“IT’S NOT ABOUT BEING MALE, IT’S ABOUT BEING COOL”:
A CASE STUDY OF MALE PEER SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATORS

By

LU RIPLEY

B.A., York University, 1994

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of Educational Studies; Adult Education)

We accept this thesis as conforming
To the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 2002

Copyright Lu Ripley December 2002
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of **Educational Studies**

The University of British Columbia

Vancouver, Canada

Date **Dec 23/2003**
Abstract

"It's Not About Being Male: It's about Being Cool:"
A Case Study of Male Peer Sexual Health Educators

Masters of Arts, 2002

Lu Ripley

Adult Education

Department of Educational Studies

University of British Columbia

This thesis examines the cultural norms relating to gender, sexuality and race in the work and lives of male youth educators who volunteer with Condomania, a Vancouver based sexual health promotion program.

A qualitative, case study action-oriented methodology was utilized. Individual interviews and a focus group were conducted with 7 male sexual health educators from the Condomania program over a one-year period. The researcher was also coordinator of the program, and integrated observations and self-reflection during the process of this project.

Aspects of educators' subjectivities, such as maleness, whiteness and sexual identity are explored. The thesis suggests that although it is essential to foreground males in the development and execution of programs that deal with issues such as sexual health, the process of doing so is not uncomplicated. Contradictions and tensions emerged throughout this study in how the participants perceived, viewed and took up gender and sexuality in the
classroom and their own lives, demonstrating concurrently the hegemony and instability of heterosexual masculinity.
# Table of Contents

Abstract  
Table of contents  
Acknowledgements  

**Chapter One:**  
**Boy Culture and Sexual Health Education**  
Introduction  
The Case Study: Condomania Program  
Research Focus and Question  
Research Project Background  

**Chapter Two:**  
**Framing the Research: What's the problem?! Gender, Sexuality and Sex/Educator**  
Boy Culture, Sexuality and Identity  
Boys and Sex/Education  
Strategies for Including Gender and Sexuality  
Shifting the Focus: Who's the Subject in Sexuality Education  
Tensions and Contradictions in Shifting the Focus  
More than about the Boys: Dealing with Sexism  
Anti-Homophobia Education: Countering Tolerance and Cultural Relativism  
Utilizing Male Role Models  
Peer Education  

**Chapter Three:**  
**Conceptual Framework**  
Essentialism  
Alternative Approaches to Essentialism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Post-Structuralism and Queer Theory</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjectivity, Agency and Gender</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/Gender: Performativity, Discourse, Knowledge and Power</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contradiction, Tension and Social Change</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-structuralism and Critical Pedagogy</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Theory</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social Relations of Heterosexual Masculinity</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Racism and Masculinity</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Four:</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodological Considerations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design: Qualitative, Case Study and Action Oriented</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Interviews</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations/Journal</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Participants: Youth Educators</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Writing Process and Critical Analysis</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating Self-Reflexivity Throughout the Research Process</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Position: Conducting Research Within One’s Workplace</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of this Study</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Five:</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“One in a Million”:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Experience of Male Sexual Health Peer Educators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Male Youth Educators Understand Their Work</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming A Youth Educator</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Existent and Mediocre: Male Educators and Sexual Health</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not about Me! Males and Safer Sex</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seeing “it” Differently: Being A Youth Educator 69
Boy Culture and Sex/uality 70
  Responding to the Sexuality Threat: ‘Knowing it all’ and Avoiding with Humour 71
  Male to Male: Working as a Youth Educator 73
  The Privilege to Speak: The Supremacy of Experience 76
  Peer Networks 80
“Not Us”: Reproducing, Rejecting and Reformulating Boy Culture 82
  Masculinity, Desire and the Condomania Icon 85
  Doing “It” Differently: Sex Education by Male Presenters 87

Chapter Six:
Addressing and Making (Sense of) ‘Difference’ 90
  A Matter of Choice: Making Sense of Sexuality 91
  Sexuality in the Classroom 92
  Seeing and Performing Gender 97
  Conceptions of Male Responsibility in Heterosexual Relationships 99
  Notions of Equality (Not Feminism) 102
  Typical Guys? The Issue of Race/ism 105
  Class, Masculinity and Sexual Health Education 111
  Disrupting ‘Difference’ in the Classroom 113
    “Just being there”: Male Bodies and the Challenge to Homophobia and Sexism 113
    Peer Pedagogy: Don’t Rock the Boat 116

Chapter Seven:
Conclusions and Implications 120
  Summary 120
  Implications for Practice 122
  Implications for Education work with (heterosexual)males 125
  Recommendations for Future Work/Research 126
In Closing

Appendices:
A  Organizational Letter of Consent (VRHB)  130
B  Youth Educator Information Letter  131
C  Letter of Informed Consent  132
D  Individual Interview Schedule  133
E  Group Discussion: Overview and Interview Schedule  134
F  Table: Youth Educator Backgrounder  136
G  Condomania Superheros: Condom Man and Luci Lubricant  137

References  138
Acknowledgements

The process of researching and writing this thesis was lengthy and I wish to thank all those who supported and encouraged during this time.

I would like to thank my thesis committee for providing me with invaluable feedback and resources. In particular, I am grateful for the critical reflection and the encouragement provided by my advisor, Shauna Butterwick. Shauna’s belief in me was pivotal to helping me gain the courage and strength necessary to finish what at many times felt like a daunting and improbable task. Her resourcefulness in establishing non-traditional avenues to support her students was also greatly valued.

I thank the 7 young men who participated in this study. Interviews with each young man were truly unique and beneficial learning experiences. Their honesty in engaging with me was appreciated, as was their commitment to the program, to sex education and to challenging gender and sexuality norms. Their dedication and well-meaning intentions provide hope for the future.

Thanks to my various friends who supported me throughout the years, particularly during the times when it seemed like the end was beyond reach. This includes my graduate colleagues, and those outside of the academy. The latter were significant in reminding me of the importance of life beyond academics. I appreciated beyond belief my sister Kristie’s support and eternally available ear during the challenging times. Thanks to Lezlie Wagman who gave me the opportunity to work with the Condomania program. Regular coffee sessions with Caroline White provided treasured opportunities for critical
insight and continual encouragement that "I could do it!" Thanks to Sarah Leavitt and Maria Jackman for their thorough proofreading, insights and being there through all the ups and down!

Above all I would like to acknowledge my partner, Elaine Arrowsmith, for her incredible positive spirit and good-natured encouragement. Her love and confidence in me was deeply felt and crucial in providing the inspiration I needed to complete this project.
Chapter One

Boy Culture and Sexual Health Education

Introduction

This thesis is an exploration of a community based sexual health program, Condomania, that has filled a niche within sexual health promotion by using peer education and social marketing\(^1\) principles that focuses on (heterosexual) boys, a group traditionally not the target of health promotion. This study sets out to examine some of the practical and theoretical dilemmas that arise when the focus of sexuality education is shifted from women and gay men to heterosexual males. In particular, the influence of heterosexual masculinities with the implementation of a peer model will be explored. Central to this study is the premise that simply adding male role models or providing additional information within the educational setting is not sufficient in itself to challenge the power relations based on gender and sexuality that lie at the heart of sexuality education. At the same time, the potential for disrupting normative sexuality education and gendered power relations through the use of male role models to educate younger (male) youth will be explored. A quote by one of the participants is used in the title of the thesis as it reflects the contradictions and tensions found within this study as well as the tendency for participants to separate being “cool” from being masculine.

\(^1\) Social marketing is “the use of commercial marketing techniques to promote the adoption of a behaviour that will improve the health and well-being of the target audience or society as a whole” (Weinreich 1999, p.2).
The Case Study: Condomania Program

Since 1990, the BC Centre for Disease Control has contracted the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board\(^2\) to develop, implement and evaluate the Condomania program. Condomania is a social marketing and education program that utilizes a variety of strategies to communicate a message of safer sex to targeted segments of the population. The primary target audience has been and continues to be predominately heterosexual, with an emphasis on males. For the first two years, Condomania's primary audience was heterosexual women 16 years of age and over, however this target shifted to males. This shift occurred as a result of research and focus groups coordinated by the Condomania program which indicated that heterosexual males were often resistant to condom use. In September 1997 the program once again shifted target population, focusing on young adolescents, with an emphasis on boys aged 12-15 years.

Since 1997, the goal of Condomania has been to increase awareness in the teen population, particularly boys, about the importance of sexual health information and the importance of condom use to prevent pregnancies and STDs. The age focus is 12-15 year olds. The overall objective is to popularize condoms.

The essence of this social marketing and public education campaign includes:

\(^2\) During the time when this research was undertaken, the Vancouver Richmond Health Board's organizational structure changed and the program became part of the newly emerged Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.
• School and community education program based on a peer mentoring framework with a focus on psychosocial issues such as self-esteem, peer pressure and gender issues that effect condom use.

• Promotion of the program through attendance at youth oriented events by the youth educators and teen website committee.

• An interactive website on sexual health issues – developed by and for teens.

• Information and social marketing campaign where teens participate in the creation of messages, materials and media strategies.

The school program constitutes a large portion of the overall Condomania project. It is based on a ‘peer’ or ‘mentoring’ model where the educational information is delivered by older youth aged 18-22 years. Each year up to twenty young adults are trained to give interactive presentations on sexual health issues to young adolescents. Twenty hours of in-class training is followed by support from the coordinators.

The foundation of this mentoring model is that adolescents are likely to reject the unsolicited advice of authority figures and that the most effective health promotion programs for teens are often the ones they develop and run themselves (Gillis, 1996).

Condomania aims to provide an alternative to the majority of sexual health education programs offered to young people that tend to be sex negative. Condomania’s emphasis on male youth stems from the existing gender slant toward women found in a majority of sexual health education programs. It is noted that even when an attempt is made to incorporate a
'gender perspective' most sexual health education programs are still fundamentally focused on serving women (Shepherd, 1996 p. 11). This furthers the idea of sex education and safer sex as women's domain, and continues to negate male responsibility. Furthermore, research reveals that perceptions of condom use and safer sex are linked to gender roles and power imbalances between women and men (Weiss and Gupta, 1998). Research on youth aged 12-15 demonstrates the influence of gender relations and the way in which normative notions of masculinity and femininity impact ideas and perceptions of sex and safer sex. In baseline research prepared for Condomania, the researchers found that:

while boys perceive sex as a pleasurable thing and they are familiar with many sexual practices, their attitudes have been shaped by gender role stereotypes with the result that they hold many misconceptions about sexual behaviour. Examples of this are demonstrated by their tendency to view an opposite sex date as a sex object along with overtones of sexual coercion or violence, their discomfort with masturbation, and its association with homosexuality...the often negative and violent attitudes towards gays. Awareness of safer sex is minimal and attitudes towards condoms are not positive...boys use terms such as lame, useless, disgusting, unnatural and used by gays to describe condom use. (Market Explorers, 1998 p. 2)

As a social marketing program, the primary means for targeting young boys is through employing male role models as sexual health educators, as well as through program materials³ that utilize cartoon superheroes - Condom Man and Luci Lubricant – as icons. As a team, the Condomania youth educators conduct approximately 350 presentations in Vancouver classrooms and community centres annually. The ultimate goal of the presentations is to popularize condom use through the use of a peer

³ Includes an interactive website, condom cartoon packages, stickers, temporary tattoos, posters.
mentoring education model. This model is premised on the belief that young male role models will act as positive mentors for younger males by promoting leadership around issues of male responsibility and condom use, relationships, self-esteem and personal protection and safety. The majority of presentations are conducted in guidance classes with up to 30 students, who sit in a circle. Presentations are 90 minutes in length and are co-facilitated by male and female educators. Most classes are co-ed and the objective is that youth educators engage the students in interactive activities and conversations.

In attempting to address misconceptions and stereotypes held by teenage boys the program also attempts to address issues related to young girls, and to be inclusive around issues of culture and sexuality. The school presentation utilizes a “popular education” approach in that the educators present themselves as non-experts through a participatory presentation. Rather than being based on the transmission of only factual knowledge about HIV, STDs and safer sex, the presentation aims to address issues such as self-esteem, self-worth, gender, sexuality and power issues that make negotiating condom use difficult. At the time of this research, Condomania offered three presentations on the following themes:

- Peer pressure interactive activity, condom identification and demonstration (for grade 7 students)
- Healthy/unhealthy relationship discussion, condom demo, condom games intended to stimulate discussion concerning decision-making and consent (for grade 8/9 students)
• Role play activity that explores common myths and stereotypes of condom use, such as issues of 'trust,' gender issues, homophobia, fear of 'embarrassment' etc. (for grade 9/10 students).

**Research Focus and Questions**

The aim of this research is to understand and document the ways in which male educators, within the feminized domain of sex education, both disrupt and reinforce normative notions of gender and sexuality. The main research question centres on exploring how gender and sexuality are constructed within mainstream sexual health settings, such as the Condomania program. In particular, what are the experiences and perspectives of male heterosexual-identified sexual health educators toward the issues of gender and sexuality? Related questions include:

- What meanings and perspectives do the male heterosexual-identified educators have about gender and sexuality and how do they reproduce these in the classroom?

- How are “traditional” notions of sexuality and gender reinforced and challenged within this program?

**Research Project Background**

My initial interest in this topic arose from my practice as an educator and my curiosity about sexuality discourses and education. As Condomania program coordinator my aim was to target and involve heterosexual males, as well as to disrupt structural inequalities based on gender and sexuality. As a feminist and queer many questions arose and issues evolved in my
work process. What did it mean to develop a sexual health promotion program that targets heterosexual males? How would the program attract and provide meaningful involvement for heterosexual males, and at the same time challenge male heterosexual privilege? In what ways did a social marketing program concerned with heterosexual males also have to pay attention to the differences within this population? Through my work I observed interesting patterns concerning the space and the role that the male presenters occupied in the classroom, a combination of authoritative, knowledgeable, sexually active and sophisticated; and I noticed the differences among males in terms of 'race' and 'culture'.

I wondered about the use of Condom Man, with the emphasis on the masculine appearance, as an icon for this program.

At the same time, as a graduate student in Educational Studies, I became interested in program planning and educational theory, with a particular curiosity about addressing the issues of oppression and marginalization within education. While reading various authors in the area of queer theory and education, I found that the majority of the work centred on the experiences of those marginalized within educational settings: the lesbian who came out during her teaching career, the gay man who remained in the closet. While worthy stories, I began to wonder about those who were working in this field, or who were recipients of education, who

---

4 Wang (2002) points to the racist underpinning of the term “race” when biological determinism is utilized to account for cultural differences. In this paper I identify “race” as “historically specific, politically engaged, and provisional”, rather than biologically stable (Frankenburg 1993, p. 12). Central to this thesis is the belief that both white people and people of colour are racialized and culturized, however I use both “race” and “culture” as terms to explore the experiences of the group of male educators.
were not marginalized, for example the heterosexual males that I was working with in Condomania. At the same time I read Frankenburg’s study that highlighted the effect of race on those who were in a position of relative race privilege, white women. I developed a critique of anti-oppressive education theory that conceptualized identities as collectively stable and rationally fixed (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 1997). There was a niche for critical research that explored the ways that knowledge and everyday practices, such as sexuality, are produced and represented by those in positions of privilege (Sumara and Davis, 1999). I was interested in exploring how dominant social discourses interplay with gender, sexuality and race and how they affect the practical implementation of sexual health education for males. As a result of these questions, I decided to undertake a case study analysis of the Condomania program with a specific focus on the experiences of developing a social change educational program with, for and including heterosexual males.

The initial goal of this research was to examine heterosexual male role models in terms of how dominant discourses of sexuality are both challenged and reproduced within sexual health programs. However, sexuality is intricately interlinked with other factors such as gender, race, and class (Irvine, 1995). Gender and sexuality cannot be separated: “misogyny is homophobic and homophobia is misogynist” (Roulston and Mills, 2000 p. 23).

This thesis is an action project; it is a story of a program in progress. It has a feminist perspective, one that is concerned with how those in
positions of significant power negotiate their privilege. How did these rather unique males understand their roles as sexual health educators, and what opportunities were there to gain information and experience in not only convincing boys of the importance of using condoms, but also in challenging traditional scripts related to gender and sexuality? In one meeting during the development of curriculum for our 'gender issues' presentation, the girls told the guys that they were pivotal in the workshop, that they had more impact on challenging gender. Some literature suggests that having heterosexual males involved in programs that attempt to challenge hegemonic masculinity and the status quo concerning safer sex is problematic because they are in a contradictory place: where they are educating to challenge their own position of power (Redman, 1996). Where do the Condomania boys fit in sexual health education? How do you challenge hegemonic masculinity and how is it being reinforced?

This research is intended to make sense of the structural factors that affect sexual health education; it is not meant to be critical of the educators. In terms of working with this group of young men I was impressed with their ability to promote rather alien messages such as respecting women and gays, lesbians and bisexuals to eagerly impressionable grade 8 boys. I would hear them champion male use of condoms. And at the same time, I would see them speak with incredible authority in the classroom, and in some instances relegating their female partner to that of secondary position. I would hear sexist comments, such as stories about 'chicks'. Despite these difficulties, overall my own perceptions were challenged and my sometimes
cynical feminism was replaced with a sense of hope for change by these young men. Their commitment to making a difference was genuinely apparent.

I now turn to Chapter Two and an overview of the literature on gender, sexuality and sex/education. In Chapter Three I outline the theoretical perspectives of this research project and in Chapter Four I address methodological considerations. Chapters Five and Six cover the analysis of the interviews and offer recommendations for future work on males and sex/ual health education.
Chapter Two

Framing the Research:
What's the Problem?! Gender, Sexuality Education

Like schools and curriculum as a whole, sexual health education is a site where gender and sexuality power relations are reproduced, negotiated, and contested. In this chapter I will review and examine the dominant discourses of sexual health education in relation to gender and sexuality, paying particular attention to the interplay of boy culture and sex education. Strategies for dealing with dominant discourses will be discussed, such as shifting the focus to men and boys, anti-homophobia education, and the use of male role models and peer education. Each strategy is valuable to some degree; however it is also advantageous to note the potential limitations and potential problematic areas. Critically examining the social construction of ‘masculinity’ has been ignored in many disciplines; and Neale, in reference to film studies, illustrates the importance of studying masculinity:

There is an important sense in which the images and functions of heterosexual masculinity within mainstream cinema have been left undiscussed. Heterosexual masculinity has been identified as a structuring norm in relation to both images of women and gay men. It has to that extent been profoundly problematised, rendered visible. But it has rarely been discussed and analysed as such. (in Whatley, 1988 p. 2)

Boy Culture, Sexuality and Identity

As a means of organizing social practice, gender is a pivotal social construct in the production of sexual identity and behaviour. The effects of

---

5 I use the term “boy culture” to describe those aspects of male heterosexual hegemony that are particularly prevalent in male teen cultures, as demonstrated in the work on boys and masculinity by Whatley, 1988, Redman and Mac an Ghaill, 1996.
gender organization on a subject's identity formation cannot be ignored, and Connell (1995) argues that although males may have very different sexual experiences, "they share a cultural experience about sex" (1996, p. 175, italics added). The cultural experience that males share about sex is deeply influenced by social constructions and reproductions of heterosexual masculinity. Although somewhat dated, Whatley's (1988) study of the construction of men's sexuality in school sex education and popular culture is still significant and is consistent with other studies on masculinity and (sex) education. Whatley's study is unique in its analysis of both school sexual health curriculum and popular culture, demonstrating the overlapping and contradictory discourses that adolescents receive about sex, sexuality and gender. Not surprisingly, school curriculum continues to be dominated by biological determinism for explanations of gender and sexuality, which posits monogamous heterosexuality as the norm. Within popular culture, there are similar, yet conflicting messages regarding heterosexual masculinity: the abnormality of virginity in 'healthy' and 'normal' males, the essential and powerful male sex drive, and the penis as a metaphor of masculinity and sexuality (Whatley, 1988). Sexual activity, as it is discussed within formal curriculum and popular culture, is often not about pleasure for either the male or female. Rather it is a means to acquire status among male peers, "women who are 'nailed' metaphorically become trophies nailed to the wall" with the fast car as a metaphorical representative of male sexual power (Whatley, 1988 p. 113). Powerful cultural scripts regarding male sexuality are vividly portrayed in both
mainstream and alternative culture. For example, a recent Mexican movie Y tu Mama Tambien (And your mother too) portrays a critical analysis of gender and sexuality identity formation that includes the influence of male peer culture. In the movie, the male characters' relationship with each other is regulated by cultural norms of hegemonic masculinity: ownership/control over women and sex, competitiveness between males, the ascendancy of sexual experience, and compulsory heterosexuality.

The shifting constitution of masculinities is discussed by Redman and Mac an Ghaill (1999) in the discussion of the policing of heterosexual masculinity within cultural sites, such as the school, and the way heterosexual masculinity is produced, reproduced, negotiated and contested within these sites. In particular, these authors outline competing forms of culturally appropriate masculinity and the role of the male unconscious in adjusting to culturally appropriate forms of masculinity. In their case study they provide a biographical example of males who are excluded from privileged forms of masculinity (i.e. the macho sport masculinity) and document the process by which excluded males may create in the production of new forms of masculinity, that are an "alternative yet 'proper' form of masculinity," which is accessible and acceptable within the school culture (1996, p. 246).

All men are not equal, and differences such as race, ethnicity, class, and ability are some of the factors that create differentiation. Men of colour are marginalized, subordinated and/or eroticized in relation to sexuality (Whatley, 1988). The strength of Whatley's analysis is that she does not
lump the experiences of men of colour into one category, but rather takes into consideration the different relation that men of colour have to hegemonic masculinity. Black males have long been constructed as hyper-sexual and deviant within masculinity discourses (Connell, 1995). Research on the sexual representation in popular culture of East Asian males illustrates contradiction; they experience marginalization, and both eroticization and de-sexualization. Whatley (1988) gives the example of the character Long Dong, who is the butt of jokes due to "the incongruity of having the name Long Dong without the matching equipment or of having the equipment but not directing his urges in the appropriate direction" (p. 112). Either way, what is evident in this character, is that the Asian male is signified as someone unable to meet "normal" and 'healthy' male sex expectations.

The particular form of marginalization on the basis of gender and sexuality that is experienced by Asian males is referred to as "gendered racism" by Kumashiro (1999). Asian males, in particular, are stereotyped as feminine which produces a unique intersection of oppression for this group. Wang's (2000) study of Asian teenage boys in Vancouver, BC illustrates the influence of race and culture in boys' complex negotiations with hegemonic masculinity. Wang found that newly immigrant Asian boys' notions of masculinity differed from the notion of hegemonic masculinity and the "transition between acting as a hegemonic male and resisting this masculine role was somewhat influenced by their cultural understandings of gender" (2000, p. 114). In contrast, "the Canadianized Asian boy and his
white peers' relationship with hegemonic masculinity was determined largely by their efforts to establish their masculinity in terms of their heterosexuality (Wang 2000, p. 114).

Studies indicate that culture and class play a role in the age that young people become sexually active (Kelly, 2000). A national survey of 4,000 Canadian high school students indicated that 55% of 15-19 year olds were sexually active. However, when culture and class are taken into account these numbers vary considerably: 63% for Native youth, 57% for Blacks and whites, 42% for South Asian and 26% for East Asians (primarily Chinese and Japanese heritage). Studies indicate that young women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to become sexually active at an early age and less likely to use contraceptives (Kelly, 2000).

A Vancouver based study conducted in 1999 regarding the attitudes of boys aged 12-15 in relation to sex, safer sex and relationships reiterates many of the themes raised by Whatley (1988) and others who have written on masculinity and sex/uality education. The anonymous survey of 100 boys demonstrates the effect of 'boy culture' on sexual attitudes and beliefs of young males and highlights the association between age and possession of certain attitudes. As the boys moved closer to the age 15, their attitudes about sex and girls tends to change and they become more likely to espouse negative attitudes about safer sex ("for gays") and about girls (they were only important if they had "big tits"). The point of raising this study here is not to insinuate that these boys are 'bad' or 'sexually deviant', but to highlight that negative attitudes seem to increase as male adolescents reach their
adolescent middle years, reflecting the powerful influence of 'boy culture' where certain discourses concerning sex and girls hold enormous authority. Individually, boys may not actually play out these beliefs; however adherence, at least rhetorically, to the dominant masculinist discourses is crucial to their identity as males, and acceptance into male peer culture. It is these attitudes and beliefs that Condomania is attempting to confront through the peer education and social marketing program that focuses on heterosexual boys.

**Boys and Sex/Education**

Schools are examples of "cultural sites that actively construct, reproduce and live out normative notions of gender and sexuality, both in the hidden and formal curriculum" (Redman, 1994 p. 141). An examination of the literature reveals an embedded misogyny and phallocentric view of sexuality that predominates much of the sexual health curriculum and promotion strategies (Fine, 1988; Whatley, 1988). Dominant discourses both within sex education, and in our culture as a whole, serve to privilege heterosexuality, while normalizing female sexual victimization and suppressing female sexual desire (Harrison, 2000; Fine, 1988; Whatley, 1988).

Gender when it is addressed in sexuality discourses is young women as victims; young women who can't or won't say no; young women as responsible contractors; and in HIV/AIDS discourses, young women as the initiators of safer sex (Harrison, 2000 p. 8).

Understanding the power of discourses necessitates the need to pay attention not only to what is said, but to how it is contextualized. As
Harrison and Hillier (1999) reiterate, sexuality education does not occur in a vacuum, and it is influenced by larger cultural norms:

Sexuality education is an embodied activity and values are imparted to students not only through spoken language but also through body language, silences, role modeling and the ways we choose to live our lives. (Harrison and Hillier, 1999 p. 283)

An effect of the dominant discourses of sexuality produced within cultural sites such as schools is that adolescent boys and girls develop different relationships to sex education classes and information. Not surprisingly, research indicates that young boys, and men, consistently view sexual health as an issue for girls and homosexuals/queers (Market Explorers, 1998). A study of segregated sex education classes reveals that girls' classes tend to be 'a picture of conformity,' while boys' classes tend to be "filled with noise, chaos and disruption, pushing and shoving, some half serious punches [were thrown, as well as] squirming and desks rattling" (Measor and Tiffin, 1996). Humour is also identified as a common reaction that boys have to sex education, which both indicates their lack of comfort with the topic and their tendency to perceive it as frivolous. Hilton (2001) suggests that sex education is socially positioned as divergent in relation to the male role model, which serves to legitimize a "setting where boys can assert themselves by shouting down girls and attempting to embarrass women teachers and those whose sexual orientation is different from their own" (2001, p. 33). Proving one's masculinity is central as "sex education is seen as establishment and authority-led and the only way to become a true man is to be anti-authority, an attitude often displayed in sex education classrooms" (Hilton, 2001, p. 36).
Young males’ lack of connection to sexual health education is compounded by the fact that boys receive far less education about sexual matters in the home than girls (Hilton, 2001). However, from a feminist perspective this does not designate the inclusion of a “what about the boys” discourse, where the goal is to find a means of including boys and making sex education relevant to the heterosexual male. Problematic and sexist male behaviour is “not a product of individual pathology rather it is part of a wider system of social relations which impart power to males in particular ways” (Harrison, 2000 p. 7). The discussion about sexual health being fraught with gender inequalities and heterosexism leads to the question as to why there is a need to attend to heterosexual male interests. At the same time as sexual health education reinforces sexuality and gender norms, it also focuses on females “as the object of attention; as still somehow the problem that needs to be fixed or the sex in most danger” (Harrison and Hillier, 1999 p. 281).

It is argued by some that the emergence of HIV produced both real and imagined threats to heterosexual masculinities by blurring the lines of sex and responsibility. However, in practice, sex education has continued to shift the focus of (safer sex) education to certain ‘other’ groups as targets: gay men, drug users, people of colour, and women (Market Explorers, 1998; Harrison, 2000). Even with the emergence of HIV, sex education continues to maintain heterosexual males as the ‘untouchable’ category where the implications of heterosexual masculinities and heterosexual power relations are largely ignored (Redman, 1996). The premise of this research is that
sexual health education programs ought to include and focus on boys; not because of the need to target individual problematic behaviour as pathology, but rather, to disrupt the foundations of male sexual power, the reverence of powerful and biologically driven male sexuality. The following is a synopsis of the literature as it relates to some of the strategies that have been developed to disrupt hegemonic masculinity and some of the limitations and theoretical discussions that have arisen in relation to these strategies. The goal in examining these strategies is not to present a unified approach for health promotion for heterosexual males, rather it is to provide a critical context for the further exploration of the issue and to acknowledge and account for the contradictions inherent in such an endeavor.

Strategies for Including Gender and Sexuality

Shifting the Focus: Who’s the Subject in Sexuality Education?

Focusing on the (heterosexual) female and on marginalized groups within health promotion and education programs can be problematic because heterosexual males tend to be omitted from the sexual health equation. As discussed above, this dilemma is not due to neglecting male interests, as some would argue. Rather the omission of males from sex education discourses is problematic because it ignores the interests and issues that can permeate heterosexual relationships and the role of heterosexual masculinity. I agree with Redman (1996) when he argues that effective safer sex programs require that hegemonic heterosexual masculinities are dealt with which involves "coming to grips with boys’ and
men's investments in the position of power which they occupy" (1996, p. 170). This is no simple feat. Condomania is an example of a program that has attempted to address men's investments in relation to safer sex in heterosexual relationships, and below I will outline the literature in relation to strategies that speak to this programming.

In the past 15 years, safer sex promotion and education has proliferated as a result of the emergence of HIV as a health concern. Within this expansion of programs and discourses, the potential for disrupting the heterosexual sexual economy has been observed. A review of the literature concerning the implications of HIV/AIDS education reveals a change in public attitudes about sexuality and sexual health. Two major consequences are the "public acknowledgment of extra-marital, premarital and non-heterosexual sex" and encouragement of women to negotiate safer sex practices with their male partners. The latter is ground-breaking because it disrupts standard practices of heterosexuality that place negotiating power in the hands of men (Redman, 1996 p. 169). At the same time that the social significance of HIV/AIDS education is established, it is also acknowledged that the potential for radically disrupting the ideology of heterosexual masculinities has been ignored by many in this field, resulting in safer sex programs that exclusively target gay men and other risk groups. The effect is that heterosexual masculinity continues to be understood as "normal, natural and healthy in opposition to the claimed ‘marginal’, ‘unnatural’ and ‘diseased’ nature of homosexual masculinities (Redman, 1996 p. 169-70). As a result, safer sex programs have been an important
cultural site for the normalization of heterosexual masculinities, even in the face of the potential ideological challenges to heterosexual masculinities.

Research into safer sex and pregnancy prevention programs demonstrates that well-intentioned programs targeting females become virtually ineffective when they neglect the power relations within heterosexual relationships that give men more social power and greater influence to control the use of condoms (Lever, 1995; Harrison, 2000; Shephard, 1996; Weiss and Gupta, 1998). Women do have some power in heterosexual relationships, however “the problem arises when we divert attention from the obvious sources of that power by telling young women they have the power to display bold verbal initiative, a power some may, in fact, not have” (Lever, 1995 p. 173). Effective sex education needs to include those groups not normally considered risk populations (i.e. heterosexuals and males) and at the same time disrupt existing gender/sexuality power relations (Weiss and Gupta, 1996; Lever 1995) and normative concepts of masculinity (Shephard, 1996).

**Tensions and Contradictions in Shifting the Focus**

Developing sexual health promotion and educational programs that promote social change in the realm of gender and sexuality is not straightforward, and caution needs to be exercised to not essentialize male heterosexuality. Socially dominant heterosexual masculine identity is relational and derives its coherence from its opposition to homosexuality and femininity (Redman, 1996). Such oppositional definition results in
contradictions and tensions which surface when potentially disrupted or challenged.

Shifting boy’s and men’s investments in hegemonic male identities is likely to be highly problematic as it is likely to question the boundaries of those identities, in the process threatening men’s fundamental sense of themselves. (Redman 1996, p. 174)

Hong’s (2000) study of a university anti-violence peer education program for males corresponds with Redman’s argument. In the study, Hong (2000) highlights the internal struggles that heterosexual male participants experienced in the process of rejecting or reformulating hegemonic masculinity while they were participants in the feminist male run organization. In addition to the attitudinal changes concerning gender and sexuality that males underwent, Hong also found that in the process of reformulating their own identity and conception of masculinity the participants experienced significant tensions in their own identity as heterosexual males. The result was male participation in homophobic behaviour, expressing concern about their public image as a potentially gay organization, engaging in the sexual objectification of women, and competition between male participants that was connected with the pressure males receive to be what Hong refers to as ‘the big wheel’, that is, to be in control.

**More Than What About The Boys: Dealing With Sexism**

Within anti-oppressive educational contexts, a variety of educational strategies are used to address young men’s sexism and homophobia. A common approach is the rigorous policing of young men’s expressions of heterosexism and sexism. Such disciplinary approaches, while important in
attempts to create a ‘safe’ space, are insufficient because they are unlikely
to “shift boys’ fundamental investment in forms of discriminatory behaviour”
(Redman, 1996 p. 171). Pedagogical practices that encourage boys to think
through values and beliefs through interactive activities are referred to as
‘participation strategies’ or ‘skill acquisition’. Examples of such practices
include role play and other activities which are designed to help boys
unlearn sexism and homophobia. The fundamental belief behind such
pedagogical practices is that by participating in the activities boys will
realize the irrationality of their behaviour and will acquire a more objective
and less sexist or homophobic set of values and behaviours. A third
approach is based on the assumption that social change will result once
boys “find the real man within” and that education needs to be concerned
with facilitating this process.

While not offering a solution, Redman (1996) argues that many of
the existing approaches are limited because they fail to acknowledge social
conditions that support heterosexual masculinities. They do not challenge
structural norms nor do they identify or deal with the question of why men
should give up positions of power. The contradiction of “empowering men to
disempower themselves” lies at the heart of many pedagogical practices
concerning anti-sexist education, and Redman (1996) points out that
existing forms of “heterosexuality ‘feel right’ or ‘make imaginative sense’ to
the men and boys who inhabit them” (p.172).
Anti-Homophobia Education: Countering Tolerance and Cultural Relativism

In addition to the tensions and contradictions that arise when working with heterosexual men on issues related to sexuality and gender, there are limitations with many of the common pedagogical practices used in education to address homophobia. Similar to the criticism of anti-sexism education discussed above, queer theorists point out that educational initiatives set up to counter homophobia and heterosexism can be ineffective because they sustain, rather than challenge, heteronormativity (Eyre, 1997; Harrison, 2000; Sears 1992). Heteronormativity is the normalization of heterosexuality within a culture, the “creation of a language that is ‘straight’ and living within heteronormative culture means learning to ‘see’ straight, to ‘read’ straight, and to ‘think’ straight” (Sumara and Davis, 1999 p. 203).

Dominant discourses in sexuality and anti-homophobia education are frequently based on the modernist notions of essentialism and cultural relativism, the notion that ‘we are all different but all the same.’ Related to this is the prevalent assumption within anti-homophobic education that receiving information about a subordinated group is an effective means of countering stereotypical views held about the particular group. Practices such as incorporating coming out stories, using ‘out’ gay and lesbian guest speakers and topic add-ons are intended to give the audience the opportunity to get to know ‘real’ gays and lesbians.

Anti-homophobia education is based on the belief that the root cause of homophobia stems from lack of information or misinformation about
queer groups (Chorney, 1997). The notion of tolerance is based on increasing empathy towards those discriminated against. However, limitations result from the focus on individual oppression at the expense of structural awareness, of participants examining “their own complicity in perpetuating domination” (Chorney, 1997 p. 13). According to queer theory, a fault with many of these pedagogical practices is the foundational premise of promoting tolerance and equality. While those within a queer theory framework agree with actions that support equality for lesbians and gays, their critical stance is with the modernist notions that situate equality and tolerance as sufficient goals in and of themselves. The critique of well-intentioned practices intended to encourage tolerance is that they actively engage in the construction of homosexual or “queer” as deviant, and thus further normalize heterosexuality.

The provision of “information” as a means to resolve homophobia and the promotion of tolerance are central tenets of anti-homophobia education that continue to present identity as stable and fixed. As a result, heteronormativity is rarely challenged and heterosexuality remains the presumed norm (Eyre, 1997). As with anti-sexist education, sexuality education needs to address structural privilege and ‘affective investments’ held by heterosexuals (Britzman, 1995 p. 159).

Chorney (1997) points to a further problem with modernist discourses: that a particular gay experience or identity is privileged, once again assuming one stable framework for describing the lesbian and gay experience.
The promotion of tolerance in anti-homophobic educational material presents the most acceptable homosexual body (white, male, middle class and gender appropriate) and evaluates the success of this education on a disruption of stereotypes and myths of homosexuality held by the participants. (Chorney, 1997 p. 16)

Guidelines for developing alternative pedagogical practices to interrupt heteronormativity are put forth by various researchers. Chorney's (1997) study of social service workers demonstrates the limitations imposed by structures such as the social service, and quotes Razack who states that “education for social change is not so much about new information as it is about disrupting hegemonic ways of seeing through which subjects make themselves as dominant” (quoted in Chorney, 1997 p. 116). Such interruption is incompatible with common social teaching assumptions, where the teacher is someone who provides information but does not create conflict. The need for a pedagogy that stirs up people’s assumptions and beliefs is echoed by Sumara and Davis (1999) when they suggest “inviting participants to partake in structures that create surprises and often troubling moments of contact and revelation” (p. 204). Pedagogy that disrupts gender and sexuality norms doesn’t necessarily ‘feel good’ as it challenges male and heterosexual investments within the current system.

Britzman furthers this critique and states another limitation with modernist curriculum is that it constructs an innocently ignorant general public:

Pedagogical thought must begin to acknowledge that receiving knowledge is a problem for the learner and the teacher, particularly when the knowledge that one already possesses or is possessed by works as an entitlement to one’s ignorance or when the knowledge encountered cannot be incorporated because it disrupts how the self might imagine itself and others. (p. 159)
In conclusion, several recurring themes emerge related to addressing sexism and homophobia within pedagogical practices. First, there is a need to move beyond the modernist conceptions of stable, fixed identity and tolerance and equality. While social and organizational arrangements make implementing new approaches to education challenging, it is also important to recognize the contradictions and investments which make learning new information less straightforward than many educators admit. The use of peer education and male teachers are two strategies utilized which like other pedagogical approaches, offer some benefits as well as significant limitations. However, as Martindale (1997) illustrates so eloquently, limitations of education extend beyond pedagogical curriculum strategies to the restrictions of social situations, such as the structure of mainstream education.

**Utilizing Male Role Models**

The employment of male role models in traditionally female dominated areas is becoming a prevalent social policy initiative in some educational areas. It is important to examine the role of male teachers and leaders because I concur that “how curriculum subjects are taught is as, if not more, significant than the content material” (Francis and Skelton, 2001 p. 22). Many within educational policy advocate hiring male teachers as a means of confronting the issue of gender representation. The rationale for recruiting male teachers within female dominated areas is usually embedded within one of two discourses; one is a male rights perspective, where boys are perceived as neglected by not having representation in
certain curricula. The other is situated in a feminist standpoint, where the argument for male role models is based on the need for male teachers to work with boys on gender issues, "not because men can do this work better than women, but rather because men have a responsibility to challenge the existing gender order" (Mills, 2000 p. 19). Including males in the work of educating young people should not be in response to the "what about the boys" discourse, an ideology that is entrenched in the notion that girls' needs are being met at the expense of boys. Instead, I agree with others who contend that involving men in education means more than simple representation; but rather that social change can only occur when hegemonic masculinity is challenged and when male investments in their privileged position are shifted (Redman, 1996). To do this, males should be integrated into and actively engaged in this rather contradictory educational process.

Francis and Skelton's (2001) study of male classroom teachers points out that within school the oppressive behaviours of men and boys are readily acknowledged; however what is lacking is a deeper analysis of male teachers and "their assumptions and practices as members of a dominant group" (2001, p. 10 italics added). This is not to suggest that male teachers are inferior, rather it is to acknowledge the contradictions that arise when males work as educators within a system where discourses of hegemonic masculinity are powerful and ubiquitous. While differences among men need to be recognized, research does establish the influential role of the hegemonic masculinity discourse and the way that it is utilized in the
classroom. For example, research shows that it is largely male (heterosexual) teachers that use the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality in constructing their public gender identity (Francis and Skelton, 2001). In examining male school teachers, various feminist theorists point out the effects of hegemonic masculinity and the way in which sexual/gendered identities are constructed, negotiated and reproduced within this situation. Instead of challenging or disrupting dominant forms of masculinity, the behaviours of many male teachers serve to reinforce hegemonic masculinity, rather than challenging or disrupting it (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Roulston and Mills, 2000).

For example, homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality can operate as classroom disciplinary tools, a means for the male teacher to confirm and normalize his heterosexual identity. Male teachers may validate their masculinity in the classroom by positioning themselves as "other to girls, non-masculine boys and all things feminine" through such practices as making references to sports, apparent male bonding with boy pupils, and robust or confrontational approaches in the class (Francis and Skelton, 2001 p. 14). As a disciplinary tool, masculinity discourse provides a standard by which male teachers can 'prove' their manhood by reinforcing their heterosexuality. Francis and Skelton (2001) point to the inclination for male teachers to employ some degree of power and authority in the classroom. Teacher's unconscious and conscious pedagogical styles construct their masculinity that is reflected in "the kinds of aggressive,

Humour is another tool that successfully constructs and reinforces heterosexual masculinity. Skelton (2002) points out that masculinity within a school setting is often “mobilized around the sharing of masculine values, in this case the sense of team spirit fuelled by the use of humour” (Skelton 2002, p. 24). In terms of the use of humour by male teachers, Skelton illustrates how it functions as a “regulatory technique that structures the performance of masculinity,” that is utilized by male teachers as a means of undermining the seriousness of the issues raised concerning gender in the classroom (2002, p. 21).

**Peer Education**

Peer education is a highly regarded education method, particularly in the area of health promotion with youth and young adults concerning ‘sensitive topics’ such as safer sex, tobacco reduction, and violence prevention. Such models are often advocated based on the belief that peers are more effective in educating about certain issues because of their position as insiders in young peoples’ culture, providing a certain degree of legitimacy. Redman (1996) acknowledges that sexual cultures, such as youth culture, act as critical sites of learning about sex and sexuality, possessing the ability to both interrupt and resist the “lessons” of formal sexuality education. It is clear that there are certain benefits to tapping into youth sexual culture and involving youth in the education of others.
Most literature in the area of peer education focuses on the effectiveness of peer education programs in terms of outcomes. However, a small number of authors point out some of the inherent assumptions which underlie peer education and argue that while effective in some ways, it is not the panacea that so many claim (Frankham, 1998). Many of the issues raised by Frankham (1998) in her critical study of peer education approaches are more relevant to peer education, rather than the peer mentoring model of Condomania. However, there are some concerns that apply to this study, for instance the struggle for young people to embody credibility with the students they teach. Too often in the quest for credibility the peer educator comes to exemplify an ‘expert’ position, which is direct opposite to the intention.

A study by Hong (2000) advocates a multi-layered approach to the analysis of peer education programs. The study describes the challenges and tensions that arose when men worked as peer educators within a feminist anti-violence program. Employing a conceptual framework that incorporated four common metaphors that construct hegemonic masculinity: “no sissy stuff, be a big wheel, be a sturdy oak, give ’em hell,” Hong concludes that participants in the study “reproduce and rely on some aspects of hegemonic masculinity.” Furthermore, they “did so even as they reformulate and contest many of the same aspects of masculinity, indicating that the process of constructing masculinity is dynamic and complex” (Hong 2000, p.280).
Thus, while peer education programs are beneficial, painting all programs with the same positive brush only ignores the structural impediments that can and do potentially thwart peer education from the position of educational panacea.

In summary, as the literature on sexual health education illustrates, sexuality is a contested educational site, leaving an opportunity for education which targets adolescent boys with safer sex messages. At the same time, consideration of the implications of this approach and of the way in which such a program is executed is warranted. I turn now to a summary of the conceptual framework (Chapter Three) and methodological considerations (Chapter Four) of this study, and then to Chapters Five and Six which outline the findings and implications of this case study.
Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework

This chapter will outline the conceptual frameworks that provide the basis for conceptualization, methodology and the analysis of this study: feminism, post-structuralism\(^6\), queer theory, masculinity theory and anti-racism. In outlining the conceptual lens that steers this project, I will begin with a brief description of what is not the theoretical perspective of this study, essentialism and objectivity, modernist paradigms frequently underpinning social science research (Kvale, 1995). From here I will shift to a synopsis of feminist post-structuralism and queer theory, outlining the fundamentals of these frameworks as they apply to this study. Acknowledging that one theory is never absolute and definitive, I will include a discussion of masculinity, race and ethnicity.

**Essentialism**

Understandings and explanations for sex/uality and gender\(^7\) within Western society have been dominated by biological determinism, objectivity, and the assumption of universal truths. ‘Common sense’ and ‘scientifically proven truths’ provide the basis for conceptualizing gender and sexuality, for example the supposed ‘fact’ that ‘men are naturally more aggressive’ or that ‘sexuality is universally expressed across time and through history.’ Such discourses constitute essentialism, a common paradigm across

\(^6\) The term post-structuralism, like all language, does not have one meaning and is a general term applied to a range of theoretical positions and is utilized interchangeably with post-modernism (Luke and Gore, 1992; Weedon, 1997).

\(^7\) Essentialism is not limited to explanations of gender and sexuality. Rather essentialist expressions and assumptions are ubiquitous and underlie present day norms, knowledge and institutions.
various disciplines and represented in segments of feminism and gay/lesbian liberation movements. Often referred to as ‘identity politics,’ Chorney (1997) points to the historical importance of establishing a “public collective identity” for lesbian, gay and feminist movements, particularly in the beginning of these liberation movements (p. 47). However, the result of essentialist notions of sexuality and gender is an identity-based assumption regarding gender and sexuality, where “women,” “gay” and “lesbian” are often understood as unified and stable categories.

**Alternative Approaches to Essentialism**

Although essentialism continues to be a dominant discourse within Western society, criticisms have emerged, both in relation to the notion of essential identity and the tendency to purport a universalized explanation of oppression. Within feminist discourses, women of colour can be credited as a pivotal group in challenging such essentialist discourse. The following quote by Audre Lorde illustrates this critique:

> Within the lesbian community I am Black, and within the Black community I am a lesbian. Any attack against Black people is a lesbian and gay issue, because I and thousands of other Black women are part of the lesbian community. Any attack against lesbians and gays is a Black issue, because thousands of lesbians and gays are Black. There is no hierarchy of oppression. (Lorde, 1983 p. 9)

Various theories have emerged in response to notions of essentialism and fixed categories of identity, in an attempt to account for integration of multiplicity and difference, for example, along lines of race, class, and ethnicity. Social construction is one example of a social theory that puts forth the idea that sexuality and gender “are constructions of social and cultural influences during an historical time” (Irvine, 1995 p. 12). Social
constructionism is an attempt to integrate difference; however its weakness is that it has a tendency toward determinism by positioning subjects passively with little personal agency.

In grappling with locating a feminist theoretical fit for this project, I felt a need to shift from the traditional streams of feminism; in particular, the essentialism and dualism predominant in radical feminist traditions; the humanism, free active agent central to liberal feminism; and the Marxist/revolutionary narratives prioritized in socialist feminism. Following is a brief summary of post-structuralist feminism, highlighting that which applies to this project.

**Feminist Post-Structuralism and Queer Theory**

Inspired by post modernism and emerging from a critique of modernist notions of essentialism, feminist post-structuralism is a body of work that seeks to disrupt tenets of modernism such as essentialism, fixed subjectivities and universal truths. The feminist post-structuralist perspective applied in this study is based on the framework developed by feminists and critical theorists that integrates the anti-foundational epistemology of postmodernism with a grounded notion of material realities central to feminist theory (Jones 1997, Weedon, 1997; Luke and Gore, 1992; Fung 1995; Stanovsky, 1997). I adhere to the theoretical perspective advocated by Fung (1995) that recognizes the shifting nature of identities, as well the notion that "identities are simultaneously and explicitly grounded" in contradictory experiences, such as sexual orientation, race,
nationality, gender and class (p. 292). The use of the term “strategic essentialism” is valuable as it “recognizes the necessity of occupying some subject position or other at the same time as it recognizes the limitations which are built into every subject position” (Stanovsky, 1997, p. 16). This study is centred on the shifting and contradictory nature of masculinity as well as the relevancy and privilege of masculinity within the current social and historical epoch.

**Subjectivity, Agency and Gender**

Contesting the notion of “foundational truth located in disciplinary knowledge and the unitary rationalist subject as foundational to all knowledge” is central to feminist post-structuralism (Luke and Gore, 1992, p. 5). Particularly useful for my study is the deconstruction of dominant paradigms related to gender and sexuality that posit the subject as either biologically fixed and historically/culturally stable or as exceedingly voluntary, assuming the individual has the ability to act and think independently of social structures and ideologies (Jones, 1997). Instead, within feminist post-structuralism, the subject is ‘multi-positioned’, simultaneously constructed by the social order and actively engaging in constituting identities.

Although the subject in poststructuralism is socially constructed in discursive practices, she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices. She is also a subject able to reflect upon the discursive relations which constitute her and the society in which she lives, and able to choose from the options available” (Weedon, 1997 p. 121).
Language is significant to post-structuralism; subjectivity, social structures, and meaning are seen as mediated and constructed by language. Meaning systems, or discourses, are ubiquitous; "existing both in written and oral form, in the social practices of everyday life," forming the basis of our institutions, manifesting both consciously and subconsciously in subjectivities (Weedon, 1997 p. 108). In relation to gender identity, Jones (1997) asserts that "at centre stage is not a real person ('us') who is made into a subject (girl) but the meaning systems which produce what counts as girls" (p. 263). Masculinity, in this light, is not a monolithic and essential entity but an interplay of emotional and intellectual facts – an interplay that directly implicates women as well as men, mediated by other social factors, including race, sexuality, nationality and class.

**Sex/Gender: Performativity, Discourse, Knowledge and Power**

In conducting this research I sought a theoretical framework that offered an explanation for the continuation of gender and sexuality norms beyond the binaries of oppressor/victim prevalent in many feminist theories. The concept of the subject, as outlined by Jones (1997), as both 'constructed' and 'constructing agent' provided a less binary explanation. Butler's concept of 'taking up' identity, or performativity, elucidate the everyday productions of gender and sexuality as unquestionably assumed, perceived as 'natural' and 'normal'. According to Butler, gender is performative "not because it is something that the subject deliberately and playfully assumes, but because, through reiteration, it consolidates the
subject” (Jagose, 1996 p. 86). Jones’ use of the “performance” of the teacher illustrates the concept and its persuasiveness:

Take me, the teacher, I say to my students. I am not “a teacher” outside of our collective understanding – I only become a teacher in the performance of certain socially understood acts (discursive practices). And those acts only “make” me a teacher as I am produced by you, the students...We are all engaged in a performance, the production of the teacher (and students) (p. 271).

Such an account of subjectivity is significant for this research project because it allows for a more complex understanding of how we are constituted as women and men, and at the same time, accounts for the potential for social change as well as cultural and historical differences in relation to societal concept(s) of masculine and feminine.

Foucault’s notions of power, discourse and knowledge are central to the foundation and maintenance of gender and sexuality norms. Social structures and power relations affect not only how knowledge is produced and disseminated, and also to what counts as knowledge, and by whom (Tisdall, 1998). From a Freudian perspective, power within Western societies does not entail a monolithic brute force, but rather functions as a relation, established through subtlety and relative invisibility.

What gives power its hold, what makes it accepted, is quite simply the fact that it does not simply weigh like a force which says no, but runs through, and it produces, things, it induces pleasure, it forms knowledge, it produces discourse; it must be considered as a productive network which runs through the entire social body much more than as a negative instance whose function is repressive (Foucault, 1979, p. 36).

This perspective on power provides a basis for grasping the persuasiveness of oppressive social norms related to gender, race and sexuality. It also helps explain the maintenance of gender roles, through
the operation of self surveillance where “particular modes of relating and feeling become a regime of normalizing practices through which boys [and girls] learn to police themselves and others” (Martino 2000, p. 103). Thus, “commonsense” discourses concerning the body and gender identity are based on essentialism and scientific truths continue to be verified by the “claim to be natural, obvious and therefore true” (Weedon, 1997 p. 77). This does not mean that change is not possible; on the contrary, there is a potential for change because of the contradictions that can, and do, emerge.

**Contradiction, Tension and Social Change**

A central purpose of this research project is to attempt to understand the process of social change within education, and the place that heterosexual men may have within that change. An immense advantage of (feminist) post-structuralist theory is the potential offered for social change, through contradictions, or “slippages” (Gutterman, 1994). Such slippages are possible with disturbances in reiteration (Kumashiro, 2002) or through “internal conflict and contradictions” that arise with/in the multi-positioned subject (Gutterman, 1994 p. 220). Weedon (1987) illustrates this possibility:

As we acquire language, we learn to give voice – meaning – to our experience and to understand it according to particular ways of thinking, particular discourses, which pre-date our entry into language. These ways of thinking constitute our consciousness, and the positions with which we identify structure our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity. Having grown up with a particular system of meanings and values, which may well be contradictory, we may find ourselves resisting alternatives....or we may be exposed to alternative ways of constituting the meaning of our experience which seem to address our interests more directly (p. 33).
Post-Structuralism and Critical Pedagogy

This study is part of a growing collection of educational research that incorporates aspects of feminist post-structuralism (Luke and Gore, 1992; Ellsworth, 1992; Kumashiro, 1999, 2002; Jones, 1997; Stanovsky, 1997; Tisdell, 1998; Wang, 2000) and which emphasizes the confines of critical pedagogy, for example the limitations of single strategies of empowerment, emancipation, and liberation (see Lather, 1991; Fine, 1992; Luke 1992). Kumashiro’s (1999) research highlights the important contributions of poststructuralist theory to education, including the recognition of silences and gaps in addition to voice and knowledge, the disruption of the common dichotomy of teacher as expert and student as receptacle, and recognizing resistance to knowledge. Finally, in response to critical pedagogy, the limitations of education have been made more transparent, and the acknowledgement that education is not necessarily a panacea that was once hoped (Kumashiro, 2000; Martindale, 1997).

Queer Theory

Underlying this research project is a critique of the unproblematic association of heterosexual as the norm and original sexual identity. Like feminist post-structuralism, queer theory challenges essentialist notions of orderly and fixed identity categories, and binary categorization (such as gay/straight) that maintain heteronormativity. Within queer theory all sexual identities are a social relation, existing within a social and historical context. An example of this is the relative historical newness and culturally

---

8 Like post-structuralism and post-modernism, queer theory comprises bodies of knowledge, rather than a singular body of knowledge (Britzman, 1995).
specficity of the homosexual identity. An early proponent and pioneer of queer theory is Sedgwick who exposed the contradictions of modern understandings of (homo)sexual desire, including the assumption that homosexuality identity belongs to a small and distinct section of the population and that same-sex desire is equally determining of the identities of “supposed” heterosexuals (Jagose, 1996).

In many respects this research is based in exploring the potential for anti-heterosexist pedagogy, particularly within mainstream education systems. Within an education context, queer theory challenges the modernist basis of educational strategies within anti-homophobia education, critiquing the predominance of pedagogical techniques and goals of attitudinal change, both of which are based on provision of information to supposed rational subjects (Britzman, 1995; Chorney, 1997; Eyre, 1993). In addition to de-stabilizing identity, queer pedagogy advocates disrupting binary categories and shifting the focus from “psychological explanations like homophobia, which individualizes heterosexual fear and loathing toward gay and lesbian subjects at the expense of examining how heterosexuality becomes normalized as natural” (Britzman, 1995, p. 153).

By situating sexual identity within the larger social relations of heterosexuality, queer theory interrupts and problematizes “normalized” sexual identity production, not only for those deemed “queer” (Eyre, 1996). Along with this critique is the desire to explain and excavate how pedagogy is sexualized, the way it is (explicitly and implicitly) heterosexualized

---

9 It is acknowledged that homosexual “behaviour” exists throughout time and culture, however its description as an identity is relatively new and culturally specific (Foucault, 1978).
(Sumara and Davis, 1999). Certainly within a project such as Condomania, attention will be paid to the heterosexualization of the curriculum.

Heterosexuality and normative gender relations are regarded within queer theory and post-structural framework as constructed, mutable, problematic and a site to contest. In exploring the experiences of the male educators from a feminist perspective, I am cognizant of socially granted male power. At the same time, I am attentive to the limitations of an essentialist notion of gender that fails to acknowledge differences among men and boys, as well as the power structures and meaning systems that influence both the gender identity of men and the possibilities for social change. I turn now to a brief overview of the theories of masculinity that will inform the lens through which I examine the male participants of this study. This will include Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity and theories that attempt to integrate race and culture into masculinity theory. While feminist post-structuralism and queer theory provides a partial lens for examining masculinity and sexuality, they also have their limitations. For instance, I have not found race to be well incorporated. As well, both theories have been criticized for being too theoretically situated and in some cases lacking grounding and comprehension.

**The Social Relations of Heterosexual Masculinity**

Of all the literature on masculinity produced over the past years, Connell's (1995) book *Masculinities* is most often utilized as a framework for other studies on men from feminist and critical perspectives. Although
more descriptive and less focused on the discursive constitutions of masculinity from a post-structuralist or queer theory perspective, the work of Connell is useful for this project. I have included his theory because it is dominant in the area of masculinity and because it provides an analysis of masculinity that is often absent in other work. Of particular use for this project is his analysis of hegemonic masculinity and his description of the material ‘realities’ of masculinity. Connell’s (1995) work on masculinities calls into question the dominant discourses surrounding gender, in particular: sociobiological ideology of the body as a “natural machine which produces gender differences”; the social science approach of the body as a “neutral surface on which social symbolism is imprinted”; and the “common sense” approach which proposes a combination of the two (p. 45-6).

Connell positions masculinity and femininity as “central to the cultural interpretation of gender,” a bodily experience. He does not purport a biological deterministic approach but rather views gender as a “social and historical process involving the body” that is neither fixed nor stable and where the gendered subject is both an “agent and object of practice” (p. 61). Connell highlights the importance of the body for gender, and recognizes that while biological, it is not static. “Masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex” (p. 52-3). For Connell, body-reflexive practice is inescapable in Western society’s concepts of masculinity, where the social world is formed through the individual’s interplay with social institutions and symbolism and where
"particular versions of masculinity are constituted in their circuits as meaningful bodies and embodied meanings" (p. 64).

Central to Connell’s (1995) thesis is that there are multiple masculinities, and that like femininity, masculinity is internally complex, contradictory and shifting historically. However, from a material perspective hegemony exists where a certain masculinity is culturally extolled over other forms.

Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable (Connell, 1995, p. 76).

Hegemonic masculinity is privileged; other forms of masculinity and femininity are marginalized and subordinated in relation to it (Connell, 1995; Mac an Ghail, 1994). Hegemonic masculinity is the cultural ideal that holds social authority; however, it is not “achievable” to most men. To account for this paradox, Connell (1995) outlines how the other masculinities interplay in the gendered identity of men. Complicit masculinity is a term that explains the way that masculinity retains its privilege. Even through the majority of men may not “vigorously practice hegemonic masculinity; they gain from its existence” (Connell, 1995). Connell states:

A great many men who draw on the patriarchal dividend also respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the house work, bring home the family wage, and can easily convince themselves that feminists must be bra-burning extremists (Connell, p. 80).

To explain the interplay of race and class with gender Connell created the term marginalized masculinities, an attempt to describe the relationship..
between masculinities in dominant and marginalized classes or ethnic groups. "Marginalized masculinity is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group" (p. 81). Using the example of U.S. Black male athletes, Connell points out that while Black male athletes may seem to be "exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, the fame and wealth does not trickle-down; it does not yield social authority to Black men generally" (p. 81). Unfortunately, however, race analysis is not central to Connell’s theory, and his theory lacks analysis of the multiple ways that race and culture interact with masculinity, although he does acknowledge differences in "expressions of masculinity" among various cultures. In relation to class, Connell (1989) argues that social class is integral to the collective expressions of masculinity. For instance, middle class and academically inclined working class males' display of masculinity linked to organized collective power within socially ascribed institutions. For Connell, "a man who can command this power has no need for riding leathers and engine noise to assert his masculinity. His masculinity is asserted and amplified on an immensely greater scale by society itself" (1989, p. 298).

**Anti-Racism and Masculinity**

Race and culture are often neglected in theoretical studies on masculinity, and in many post-structural accounts of gender. When race is mentioned in relation to masculinity, the assumption is often one of a unified and stable ‘man of colour.’ Connell’s work is weak in the area of race and when it does address the issue, it tends to focus on Black males.
My geographical location in Vancouver requires a lens that acknowledges the representation of Asian males, particularly East Asian or Chinese.\textsuperscript{10}

In integrating a race analysis into this project, I am informed by the work of anti-racist post-structuralists (Kumashiro, 1996), post-colonial theorists (Said, 1979; hooks 1995) and by the work of Frankenburg (1993). Examining race necessitates awareness of the historical relationship between Western societies and the production of the Other, the non-white. Kumashiro's (1996) research on queer Asian males illustrates the intersected forms of oppression based on white normativity, heteronormativity and normative masculinity. Kumashiro's work demonstrates the unique form of gendered racism specific to Asian males in North America that can cause a double oppression constituted "within the Orientalist lexicon, as associated with the feminine Other, while whiteness was privileged by being associated with the masculine norm" (1999, p. 501). Fung (1995) explores the historical specificity of Chinese males in Canada and discusses how representations of the Chinese man "still oscillates between asexual wimpiness and a degenerate, sexual depravity, reflecting and reproducing this unstable masculinity" (p. 296).

This chapter provided an outline of the main theoretical frameworks that have influenced my work as an educator and researcher. I have reviewed some of the major tenets of feminist post-structuralist and queer theory, and outlined the social organization of masculinity. Although potentially marginal, I have also recognized the necessity to integrate race in

\textsuperscript{10} I also acknowledge that a study of masculinity would have benefited from including First Nation males, but unfortunately my sample was limited by the males who participated in the Condomania program.
the discussion. My research on primarily heterosexual male sexual health educators will employ these theories as a way to understand the challenges and possibilities of designing and implementing a sexual health education program that both includes boys and attempts to challenge the structural privilege of hegemonic masculinity.
Chapter 4
Methodological Considerations

This research study uses an action oriented, qualitative case study approach to explore and analyze the subjective experiences of male sexual health educators within the Condomania program. Specifically, this research focuses on uncovering the Condomania educators' analysis and practice in relation to how issues of gender and sexuality are interpreted, constructed and dealt with.

Research Design: Qualitative, Case Study and Action Oriented

The research design is based on the type of research questions I was seeking to uncover in this study, which are primarily exploratory and descriptive. The study is action oriented\(^\text{11}\), located in my practice, and as a result my positions as coordinator of the program and as researcher are inter-related. My practice informs the research and vice versa. In its essence, this project is a synopsis of my experiences working with a group of young men concerning the issue of sexual health. In using a qualitative design, the central purpose is a descriptive investigation that centres on the participants' understandings and experience with the purpose of highlighting complexities and tensions concerning gender and sexuality (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). This investigation employs a case study approach in that it is occurring within a particular setting, a bounded

---

\(^{11}\) I use the term "action oriented" because I utilize certain principles of action research, such as the teacher co-existing as researcher to explore a practical education dilemma (Rose, 2000). However, it is not "true" action research because I am not working on finding practical answers to the dilemma through educational processes, and it is not collaborative or participatory (although the participants do have an opportunity to comment on themes of the research inquiry).
system. A case study approach is particularly beneficial when the research intent is to offer opportunities for insight, interpretation and uncovering tensions, rather than hypothesis testing or seeking definitive answers (Merriam, 1988). As this project is an interpretation of a specific bounded system, the male Condomania educators, case study is useful in that it allows for the opportunity to uncover “the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon,” in this case the experiences of the male youth educators (Merriam, p. 10).

Individual and group interviews provided the basis for data collection. Each of the educators participated in one individual interview and one focus group. In addition, journal notes were kept throughout the year to record my thoughts, concerns, ideas and general impressions, and as a means for tracking self-reflexivity. Employing more than one source of data collection helped foster a more detailed analysis and increased internal validity.

The design of this project is situated in my education practice, informed by a post-structuralist feminist conceptual framework. As such, notions common in positivist research traditions, such as objectivity, universal truths and knowledge, are problematised and deconstructed (Kvale, 1995). The narratives, both what was said as well as the silences, are analyzed within the ‘strategic essentialism’ lens, where subjectivities are seen as shifting and fragmented, as well as materially based. Thus, positioning masculinity as a shifting and contradictory subjectivity does not negate the material ‘reality’ of male privilege within our society.

---

12 One educator did not participate in the group discussion due to his absence from the province at the time.
Data Collection

Individual Interviews

Since the interviewees were educators involved with the program, selective interviewing was fairly straightforward: male youth educators were invited to participate (Appendix B). As a data collection method, interviews provided insight into the background of the educators, their reasons for getting involved, and their experiences as young male peer educators. Because I was interested in how males responded and adapted to the program, I conducted the first interview closer to the beginning of their involvement in the program in order to gain a sense of their initial opinions and experiences. All first interviews occurred after they had participated in the Condomania training program and once they had gained some experience in the classroom.

An interview schedule was developed based on the literature review as well as on my own observations of male youth educators over the past three years, and from feedback from my committee members (Appendix D). Once the set of questions had been developed, I conducted a pilot interview with an older male educator who was still involved peripherally with the program, but who was no longer a youth educator. Because he was not a new educator, his interview was not included in the analysis; however interviewing him at the onset provided me with enormous insight into reframing questions. However, while a structured set of interview questions was utilized, because I was using interactive and dynamic interviewing procedures I found it beneficial to integrate ideas and issues into later
interviews that emerged in the earlier ones (Ristock and Pennell, 1996). As well, due to the specific interests of each interviewee, certain issues and questions were raised with particular interviewees making each interview unique.

Interactive interviewing techniques were utilized resulting in conversations that progressed in several directions depending on each participant (Anderson and Jack, 1991). During interviews attention was paid to “the participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest, to unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). In order to encourage comfort and frankness I followed the advice given by Marshall and Rossman (1995) which includes allowing general themes to emerge through the use of a conversation approach and gentle probing for elaboration. I found it imperative to convey openness for diverse opinions and perspectives provided by the participants, particularly because as an interviewer I was not anonymous. I felt that a comfort level was created in the interviews, witnessed by the personal information disclosed by the educators, and the raising of issues that as a feminist researcher, I at times found both challenging and problematic (I didn’t feel they were attempting to please me!). Rather than view these disclosures with trepidation and concern, I find it a consolation that on some level my aim of openness was realized and that for the most part the youth educators felt comfortable with the interviewing process.
Focus Group

One year\textsuperscript{13} after the individual interviews a focus group was held with six of the seven participants, during their second year in the program. There were two main purposes for the focus group. One was to inform the youth educators of my research progression in order to obtain their opinions on the project and my findings, and to increase ‘validity’ (Kvale, 1995). Secondly, the focus group allowed for the incorporation of action research principles. It was important for me that this research be an applicable educational process, not just for me, but for the participants. During the course of the year since their initial interview, Condomania had grown and included the development of a gender presentation that the male participants assisted in creating and implementing in the classroom. My intention with this research was to create an opportunity for reflection on their work as educators and on issues related to sexuality and gender both in their lives and in the classrooms. It was also utilized as a means of closing the study, and allowing learning to be shared amongst the group.

Prior to the group discussion I created a set of questions which were developed after reviewing the individual interviews, in order to guide the focus group (Appendix E). These questions related to the issues not thoroughly answered in the individual interviews and issues that emerged during the individual interviews. At the beginning of the focus group I outlined the research project, conceptual framework and a summary of my findings and analysis of the individual interviews (Appendix E). Feedback

\textsuperscript{13} This was an unintended length of time and was due to employment on the part of the researcher that made it difficult to schedule the focus group at an earlier time.
was solicited from the participants about my interpretations of their interviews, stressing that the findings were my interpretations, and not the objective truth. Each participant was provided with paper and pen, and was encouraged to write down questions, concerns or general feedback. They were also encouraged to contact me via email after the focus group if they wanted clarification or additional feedback. While providing a summary of findings, it was confirming to receive affirmative nods from the group as a whole. The focus group had the additional benefit of allowing the group an opportunity to explore with one another the issues they confront when doing sex health education presentations (Chorney, 1997).

**Observations/Journal**

This study arose out of my practice, and is informed by my experiences as program coordinator. After each interview I took notes on what had occurred, my feelings, and overall impressions. As well, during the course of the year I kept notes on my observations and thoughts. While my ongoing observations are not formally represented in this project, they informed the conversations and the direction of this project.

**Validity**

The emergence of post structuralist inquiry has facilitated a shift from research centred on prediction of fact to interpretation of meaning, raising the question as to the place of validity within (social science) research (Kvale, 1995). Validity within qualitative research is defined as maintaining the “integrity and value of the research, achieved through accountability both to the participants and to those who will be affected by the outcome”
(Ristock and Pennell 1996, p. 50). Opie (1993) articulates the potential in any research for disempowerment through textual appropriation, where data is expropriated to the researcher's interests, "so that significant experiential elements which challenge or partially disrupt that interpretation may also be silenced" (p. 52).

In undertaking a critical qualitative research project, I paid significant attention to my role as both researcher and program supervisor to, as best I could, ensure validity. Techniques identified by Lather (1986), aimed at strengthening the validity in qualitative research were considered throughout this project. Triangulation, the use of more than one data source, method or theoretical scheme, was utilized and data was obtained from individual interviews, as well as a focus group and researcher journaling. The focus group acted as a means of promoting face validity, in that the participants were given access to findings and were allowed to comment on the direction of the project. All participants were given a copy of the transcripts of both the individual and group interview. As well, participants were invited to email me comments if they felt uncomfortable raising a concern within the larger group, or if they thought of something after the focus group. One participant wished to know which quotes were used in the study. I provided him with a list of all quotes I used from his interview, as well as the context in which they were used in the analysis.

Catalytic validity is the degree to which the process adheres to the experiences of the respondents and how it functions to "reorient, focus and energize" the participants to question their current ideas and practices.
To encourage catalytic validity the individual interviews functioned as a dynamic process where I not only acquired information, but provided an opportunity to engage in a learning situation concerning sexuality and gender issues. The focus group functioned as a way for participants to be informed of the issues raised by the study and to participate in a dynamic learning process. Finally, in addition to re-energizing participants, I, as the coordinator, was re-energized and a result of this project was the creation, in conjunction with youth educators, of a gender presentation that was piloted in Vancouver schools during the 2001/02 school year.

The Participants: Youth Educators

Each fall, Condomania recruits young people for the position of youth educators. Training takes place in October and November and youth educators present in school classrooms beginning in late fall. The year of this research project, 2000/01, there were 8 male volunteers. Seven male volunteers participated in the study; one did not participate because he left the program for other work prior to the end of the school year.

Six of the interviews took place between January and May 2000, after the youth educators had presented in the classroom and exhibited a degree of comfort with the program and the material. One exception to this was EY, who did not participate as fully as the other presenters during the 2000/01 Condomania year and was interviewed in the beginning of the 2001/02 year.
Participants were informed of the research project at the initial training session, where the topic of the research project was shared and it was reinforced that their participation was completely voluntary, that not participating in the research would in no way affect their overall participation in the program. At this time a letter outlining the research project was provided to each male youth educator (Appendix B). Once informed of the study, participants were asked to inform me if they wanted to participate in the research. All keenly agreed to participate and interviews were set up with each educator via email or telephone. Interviews took place in cafes, at the university or at my home.

Interviews began with a synopsis of the research project and informing the participants that their participation was completely voluntary. As the program supervisor, I found it important to reiterate that the project was not an evaluation of their level of knowledge or skills in the classroom. At the interview each participant was given a copy of the consent form to read and sign (Appendix C). At the end of each interview I filled out a journal form where I indicated some demographic information about the participants and summarized my impressions of the interview.

At the time of the interview, all participants were between the ages of 18 and 22 years. Each participant was given the opportunity to select a pseudonym, many enthusiastically inventing their “new” identity. These pseudonyms are used throughout this text. One identified as bisexual, the remaining six identified as straight. Three of the males, “Tom”, “N-Man” and “Porn Star” are white and were born and raised in the Lower Mainland. Two
males, "Locklin" and "Brandon", refer to themselves as CBCs (Canadian born Chinese): one was raised in East Vancouver; the other grew up in a small northern town. Two others were immigrants: "Leigh", a Black male from South Africa who immigrated with some of his family when he was 17 years, and "EY," emigrated from Taiwan to Vancouver with his parents when he was in grade 5. All seven of these males had finished high school and with the exception of three - Porn Star, Tom and Leigh - all were currently studying at university.

Data Analysis

Like most qualitative research studies, making sense of the data gathered by the interviews and focus group was inductive and continuous, occurring throughout the process of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988). Rather than attempting to expose definite conclusions to the problem(s), the object of this research is to raise questions and unveil contradictions regarding sexual health education and the involvement of primarily heterosexually identified male educators.

The process of data analysis began with the transcribing of interviews, an extremely beneficial process because it enabled me, the researcher, to reacquaint myself with the interview and the themes that emerged. Interviews were read more than once, with themes manually highlighted. Material from both individual interviews and the focus group was examined with attention to the issues that emerged in the literature review regarding gender, sexuality, masculinity and sex education, with particular attention
to how heterosexual masculinity was both challenged and reproduced by their involvement in the program, in both their personal lives and work as educators. Through reading and re-reading interviews attention was given not only to what was said by the participants, but also to what was not said, to hesitation around certain issues, to gaps or silences in knowledge concerning gender and sexuality (Anderson and Jack, 1991). Themes were identified and organized, and matched with quotes in order to provide a visual sense of the prevalence of themes. Once highlighted, themes were noted on sticky notes for organizational purposes and to link issues.

**The Writing Process and Critical Analysis**

Certainly, the themes I have acknowledged do not represent all of the content mentioned in the interviews. Rather, what I have highlighted is that which spoke to me, and that which related to the research issues. I must admit, I experienced apprehension in selecting themes and analyzing the interview content, particularly because I was both researcher and supervisor. It was with great caution that I set out to interpret the interviews, and was anxious about misrepresenting their words or creating conflict through my critical approach.

In concurrence with post-structuralist methodology, during analysis I attempted to “think outside the confines of dominant assumptions and [my own] interpretations, to invent alternative truths” (Ristock and Pennel, 1996 p. 79). At the same time potential tensions within action oriented qualitative research were recognized, between consideration of the ‘voice’ of the participants and the need to analyze those voices from a critical
perspective (Ristock and Pennell, 1996). This tension was amplified by my role as both researcher and program coordinator. As supervisor of the participants I experienced a dilemma: from a position of trust, as their supervisor, I engaged the participants in a dialogue and at the same time was conducting a critical research project that was not necessarily affirming. While I admired the incredible dedication to the program, this analysis centres on deconstruction and uncovering tensions and contradictions, rather than focusing on the individual. Following the suggestions of Ristock and Pennel (1996 p. 96), I sought to:

- Respect the experiences and positions of the participants, contextualizing opinions and views that are outside my personal and professional opinions and expectations.
- Adhere to principles of self-reflexivity by remaining “accountable to rather than detached from those whose positions are being interpreted.”
- Inviting reflection rather than striving to arrive at one final solution.

**Integrating Self-Reflexivity Throughout the Research Process**

Self-reflexivity is central to critical feminist research and is identified as “self-consciousness with the goal of establishing non-exploitative relations between the researcher and the communities researched” (Ristock and Pennel, 1996 p. 48). Maintaining self-reflexivity throughout the research process meant continually reflecting on my own assumptions and beliefs. It was vital to position myself not as a researcher searching for objectivity, but as someone exploring a variety of questions and not seeking
a single, correct answer. In order to build and maintain a relationship of reciprocity with the participants, interviews were conducted in an "interactive, dialogic manner that requires self-disclosure on the part of the researcher" (Lather, 1991 p. 66). Integrating the notion of transparency among the participants - making visible why and what I am doing and how I am doing it – was central (Ristock and Pennell, 1996). I was forthright in disclosing the political perspectives of the research, including the feminist perspective that guides the project. Research design flexibility was maintained through a process that accounted for learning that occurred throughout the research process, both from the respondents' remarks and my own reflections.

**Dual Position: Conducting Research Within One's Workplace**

This research is situated in my practice as coordinator of the Condomania program. I acknowledge that the greatest advantage of this research project - my involvement with this unique program and my relationship with the educators - was potentially a source for obstacles and dilemmas. Although the educators are considered volunteers and not paid employees, I am their supervisor. As such, I was aware that my position could potentially silence or cause resistance in the educator's participation with this project (Roman, 1993). These questions are compounded by the controversial and sensitive nature of the topic itself. I had to be attentive to the possibility that the study may be influenced by the educators' desire to be portrayed in a progressive light, in order to not appear homophobic or sexist.
My location in this research project was further complicated by my sexual and gender identity and by the gender, race and sexuality dynamics at play. I was mindful of how my gender might affect the information disclosed during the interviews. Would my identity as an out white lesbian, who was also their ‘boss,’ restrict the comfort of some or all of the participants? Would the desire to be seen as ‘politically correct’ influence the dialogue? I had to be cognizant of how my identity as a queer woman affected the participants’ comfort in divulging information related to dealing with issues of gender and sexual identity. At the same time, I am mindful of my femme lesbian identity, that I pass as “appropriately” female and that my appearance is not heterosexually “disturbing.”

Would a “butch” identified lesbian researcher maintain a different relationship to the participants?

While I cannot presume concrete answers to these questions, at the end of this research project I can make some speculations, and speak about what I did to minimize the impact of my position. During the interviewing I felt as though the majority of participants were open, and were perhaps more receptive than if I were a male interviewer. I found that my identity as a lesbian allowed them to be more open about their own sexuality in the interviews, and while I wondered if it would affect their own opinions of sexuality, I found that they were honest about their own difficulties in dealing with homophobia in the classroom. As much as possible I attempted to create an interview environment that allowed the participants

---

14 I use the term disturbing in this regard because my outward appearance is not threatening, although I would argue the identity as a femme lesbian can be disturbing and disruptive within heteronormativity.
the opportunity to reflect upon their ideas, values and opinions. As the coordinator of the program I was cautious not to position myself as an objective professional, but as a subjective insider. In many ways, this research project was an incredible learning experience for my own educational practice.

**Limitations of this Study**

While I am aware of the multiple experiences of difference that could be explored in relation to sexuality, due to the limitations of space and time I had to make choices. As a result, this project primarily deals with sexuality, gender and race. My focus on race is limited due to the composition of the group: comprised of mainly white, Asian and one black male. In Vancouver it would have been beneficial to include First Nation males; unfortunately there were none in the existing Condomania group during the year of this study. Social class is not a primary research focus, although where possible I have made a rudimentary attempt to address it. Unfortunately, disability is not addressed in this project, primarily because I could not address it sufficiently within the confines of this study.

This research project does not attempt to divulge definitive resolutions concerning male involvement in sexual health programs. Nor does it intend to provide solutions to concerns related to gender, sexuality and anti-oppressive education. Rather, the intention is to explore the complexities and to provide insight into the tensions and contradictions that emerge within one particular educational program. With this in mind, I now turn to an exploration of the research data.
Chapter 4

“One in a Million”:
The Experiences of Male Sexual Health Peer Educators

This chapter explores data that emerged from the research with male sexual health educators and highlights the themes related to the production, reproduction and potential disruption of gender and sexuality norms within the Condomania program. While interviewing the young men I heard a range of views on a variety of issues related to gender and sexuality, including their perceptions of gender and sexuality within their own lives and in their work as educators. A central finding of this research is not surprising: hegemonic heterosexism continues to be a pervasive discourse, both consciously and unconsciously in the lives of young men, present and influential even for those who place themselves outside the parameters of this discourse. While incorporating young men into the creation of future discourses about sexual health education and promotion is worthy, and I would argue necessary, the prevalence and persuasiveness of hegemonic masculinity suggests that this task is not as straightforward as many health promoters or educators believe it to be. Contradictions and tensions abound throughout the study, and within the subjectivities of the male educators. They highlight the appropriateness of utilizing a poststructuralist perspective, which sees contradictions as offering unique moments of learning and potential for social change.
How Male Youth Educators Understand their Work

Becoming a Youth Educator

For the majority of youth educators who participated in this study, becoming involved with the Condomania program was not due to a personal desire to educate others about safer sex. Rather, they were interested in the program because of a desire to improve their personal and job skills, and many were referred and encouraged to join the program by teachers or female friends. The ratio of interested candidates is about fifteen female volunteers to one male. Male participants' lack of awareness and passion about the topic of sexual health conflicts with other studies of peer education programs which demonstrate that those who become involved most often individuals have an established interest in the topic. This is likely indicative of the pioneering strength of the Condomania program in including heterosexual males into the discussion of safer sex and sexual health.

The interviews reveal that at the time of entering the program, participants exhibited some ambivalence concerning the issue of sexual health and heterosexual males' relationship to safer sex.\(^{15}\) Explanations for this may be linked to the situating of dominant discourses of sexual health as peripheral to male accountability or interest\(^{16}\). Locklin exhibited surprise when he learned that people might not practice safer sex consistently:

\(^{15}\) Two participants articulated that they were very comfortable with the topic and their knowledge base prior to joining Condomania.

\(^{16}\) Literature suggests the contradiction within sexual health education, where it is located outside male interests and accountability (see Doyal, 1994; Hilton, 2001) and at the same time reinforces and fails to disrupt dominant masculinity discourses (Redman, 1996; Whatley, 1988).
Some of my friends I would say it's [safer sex] in their system, it's natural. When you say that a lot people [don't use condoms] that's not the first thing that comes to my mind, that people aren't having safer sex...when I first heard that I was surprised.

He later admits that he hasn't talked about safer sex with his friends, but "senses" that they would use condoms.

One participant became involved in the program because of a personal experience with HIV that resulted in a subsequent desire to make sure that younger youth know about safer sex so that they do not make the same mistake that he witnessed when a friend acquired a STD from unsafe sex. Two others said they were attracted to the topic of sex and condoms. When asked what attracted him to the Condomania program, Porn Star states "Sex. I mean that and include it in my spiel I tell the kids."

Self-assurance regarding sexual knowledge by some participants was juxtaposed with other participants' who felt they lacked awareness and knowledge of issues related to safer sex education. Three participants acknowledged that they had no idea what they would be doing once they were 'working' as youth educators. Three mentioned that participation in this program provided a first exposure to condoms, or at least basic information about condom use.

I found out about Condomania through a friend...she said 'you'd be perfect for Condomania.' I didn't know what it was about...I don't think I knew exactly what it was about until we had those training sessions...I was a little surprised, it was in-depth and I didn't know...I guess I did know that it was sex education and being youth educators, but it caught me by surprise and I did learn a lot of things. Brandon

In terms of silences, it is interesting to note that five of the youth educators in this study refrained when possible from using the word 'sex'
during their interview. This is obviously indicative of the lack of comfort with the topic, a topic that is so taboo within our society. However, it also led me to consider the way that certain silences are translated into the classroom, reproducing the shaming of sex.

**Non-Existent and Mediocre: Male Educators Talk about their Sexual Health Backgrounds**

All seven youth educators felt that the sex education they received in schools was mediocre, and for most it was practically non-existent in their families, although two participants mentioned receiving positive sex education from their parents (N-man and Tom). In the interviews, participants described their experience with school-based sex education as too infrequent, rigid in delivery, centred on reproductive organs and abstinence, neglecting issues faced by teens, and imbedded in a curriculum delivery that did not allow for discussion and positive participation. Such descriptions correspond with literature on sex education (Harrison and Hillier, 1999; Hilton, 2001; Measor and Tiffin, 1996; Whatley, 1988). Participants criticized the approach of school-based sex education, in particular that it was delivered by teachers, counselors and nurses who were “not like them”: female, older and conservative.

I guess it [sex education] didn’t seem as real in the sense that the nurse was like six times as old as I was. She was way older; she didn’t seem as one of me. *Locklin*

Sex ed I had in school was mediocre. The nurse was really anti anything that wasn’t regular. She claimed to have been married for 20 odd years, only had one sexual partner, waited to marriage; it was...as far as she was concerned the only way to do things. She was anti anal sex, anti experimentation. She got really edgy when she was talking about oral sex or anything like that. It’s not really about
sexual health, but information on diseases and whatever that nurse’s personal thing is. (*N-Man*)

Experiences with sex education are differentiated by factors such as gender, class, and race (Irvine, 1995). As previously established, boys tend to receive less and different sexual health information in homes and schools than girls. Leigh talked about being one of the first ‘coloured’ South Africans to go to a previously all white school, and the negative messages he received in his sex education classes:

The head master came and he just sat there and he showed us a couple of videos that had nothing to do with sex...like they didn’t explain anything to do with sex. And the counselor came in and showed us a diagram of the human body and stuff like that. But it wasn’t in detail and we weren’t allowed to ask questions. Once the headmaster found a condom on the school premises and there was this huge thing and he found out who brought it to school and that kid was suspended.

EY, who immigrated to Vancouver as a child, did not participate in sex education because of the school structure and internal biases. In his view “teachers assume with ESL... you go to ESL classes and miss out on the important curriculum like PE and sex education.” His experience points to the cultural dynamics that effected his sex education, both within school and in the home, demonstrating the interplay of race and culture within sex education.

I was afraid to ask questions about sex or relationships for that matter. I’m not sure if it’s because I’m a guy or because I come from a traditional background where I was raised not to ask questions...when I immigrated here I spoke few words of English and people expect you not to speak, so I keep my mouth shut...they [Canadian society] expect Asians to be more strict, not necessarily strict, but more sensitive about sex health issues. They would be more careful about how they talk about sexual health in front of you because they are afraid to offend you in some ways. (*EY*)
Not About Me! Males and Safer Sex

It varied among the participants as to whether they felt that their peers were practicing safer sex; however all acknowledged that safer sex, particularly as it concerned STD prevention, was not seen as particularly relevant to heterosexual young men. Contradictions emerged in the participants' discussion of safer sex and condom use: almost all participants insisted that condoms are 'common knowledge' among their peer group, and at the same time asserted that pregnancy prevention is the most common reason for using a condom (if it is used at all). This perspective concurs with the literature on heterosexual males and safer sex; condoms are known, however, they are usually not associated with STDs, but with pregnancy prevention, further indicating that STD transmission continues to not be perceived as a genuine threat within straight male culture(s). It seems evident that heterosexual males are still less likely, as a group, to be concerned with safer sex and pregnancy prevention. The following quote from Brandon illustrates some of the dynamics within straight male culture(s) concerning sexuality and risk-taking:

I do have some friends that absolutely insist on it [wearing a condom], and others who just don't care. Like if a girl doesn't ask, who cares....they won't wear one. Because it's all about scoring for these guys, it's like whatever I have to do, as long as I get something. (Brandon)

All educators mentioned that they noticed a difference in the reaction of male and female students to the Condomania presentation, and to them as male presenters. It was intriguing how quickly these participants came to recognize the level of knowledge and openness possessed by the female
students towards sexual health information in the class. Participants in this study found that boys in the classroom presented themselves as less interested in the material and were more challenging behaviorally in the classroom, intent on giving the impression that they possessed all the information they required about sex and sexual health. These characteristics were attributed by the participants to the lack of permission within society and boy culture to being interested in sexual health or at least talking about the topic in a serious manner.

**Seeing “it” Differently: Being a Youth Educator**

Being a Condomania youth educator was viewed by the participants as a positive development, and five of the youth educators spoke about their involvement in the program as not only increasing their skills, but changing how they saw the world, themselves and their relationships. Some of the youth educators mentioned that Condomania was their first experience in undertaking serious discussions about sexual health and related issues. For Brandon, he began to think about male accountability in a new way:

Yeah [I began to see sex] in a totally different way. Responsibility is attached to sex. Whereas if I hadn’t joined Condomania I wouldn’t have attached so much responsibility to it.

As mentioned above, possession of information prior to their involvement in Condomania ranged from those who acknowledged having very little 'correct' information before the program to a small minority (two participants) who felt that their knowledge level had not changed. Interestingly and perhaps indicative of the interplay of race and masculinity in this situation, it was two white male educators who spoke absolutely
about their prior knowledge of sexual health, illustrated by N-Man’s belief that: “By the time I got to grade 8 I knew pretty much everything that there was to know [about sex].”

**Boy Culture and Sex/uality**

*Masculinity is a bond, a glue, to the patriarchal world. It is the thing that makes the world mine, that makes it more or less comfortable to live in...from the moment when I learned, unconsciously, there were not only two sexes but a social significance to the sexes, my own self worth became measured against a yardstick of gender. (Kaufman 1993, p.148)*

The discussion so far indicates that the experience of the participants parallels the literature on males and sexual health, as outlined earlier in this paper. I will now examine some of the dominant themes that emerged throughout this study in relation to boy culture and sexual health, including how it was both reproduced and disrupted by the male educators in their work in the classroom and in their personal lives. As mentioned earlier, ‘boy culture,’ the social ‘ideal’ manhood, shapes the subjectivity of males, regardless of whether they actually correspond with the male norm. Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) argue that the school system, and sex education curriculum in particular, is a location that provides young males an opportunity to assert their masculinity. Within Condomania how are dominant conceptions of masculinities both reinforced and challenged?
Responding to the Sexuality Threat: “Knowing it All” and Avoiding with Humour

Similar to other research on boys and sexual health, the youth educators in this project found that boy students were usually resistant to information about sexual health and all expressed concern about the manner in which boys dealt with sex and sexual health information. According to Connell (1995) rationality and sexuality are two significant factors in defining one’s masculinity. Sexuality embodies masculinity, and moreover, serves as a potential threat to the fundamental elements of masculinity - rational control and knowledge (p. 175). As a result, sexuality remains a source of tension for young males, manifesting in behaviours and attitudes, such as thinking they ‘know it all’, or at least, pretending that they know it all, and utilizing humour as an avoidance tool. Humour comes into play in an attempt to manage uneasiness with the ‘irrationality’ of sexuality. As demonstrated by various theorists, the cultural (in this case, North American) ideal concerning male sexuality is rigidly enforced and policed: males who are perceived as not adequately within this norm are often marginalized (Connell, 1995).

Participants noticed that boys in the classroom often displayed the attitude of knowing it all. For the educators this was a mind-set they were familiar with, as they too experienced the social pressure to exhibit public knowledge and experience about sex or risk being marginalized within their peer culture.
Some boys they try to act macho and think they know it all. I’ve seen that, they’re like, I don’t need this presentation....Guys think they know it all, but it’s usually misinformation. *Brandon*

Most of the time I find that the girls are more willing to listen. The guys pretend not to listen but they actually are more interested in listening. Girls ask more questions. Guys want to know more but are afraid to ask questions. I think for the girls that they are comfortable enough to be asking questions and they know they won’t be judged...won’t be judged as in, when a girl asks, the rest of the girls won’t be asking ‘why do you want to know, are you having sex?’ But for the guys, if they ask, it means they are having sex or they want to have sex. *EY*

The apparent disinterest in sexual health, according to educators, is a result of social factors that impede their involvement. The most prominent hindrance identified is the lack of tolerance within our society for males to demonstrate a serious interest in sexual health issues, indicated by the role that humour plays in boy culture, particularly concerning the issue of sex. Joking about sex was both common in the participants’ peer groups, as well as something they observed in the classroom. For the participants, humour functions to camouflage male interest in sexual health.

[Males joke about sex] because they are uncomfortable. I think they are uncomfortable talking about sexual issues with a girl they are not intimate with, or even with girls they are intimate with. Even with their girlfriends it’s hard. So they tend to joke about it, so that their friends can either take it seriously or not seriously, up to them. ...For the joke is for anyone to take it any way they want, it’s kinda like they don’t have to make a decision of what others will think of them. *EY*

Potential marginalization operates as a threat for most males, a means of maintaining their compliance with hegemonic masculinity. The following quote by *EY* demonstrates the way that gender identity is linked to heterosexual sexual activity for boys and passivity for (‘good’) girls.
Girls are able to ask questions and the rest of the girls won’t think they are having sex because they won’t expect girls to be having sex. But they expect guys to be having sex. So once a guy asks a question, like how do you put on a condom, or asks about condom size or something. The other guys are like ‘why is yours too big, you tried it before or something?’ EY

Within sexualized arenas such as schools or peer culture, humour functions to conceal embarrassment, inexperience, or sexist attitudes. A ramification of this is that it can suppress openness and potentially diminish the impact of offensive remarks, thereby eradicating the legitimacy to challenge or address such comments. The following quote from the focus group is based on comments participants made concerning how members of their peer groups joke about their work as youth educators, about sex, often with an offensive quality.

Leigh: When that kind of situation happens [peer male friends make jokes about sex or women] it’s like do you say anything because the guy’s going to blow it off and joke about it? EY: Sometimes you realize it’s just a joke, you take it as a joke. In your mind you’re like, that’s not right, but then it’s like he’s joking...it’s not serious.

**Male-to-Male: Working as a Youth Educator**

Widespread support for males taking a more proactive role in sex education was identified by all interviewees. Utilizing males as ‘peer’ educators was recognized by the participants as an effective approach to disrupting inequalities and stereotypes concerning sexuality and gender, as well as in promoting safer sex among boys. Locklin highlights what he sees as the effect of older male youth mentoring adolescent males:

Young boys...they have to be aware that this stuff is going to happen and that this stuff is important and that on top of how funny it is, how serious it is. And basically, I’m always talking about the link,
once you make the link and you're talking about it seriously and that it's real to you, then it becomes serious and real to them too.

While the participants saw the tremendous benefits of male-to-male education, they also recognized that, as educators, they employ strategies operative within boy culture in order to win the respect and attention of male students. For example, Leigh mentions his use of humour as an entry point to a more serious discussion in the classroom, something he finds particularly useful when working with adolescent males:

A lot of the times in the presentation with young guys I tend to joke around to get them involved. Because I know the female presenter is not going to be doing that to the extent that I know the guys...very slick. And it doesn't have to be a big thing, a small little hint at something, and the guys get over it and they're totally into the presentation and responsive.

Many participants acknowledge both the unconscious and implicit operation of male authority in the classroom, although it is not necessarily perceived by the participants as problematic.

You can see when the female is talking it's just sort of when is this going to end. But when the guy brings up something it's like that's cool. If I come in when the female is talking and they are paying attention and I'm like what about this and this and the guys are like [snaps his fingers]...I think it's a penis thing. It's a guy thing. Still in society I think males respect other males more than they respect women. Unfortunately, that's the way society works now. Tom

Five of the educators acknowledged the amazing opportunity that participation in Condomania provided for discussing issues normally not permitted for men within dominant society. EY enjoys having the opportunity to talk about issues that you don’t really talk about in my circle...issues we talk about in a joke fashion, but it’s nice to be in an environment
where serious issues are taken seriously instead of a joke. Once in a while it’s needed to be open and talk about it and not be judged.

The experience of male educators can be examined within the context of masculinity as a combination of both power and alienation, something that I will discuss later, in the section on peer networks. Male bonding is often perceived as a common occurrence in male groups; however Kaufman (1994) argues that males lack opportunities to create meaningful relationships with other males, and with women. He suggests that institutions and sites of male bonding (sports, locker rooms, and religious institutions) are places where men collectively exercise their power, but remain isolated in very meaningful ways from each other. As a result, the mythology of male bonding functions so that men remain blind to the self doubts that are consciously experienced by virtually all adolescent males and then consciously or unconsciously by them as adults. In a strange way this isolation is key to preserving patriarchy (Kaufman 1994, p. 151).

**The Privilege to Speak: The Supremacy of ‘Experience’**

Entitlement to speak and be respected within the classroom situation is linked to several factors that are interrelated: gender, race, class, and adherence to hegemonic masculinity, which in the circumstances of this thesis, is often in light of one’s perceived sexual experience. As coordinator, I observed distinctions between the participants in the classroom, and five participants mentioned in the interview that they recognized and experienced the different levels of authoritative voice held by male presenters in the classroom.
Possessing “voice” – the privilege to be heard and respected - is related to one’s gender. Morgan (1994) demonstrates how rhetoric\textsuperscript{17} of ‘reason’ and ‘experience’ are ways in which men claim ownership to knowledge, which “derives from and constructs masculinity” (p. 103). In relation to gender dynamics within the classroom, Brandon notes that

> When you’re in the classroom, you’re like okay let’s get started, and you have authority to get things going, they listen to you. But sometimes when the girls [female educators] do it, the guys are like [not paying attention].

Another participant echoed the observation that male presenters hold authority as a result of their gender position.

> When you are saying stuff like....that it’s less credible if you are putting on a condom, and a female says yeah from what I heard it feels more...but if they hear it from a guy, a guy will probably be like, he says it, and so it’s probably true then. EY

Another participant, N-man, observed that knowledge is validated in the classroom through establishing with students that you “know what you’re talking about” by demonstrating sexual experience. Within the context of a heteronormative school system, establishing authority to speak about sexual health entails performing and affirming one’s heterosexuality. This supremacy of experience serves to further marginalize queer identities and to solidify hegemonic masculinity. When asked to share his point of view on the impact of a male educator in the classroom, N-man stated that that his sexual identity is often questioned as a result of his role as youth educator and his perspective on issues related to gender equality, which he feels are unusual among males his age.

\textsuperscript{17} Morgan (1994) uses the term ‘rhetoric’ to indicate that such techniques are not necessarily overt or even recognized by the “parties involved. They are woven into statements of the world.” p. 103
I do my best to be as equalitarian as I can [in the classroom]...and what comes across is ‘man that guy is gay’, for the most part. They ask me all the time. [Why do they ask you if you are gay?] Because of the way I deal with issues or the way I respond to them. They say things like ‘Bitch please’ or ‘Man girls just want to give head’ or ‘girls are for fucking’. The way I respond [is by saying] ‘You must not be a real man’ and I back my point up to the extent they understand that I know what I’m talking about. That I have relationships with women and I understand that that [being sexist] doesn’t work. Understand that this isn’t theory speaking, that this is experience N-Man.

This quote illustrates how male sexuality and voice can be questioned when behaviour is perceived as divergent from hegemonic masculinity. As well, the rhetoric of ‘experience’ is used to distance oneself from particular behaviours, in this case sexual activities that are marginalized socially (being gay), to affirm authority based on his experience as a ‘real man.’

In a similar vein, Tom states that his lack of anal sex experience indicates that he shouldn’t raise the topic in the classroom. “I mean I’ve never had anal sex...I don’t have expertise on it and I’m not going to preach something I don’t know” (italics added). The operation of heteronormativity is exemplified in this quote, for this participant anal sex is associated with queer behaviour, it is “Othered”. Mentioning it signifies ‘preaching’ or ‘promoting,’ rather than educating, as is the case when vaginal intercourse is raised. Othering of ‘deviant sexuality’ such as anal sex is a common response of heterosexism within educational settings; I have experienced it as an educator within the school system.

Morgan (1994) demonstrates the workings of the rhetoric of experience within masculinity and how “men lay claim to reason ...supported by and woven into claims based on experience” (p. 107). This
was certainly exemplified in this study by the way ‘experience’ created hierarchies often based in relation to (perceived) level of sexual experience. Literature on masculinity and race speaks to the Othering of males, for example males who lack sexual experience, and in the case of East Asian males, the subordination and Othering of those deemed de-masculinized and de-sexualized (Kumashiro, 1999). Subtle forms of racism are at play within the Condomania program. For example, ascendency of sexual experience serves to maintain a form of racist hegemonic masculinity by marginalizing males who are not seen as exhibiting sexual prowess or experience. In the following quote an Asian presenter illustrates his feelings about which youth educator he feels is best equipped to tackle the issue of girls feeling pressured by their boyfriend to have sex.

I think that a presenter who is really strong in that sense, like “Porn Star” for example...I think he’s really great for something like that. Because he’s outspoken and they know about him and they see him...even when they see him, they are like okay this guy knows what he is talking about...the way he presents himself, the way he’s so outspoken, when he says something he says it with authority, ‘I’m speaking from experience kind of deal.’ Brandon

Interestingly, for Brandon, the most qualified male in his eyes is the presenter who possesses ‘authority.’ It raises the question: what constitutes authority in the classroom? Brandon’s quote reveals his observation that younger youth are likely to accept advice about sexual matters when it comes from a loud, big, ‘cool’ and sexually suave male. When interviewing Brandon I pondered the operation of racist hegemonic

---

18 During the creation of the gender presentation it was also raised by the group of educators that the “best” male presenters for the job were those who appeared to be the most heterosexual and masculine (interestingly, they were always white).
masculinity in consideration of the best 'man' for the job. What role does Porn Star's white, seemingly heterosexual maleness play in Brandon's assessment of his appeal to younger youth?

It is within the context of racism and masculinity that I now explore the experiences of Brandon, a self identified CBC (Canadian Born Chinese) educator who raised the issue of his sexual experiences, in particular his virginity. In his interview, Brandon expresses insecurities regarding his virginity and his perceived lack of authority in the classroom, which he related to his not having appropriate 'experience.' Brandon felt that his lack of sexual experience meant that he didn't have the proper foundation for being a youth educator, and this affected both his work as a youth educator and his relationships within the youth educator group. Brandon's interpretation illustrates our culture's restrictive view of sexuality where sex/sexuality is only present if it involves genital (heterosexual) sex. Such a restricted view marginalizes other sexual experiences, and continues to omit desire and pleasure from the conceptualization of sexuality (Harrison and Hillier, 1999). Surprisingly, during the course of the year, Brandon bravely 'came out' as a virgin within the group as a whole and provided an opportunity to discuss issues associated with males and virginity in relation to being a youth educator on a more personal level.
Peer Networks

Peer networks are essential to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity, functioning to ensure compliancy. Martino’s research with adolescent males demonstrates how group norms and subsequent self-surveillance play a role in the establishment of “fashioning a desirable heterosexual cool masculinity” (2000, p. 103). Earlier I mentioned that while the notion of male bonding pervades our social concept of male peer cultures, in practice such cultures are often void of substantial relationships (Kaufman, 1994). The importance of peer networks in passing on information about sexual health was highlighted by the participants. Peer networks were also a source of information that many participants found to be substandard.

I’m surprised that girls have the correct knowledge about sex, because I’m used to the guy atmosphere and getting the wrong information. Whereas I find that girls, maybe they know less, but they know more correct stuff. So girls have more quality [information]. ...guys will take information, it doesn’t depend what the information is, and it’s who they get it from... [I learned about sex] basically from friends. I have an older brother and learned some stuff from him, like condoms and stuff like that. Basically, just getting small bits of information in different situations. Leigh

Learning about sex occurs through informal peer networks, which in turn exert tremendous pressure on young males to live up to the male cultural ideal. It was evident in the interviews that a chief advantage to being in Condomania was the provision of a peer network, providing a comfortable space to discuss sexual health issues with other males, topics that are uncommon in male peer circles. Such an opportunity was perceived as quite radical, providing a means for the males to challenge a
central aspect of masculinity, such as the pressure to ‘be the sturdy oak,’ by not exhibiting emotions or vulnerability publicly (Hong, 2000):

I think that every male in Condomania is open enough to talk about stuff that most guys are not open to talk about. It’s like with my buddies, you just don’t talk about it [gay, lesbian, sex issues]. Whereas females can talk about anything, it almost makes me wish I was female because they can openly talk about their relationships, whereas guys are almost trained to control the outside of their person, where inside they have all these thoughts and opinions that they can’t tell people because they are afraid of being ridiculed. *Tom*

Normative notions of masculinity are also challenged through youth educators’ new role as ambassadors within their own peer culture, where they take on the role of educating their friends about condoms, STDs, sexual identity and even relationships with girls. For many, this is a completely new and often unexpected role. Brandon’s quote demonstrates how in his new role as Condomania youth educator, he becomes a sexual health adviser in his peer culture:

It’s all about scoring for the guys, it’s like whatever, if I have to wear one, as long as I get something. When we talk about things like who you met last night...we never talked about so did you use a condom, we never say stuff like that. It’s like so did you go back to her place, and they’re like, yeah I scored, totally. I’ve found since being in Condomania I’m always the one to ask them, so did you use protection? Laughter...they’re like why the hell are you asking me this? I’m like well anytime you do need it just come to me and be safe kinda deal, it’s funny. *Brandon*

I have the same thoughts, views, ideas as a lot of people [male friends], although they treat their girlfriends like crap. It’s like [I say to them] ‘why are you treating your girlfriend like that?’ and its like, ‘she’s just my girlfriend.’ But [I say] she’s still a person. *Tom*
“Not Us”:
Reproducing, Rejecting and Reformulating Boy Culture

Throughout the interviews participants made an effort to distance themselves from typical macho guys and from behaviour they believed to be ‘stereotypical male.’ Separation from macho behaviour came across not only in what they said, but also in how it was said and in the silences, what was not said. For the most part, offensive or stereotypically sexist behaviour, as the participants saw it, was something ‘those men’ did, as opposed to something that they did. Among the participants there was very little recognition of the subtle ways that male privilege permeates our culture; this recognition was a desired outcome of both Condomania and this research project. In the interviews, when discussing gender issues, there was a tendency to utilize dichotomies to separate ‘good guys’ from the ‘bad guys. Porn Star quite harshly states that he has a “low opinion of men, if they are not my friends then...let’s face it men are a bunch of pigs.” Leigh also expresses concern about male behaviour and attitudes:

A lot of them [teen boys] have misconceptions about sex in general and sexuality and a lot of them don’t know what it is...and they don’t take into account other people’s opinions or other people’s decisions.

Youth educators perceived themselves as different from other males as a result of their opinions about women and their desire for equality between the sexes. Reformulating what constituted maleness was evident in three male educators’ aspiration to be “more like a girl” or at least have access to what they believed to be the advantages of being female. This desire was most often stated as a result of the lack of social permission for
males to be expressive and communicative, without an acknowledgement of the difficulties or restrictions of being a girl. While elaborating on the gendered experience in sex education class, Porn Star states that as a male, discussing gender discrepancy is complicated because he feels closely akin to female subjectivity, or at least his perception of femaleness.

I don’t really attach labels [to gender] because honestly I swear I’ve got 60% wiring in my head. Why do I say that? Because I think like a girl...when something bad happens I’m like oh my god that’s so horrible [says in a high voice] and when I have problems I like to talk about it with a friend and then all of a sudden I feel better.

There was little acknowledgement of the participants responsibility or actions in maintaining gender and sexuality norms, with one exception. In speaking about his experiences growing up in a Northern B.C. town, Brandon recognizes homophobia among his peer group.

Totally, there was pressure not to be seen as gay, especially in the change rooms during phys ed class...it’s a joke and people laugh at it [being gay], but I look back on those years and I think what if one of my friends really was gay and they were there during those times when we were expressing all that...and I feel really bad about it.

Each interviewee, in some way, remarked that they did not see themselves as stereotypical or macho guys, yet at the same time I found that the white participants, in particular, spoke of themselves as “fairly regular.” N-Man describes the group as “all relatively regular men”, while Tom describes what he sees as “typical”:

As a male I consider myself not typical, but I have the same mentality of a lot of guys.... I’m very physical, go kickboxing, go the gym, and you know, testosterone kind of stuff. Tom

As mentioned, there was a common theme in the interviews for participants to separate themselves from ‘regular guys’ and ‘macho’
behaviour in particular, biological determinism was a common explanation for male behaviour and attitudes. Three white participants mentioned matter-of-factly that males 'stick together,' participate in 'male bonding' and are propelled by hormones and genitals that influence male behaviour beyond an individual's control. As Tom states, “guys all think the same...with the wrong head.”

Negotiating contradictions within masculinity was evident as the youth educators struggled to make sense of the tensions between 'common sense' deterministic ideologies concerning gender and experiences that negate these supposed truths. An example is the following quote by N-man, who articulates this tension when asked his opinions on inclusions of gender issues in sexual health.

I think women need to understand that men have a respectable set of issues, that they are not all idiots. Yes, for the most part guys have a single track of thought from about the age of 13 to about the age of 30. They can’t help that though, and I think that they do have other thoughts.” N-Man

In attempting to deconstruct the use of dichotomies and the inherent contradictions in discussions about biological determinism and male behaviour, I noticed a pattern in the interviews: discourses of “truth” or determinism concerning gender were raised at times when masculinity was being challenged. Perhaps totalizing discourses are appealing because they attempt to provide concrete answers in the face of uncertainty. As Weedon (1997) states, the allure of essentialist arguments and common sense knowledge, such as biological gender difference, is the “claim to be natural, obvious and therefore true” (p. 74).
At the same time, there was evidence that the male participants negotiated and in some cases rejected aspects of heterosexual masculinity. Cultural difference in relation to the discussion of what constitutes masculinity is also evident. While the majority of the males perceived masculinity in relation to physical size, athletic ability and heterosexuality, EY, a Taiwanese immigrant, defined it differently.

In Asian communities to be masculine is to be able to support your family with money, and to have the authority to control the situation and protect the people around you. In Canadian society, I find that masculinity has more to do with size and muscles and things like that.

The themes concerning masculinity are similar to the findings in Wang's (2000) study of adolescent males which recognizes the role of hegemonic masculinity with Canadian society but also acknowledges that “boys are active in their resistance or conformity to hegemonic masculinity and that masculinity has multiple meanings” (p. 115). Wang emphasizes the need to consider culture in understanding how males both conform to and resist the hegemonic male role.

**Masculinity, Desire and the Condomania Icon**

A study on male peer educators in Condomania would not be complete without an examination of the program's icons, Condom Man and Luci Lubricant\(^{19}\) (Appendix G). Constructed as representatives of the safer sex agenda, they are intentionally designed to appeal to a heterosexual

\(^{19}\)See Katherine Dodds (2002) as she outlines the “theoretical musings” that arose while creating a female superhero. However, some other aspects of the creation of Luci Lubricant were not raised in this article, such as the issue of race and the response that the character is too masculine.
audience. According to the feedback from adolescents, both characters are engaging to this audience. Appearance-wise, these characters conform to normative notions of masculinity and femininity, although many teens claim that Luci Lubricant is 'too assertive.' These characters are intended to adhere to particular cultural norms in order to be convincing and palatable to teens, while at the same time providing an opportunity for gender disruption. I mention the issue of these characters here for two reasons. One is because as program icons they act as, in comic form, mentors or educators. Secondly, the issue of Condom Man was raised in the focus group in our conversation regarding the constitution of 'real' masculinity:

Lu [Interviewer]: What images do you think of when you hear the word masculine?
Tom: Condom Man! (they all agree)
Locklin: And if I didn't know Condom Man, I'd say Superman.
All: Yeah!
Lu [Interviewer]: What is it that makes him masculine: is it how he looks?
Porn Star: It is a bunch of qualities...deep voice.
Brandon: I think it's presence...when a guy walks in the room.
Leigh: Like I play soccer and I looked up to them...that's what I think, a big guy, walking in...rugby player, soccer player...having the presence that when he walks in, he's the person to watch.
Porn Star: I think you still have to have that certain bit of attitude, you know. Like that tough...how many have seen that old-fashioned army colonel...like argh! (He says in a very deep, tough voice) 'How are you doing today, give me another beer. Buck up, be tough, don't cry.' Yell, don't talk. (He says in a very loud, commanding voice)
Lu [Interviewer]: So what makes Condom Man masculine then?
All: Big chest...full six pack...confidence.
Leigh: I think Condom Man is way too masculine.
(Yeah. Some agree)
Leigh: I'm actually scared to be Condom Man, because he's got the chiseled chin...

20 No formal evaluation of Condom Man and Luci Lubricant has taken place, however focus groups with teens have shown them to be very popular and a bus campaign with them as primary characters was so successful all ads were stolen.
21 The assertion that Luci Lubricant is "too assertive" and "butch" came from focus groups with young girls conducted in the schools during the creation of the character.
The contradictory positions of Condom Man and Luci Lubricant need to be exposed and discussed. In what ways do these characters conform to romantic codes based on the nature of sexual difference, policing the boundaries of masculinity and femininity? How can Condom Man, in his embodiment of heterosexual masculinity, also challenge this representation? Condom Man is paradoxically situated in his representation of manhood. He is intended to be a catalyst for deconstructing gender and sexuality norms, in a similar way as the positioning of male educators. He represents ideal masculinity, and at the same time challenges it with such messages, such as ‘wearing a condom is important for heterosexual men’ or ‘it’s important to communicate about sex before you do it.’

**Doing “It” Differently: Sex Education by Male Presenters**

While not the primary reason for these participants to become involved in the program, countering ineffective sex education of teenage boys evolved into one of the main goals of the male youth educators. As mentioned, for most of the participants\(^{22}\), sex was not a comfortable or open topic when most of them were growing up, or even in their present life, and a consistent theme throughout the interviews was the intention to increase young people’s, particularly boys’, comfort with the topic. After one year with the program, they began to see themselves as “one in a million, guys who are like other guys but also really different” (Brandon).

\(^{22}\) Five of the seven participants indicated that sex was not a comfortable topic at home and all seven stated that “healthy” sex education was not a comfortable topic at school or among peer circles.
I feel it’s important to make these topics talk between people. And the way we do it is by making a discussion and I think and hope that it will make it easier to talk about when they grow up. Locklin.

Targeting younger youth was seen as important as their attitudes and beliefs are seen as formed by the time they are in their late teens. As one participant states, “you can’t change someone’s attitude about wearing a condom on the day of the prom” (Locklin). The assumption that the most productive education occurs with children and younger teens was challenged by their own comments about what they had learned. Many indicated that not only did they learn how to use a condom effectively, but they challenged their perceived knowledge about issues such as sexuality and male/female relationships.

The goals expressed by the youth educators were impressive, and included: challenging homophobia, changing the way that males and females communicate with each other in relationships, challenging male and female stereotypes in relation to the roles they undertake in intimate relationships, teaching that boys and girls masturbate/achieve sexual pleasure and teaching about female sexuality, i.e. the clitoris. According to the presenters, the interactive and participatory curriculum that comprised the Condomania program was dissimilar to the sex education curriculum that they experienced in high school. In particular, what they found positive about the Condomania curriculum was that it was delivered by a young female/male pair with an approach that encouraged discussion, rather than lecturing. It was felt by all youth educators that the approach (interactive, participatory, discussion-based) eased the delivery of a rather
‘difficult’ topic for students and disrupted the normative pedagogy typical of the school system.

I especially like the way we do it, we’re sitting with them, and we’re in a circle. And it’s just like a bunch of friends talking, well not exactly like that, but it makes it more like that. And so I hope that it makes it easier, I mean if I had it like that, it seems like it’s easier, like at a quiet party where you had a circle and you just talk about things like that, I see it happening like that. *Locklin*

These youth educators came to see their work in the classrooms as making a tremendous difference in the lives of young people, particularly young heterosexual males. They perceived their work as revolutionary, substantially unique, and fundamentally different from their own sex education experiences. While my intention is not to evaluate their impact in the classroom, I now turn to the issue of how ‘difference’ or inequalities are taken up in the Condomania classroom by the male educators, which further facilitates the analysis of reproducing and disrupting discourses in the sex education classroom. I will also explore in more detail some of the contradictions and tensions that arose in the interviews as they concern gender and sexuality.
Chapter 5

Addressing and Making (Sense of) ‘Difference’

An intention of this research is to gain insight into the ways that young males conceptualize gender and sexuality in their own lives and how these norms are reproduced and/or interrupted in their work with the Condomania program. This study is not an evaluative critique of the work of the educators, but rather is intended to provide a post-structural analysis of gender and sexuality within mainstream sex education and how dominant aspects of the participants’ identities influenced their work. As educators within a safer sex education program, the participants faced numerous issues related to ‘difference,’ although these weren’t necessarily articulated as such by the youth educators. Influenced by the discourses and ‘regimes of truth’ that pervade sexuality education, in many ways the educators within this study participated in both reproducing and disrupting normative gender, sexuality and cultural discourses. This is not unique to these participants; it is a common by-product within education, revealed in other educational research on resistance to knowledge and awareness of social power and oppression (Ellsworth, 1992; Kumashiro 1999b; Martindale, 1997). For example, Kumashiro (1999b) suggests that “we unconsciously desire to learn only that which affirms our sense that we are good people and we resist learning anything that reveals our complicity with racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression” (p. 43). At the same time, there were unique moments that allowed for interruption of norms in the classroom and in many ways, the peer education component of Condomania
initiates opportunities for contradictions and tensions to surface, fundamental to stimulating change. This chapter will explore some of these contradictions and tensions, in particular focusing on the issues of sexuality, gender, and the interplay of racism and masculinity.

**A Matter of “Choice”: Making Sense of Sexuality**

For many of the participants, involvement in the Condomania program interrupted normative values and beliefs about sexuality. This was illustrated by the participants' articulation of sexuality, desire and identity and their discussion of sexuality as a continuum, corresponding in some ways to the notion of identity as unstable and shifting. In perceiving his sexuality on a continuum, Leigh articulates that he could have relationships with men just as easily as he has relations with women: “I would see myself as straight for now, I say for now because you’ll never know what may happen later in your life.”

While no doubt a radical announcement for a young, heterosexual identified man, an understanding of the material impact of being queer within a heterosexist society was limited. While the participants spoke of the need for anti-homophobic education, there was also a tendency to perceive of gay/lesbian sexuality as a choice, and as such, essentially the same as being straight.

Like I was never homophobic, or at least I wouldn’t say I was. I was in a state that I wasn’t repelled by it or attracted by it, I was neutral. But now I feel more neutral. And definitely that everyone’s on a continuum. There’s no such thing as being absolutely straight or absolutely not, like queer. I like that: everyone’s on the continuum.  

*Locklin*
I've heard...those kids that have said 'Ewww', 'Gross', or 'That's not right,' and you say, 'It's a personal preference, it's an opinion and some people like different things...I like to use the analogy of music, everyone likes different types of music, no one can live without music, it is there and everyone has their own preferences...one likes rap, the other rock. It doesn't mean you're going to fight. Brandon

At the same time as these educators saw sexuality as a 'choice', there were contradictions and tensions. On the one hand, they articulated limited awareness of discrimination and negativity towards homosexuals, although for the most part, participants did not use the word homophobic to describe the observed disapproval. Brandon was the only educator who admitted to actually participating in homophobic activities as a young Asian male growing up in northern British Columbia. He surmised that his own marginalization within the small community where he grew up may contribute to his current empathy for gays and lesbians, based on a shared experience of oppression that rendered his opinions about homosexuals radically different from other peers his age.

I think it just really occurred to me that everyone's different, maybe in many ways I was different from many of my friends, maybe not consciously but because of my race I knew I was different from all other friends, and they accepted me. Brandon

Sexuality in the Classroom

While certain aspects of fluidity characterized the youth educators' understandings of sexuality, there was little or no challenging of heterosexuality as a normative identity, a fundamental ingredient of queer theory practice. In terms of mentioning or dealing with queer issues in the classroom, the concept of choice intersects with the similarly modernist
ideals of promoting tolerance and equality, resulting in queer as Other remaining an entrenched discourse.

This kid today asked me if we could make fun of gay people. I just told him that there are people who choose to be gay, who are gay, and they're just people and it's the same as not making fun of people who aren't as smart in a subject. It's just being different. [italics added] Locklin

The following quote from N-man reveals contradictions in notions of sexuality, illustrating both the idea that sexuality lacks categories as well as the notion that once someone figures out their sexuality, it's defined. His idea of sexual fluidity based on heterosexual male interest in sexual representations of lesbians is a significance addition.

There are no defining categories [in relation to sexual identity]. There is gay and lesbian, but you can be somebody who's turned on seeing lesbians make out but who's completely straight and someone who's completely gay but turned on by seeing heterosexual people. Or someone who's turned on by the colour pink and that just happens to be the way you are. And I think that's important to get out. And again, it's not something to judge somebody else, it's something to judge about yourself and once you've done that you've done your bit. As soon as you've figured it out for you that's all you need to contribute, really, because I don't think you have to expand your opinions to anybody else. N-man [italics added]

While youth educators, for the most part, spoke about sexuality as a choice, they also recognized negativity concerning sexual orientation, and anal sex, in the classroom; however such anti-gay condemnation was often not named homophobia or heterosexism. Not naming homophobic behaviour suggests that these participants see such actions as behaviours of only a few 'bad' male teens, rather than as a systemic problem. Such a view is not surprising given the dominant discourses concerning sexuality, which tend
to be embedded in modernist notions of tolerance where homophobia is often seen as the result of individual pathological behaviour.

For some participants "negativity about homosexuals," or homophobia, in the classroom was a challenge they felt capable of and committed to curbing, although as exemplified above in the comment by N-man above, the idea that sexuality is personal created a barrier to challenging it in the classroom. Others indicated they lacked confidence to deal with sexual orientation, including the following impediments: lack of expertise with the topic, fear of conservative teachers, and concern about backlash from students. Fear of negative criticism from students was a common theme in the interviews and I would argue the foremost impediment for raising queer issues in the classroom. According to the participants, they faced risks in dealing with homophobia in the classroom, risks to both their status as educator and as heterosexual male. As a result, they did not know how to name the problem without distressing or excluding the offending students from the presentation. This was compounded because the effectiveness of peer education is strongly linked to being regarded as "one of the students." Although it was implicit, the participants raised homophobia as a topic that could potentially trigger a rift between the youth educators and the students.

I feel pretty comfortable and sometimes feel uncomfortable in how to approach situations where girls and guys are making funny faces when the topic [of sexual identity] comes up. You're not sure if you want to correct their views, you want to make sure that they're open to it, but you don't want to force them by saying that's not right, they shouldn't do that. So most of the time I go on and talk about it by talking it's okay, but I won't name specific things like you shouldn't think this... I just say things like gays and lesbians are okay, a lot of
youth educators say ‘whatever floats your boat’. You say stuff like that. But sometimes you’re not sure if you need to correct the opinions of other people, or just leave it. If I correct it, what if the teacher doesn’t think I should. What if they go home and go ‘this youth educator told me to accept gays’, and ‘what if I’m gay’, and the parents get mad. Not sure how the society, how open they are to these things. And even if the society is open, their cultural and family background might not accept the openness. So I’m not sure when faced with issues of gays and lesbians, when people don’t agree. EY

I find that the best way to deal with it [gay issues] is not necessarily confront that kid, just because of the way he acted. But to explain it as though you may not like it or you may not choose to do it, but you do have to accept that it exists. And leave it like that and move on. It’s not part of the curriculum per se....there’s no point in squashing kids for saying things because you’ll just lose them in the presentation. N-Man

In what ways do such silences and non-verbal communication in the class contribute to reinforcing heteronormativity? As Harrison and Hillier illustrate, “not addressing certain questions and refusing to give opinions also gives messages about taboos and behaviours that are undesirable” (1999, p. 283). Can we as educators find a way of addressing sexuality without “squashing” people? Silences and gaps concerning certain ‘taboo’ issues are not exceptional within the sex education class. For the most part, the participants view sexual identity in relation to men, furthering the invisibility of queer women. Within the heteronormativity of the school setting, mentioning ‘queer issues’, such as anal sex or same sex relationships, in the class is avoided by some participants because of the assumption that speaking about these topics raises questions about their own sexual identification. N-man feels that students often think he’s gay because he stresses the importance of equality between “homosexuals and heterosexuals...and so what comes across is man that guy is gay.” Porn
Star, who identifies as bisexual, feels a need to censor his sexuality for fear of being marginalized and losing authority in the classroom:

I would rather teach what I’m here to teach, have them think that I’m some regular Joe guy so they take what I have to say and don’t start putting it into colour goggles...‘Oh he’s a bisexual so I don’t know if I can trust what he says’. I find that with most people...you have to get to know them, and then when you get to know them it’s like ‘Oh I guess they’re not all that loony, not all crazy.

The above quotes illustrates the regulation and maintenance of heterosexuality through the policing and shaming of gender, where contemporary heterosexual masculinities are presumed to be in opposition to homosexuality (Butler, 1993; Redman, 1996). As such, for these participants, confronting homophobia is complicated, full of tensions and contradictions. While these youth educators embraced the concept of a sexual continuum, at the same time they also witnessed homophobia and heterosexism and in some cases did not name it or deal with it in the classroom.

This situation brings to light Britzman’s (1995) criticism of modernist educational strategies; namely, the assumption within some educational circles that “good knowledge leads to good conduct and that receiving information is no problem for the learner” (p. 160). I, as coordinator and educator, also struggle in raising and confronting queer issues, and have found myself in similar situations as the participants when faced with the ‘regimes of truth’ that regulate sexuality, such as the heteronormativity of the school system, as well as education strategies that continue to situate queer as Other and the learners as the “innocently ignorant general public” (Britzman, 1995, p. 159).
**Seeing and Performing Gender**

Similar to the contradictions and tensions evident in how these youth educators took up issues of queer or homosexuality/heterosexuality, gender was a further example of paradox. The participant’s articulation and awareness of gender stereotypes was juxtaposed with a lack of awareness or openness of the structural inequalities, the ways that males are complicit in maintaining gender disparity. In the focus group, the dialogue shifted from discussing gender inequalities to denying their predominance and effect. The tendency to position the behaviour of males dichotomously, as either “good” or “bad”, manifested not only in the way that participants perceived themselves and their peer group, but how they perceived the students in the classroom. For instance, troublesome students were often identified as ‘them,’ and when problematic male behaviour was discussed, it was often in the context of an extreme situation. Redman (1996) found similar resistance in his study of HIV/AIDS education with males, which he attributed to the contradictions that arise when educating about issues that impact a group’s dominant social position.

Dichotomous thinking, such as that seen in this study, is common, reinforcing ‘regimes of truth’, the way that behaviour is socially constituted. For those who possess privilege, dichotomous thinking functions as a means of maintaining a vision of (ourselves) as innocent and serves, in this study, as way for the male participants not to consider “their own use of power-over in society at large” (Holmes 2000, p. 124).
In discussing stereotypical and problematic male behaviour, other themes emerge. Participants acknowledge the public performance of masculinity. Secondly, the participants cite the negative effects of gender stereotypes on men, maintaining the desire for the social permissiveness afforded to women within our society and indicating a fear of reverse sexism. A related theme is that the impact of sexism is minimized by dismissing its effect and surmising that sexism is not as widespread among the younger generation. While sharing his opinions on the need for sex education to address the variance in gendered experiences, Porn Star remarks:

I don’t think that its [gender issues] something to be addressed, but I don’t know if it’s necessarily an issue. Because one-to-one interactions with a guy and his partner, I think they’re more accustomed to being themselves, rather than having to put on a big show for one person. You know, you always hear: why are you going out with that asshole? ‘Because he loves me.’ When does he say he loves her? When he’s at home with just her, when he’s not having to put on this front for the rest of the world. Like I’ve been told a million times, that I’m a different person when I’m alone with some person, as opposed to being in a group. Porn Star

I think there’s an unseen bond between guys. And it’s hard to explain...you know...a sport. If you’re ever at a buddy’s house [watching football] and one guys scores a touchdown, one guy will go ‘yeah’ and then everyone will join in because they don’t want to feel like an idiot and think that they don’t know what’s happening. Tom

These quotes exemplify the social pressure to perform masculinity and the tensions within expressions of masculinity. I am not suggesting that participants consciously perform their public masculinity while conducting themselves as well-behaved males in their private lives. Rather, in utilizing Butler’s theory of performativity to analyze this situation, the ubiquity of hegemonic masculinity discourse is exposed. Masculinity is
socially persuasive, informing, both consciously and unconsciously, male actions and negotiations with masculinity. Public masculinity can be extremely influential even when it is incongruent with men's lived experiences.

**Concepts of Male Responsibility in Heterosexual Relationships**

A curious and somewhat surprising theme in the interviews was the perception that sex education in schools places responsibility on boys, and that disrupting gender norms entails challenging this notion of responsibility:

Girls need to know not to lie back and take it, that if you don't want it, don't take it. And boys need to know that they need to ask. *N-Man*

As a male I felt like it [sex education] was just...I think they laid the burden and everything on the guy. The guy should carry the condom, the guy should know when it's going to happen, if the woman gets pregnant, you should take care of her...And I do believe in it, it does sort of let the...role of the female be submissive. This is all happening to her, she isn't even part of it...even back then [in high school] I thought that was wrong...it's completely inappropriate because they lay the blame on the guy. The guy's fault. Where it was mutual yet they blamed it on the male...it [these ideas] is starting to phase out, I think with both the male and female starting to equal out, with women demanding the same pay, which I totally believe in. *Tom*

Tom's impressions of male responsibility in intimate relationships demonstrates the contradictions and tensions within masculine subjectivity; highlighting men's contradictory relationship to masculinity (Kauffman, 1994). The participants raise a rather peculiar impression of male responsibility. On the one hand there is the inclination to blame women, and at the same time some recognition of the Othering of females within

---

23 I use the term peculiar because their impressions of male responsibility contradicts with the majority of the literature on the topic, as discussed in Chapter 1, which recognizes the inclination towards girls/women within mainstream sexual health education.
normative sexuality discourses. The notion of ‘equal’ responsibility between men and women was a recurring theme, perceived by the educators as a means of challenging and disrupting gender norms. Brandon proudly points to how the notion of “equality” is taken up by male educators when they demonstrate the female condom in the classroom:

It’s kinda cool because why do the guys have to carry the condom. Especially that condom right there [male condom], the guys are always like, yeah totally. [they relate to that] yeah they do. Put some responsibility on the girls’, kinda thing.

Internal contradictions and tensions are evident in this quote. At the same time as the participants spoke about the responsibility placed on guys, they also acknowledge that sex education encourages passivity and submissiveness in girls, and they problematize male behaviour in intimate relationships. Leigh says, “in a relationship guys don’t really know how to communicate, so they tend to... act or communicate in the wrong way.” N-Man challenges the romantic codes underlying heterosexual masculinity: “Boys...need to understand that intimacy is not a given, for one, that you don’t automatically get it just because you asked her out, and there are other ways to be intimate that doesn’t involve getting off.”

The notion of male responsibility in the area of intimate relationships and safer sex contradicts their own statements; for example, that males do not take the issue of safer sex seriously, and that they often don’t participate in or care about using condoms. Brandon’s statement that he didn’t attach much responsibility to sex prior to his involvement in Condomania negates what many of the youth educators perceived as male responsibility in sexual health. “Yeah [I began to see sex] in a totally
different way. Responsibility is attached to sex. Whereas if I hadn't joined Condomania I wouldn't have attached so much responsibility to it."

This paradoxical perception of male responsibility has been found in other critical and feminist studies on masculinity, particularly in studies of progressive men who openly advocate challenging gender norms.24 Although in some ways counteracting my feminist sensibilities, I struggled to make sense of the participants' notion of responsibility as raised in the interviews and within the group of youth educators as a whole. On the one hand, I interpret their notion of male responsibility as an example of male privilege that demonstrates the youth educators' lack of understanding of structural issues of oppression. At the same time, I also consider the participants' concept of responsibility to be more complex than simply conveying a 'poor male' sentiment; perhaps it is a way of making sense of men's own experience with stereotyping and discrimination, as well as the victimization of women. I wondered if in any way this perception of responsibility might be an example of internal subjective tensions, a way that the male youth educators make sense of male privilege when the primary discourse concerning subjectivity is situated in a stable notion of oppression and identity, although it did seem oxymoronic to my feminist sensibilities.

Yudice (1996) offers a post-structural perspective on males, responsibility and identity politics that I have found helpful in this regard. In a study of a group of 'progressive' men, Yudice examined how the

respondents understood the concept of responsibility and argued that its use does not necessarily indicate a “male revolt” but rather a “process of rearticulation or reconversion of the ethics of identity” (p. 277). Utilizing Gramsci’s concept of realizing hegemony, Yudice argued that the “problematic foundation of a politics of identity and disidentity” is at the heart of (progressive) male use of responsibility (p.281). Yudice suggests that the males in his study adopted terms such as ‘responsibility’ and ‘oppression’ when talking about masculinity because the language available for articulation of identity is based a dualism of oppression/privilege. While I hesitate to entirely agree with Yudice’s tragic concept of identity politics, I do see relevancy in his analysis for my interpretations. Perhaps the male youth educators appropriate the idea of responsibility in order to articulate their perceptions of males and safer sex because there is a lack of meaningful discourses available for males to express the confines of masculinity (Martino, 2000). In this light, my role as a feminist educator is not to challenge and silence the conversation about male responsibility, but to encourage it, in order to investigate the complexity and shifting nature of heterosexual masculinity.

**Notions of Gender Equality (Not Feminism)**

As mentioned above, the participants’ interviews were fraught with contradictions concerning gender. At the same time as I discuss these contradictions I also point out the tremendous sincerity on the part of the educators. Given their social context, it is not surprising that participants revealed modernist notions of equality, common sense knowledge, and
progression regarding feminism and social change. In response to me asking about their personal thoughts on feminism, Leigh states that he “likes more to think of equality [than feminism].” Similarly, Porn Star declares that “gender is something to be addressed, but I don’t know if it’s necessarily an issue” and Tom surmises that “women are exactly the same [as men], we are all humans.” Locklin discloses a common belief about feminism:

I don’t like the word feminism. I’d rather something like equality. Feminism almost means to me that women are better than men. And to me, equality doesn’t mean that everything is equal, but it just means a balance.

Indicative of modernist notions of change, a common view among the participants was that relations between women and men are progressing quite ‘naturally’, and that young people today possess more progressive ideas about gender relations than previous generations. Tom states that in his generation, equal pay for women and men has “become more the norm” and, in fact, he feels that gender roles are “almost switching.”

I’d say that now since feminism has been raised that it’s not that big of a deal anymore....they [women] have more say nowadays and the stories you hear about a long time ago, like a decade or so, when women didn’t have as much say....but now I think that women have just as much say in anything as men. Locklin

While Porn Star acknowledges inequality in the quote below, he believes that it is also women’s responsibility to change.

I love arguing that there’s equality, or that there’s equality and that everything is fine and dandy. But you know what, it’s not. I think it’s better than it was, and that it’s going to get better as we get older, but it’s still not ....girls accept being victims, they need to act like people. Porn Star
Throughout my experience working with this group of male educators I noticed contradictions and tensions concerning gender. There was a compelling sensitivity and social awareness, combined with a blindness and resistance. As mentioned above, in the individual interviews male educators tended to resist acknowledging male privilege or gender inequalities, even in the face of their own recognition of such stereotypes or problems. One benefit of the focus group was that I was able to illustrate this tension to the participants. While they agreed with my analysis that they recognized gender inequities but also resisted it, near the end of the focus group the conversation once again shifted from awareness of the problematic nature of gender and sexuality social norms, to contesting its relevance. This is evident in the following discussion among participants that occurred near the end of the focus group:

Locklin: Like I totally understand when you talk about it that way, there are inequalities like I'm not saying there are not inequalities...but guys and girls are different, how can we be equal?

EY: Basically you have a male and female going for a job, they have same qualifications, at the end the female gets the job because the company's afraid of getting sued by Human Rights. So...when do we measure that we're there. There's going to be part of the society that's minority, it could be women or whatever, but how do we know everybody's rights, or is it possible at all. Will in 50 years it be that man has less rights.

Porn Start: Then it's going to go back to the male, it teeter-totters.

EY: It takes about 50 years for the women's rights to come.

Leigh: Each sex is different, and from which point of view do you judge it?

In the individual interview, Locklin denied that gender inequality was common within dominant Canadian society (i.e. white) and at the same time he recognized such inequalities within Asian culture(s). In a discussion

25 I opened the focus group with an outline of my theoretical perspective and research findings, which is available in Appendix E.
about gender issues, Locklin argued that for the most part gender is a non-issue, except in Asian culture(s) which he perceived as more gender stereotypical than white culture(s).

I guess, well since we've talked about gender, I guess it's important in the Asian culture then. I think it's even deeper in their mind that men are out working and women are washing dishes at home.

This issue of cultural double standard is one that I have grappled with both within this project and in my work as program coordinator. While I don't argue the existence of sexism within Asian culture(s), I do find the lack of recognition of sexism within dominant white culture troubling, demonstrating a legacy of racism and colonialism in which the white/Western subject and society are "unmarked, autonomous...in contrast with the marked, Other racial and cultural categories" (Frankenburg, 1993, p. 17).

**Typical Guy? The Issue of Race/ism**

Race and ethnicity permeate constructions of masculinity, producing different experiences and subjectivities within the group of male educators. In grappling with and making sense of the issue of race within this study, I am cognizant of the historical specificity of race discourses within contemporary Western society. I am also mindful of the more recent emergence of an insidious racism that is reliant on the notion that "racial difference should be overcome even as it reaffirms white power and domination" (hooks, 1995 p. 103). Current race discourse is located in "colour evasiveness and power evasiveness", the assumption that we are "all the same under skin and that culturally, we are converging; and that
materially, we all have the same chances with [US] society” (Frankenburg, 1993 p.15).

In relation to dominant representations and discourses of masculinity, men of colour are positioned subordinately in relation to white males; however the construction of masculinity cannot be simplified into an oppressor/oppressed analysis that considers “men of colour” a homogenous group. Rather, racial oppression is played out in complex and often contradictory ways within and by the dominant society (Kumashiro, 1995 p. 491). Men of colour, while marginalized sexually, do not share identical experiences. For example, East Asian men historically have been emasculated and stereotypically constructed as the asexual, “model” minority (Chua and Fujino, 1999), and Black men, in contrast, have been portrayed as deviant and hypersexualized (hooks, 1995). I have found this “new” insidious racism, based in a “colour and power evasiveness” discourse, apparent within the multicultural Condomania group in the way that race is largely ignored and rendered invisible. For example, the tendency for white male participants to refer to themselves as typical even though the majority of the typical Vancouver classroom is made up of Asian youth. This evasiveness of race within some discourses is juxtaposed with the attentiveness to race in other discourses, such as the discussion above about gender inequalities being more common within certain cultural groups.
Within this case study there are examples that demonstrate the interconnection of race with masculinity. One concerns the only Black male presenter, who is known among the youth educator group to be exceedingly popular among teen girls for his attractiveness, based on his ‘dangerous’ appearance. Another example relates to the portrayal of Condom Man in our media campaign by a Chinese male. Response to the Chinese superhero was indicative of representations of masculinity, with various people mentioning his small physical size, that “he needs a deeper voice” and of course jokes about penis size, with one female educator advising that “maybe [he] should put a sock in [his] pants.”

The issues of ethnicity and culture flow through the interviews, particularly evident in the interviews with the three Asian men and the one Black male and noticeable by its omission in the interviews with the three white educators. In response to the question, what helps young boys relate to sexual health material?, Tom states that it’s “having guys like me...typical, straight white guys, present it.” This statement by a white male educator positions white males as the norm, and his lack of recognition of race is particularly astonishing in a setting such as Vancouver public schools, where, as mentioned earlier, a white presenter is often the only white person in the room.

The Asian male narratives in this study illustrate the instability of collective masculine subjectivities. Tensions and contradictions were noticeable in the three Chinese Canadian participants’ discussions about

---

26 These two examples emerged from my observations.
their Asian identity, and their experiences as Asian male presenters. At
times they referred to being part of a marginalized culture and expressed
annoyance with the dominant societal impression that Asian cultures are
less open and more rigid about sexuality. EY, an immigrant Chinese
Canadian, included his perspective on marginalization and cultural
stereotypes:

They [Canadian society] expect Asians to be more strict...more
sensitive about sex health issues. As in, I mean, they would be more
careful about how they talk about sexual health in front of you
because they are afraid to offend you in some ways. They think you
are more old-fashioned. They expect, it's a stereotype, kind of like,
people from Asian, they have to be better in math, and Canadian
people are better at sports. EY

Power and colour evasiveness discourses are evident in this study in
the silence of the white males concerning race and in the desire not to
notice difference or marginalization, particularly from the white males and
in some cases by the Chinese males who identified as CBCs. In fact, as
mentioned above, the CBCs' analysis of sexuality and gender cultural norms
appeared to me, the white female interviewer, to be more critical of Asian
culture(s) than the white participants' were of Canadian culture norms. For
example, one Asian educator clearly voiced concern about the negativity and
omission within Chinese culture concerning condoms, sex and sexual
health. At the same time, there was little or no recognition of similar types
of conservatism within dominant white culture. Moreover, not one white
youth educator judged mainstream Canadian society's treatment of sex or
condoms, indicating to me, a double standard.
To make sense of this contradiction within the Asian male educators’ interviews, I turned to Kumashiro’s (1999) study of queer Asian males. I am not suggesting that the experiences of the heterosexual Asian males in my study parallel the experiences of queer Asian males in Kumashiro’s study; however, there are some similarities in the process of both groups’ experience of being Othered. The Asian male youth educators experienced stereotyping and marginalization in relation to their sexuality and masculinity. The following quote illustrates the particular cultural identity struggle between being the Asian “Other” and fitting into the mainstream Canadian society, experienced by the two males who identified themselves as CBC:

It’s hard to completely identify myself as Asian because I was born here. I’m totally whitewashed ...a banana...that’s definitely what people think of me when they first see me. But I actually know quite a bit of Chinese and could totally survive somewhere like Hong Kong. So I kind of have both sides, but I was brought up here and what that means to most people is that I’m more open about this stuff [sexual health]. I don’t think that when I go into a class that I’m bringing anything Asian with me...because I don’t think there’s an Asian style. I don’t know what Asian thoughts mean anymore, but there’s not a lot of that when I’m talking. So I can’t see the Asian part. Heterosexual maybe, male, definitely. Locklin

This quote also demonstrates the difficulty in being asked to ‘speak as’ or to ‘speak for’ a particular group. Like all identities, the Asian male identity is not stable and uniform. At the same time, Locklin’s statement that he doesn’t “know what Asian thoughts mean anymore” highlights the changing nature of cultural subjectivity. It also suggests the impact of colonialism and racism, where Asian thoughts or beliefs become westernized. In applying Kumashiro’s theory to this study, the Asian
participants’ perception of anti-sex conservativism in the Asian community supplemented being Othered within white normativity\textsuperscript{27}. In practical terms, this played out in potentially increasing the divide between the Asian presenters and their perceptions of Chinese culture:

If I went into an ESL class and was talking about this [sex education], that would make them [students], more strongly make them think I'm a CBC or a banana. \textit{Lockin}

At the same time as the Asian participants indicated that being a sexual health educator placed them on the periphery within their culture, they also emphasized the impact they felt they made in the classroom, where the majority of students are Asian and are, according to the participants, caught in a similar cultural divide. The following quotes demonstrate culture as dynamic, contested and changing:

So I guess being Asian makes the [Chinese] students more surprised to see that I'm Asian and I'm talking about it. \textit{Locklin}

I know a lot of Asian families wouldn't talk about sex openly and seeing someone like me up there they might think 'oh my god he's totally unique and totally crazy'...or they might think, 'hey this guy's like me and he's talking about it, why can't I?' \textit{Brandon}

The themes in the interviews, as well as within the group in general, point to cultural influences on perceived masculine authority. In particular, exploring the relationship to hegemonic masculinity and the question of how possessing ‘masculinity’ bestows authority within the group of male peers? One Asian presenter asserts that he doesn’t possess authority in the classroom, particularly in comparison to some of the white male educators, who do not question their authority (at least not explicitly). \textit{Brandon}

\textsuperscript{27}Kumashiro (1995) discusses the forms of Othering experienced by (queer) Asian males: the intersection of white normativity, normative masculinity, and heteronormative masculinity.
perceives that his lack of experience stems from his lack of conformity to the 
hegemonic ideal, which denotes a loss of authority in the classroom:

\[\text{I can't do that exactly, I can't speak from experience a lot and I think} \]
\[\text{maybe the students do look at me like textbook material kinda deal.} \]
\[\text{Some like, a presenter who is really strong, like take Porn Star for} \]
\[\text{example, I think it's really great for something like that [talking about} \]
\[\text{pressure to have sex] because he's really outspoken and they know} \]
\[\text{about him and they see him...it's like okay, this guy knows what he's} \]
\[\text{talking about...the way he presents himself, they way he's so} \]
\[\text{outspoken, when he says something it's with authority.} \]

Later in the interview Brandon expresses surprise at the influence he exerts in the classroom: “when I’m talking, the boys actually pay attention to me, surprisingly” (Brandon). I argue that Brandon’s experience illustrates the interplay of race, experience and hegemonic masculinity, for example the perception by Brandon, a Chinese male, that Porn Star, a white male, has legitimacy because of his experience and his authority in the classroom.

**Class, Masculinity and Sexual Health Education**

In contrast to race and gender\(^{28}\), class is generally a less visible category of social difference, thus more complex to decipher and gauge. In terms of the existing literature on sexual health and masculinity, class is often a neglected issue. While difficult to gauge, class, like race, is situated within a power evasiveness discourse. It is not readily acknowledged, yet present even in its absence. As literature on social class and masculinity has recognized, class corresponds to the unwritten rules of male culture, and operates as an important component in defining peer culture (Connell, 1989; Martino, 2000).

\(^{28}\) At the same time it is important to note that gender and race are not always visible social categories.
Class experience differs culturally. For example, within immigrant working class Asian families, university education is often respected. This is not necessarily the case in white working class families, which corresponds to my own class background. The participants in this study come from a variety of class backgrounds, although I would speculate that many are middle class, either because I observed their access to products such as sports cars or they discussed their family background in the program or interview. In my observations I find that class operates in some of the same ways as race, for instance in bestowing voice and authority in the classroom to those with middle class background. An example is N-Man, who came from a well-educated family and went to an alternative school for 'bright' children, and who certainly presented a great deal of confidence in his knowledge of the topic and in presenting in public. While I don't want to insinuate that all middle and upper class people have access to sexually educated parents, it can be said that people from such backgrounds possess a certain level of comfort often not granted to people who come from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Literature on males and masculinity indicates that lower class position may generate more masculine stereotypical behaviour in males due to marginalization (Connell, 1989; Willis 1977). Other studies (Martino, 2000) negate this finding. In terms of this study, I did notice that the less educated males often did not have access to 'politically correct' language, and a result might appear more sexist; however I did not find that they necessarily were more sexist.
Disrupting “Difference” in the Classroom

“To be a ‘man’ in our culture is to stalwartly reject homosexuality and all that which is considered feminine.” (Gutterman p. 229)

As mentioned above, the participants possessed a desire to have an impact in the classroom and in many instances this was expressed as challenging homophobia and gender stereotyping. In this section I will explore two trends that emerged from the interviews, and discuss how they shaped the way these males dealt with norms within the classroom. One trend concerns the presence of young and (for the most part) heterosexual male bodies in the classroom, and the perception, among peer educators in this study, that positioning males as leaders and authorities within sex education challenges the fundamentals of sex education. The second trend highlights the desire to be a ‘good and appropriate’ peer educator.

“Just Being There”: Male Bodies and the Challenge to Homophobia and Sexism

Harrison and Hillier’s (1999) argument for inclusion of “teachers’ fleshy bodies” to replace the disembodied teaching practices that characterize the delivery of “sensitive” topics such as sex education, leads me to consider how the male educators reproduced and reinforced masculinity and heterosexual codes of desire (p. 284). According to the participants, the simple presence of their male bodies within the sex education classroom disrupts norms related to gender, sexuality and in some cases racial norms. The uniqueness of positioning males as leaders in the classroom in the discussion of sexual health is a radical departure from the way boys/men relate to and talk about sex:
I think, as a male walking into a classroom that it evens the playing field. Guys, especially young boys, don’t look up and go ‘Oh it’s just some lady talking about sex. It’s a guy talking about sex, with a lady, and they’re not even guys and ladies, they are guys and girls.’ And that’s important because they see it as youth coming in and talking about sex. *N-Man*

If we didn’t have males in this program, reaching other males would be pointless because I think they really need males in the classroom, to be like ‘This is a guy who is saying it so it must be okay.’ *Porn Star*

Usually in class the guys who talk about sex are always just joking... they’re going to be acting cool and saying how much sex they had, or whatever. And that’s how a guy talks about sex. But in Condomania it’s totally different in that we are talking about it seriously and we’re talking about it in reality, it’s real and genuine, from a person that cares...a male that cares. Like [I’m] a guy who doesn’t have a kid and is talking about it, it means that it’s not a person who made a mistake and is talking about it; it’s a person that’s thinking ahead. It’s different. [italics added] *Lockin*

As noted earlier, Asian youth educators commented on the contradictory process of race, and how the Asian male body in the sex education class is nonconforming - both powerfully disrupting and potentially marginalized. In fact, the male subject as educator is contradictory: unique in its presence, and as I have suggested throughout this paper, constrained not only by the social regulation of sex within the schools and our culture as a whole, but also by the social regulation and policing of gender and desire. This can be witnessed by the pressure expressed by the youth educators to be perceived as heterosexual and thus palatable to the students in the class.

As outlined in a previous chapter, the issue of men teaching has been raised by numerous theorists (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Roulston and Mills, 2000; Stanovsky, 1997). The findings of this research project correlate with much of the feminist literature on male teachers; namely, that
contradictions arise when males work as educators in areas such as sex education, where hegemonic masculinity discourses are powerful and ubiquitous.

Stanovsky exposes the tensions and contradictions, as well as the possibilities, which embody the male teacher within anti-oppression or feminist education, tensions that I have witnessed in this study. Young, heterosexual males rarely speak on sexual health matters, and as a result I would argue that their "subject position is quite starkly and unmistakably evident", challenging assumptions regarding who should be the 'subject' in sexual health (Stanovsky, 1997 p. 18). Male educators occupy unique subject positions, differentiated from the essential feminine or Othered voices predominant in a context such as sex education. As well, male presence in the classroom challenges certain sexual health beliefs by promoting, for instance, that the male and female partner should be equal partnerships in the decision making process, thereby potentially disrupting romantic codes of heterosexual behaviour.

At the same time, the positioning of the male educators, and our Condomania icon – Condom Man, needs to be problematised. Stanovsky expresses caution in relation to an unsound syllogism that occurs when a male is positioned within a leadership position in the classroom, particularly in contexts where male teachers are less predominant:

I, as a man, speak on [sex education].

All and only those things which men speak about are important.

---

29 As mentioned earlier in the literature review, the majority of sex education targeted to groups such as women, queers or people of colour.
Therefore, [sex education] is important. (p. 18, italics in original)

Paradoxically, the premise of this program, with both the male youth educators and the icon Condom Man, is to utilize the cultural authority of males to motivate students, particularly boys, to take the topic of sex education seriously. While not necessarily destructive, this study points to a need to be cognizant of the practical ramifications and implications of such a strategy.

**Peer Pedagogy: Don’t Rock the Boat**

Peer education has been advocated by many as a panacea, particularly in relation to educational programs for teenagers, young adults, and for the delivery of safer sex education.\(^{30}\) As mentioned above, youth educators were in unanimous agreement that young male bodies in the classroom were instrumental, a significant transformation to most sex education programs, and a potential means of disrupting gender, sexuality and racial norms. As a result, there was an overwhelming desire among this group to present themselves as similar to the (male) students. Accomplishing likeness between educators and male students occurred through positioning themselves within a hegemonic masculinity discourse, as ‘normal’ heterosexual guys.

If they [male students] thought I was gay or bisexual they would act differently, they would have different opinions...he acts this way or he may look a certain way...but he’s gay, then he’s feminine, that makes him weaker. I think if I was in the class and I said, ‘I’m gay’, then the guys in the class would be like ‘oh I’m not listening to him. Because he’s not like me.’ *Tom*

\(^{30}\) Frankham (1998) presents one of the few critical studies of peer education models in an attempt to demonstrate that it is not necessarily an educational solution.
I try to make it seem that I'm not different from them [male students]. Just even from my background information, that I just graduated from high school, and I come from Hamber...and that you're born here, and you have roots and maybe you're Asian. I think it's that link that makes everything relatable, and makes it real. And I think that's the most important thing. *Locklin*

Similarity was established through specific actions in the classroom. The following dialogue from the focus group highlights the performance of male educators, and the way that authority and relationships with the students occur by the reinforcing a masculine public gender identity (Francis and Skelton, 2001).

**EY:** It's like what Lu said, in the presentation we try and get the class on our side by whatever maneuver we have, it's not us being cool, it's trying to relate to them, trying to get them on our side.

**Leigh:** I think I do agree with Lu that when we are in the class and getting them on our side it does have that male thing behind it.

**EY:** The female presenters do it too, are they manly?

**Brandon:** But when you're in the classroom, you're like okay let's get started, you have authority to get things going, and they listen to you. But sometimes when the girls [female educators] do it, the guys [students] are like [not paying attention].

**[Nodding heads from other participants.]**

**Porn Star:** I think it's not really about being male, it's about being cool. And it comes with the background confidence, I mean you get a good confident presenter like [names a female presenter] she could take down any of us. It's like the confidence you say it with.

**Leigh:** But I've been in presentations where the girl has done that, like laying down the law, you'll see them [students] gradually going, but resisting. And I think to myself, if I did the same thing would they react differently.

**EY:** You've got to admit that's true [there's more respect for male educators], and how much is because that's how their family works...the dad at home is the authority one, they're afraid of their dad, not their mom.

**Brandon:** It's also top notching of boys in the class too. It's a push and pull, being the top dog in the class, the guy who's going to be the coolest guy that sticks up against these educators, and breaks them down or something like that.

**Porn Star:** Yeah, you know it does help, that I speak loudly and I'm big.

**Brandon:** Exactly.
Porn Star: Those are two things that are to my advantage, I'm always going to have them in my tool bank.
Leigh: For me it's going to be something silly, not even about sex, but it's something to get their attention.

The participants expose a common problem not only in peer education, but in education in general. Challenging firmly held ideas and stereotypes is complex, an act that could potentially dismantle a teacher or facilitator's authority in the class or their connection with the students. The apprehension associated with 'rocking the boat' impedes the youth educators in this study from tackling serious issues in the classroom. Moreover, the way that educators often establish themselves in the classroom is by appealing to commonly held beliefs concerning gender, sexual and racial identity. Porn Star's assertion that it's “not about being male, it's about being cool” relates to a study by Martino where he found male youth “evaluated themselves to specific norms for fashioning a desirable heterosexual cool masculinity” (2000, p. 103). Martino further states that the creation and performance of masculinities, such as the cool male, functions to maintain “a regime of practices that regulate and monitor the conduct of masculinity” (2000, p. 103).

In this chapter I have explored the way that difference was articulated and experienced within the male youth educator group. The issues that emerged in the interviews illustrate the way that certain social factors underlie the educators' perceptions and work in the classroom, many of which are not always consciously present. I now turn to the concluding chapter, and a summary of the research project as a whole.
Chapter 6

"Not Like Them, Yet Like Them:" Boy Culture and Peer Education
Conclusions and Implications for Practice

Sexuality education is not taught in a vacuum. As we have noted elsewhere, what is taught and the ways in which it is taught reflect larger cultural norms, and teachers (together with students) continually reconstruct those norms in the practices they engage in when doing sexuality education. (Harrison and Hillier, 1999 p. 283)

Summary

I began this research as a community educator and coordinator of the Condomania program struggleing to make sense of working within a sexual health promotion program that targets (primarily) heterosexual identified young men both as educators and students. This research project has been a catalyst for identifying and grappling with the issues that have arisen in my work, in particular exploring the constructions and meanings of masculinity within the context of this sexual health education. As this process comes to a close, I believe that although it is essential to foreground males in the development and execution of programs that deal with issues such as sexual health, the process of doing so is not uncomplicated. I have argued in this paper that interrupting heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity involves challenging many of the normative foundations of contemporary western society, and as such, is not a simple and unproblematic process (Britzman, 1995; Ellsworth 1992, Kumashiro, 2002; Martindale, 1997; Redman, 1996).

To summarize this project I now turn to the original research questions. In my pursuit to explore the policy of targeting the male heterosexual group I sought to understand and document the ways in which
male educators, within the feminized domain of sex education, both disrupt and reinforce normative notions of gender and sexuality. The main research question concerns how gender and sexuality are constructed within a mainstream sexual health setting, such as the Condomania program. In particular, I explored the experiences and perspectives of male, primarily heterosexual-identified sexual health educators, toward the issues of gender and sexuality, as well as race and class. Related questions included:

- What meanings and perspectives do the male heterosexual identified educators have about gender and sexuality and how do they reproduce these in the classroom?

- How are “traditional” notions of sexuality and gender reinforced and challenged within this program?

The findings of this study concur with other educational research on education, masculinity and anti-oppression. Similar to the research findings by Redman (1996), this study exposed the way that cultural norms surrounding gender, sexuality and race impact the work of male sexual health educators. Like all educators, the participants in this study reconstructed and reformulated cultural norms within their own practice. Particular issues and potential limitations emerged in the process of implementing a sexual health curriculum, which are intricately linked to contemporary discourse(s) of hegemonic masculinity and “appropriate” romantic desire:

Shifting boys' and men's investments in hegemonic male identities is likely to be highly problematic. This is because challenging the homophobic, heterosexist and sexist relations through which heterosexual masculinities are constructed is likely to question the
boundaries of those identities, in the process threatening men's fundamental sense of themselves. (Redman 1996, p. 174)

Contradictions and tensions emerged throughout this study in how the participants perceived, viewed and took up gender and sexuality in the classroom and their own lives, demonstrating concurrently the hegemony and instability of heterosexual masculinity. I have demonstrated within this study that the participants, not unlike others, are not “conscious, knowing, unified and rational subjects” (central to liberalism). For the most part, the participants came to this program with little exposure to the topic of sexual health and related social issues. Learning was not uniform; for example, in some instances the participants were able to openly talk about gender bias, and in other instances they were not. In some cases they were able to challenge cultural norms and in others they were not. Some talked about the importance of being ‘cool,’ while one defined masculinity in relation to his culture, in a term that differed from the mainstream definition. However, it did appear that even in the face of multiple definitions of masculinity, there were hegemonic masculine norms (such as being ‘cool’) that affected, in some way, each male youth educator.

Education that attempts to deal with identity and social power issues is constrained by a number of factors, evident in this research. The school system and ‘regimes of truth’ concerning education, masculinity and sexuality are integral in maintaining and policing gender and sexuality. ‘Regimes of truth’ are operative within this study, such as the desire to ‘be a good teacher’ (disembodied and non-disruptive), a well-liked ‘peer educator’
In my opinion Condomania is an example of a program that is both constrained and disrupting and which exemplifies the tensions that arise when attempting to develop health promotion programs that appeal to the teenage masses. For example, the way that Condom Man, in his encapsulation of masculinity, both reproduces and challenges elements of romantic heterosexual desire – he is masculine in his appearance but at the same time he reinforces messages concerning communication, condom use and respect in heterosexual relationships. The effect of the heteronormativity with peer culture, popular culture and social systems are evident in this study. For example, apparent in the interviews is the way that heterosexual masculinity influences the male youth educators' presentation in the classroom and their subsequent subscription to heterosexual codes of conduct.

This study attempted to address the shifting nature of masculinity, particularly in relation to race. I have shown the process by which men of colour, as a group, are marginalized in relation to masculinity norms within the Condomania program. At the same time, current racial discourse is situated within a power and colour evasiveness, which challenges the articulation of racial issues within an educational context.

**Implications for Practice: How Did This Research Affect Condomania?**

Like other critical examinations of education (Ellsworth, 1992; Martindale, 1997), this study challenges the modernist notion of the rational
subject who simply requires information in order to change his/her views. Like Martindale (1997), I have struggled as an educator to successfully implement anti-oppression education, and chose in this study to highlight some of the day-to-day realities within educational practice that make theoretical insights challenging to implement. Rather than a good news story, this study highlights the learning opportunities that stem from "unhappy stories" (Martindale 1997, p. 71). Within the context of this study resistance to education cannot be ignored:

Pedagogical thought must begin to acknowledge that receiving knowledge is a problem for the learner and the teacher, particularly when the knowledge one already possesses or is possessed by works as an entitlement to one’s ignorance or when the knowledge encountered cannot be incorporated because it disrupts how the self might imagine itself and others (Britzman 1995, 159).

Conducting this research project impacted the implementation of the Condomania program. On a personal level, it led to an increasing awareness of gender, race, social class and sexuality performativity in the classroom in general, including my own performativity. I became more cognizant of the way that discourses concerning education, gender and sexuality operate, for instance how my performance of white-skinned femininity within education settings affords me certain legitimacy, particularly in the face of my own marginalized sexual identity. For example, I strategically “out” myself at various educational sessions when I have established familiarity so as not to distance the participants and to amuse myself by surprising participants when they realize that this seemingly ‘normal’ female leader is queer.
In terms of other implications, this study brought an increase in
dialogue concerning gender, sexuality and race among the participants and
the rest of the youth educator group. A gender presentation was created
that resulted from a group work-shopping with youth educators from this
study as well as the female educators. While the evolution of this
presentation could be a study on its own, the fact that it occurred served to
push the boundaries of gender and sexuality discussions, and I would argue
prompted the male (and female) youth educators to examine gender in a
different light. The result of this process is a presentation that incorporates
role-play to demonstrate the ways that male and female gender norms
regulate our behaviour and attitudes. The goal of the gender presentation is
to disrupt repetition of common discourses and 'regimes of truth'
concerning gender within our society. In the role-play, youth educators act
out a skit (which they developed) that highlights gender stereotypes in
relation to sexuality, and encourages thinking beyond the common 'truths,'
rather than blaming individual behaviour. For example, raising the
dialogue and questioning the slut/virgin dichotomy, the sexual double
standard, and the underlying issues present when a boy is called 'gay'
because he hasn't had heterosexual relations.

Interestingly, in the process of developing the gender presentation the
female educators were insistent that the most 'masculine' members of the
group act as facilitators (in this case the white male presenters). The reason,
they all agreed, was because masculine youth educators would receive more
respect in the classroom, particularly from boys. Stanovsky's male privilege
syllogism emerges once again where males are encouraged as educators precisely *because* of the authority they possess, yet at the same time offer an opportunity for interrupting normative gender relations. At the same time when considering male privilege it is necessary to attend a differentialist position by asking the question of which males are believed to possess authority in the classroom and how race and class, for example, factor into this perception. In this thesis the shifting nature of masculinity and relations of power were demonstrated by showing the way that the male youth educators reworked, inverted, contested, as well as participated in the construction and expression of masculinities. Subsequently, Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (1997) cogently remind educators of need to “identify differentiated forms of social power without relinquishing forms of structured oppression” (p. 23).

**Implications for Education Work with (Heterosexual) Males**

The purpose of conducting this study was, in effect, to generate greater awareness of how to integrate anti-oppression into a mainstream sexual health programming that targets heterosexual identified young males. There are a limited number of studies on heterosexual males involved in sexual health education, and the ones that exist are either embedded in liberal discourses or tend to be somewhat less optimistic regarding the ability for heterosexual males to be constructively involved (Redman, 1996). Certainly, more studies are needed in order to engage males (heterosexual, queer, white, men of colour, etc) in critical practice, that do not provoke resistance or reinforce hegemonic masculinity (Marino
This study represents a beginning of the suggestion by Martino for the development and implementation of pedagogical strategies to help males "explore the links between such practices [the ways of relating as males] and normalizing conceptions of self and gender" (2000, p. 110).

As articulated by Kumashiro, education processes that attempt to deal with the contradictory nature of anti-oppression education require recognition that education doesn’t always "feel good" and that the unlearning of ideas of "good" teaching “involves educators constantly complicating their identities, knowledge and practice” (Kumashiro 2002, p. 79). Working with heterosexual males involves translating such messages, and recognizing that like all educational practices, these processes are bound by tensions, contradictions, limitations and possibilities.

**Recommendations for Future Work/Research**

Noticeably absent from this research study were the experiences of two groups that could significantly broaden the understanding of masculinity and sex education: the girl and boy students who received the Condomania presentations and the female youth educators. The perspectives of both groups on the issues raised in this study would undoubtedly be worthwhile. I considered broadening the base of this research project to include the female educators as I thought that their perspectives on dealing with gender and sexuality in the classroom, and within the youth educator group, would have been valuable. Further studies that address female educators’ experiences in the classroom as well as the student participants would be worthwhile. How do the female
educators negotiate through the gender performativity of the classroom? How do teenage boys make sense of masculinity, sexuality and gender, in light of the Condomania program?

This research project attempts to integrate a race analysis, although I acknowledge that a valuable endeavor would be to specifically examine culture and race in relation to masculinity and sex education. Further exploration is needed into the way that race/ethnicity play out in male peer groups. I realize that my focus tended to centre on Asian males, however this transpired for a couple of reasons. One, within the context of Vancouver, Asian communities are predominant, and secondly, within my literature review I found that analysis of race and masculinity rarely included a substantial inclusion of Asian males. From my perspective, additional studies on masculinity and race would be valuable, particularly that which explores the insidious workings of racism and how it functions to serve stable and dualist categories of collective identity.

An obvious and glaring omission on my part was a clearer analysis of the intricate workings of class with masculinity and sex education. While I attempted to integrate a class analysis where possible, I acknowledge that it is suspiciously absent in the interviews and in my analysis, surprising even to me, especially considering my own curiosity about the topic. There are several potential reasons for this absence. Relative to race and gender, class is usually invisible and hence more difficult to articulate (Martindale, 1997). Furthermore, like all facets of identity, the markers of class are not stable and I found that my own class assumptions became conflated with the
integration of race and immigration; my white lens was biased when perceiving class in combination with race. I would argue that further work on masculinity and on sex education would benefit from a class analysis, as it is almost lacking in the existing literature. For instance, how does class position affect the type and quality of sex education received? As well, it would be valuable to gain further insight into the way that class informs masculinity and how males negotiate class in creating male subjectivities. Related research questions concern the exploration of physical appearance with masculinity. How do physical attributes incorporate the hegemonic masculine presence? How do factors such as 'lookism' and disability interplay with normative notions of malehood?

**In Closing**

This research has provided an opportunity for discussing how aspects of educators' subjectivities, such as maleness, whiteness and sexual identity, influence pedagogy. In light of the continued threat from conservative governments regarding the supposed fiscal crisis, sexual health education is being undermined. As a result I found it increasingly challenging to conduct a critical analysis of this program; however, as I have outlined earlier, this study does not negate the need for programs such as Condomania. On the contrary, I believe that this study made a significant impact on my work as an educator as well as the Condomania program as a whole. Raising the more troubling aspects of education, as well as the triumphs, allows for building opportunities for improvement, and as Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (1997) argue, the particular historical epoch of
conservativism is providing an opportunity to transform anti-oppressive education. The contribution of young people to the Condomania program has been incredible, and my hope is that the process of this study will continue to augment worthwhile dialogue, enhancing the effectiveness of sexuality and anti-oppression based education.
Appendix A

Organizational Approval

October 12, 2000

University of British Columbia
Office of Research Service
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Room 323 - 2194 Health Sciences Mall,
Vancouver, B.C.
V6T 1Z3

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to give my approval of the research project to be carried out by Cindy Luanne (Lu) Ripley in the Department of Educational Studies at UBC. This research will fulfill the requirements of a Master's of Arts Degree. The thesis topic is Exploring the Construction of Sexuality within the CONDOMANIA program.

Lu is currently a contract employee with the Vancouver Richmond Health Board, and is responsible for coordinating CONDOMANIA, a project of the Health Board. I am aware that her master's thesis concerns her work with this program and that research will include a focus group as well as four to six personal interviews with youth educators. Additionally, I approve of Lu using her own work as a basis of research. This will primarily entail the journaling of observations over a period of six months.

I understand that all participants in this project will do so with informed consent and will sign a letter of consent. Confidentiality of all participants will be maintained.

Sincerely,

Marleen Morris
Executive Director of Communications and Health Education
Vancouver/Richmond Health Board
Appendix D

Individual Interview Guide

1. Can you provide me with a little background about yourself? How did you get involved in Condomania? What experience, training has helped you in this role?

2. How would you describe the work you do with Condomania?

3. In your opinion, who is the target audience of this program and what are the desired outcomes? Are they worthwhile, why/not?

4. In your opinion, how do you think of Condomania’s approach to sexual health? In what ways does it differ from your experience of sexual health education as a teenager?

5. What was your experience with sex education as a young person?

6. What do you hope to achieve in your work as a Condomania youth educator?

7. Have you had to censor yourself in the classroom? In what situations?

8. As a Condomania youth educator, have there been any uniquely difficult situations, or uniquely positive situations?

9. Have there been any surprises?

10. What kinds of information do you feel youth need to receive about sex?

11. Condomania attempts to reach young males. In your opinion, is that group being reached through this program? What sorts of information/skills to young males need? What helps young males relate to this information?

12. Did you expect that gender issues would be part of the Condomania presentation? How do you think sex education should deal with the issue of gender (male/female relationships) and safer sex? How is gender (male/female) handled in the classroom? What is needed (i.e. support/information) in regard to handling gender issues in the classroom?

13. Did you expect to discuss sexuality/sexual identity? How are these issues dealt with in the Condomania program? What could we do differently? What is needed (i.e. support/information) in regard to handling sexual identity issues in the classroom?

14. What messages are important to address when discussion sexual identity? Do you find that these messages are being raised in the classroom? Why/Not?

15. What difference does having someone like yourself present this material in the classroom? (discuss in relation to 'race'/culture, age, sexuality, gender)

16. What does feminism mean to you?

17. Do you have anything to add?
Appendix E

Focus Group Overview and Interview Schedule

Theoretical Framework
- Qualitative
- Feminist
- Post structural
- Masculinity

Summary of Research

Experience in Sex Education
- Was often described as inadequate, often because you couldn’t relate to person teaching it (female, older, to moralizing, dealing with issues you didn’t find important) or you didn’t receive it at all. Most of you felt that you didn’t get adequate sex education in your families.

Condomania Experiences
- Range of learnings: for some it was tremendous and for others it wasn’t so significant.
- Beneficial was the opportunity for males to talk to males about sexual health issues.
- You became ambassadors in your peer culture.

Boy Culture
- Expressed concern with how boys dealt with sex and sexual health information, citing both your own personal experiences as well as what you witnessed in the classroom.
- For males, peer culture operates in a way that limits freedom of information; often what the “cool” guy says is believed.
- “It’s not the info, it’s who tells you” was a common theme.
- Boys tend to experience pressure to know it all, or use humor as distraction.
- Messages males receive: don’t show emotions or vulnerabilities, be sexually dominant, think you know it all.
- Many expressed distain for male macho behaviour, at the same time there was a tendency to legitimate this behaviour, often through a “men can’t help it” justification (biological roots).
- Many of you distanced yourself from what you saw as male macho behaviour.
- Witnessed homophobia in classroom, in peer circles, but acknowledged it was a difficult to deal with in classroom.
- Many of you saw sexuality as a choice – like someone who likes bananas and not apples.
Like Them, But Not Like Them: Being a Male Peer Educator

- Many of you stated that you don’t feel akin to the “bad” male behaviour you saw in the classroom.
- At the same time, you strongly felt that it was important for you to be like the males in the class, so that they could relate to you.
- This created some tensions:
  - Proving masculinity?
  - Using techniques to get guys on your side
- Many mentioned that you felt the male presenter was more respected in the classroom than the female presenter.
- You recognized, quite astutely, problematic male behaviour and gender inequalities, but were resistant to acknowledging that gender issues/sexism were issues in our society. It seemed like it was bad to see difference.
- You wanted to address homophobia, but feared alienating the students.
- There was a male hierarchy, those with “experience” and “authority” were revered within the group of educators as a whole.

Typical Guys? Culture, Race and Sexuality

- Men of “colour” (not white) talked about the importance of culture, yet again there were contradictions, as its importance was also denied. Again, it seemed like it wasn’t positive to see difference.
- Tended to be more critical of your own culture (if you weren’t white) than white presenters.

Contesting Masculinity

- You saw yourself and your position in the classroom as unique, radical – it challenged traditional notions of gender and what it means to be male.

Guiding Questions

- Any reactions, questions, feedback?
- What images come to mind when you hear the word masculine? What does a masculine boy say and do?
- Is there pressure for boys/men to prove their manhood? What do they need to do?
- What do you think about the idea that as male educators, you are challenging common ideas about masculinity?
- What about in the classroom: what are the experiences of being a male youth educator with this program?
### Appendix F

**Youth Educator Backgrounder**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>&quot;Race&quot;/Cultural Background</th>
<th>Location Raised</th>
<th>Sexual Identity&lt;sup&gt;31&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Chinese (born in Canada)</td>
<td>Northern BC</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EY</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Chinese (Immigrant from Taiwan)</td>
<td>Lower Mainland</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Black (immigrant at 15)</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locklin</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Chinese (Born in Canada)</td>
<td>Lower Mainland</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-Man</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>White (Jewish)</td>
<td>Lower Mainland</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Lower Mainland</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porn Star</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Lower Mainland</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>31</sup> Acknowledging the instability of sexuality, this column represents the youth educators’ sexual identity at the time of the interview.
Appendix G

Condomania Superheroes: Luci Lubricant and Condom Man
References


