal with the material being covered on issues like homosexuality and sexual violence and they assisted in perpetuating commonly held myths about sexuality. Until educators begin to question traditionally held beliefs about sexuality education, there will never be sex equitable education and educators will continue to propagate the flow of inflexible beliefs about sex roles in society (Whatley, 1987).

The influences that the classroom teachers exert on sexuality educators exist both directly and indirectly, consciously or unconsciously. The pressure exists directly when the classroom teacher actively interrupts or sidetracks the presentation, but this pressure can work indirectly through the type of classroom climate the teacher develops. The classroom teachers will have an influence on students and their receptivity to the material the educator is presenting. The classroom teacher can indirectly influence the educator's presentations by how they introduce the topic and guest speaker. That is, the classroom teacher sets the stage for the presentation with the students and can influence how students react to the educator. If the classroom teacher is

threatening or insists that students be tested on the material, then the students may not be completely open and receptive, whereas a positive teacher will usually create an accepting student environment. Therefore, the classroom teacher's thoughts and feelings toward human sexuality education can influence students and indirectly put pressure on sexuality educators in the classroom. Sears (1991) believes that there is a need for teachers to provide a more open and honest sexuality classroom, that would allow students to explore their sexuality, and this can only be done by providing comprehensive sexuality education.

Classroom teachers not only exert their influence on guest speakers but on their colleagues as well. Perhats *et al* (1996) suggests that colleague, or peer, relationships between teachers is central to sexuality education and that they can support or subvert changes in the implementation of sexuality curricula. Research suggests that without support, opposition to comprehensive programs can rise and create a barrier to sexuality education. The participants listed colleague support as being central to their approach to sexuality education, and the topics they included in their curriculum. They felt that colleague support directly related to their access to resources. The influence that colleagues have on sexuality education is especially strong with new teachers in search of both peer and curricular support.

The need for colleague support is extremely influential and can become a barrier to sexuality education when colleagues hold repressive or ultra-conservative views on sexuality education. Hamilton and Gingiss (1993) state that teachers with the greatest concern for lack of support from colleagues may avoid or minimize references to sexually specific content. Not only does this fear of support limit the information presented, it can also effect the effectiveness of the teacher. That is, Hamilton and Gingiss (1993) suggest that those teachers who don't feel support

from colleagues were rated less effective by students. Here the lack of support from colleagues illustrated how a direct barrier to comprehensive sexuality education is created because it limits both the information presented in the curriculum and how it is implemented in the classroom. The participants discussed this barrier and agreed that the need for colleague support was extremely important and that without it they felt isolated and dissatisfied with their teaching experience.

Administration (organizations/principals)

Teachers and educators are not only responsible for meeting the needs of their students, they must also work within the mandates or curricular guidelines set down by their administrative body. In the current study, the participants discussed three sources of administrative control: the principals and school boards, the administration from the various supporting agencies and the control of the ministry of education. Whether or not these administrative bodies were seen as barriers or facilitators depended on the congruency of beliefs that existed between educator and administration. When the administration is like minded, then it is seen as a positive influence, whereas contradicting beliefs led the educator to feel unsupported and limited in the information they can present in the classroom.

Research literature supports this idea that principal and school board control over classroom education can be a barrier to comprehensive sexuality education (McKay, 1997; Lenskyj, 1997; Rust, 1994; Edwards, 1997; Perhats *et al*, 1996). This control exists because the principal plays a leadership role in defining the curricular mandates for a school and determines what is and is not acceptable to discuss in terms of sexuality education. The principal acts as the liaison between the teacher and the parents/community and is therefore responsible for any problems that may arise due to the sensitive and controversial nature of sexuality education.

It is the principal who possesses ultimate responsibility for what is taught in the classroom and teachers must seek the permission of their unit head and principal before implementing new curricula on sexuality education. The participants in the study believed that it was necessary for them to gain permission from the principal before they could teach sexuality education and this created a barrier when the principals would not allow the information. McKay (1997) supports these findings and found that teachers regarded school administration as a major problem, and that the teacher would omit any topic or subject that caused an ideological dispute. The principal becomes a barrier to sexuality education when his or her views restrict the curriculum of the classroom teacher and their desire to teach a comprehensive curriculum.

Dina reported that the principals' decision on what information can and cannot be presented in the classroom is based partially on regional and governmental mandates, but it is also based on their own personal and cultural beliefs. She felt that, in her own experience, this system of curricular decisions can make the principal's basis for topic inclusion arbitrary and biased toward their own standards. Lenskyj (1997) relays a story of how one principal in a Catholic High School in Ontario thwarted the newspapers' plan to publish Bill 7, which introduced sexual orientation into the human rights code as a prohibited ground for discrimination, on the grounds that it undermined Catholic doctrine. Here a clear example of how the beliefs of the principal (working within a particular set of sanctioned beliefs) can limit student access to information that is even remotely related to human sexuality. It is this ability to make curricular decisions based on personal and cultural beliefs that makes the principal both a strong barrier and facilitator to sexual education, depending on his or her own views and ideologies in relation to human sexuality.

The principal's authority to decide what can and cannot be taught in the classroom acts as

a gatekeeping process to comprehensive sexuality education. That is, this administrative body acts as a filter through which in principle, all sexuality information must pass before it can be introduced to the classroom. In reality it is likely that teachers develop strategies for resisting or subverting such authority structures. However, in the case of sexuality education, the cost of such resistance may be too high. Perhats *et al* (1996) looked at the organizational structures of schools and suggest that principals are an integral part of the gatekeeping process because they have access to both upper- and lower-level decision makers and that support for a program will weaken unless the principal is an advocate of the program. Participants in this study support this idea. Dina stated that due to the sensitive nature of sexuality education, she was unwilling to discuss sensitive areas without the support of the principal, therefore allowing the principal to act as a gatekeeper for her own classroom information. Furthermore, the outside educators felt that their access to classrooms was often limited by pressure principals placed on the teachers inviting them into the classroom. Edwards (1997) also supports the idea that principals act as gatekeepers to sexuality education through policy barriers that block sexuality education programs.

Not all participants in this study felt that the administration in their organizations were barriers to comprehensive sexuality education. In fact, the participants who worked for private organizations felt that the administration provided support and encouragement for their educational goals. The participants stated that they felt accountable to the ideals of their organization and were responsible to advance the organizational goals in the classroom. The participants felt support for comprehensive and liberal views, and worked to maintain this stance when they were in the classroom. Participants noted that their organizations provided moral support and encouragement for their goals, as well as support through training and resources.

Like principals, the members of the administration work as policy makers, defining the mandates of the organization and the subsequent material presented in the classroom. However, the organizations' administrations always supported the comprehensive goals of the educators, facilitating the classroom goals of the sexuality educators.

Parental/Community Involvement

During the analysis, writing and revision of this thesis the robustness of this section was called into question and the decision to include this theme was debated. The fact that the strength of this theme is not equal to the others was discussed and upon careful consideration I have decided to include the theme while noting its weakness in relation to the other themes discussed. Although the participants did not talk about the involvement of parents and community at length in their interviews, I feel it is important to include this section because of the pervasiveness of the topic throughout the literature and research. My decision to include this section is based on the need to recognize that the issue was discussed and reviewed during the research project. I must acknowledge its presence for fear that its absence may suggest that the theme was merely neglected instead of simply revealing weak results.

Much of the literature reports on the strength of community and parental involvement as a barrier to sexuality education and a defining factor in the type of material that is and is not acceptable to teach in the classroom (Miller, Harrison & Warr, 1998; Hamilton & Gingiss, 1993; Schultz & Boyd, 1984). The fact that much of the study was done on sexuality educators, rather than classroom teachers, could be a possible reason for the discrepancy between the current research and what has been reported in the literature. Participants stated that the pressure they feel from parents and the community is not direct, but occurs through interactions with the

principal. The participants also felt that the level of community/parent involvement in the school, and the type of school, determined the effect this involvement had on classroom education and the educators.

Schultz & Boyd (1984) suggest that teachers perceive a lack of support by the community and parents, and that this can be a barrier to teaching sexuality in the classroom. Although the participants did relate some anecdotes about parental and community complaints, they generally rated their experiences with them as positive overall and stated that they feel more support than adversity to their teaching. It is important to note that the pressure that teachers feel from parents usually occurs when they are dealing with issues like homosexuality and abortion. The participants feel that there is support for other sexuality issues, and this may reflect the growing trend for acceptance of issues relating to contraception and STDs, but the continuing inability to deal with more progressive and alternative curricular issues including homosexuality and sexual desire. The participant's acknowledgment of the fact that there are differing levels of sensitivity for sexuality issues may suggest that the educators stayed away from more controversial areas, making parental and community complaints less prevalent. By only covering the less sensitive issues of anatomy, physiology and birth control, the teachers may have felt only support and received few complaints.

The impact of parent and community involvement in the classroom is also determined by the type of school. The participants felt that the alternative schools and community groups tended to have less barriers, which can be due in part to the less active role that parents and the community play in these types of programs. In groups where street kids and runaways are involved, the participants felt that the only barriers were the adolescents. They felt that they could speak

openly about taboo and sensitive issues, issues that would not be covered in the public schools. The proximity of the parent and the community groups to the schools or community groups seems to have a facilitating or restrictive effect on the curriculum depending on the level of involvement. So although the participants did not always discuss a direct feeling of pressure from the community and parents, this pressure may still exist for many of them on a general level, and thus effect the material they present in the classroom.

Personal Issues

Barriers to comprehensive sexuality education are not only the product of external social sources or discourses, but can exist within the sexuality educator. Perhats *et al* (1996) state that teacher attitudes and perceptions are the most important dimensions of classroom education and that they are especially important when dealing with the sensitive topic of human sexuality. Educators and classroom teachers must be aware of their own feelings about human sexuality and try to overcome any personal problems they have with presenting progressive and comprehensive information. Yarber and McCabe (1984) suggest that teacher attitudes toward their own sexuality is the most important trait affecting the teaching of sexuality education and that topic inclusion, especially sensitive topics, is greatly influenced by this trait. A teacher's comfort with sexuality education, and his or her willingness to teach even controversial topics, will define the extent of the sexuality education made available. Only when educators are comfortable with human sexuality can they expect to teach it effectively in the classroom.

The participants in this study listed concern for their students as the main reason for providing comprehensive sexuality education. The educators felt that it is their duty to provide students with as much information as possible, so that they may be able to make healthy and

informed sexuality decisions. The participants believed that they must create a safe and open environment for students to explore their sexuality without fear of repercussions.

One of the most important personal boundaries can be lack of information. Hamilton and Gingiss (1993) assert that the nature of teacher behavior in sexuality curriculum implementation is closely tied to information and concerns over their level of knowledge. Without sufficient experience or knowledge, educators feel unprepared to deal with certain areas. In the classroom, teachers are supposed to hold the knowledge and be able to pass it on to students. Without knowledge, teachers feel that they are unable to pass on comprehensive information to students. Teachers may also be unwilling to discuss areas that they are only partially familiar with, and this too creates a barrier to presenting a comprehensive curriculum.

Some of the teachers acknowledged that their discomfort or lack of knowledge was rooted in an un-supporting pre-service program that provided little training in the area of sexuality education. Those participants who obtained a B.A. in education (Dina, Christina, Peter and Gillian) felt that their pre-service training did not provide them with the information and skills needed to deal with the emotional and social barriers that are intrinsic to sexuality education. A SIECUS study of pre-service training programs for teachers found that few programs offered a course on sexuality education and even fewer made any sexuality training education compulsory (Rodríguez *et al*, 1995). This lack of training may be more widespread in particular divisions or sections (i.e., early childhood education) or classes (i.e., Roman Catholic schooling). The gap in professional education can become even more problematic when compounded with the fact that few teachers receive support once they are in the school system. DeGaston (1994) suggests that while teachers do receive some training, they are usually left to determine their own direction in

sexuality education after their first year of teaching. The participants felt that the training they did receive, from the various organizations they work for (outside of the Faculty of Education), was a facilitating factor in their openness toward sexuality education and their ability to teach comfortably and without reservation.

Lack of training creates a barrier to sexuality education because it doesn't provide teachers with the knowledge and space to deal with their own issues with sexuality education. If teachers are uncomfortable with their own sexuality, then it will be hard for them to pass on sexual knowledge to their students. Schultz and Boyd (1984) found that teachers feel more comfortable and positive about human sexuality education when they have positive attitudes toward their own sexuality. Participants felt that their comfort level with the topics being taught is affected by both the amount of information they possessed and the training they received, and that only with both of these qualities being present could comprehensive teaching be achieved.

All of the participants for the study showed a willingness and desire to bring sexuality education into the classroom. Although they all share the common goal to teach human sexuality effectively, they agree that their comfort and ability to teach came with time and experience. The participants stated that when they began teaching they had reservations and they felt uncomfortable discussing many of the topics. With time, the participants learned to overcome their personal barriers and present the information more comfortably and comprehensively.

Time

The participants reported that lack of time is a barrier to comprehensive sexuality education. This finding is unexpected, due to its rare mention in the research literature. Participants stated that the lack of time allotted to them for sexuality education is frustrating

because it creates conditions that disallow the teaching of a comprehensive unit. One study supports this idea and stresses that it is almost impossible to design comprehensive sexuality curricula to fit into the normal range of time scheduled for sexuality education (Croft & Asmussen, 1992). The participants are concerned by the fact that all other topics, like math and science, receive large blocks of time, but that sexuality education is usually relegated to one or two periods close to the end of the year. What frustrates the educators even more, is that many of the students convey a need and desire to receive more information. Croft and Asmussen (1992) found that many youth want more sexuality education and this highlights the need for additional class time being allocated for comprehensive sexuality curricula taught in open learning environments.

The participants felt that they were asked to present too much information in too short of a time span. This time restraint meant that more marginalized issues were not discussed and that most of the class time was focused on mainstream, heteropolar aspects of sexuality education. The educators were unable to do an in-depth review of topics and were forced to only introduce students to issues in order to incorporate all of the information into a one-hour to three-hour session. Many of the participants mentioned that they were willing to discuss knowledge about sexual orientation, but that they simply ran out of time. Participants explained that it is this lack of time to discuss all issues that creates one of the main institutional and formal governance in relation to comprehensive sexuality education.

Time, or lack of it, is not only important in terms of the information covered, but also as it relates to the participant's ability to build a rapport with the class. Due to the sensitive nature of issues it is important that students be comfortable with the presenters in order to create an open

learning environment. Since educators only come into the classroom for a few hours, they do not have the time to build a trusting, working relationship with the students. Participants feel that without this relationship, students do not always feel free to ask questions.

The participants feel that the complete lack of time allotted for sexuality education reflects the importance society puts on children receiving information on these issues. Importance has been placed on subjects that will lead to occupational employment (math, English, physics and biology), but not on health and philosophical issues, and this is reflected in the differing amounts of time afforded allocated. It is also possible that by not allotting enough time for educators to sufficiently cover all information necessary for a comprehensive curriculum teachers, principals or administrators create a climate that only allows for heteropolar issues to be covered in the classroom.

5.0 Discussion

This study set out to discover the different social forces that effect educators to reproduce or oppose the heteropolar imperative in sexuality education. Through participant interviews, I found that the heteropolar imperative within sexuality education is maintained through a set of external and internal barriers that block the educator's ability to implement a comprehensive sexuality curriculum. These barriers work as a discursive network that surrounds teachers and has an effect on their ability to teach a sexuality education that disrupts the heteropolar discourse that currently dominates sexuality education. The study has identified these barriers as the gatekeepers of sexuality education and include the interconnected variables: students, classroom teachers, colleagues, principals and administration, time, and personal issues with the educator. These variables create a fluid and shifting power structure that attempts to influence, control and

manipulate sexuality educators. The success of this hegemonic control depends on the teachers' capacity to recognize these forces and their ability to question them in the sexuality classroom.

The study also looked at the effect of the heteropolar imperative on the practices of sexuality educators working in the school system. That is, it analyzed discourses on human sexuality and how they are constituted consciously and unconsciously in educators. How the heteropolar imperative is represented in sexuality educators will effect the hegemonic control of sexuality education and a teacher's ability to reproduce or disrupt the discourse. The heteropolar imperative is reproduced in the school system when educators are unable to present multiple perspectives, discuss taboo topics or give voice to issues pertaining to marginalized youth. The fixed and rigidly defined sexual behaviors that I have identified as heteropolar norms are upheld in the education system when teachers cannot present information on the changing and shifting meanings that are applied to human sexuality. The teacher's inability to present a comprehensive curriculum only allows for teaching society's narrow definition of human sexuality. What the current study found is that when sexuality educators recognize that hegemony is not absolute they are able to implement subtle forms of resistance that question how social and political institutions produce and reproduce sexual knowledge.

The heteropolar imperative is maintained through the pressure that teachers feel from gatekeepers over topic inclusion and what material is and is not acceptable to bring into the classroom. The current study found that often these pressures establish who can speak in the classroom, when they can speak and with what authority. These pressures constitute the discursive network controlling sexuality education. The study found that the pressure exerted by gatekeepers can be as subtle as regulating the educator's access to students through time

constraints, and as obvious as side-tracking and taking over class presentation. Gatekeepers influence educators in order to maintain control over the sexuality education of adolescents and to ensure that the educators reproduce social views that promote heterosexuality, gender bias and abstinence. The meaning attached to the language of sexuality education is composed by the dominant class and this limits its significance for marginalized students. When the participants resisted hegemonic practices and gave voice to marginalized issues they presented discourses on sexuality that gave meaning and value outside narrow definition and disrupted heteropolar norms.

The question of how the forces behind heteropolarity relate on a larger social level is more difficult to answer than the preceding findings of the study. Although I have already mentioned that there is a discursive network controlling sexuality education, and I have attempted to define who the agents are and their relationships, I am only able to do so within the boundaries of the current study. Participants felt that much of the influence on their teaching reflected society's larger conceptions of human sexuality and that gatekeepers worked (consciously and unconsciously) to reproduce these conceptions in the classroom. It would be naïve to assume that the current study could identify all of the social barriers to sexuality, or try to explain how they all work on a larger scale; however, what was found was evidence of some smaller examples of gatekeeper interaction.

The current study was able to illustrate how various members of the discursive network controlling sexuality education work to maintain hegemonic control over the sexuality classroom. Although much of the relationship between social forces is hard to define because of the very subtle and undefined nature of those who define and reproduce dominant culture, the interaction

of principals, administration and parents reflects a larger relationship between gatekeepers and illustrates a system of human, discursive and institutional pressures working on a larger level. School environment, including students, teachers and the principals, is another example of gatekeepers coming together to assert, even unconsciously, the assumptions of the heteropolar imperative on sexuality educators in the classroom. The agents of the discursive network that define and maintain heteropolar norms in society are hard to define because they work anonymously throughout sexuality education. The very nature of the heteropolar discourse, works silently and unconsciously, to define the proper, natural and right manifestation of sexuality in society. The current study attempts to disrupt these hegemonic forces by naming them and therefore defining their role in society and how the meaning behind their discourses on sexuality limit and marginalize those who do not fall into the rigid confines of the heteropolar imperative.

Finally, the study examines how educators feel about heteropolarity, and their perceptions of how the discursive network effects their teaching. This aspect of the study is important because it helps educators name those who produce the heteropolar discourse and how it functions in the education system. I found that participants were largely aware of the pressures from gatekeepers and tried to work within their limitations, while trying to push boundaries through acts of courage in order to disrupt hegemonic practice. Many of the participants felt frustrated and even angry about the barriers presented to them by gatekeepers because they realized they were being forced to reproduce the heteropolar discourse in their classrooms. At times though, I also found that participants were surprised with the questions I asked, or answers they provided, and how these revelations helped them to identify how they had been unconsciously upholding heteropolarity in their classrooms. When this occurred the research

process became a learning experience for both the researcher and the participants and helped to disrupt the heteropolar imperative. I feel that many of the participants walked away from the research process with information about themselves and their teaching and how they can begin to provide a new progressive discourse on human sexuality in their classroom.

I feel that the goals of the study have been met and that through the research process I have gained a better understanding of human sexuality education and the discursive network that creates barriers to the implementation of a comprehensive sexuality curriculum. Key social issues were identified, as well as the social agents working to reinforce the heteropolar discourse in the classroom. The participants in the study represent a group of educators, working in and out of the school system, who try to disrupt the effects of gatekeeping process on sexuality education. It is possible that the information revealed by participants, and the assumptions I have made from this information, may better assist these educators in their efforts to oppose gatekeepers and bring a more progressive and diverse sexuality education to adolescents.

6.0 Lessons Learned

One of the largest lessons learned during the current study occurred early on in the project during the recruiting stage. I learned that the parameters set for participant selection must be flexible and that potential participants may not be as enthusiastic about involvement in the study as the researcher. It became obvious early on that it was going to be difficult to find five sexuality educators working full-time in the school system. As time went on, the criteria for participating in the study changed and I began to look for educators who had experience in the school system, but who were not necessarily currently practicing classroom teachers.

Eventually I was able to find five participants for the study, only one of them being a full-

time teacher. This diverse set of backgrounds meant that there would be different sets of social pressures working on the participants, and, at the same time, fewer commonalities between participants. On the other hand, a rich tapestry of perceptions, beliefs and experience allowed me to interpret the factors at play from a variety of viewpoints. A homogeneous group of participants might have been narrowly restrictive, as the sample would not have represented a wide variety of views and experiences on sexuality education. Therefore, to base my interpretation on a narrow sample could have had the effect of rendering silent and unheard the voices of other groups. The wide group of individuals may not have yielded as many common themes, but this approach represents and formulates knowledge based on the third tenet in the Feminist Progressivist Discourse, which is to aim to represent all the voices in the community.

Another lesson learned from the current study is the fact that human sexuality is an emotionally and morally loaded area that needs to be studied with caution, delicacy, respect for privacy, and sensitivity. Often the emotional restraints in society prevent an open and honest discussion of human sexuality and this could have contributed to the difficulty faced during participant selection. This also may have had a limiting or prohibitive effect on what the participants were willing to reveal.

I have also learned that the educators could have been unaware of the external social, religious or political forces working on them, and the effects of culture on planning and implementation of human sexuality curricula, and this could have limited the information collected from participants. According to Golden (1988) traditional sexual beliefs have become so common place in society that the limitations they create are not realized. Without the realization of these barriers, educators may be unaware of the heteropolar norms they are perpetuating in their human

sexuality classrooms. Linked to this lesson learned is that some of the educators may have had traditional, conservative views on human sexuality, and may not have identified with me, which would prevented them from feeling open to discuss particular issues with me. Also, the fact that the purpose of this study is to examine how society influences perceptions and beliefs, sometimes unconsciously, may be another limiting factor, because it requires people to express ideas whose foundations may be hidden, denied, or reconsidered. In future research it may be interesting to take these lessons and limitations into consideration and try to build into the research and analysis of how they effect the research process.

7.0 Contribution of the Study to the Field of Human Sexuality Education

The current study may contribute to the field of human sexuality education on two levels. On the first level, the results provide information on heteropolarity and how it affects an educators ability to implement comprehensive sexuality curricula. By identifying how various systems inform heteropolar beliefs, the research hopes to question such systems and work to change them. By transforming expressive structures (i.e., by influencing policy makers to mandate more time for sexuality education) educators may be able to bring more diverse opinions into the classroom. This will open up more support for educators and therefore improve the effectiveness of sexuality instruction. Such a possibility may be achieved by drawing upon issues of post-structuralist curricular design in order to point out the values assigned to particular sexuality discourses, and how they are chosen and relationally sustained over others. The results of this study may also give educators the tools to question the structures of sexuality education, and to ask whose interests are being served by these structures. Because education is not free from restrictive discourses (Cherryholmes, 1988), the current study gives educators the

information to question and contradict the dominant ideologies and material conditions on a continuous basis. Therefore, it allows them to constantly question the information being presented in pre-packaged curricula, textbooks and institutional mandates, and in turn provides a more diverse and promising sexuality education. This post-structural approach to curricular design would begin to recognize how curricula are constantly changing and shifting in reaction to power arrangements, discursive practices, history and the values of society (Cherryholmes, 1988). The recognition of this shifting may allow educators to better understand how meaning within a curriculum changes according to dynamics of power within education. In conclusion, the current study begins to provide educators with information they need to understand how power structures and different role groups involved in planning and implementing sexuality curricula effect their attempts to bring comprehensive sexuality education into the classroom.

On a second level, the study assists educators by giving them information to increase their effectiveness, assisting them in taking a step toward educating children more accurately about the consequences of risky and/or rigid sexual activity. This, in fact, is the true impetus for this study, to take the beginning steps in teaching children more healthy, diverse and comprehensive information about human sexuality. When children are taught in this manner, educators may be able to lower the health risks related to adolescent sexual activity and increase healthy, mature decision making.

The current study may also begin to open up the door to teaching a discourse of desire in the classroom by providing a strong research base for questioning the gatekeeping process affecting human sexuality educators. When teachers acquire the tools to question this process they may be able to move forward and provide a more progressive approach to sexuality

education and provide a discourse on desire in the classroom. Many researchers would argue that the current tradition in sexuality education is to teach plumbing and anatomy over issues of emotions and desires (Diorio, 1985; Lenskji, 1990; Pollis, 1986; Rosser, 1986). This leads to a missing discourse of desire within sexuality education. Fine (1992) writes about four main sexuality discourses that exist in public schools currently: sexuality as violence, sexuality as victimization, sexuality as individual morality and a discourse of desire. Fine (1992) suggests that the first three discourses contribute to silencing female desire. This in turn can lead to risky sexual behavior, can add to traditional heterosexual arrangements, and can teach sexual education from a moralistic and judgmental stance. Fine suggests that educators should begin to adopt a discourse of desire in the classroom that would help adolescents to acknowledge their sexuality through the naming of desire, pleasure and sexual entitlement.

The use of scientific facts distances adolescents from the real issues inherent with teenage sexual contact. By questioning the dominant restrictive ideology and by deconstructing the meanings held by this ideology, educators may begin to teach children that sexual contact can be pleasurable. Tolman (1994) argues that educators infuse female desire with fear and confusion which leads to a silencing of their desire. Adolescent girls become dissociated from their bodies through societal pressures and a search to maintain cultural standards. Tolman (1994) cites the “policing” of female bodies by sexual education, public school codes and the media as a major oppressor to female sexual freedom, identity and desire. She argues that educators must begin to acknowledge how patriarchal systems deny females their sexual freedom in order to allow for social change to occur. Once these repressive systems are illuminated educators can then begin to teach children comprehensive education that addresses issues of sexual equality and

empowerment instead of repression, chastity and victimization.

8.0 Conclusion

It is important to note that during the process of collecting and analyzing data for the current study, I found myself questioning my own system of beliefs and the nature of my research within human sexuality. As I moved away from the theoretical study of sexuality education, into a more practical, experienced-based, system of knowledge, I began to contemplate the validity of my own knowledge and the opinions I had formed. I felt that my dealing in the abstract world of human sexuality was a naive view in the face of actual classroom practice. I began to question the validity of my feminist, anti-heteropolar, view of sexuality education. I began to feel insecure about my beliefs and wondered if the kind of ideal sex education I had envisioned was only possible on paper.

I was attending the 21st annual Human Sexuality Conference, at Guelph University, when I first felt the insecurity. I had been feeling some resistance from other educators over my views on integrating information on sexual desire, homosexuality and sexual relationships into sex education, beliefs that I felt were fundamental to comprehensive sexuality education. In the past, I had experienced some resistance from other educators and my Education students, but now I was feeling resistance from my colleagues and this was upsetting. Although I have received tremendous support for my research, the opinion of fellow educators and sex therapists has always been vital to the believed efficacy of my research. At the conference, I began to seriously question the educational efficacy of the ideals I had endorsed for a comprehensive sexuality education. I had begun to accept the possibility that maybe my understanding of sexuality education was not valid and that I should rethink my whole stance on comprehensive sexuality

education. It was only after great contemplation, and a thorough rereading of my thesis proposal, that I realized that I had fallen into the trap which was the subject of my study. I began to realize that I was questioning my own beliefs due to the subtle system of pressures that was affecting me. I began to question my own views due to the discomfort I felt in challenging the mainstream, dominant, heterosexual views of those who had experience in the field.

What I realized is that incongruity between their beliefs and mine wasn't necessarily based on the difference between practical and theoretical experiences within sexuality education but on actual differences in perspective. I now realize that, like the over-productive factory worker who slows down under the pressure of his/her coworkers, I was beginning to change my views in order to better blend in with mainstream educators. It is not often that, as a researcher, one is able to experience the phenomenon one is studying. Consequently, for me this experience was invaluable. The subtlety of the pressure as I experienced it as a sexuality educator informed the analysis of my data and helped me to visualize the system of social pressures that work on the marginal voices in human sexuality education.

When educators question heteropolar approaches to sexuality education, they are able to teach the equation "Sex=vaginal sex=heterosexual sex" is not always true, and that alternate sexual behaviors are acceptable and normal (Diorio, 1985). By taking away the shame associated with discussing sexual practices, educators can begin to talk about non-penetrative forms of sexuality. Issues of safer sex may also be expanded to talk about more than just condoms, and may begin to separate fear from sexual expression. The fear of STDs and pregnancy associated with most safer-sex methodologies may be stripped away when educators begin to discuss human sexuality in an accepting and open environment (Hiller *et al*, 1998). In conclusion, I hope that

this study will contribute to the creation of more open and effective sexuality programs. I believe that when educators begin with the needs of children in mind then society can better understand what is really important in education. Unfortunately, too many times children become the pawns of dominant society in an attempt to reproduce the unquestioned status quo. Hopefully, this study will begin to shed some light on the mechanisms of sexual oppression and give educators the tools to start breaking down the misconceptions and stigmas that surround sexuality, sexuality education and teaching sexuality education.

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