RUNNING THREADS:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF B.C.'S SEXUALITY EDUCATION CURRICULA

by

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Sexuality education is a contested arena in which multiple sexual discourses compete for dominance. These discourses have the potential to empower or marginalize students (and teachers) based on constructed social identity categories. The purpose of this study was twofold: to determine which sexual discourses are reflected in British Columbia’s secondary-level instructional resource packages (IRPs) that address sexuality issues, and a selection of their recommended learning resources; and to explore how the sexual discourses inherent in these documents construct or perpetuate social inequalities through the positioning of sexual subjects according to gender, sexual orientation, age, race, class and physical (dis)ability. The selected IRPs were Career and Personal Planning, 8-12; Science 8-10; Biology, 11-12; Home Economics, 8-10; and Home Economics 11-12. The selected recommended learning resources were *AIDS: Allie’s Story* (video); *Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life, Eighth Edition* (textbook); and *The Living Family: A Canadian Perspective* (textbook).

The relevant curricula were subjected to a critical discourse analysis informed by both critical feminism and a pragmatic, Foucauldian theory of discourse. This analysis was carried out using sexual discourse categories developed by Alexander McKay (1998) and a set of open-ended questions derived from several sources.

The results of the analysis suggest that the selected curricula and recommended learning resources adhere for the most part to Romanticist and/or Progressive sexual discourses, employing sub-discourses of danger, control and individual responsibility. Related to these discourses is the texts’ marginalization of the reader or viewer, primarily on
the basis of sexual orientation and gender, but also significantly on the basis of age, race, class and physical disability. It is argued that the documents examined have the potential for perpetuating stereotypical identity constructions and social inequalities through the lens of sexuality. Recommendations for future curriculum development are included.
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List of Acronyms

AIDS ......................................................... Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BC .......................................................... British Columbia
CAPP ......................................................... Career And Personal Planning
CDA .......................................................... Critical discourse analysis
GLBT ......................................................... Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered
HIV .......................................................... Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IRP .......................................................... Instructional resource package
STD .......................................................... Sexually transmitted disease
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Finally, my husband, John, has given me so much throughout this process that I could never adequately thank him. I will, however, try!
Chapter I: Introduction

Starting Point

In the course of this thesis, I will closely examine the sexuality education curricula provided for secondary students in the Province of British Columbia, along with a selection of their recommended learning resources, to determine both how they frame the topic of sexuality, and whether they work to perpetuate or subvert existing power inequalities based on a variety of social markers such as gender, age and sexual orientation. The motivation to assign myself such a task stemmed from two fundamental sources: my experience as a student in a high school sexuality education classroom, and my growing interest in the highly charged arena of sexuality in schools, as reflected in the media.

My own experience as a student of sexuality education took place in the mid-1980s, at a large secondary school located in a very diverse suburb of Toronto. All students of this school were purportedly given access to sexuality education through gender-segregated physical education classes, mandatory in Grade 9, but optional for Grades 10-13. As a female student of 9th Grade Physical Education, I was shepherded through what Helen Lenskyj (1990) would term a standard “plumbing and prevention” sexuality education program. It covered reproductive anatomy and physiological function, the risks and benefits of a range of birth control techniques and devices (though not instructions on their use), and the risks and symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases (though with very little instruction on safer sex techniques for their prevention). While the unit was not comprehensive in scope, we were stridently informed of our sexual “responsibilities” and vigorously tested on our retention of the basic, biological facts. Sexuality in general was framed negatively, as an
arena for potential personal and social disaster, and our classes on the subject were
dominated by discourses of danger and individual control.

After completion of Grade 9, I opted out of physical education and received no
further access to sexuality education or information through the official channels of
schooling. In itself, it was not an unusual experience for youth of the time. What was
noteworthy, however, was the difference between my experience and those of my two
younger brothers who were three and five grades behind me at the same school. Though
both of my brothers took Physical Education from Grade 9 through Grade 13 (with a variety
of teachers), and though both were told at the beginning of each year that they would cover a
unit on sexuality, they graduated from secondary school without ever having done so.
According to their recollection, each year, in the time allotted to discussing sexuality issues,
they instead covered a unit on substance abuse. No one told them of their sexual
“responsibilities” nor made sure they understood the processes of reproduction or the risks of
sexual interaction. Where I was made to understand that sexuality was a matter for
containment, they were met with a puzzling silence.

At the time, this blatant discrepancy struck me as unfair and raised several questions
regarding the ascribed cultural value of sexuality education and gender: As young men, were
my brothers deemed unworthy of sexuality education? Were they expected, by virtue of their
gender to already “know” what they needed, to be inherently sexual (and sexually powerful)
where I was not? As a young woman, was I deemed a potential victim, a relative innocent in
need of the protection that “knowledge” could afford me? As the holder of this “knowledge”
was I then more responsible for the regulation of my sexual relationships – including
pregnancy and STD (sexually transmitted disease) prevention – than were my male partners?
Though the failure of my school to provide boys with sexuality education was more likely due to the discomfort the male physical education teachers experienced regarding the subject than to any official policy, the practice sent messages that aligned with mainstream sexual discourse of the time and that still resonate today: sexuality is (sometimes?) too "dangerous" to deal with in the classroom, and sexual knowledge and power are ascribed differentially to men and women. The way sexuality was framed by the school, the way it was addressed (or not) had repercussions; it could serve to empower students or to marginalize them based on a culturally constructed identity marker such as gender.

Fifteen years later, this point was again highlighted for me by media coverage of two controversies regarding sexuality and schooling in Surrey, B.C., a suburb of Vancouver, the city where I live. The first of these was the banning by the Surrey School Board of three books portraying same-sex parents from elementary school libraries, and the ensuing battle to have them reinstated. The banning of these books on the grounds given by the Surrey School Board (including age inappropriateness and moral questionability) was eventually forbidden by the Supreme Court of Canada. This prompted the Board to re-evaluate and reject the books a second time based on standard Ministry of Education criteria, and subsequently approve two alternate books depicting same-sex parents for elementary schools (McLellan, 2003; Ramsey, 2003). The second controversy involved the Surrey School Board’s development and implementation of a policy requiring parental permission for student involvement in all school-based extra-curricular activities in order to discourage students from participating in school-sponsored gay-straight alliance clubs ("In Brief," 2001; Steffenhagen, 2000).
The heated public debate surrounding these controversies was one of discourses competing for dominance around key questions of sexuality and schooling: How should society define a “normal” family? Can it include same-sex parents or not (Clarke, 2000)? Does a parent’s right to determine their child’s moral and/or sexuality education supersede a child’s right to an inclusive learning environment? Does a parent have the right to control their (adolescent) child’s sexual thought, behaviour or association? Again, as with my own experience as a student of sexuality education, the discourse surrounding sexuality – the way it was framed in public debate and in schools – was important. It had the power to include or to marginalize students and their families based on ascribed social markers such as age and sexual orientation.

This, I thought, warranted further investigation.

**Why Analyze Curricula? The State of Sexuality Education in Canada**

*Canada*

Over the course of the 20th century, the field of sexuality education in Canada has seen great change. Advocates have overcome the strong opposition that was prevalent in the first half of the century to the point where the vast majority of adults now support some form of sexuality education in the schools, though no consensus has been reached on preferred program content or approach (McKay, 1996; McKay, Pietrusiak, and Holowaty, 1998; Verby and Herold, 1992). This has led to the implementation of public school-based sexuality education programs in every province. Nevertheless, sexuality education remains one of the most contentious and widely disputed issues in educational policy. Questions regarding its approach, scope, form and effectiveness have yet to be resolved in the public arena.
In 1994, Health Canada published the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*, which included recommendations that all school-based programs address and affirm the diverse sexualities of the national student body, including students who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered (GLBT). The guidelines are not mandatory, however, and as the responsibility for providing education rests with the provinces, the recommendations are incorporated unevenly across the country.

Studies have shown that programs vary widely between provinces, school districts, schools and even classrooms. Formats range from short, one-time units in Grades 9 or 10, to integrated curricula throughout elementary and secondary school. Students may be presented with a bare bones program on reproductive biology and sexually transmitted diseases, or, more rarely, they may have access to comprehensive programs addressing emotional development, relationship negotiation, decision-making, values clarification, sexual pleasure, sexual orientation, sexual violence, child abuse, contraception, abortion, and child care (Ajzenstat and Gentles, 1988; Barrett, 1994).

While it is known that a wide variety of program types is offered across the country, there has been very little study on what happens in sexuality education classrooms themselves – how content is discursively framed, and how it is experienced and reframed by students.

**British Columbia**

In British Columbia, the provincial Ministry of Education was prompted by the AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) scare of the 1980s to develop a sexuality education curriculum, mandating 10 hours per year of “family life” education to secondary school students. Though the scope of the curriculum extended beyond reproductive
physiology and function, issues such as contraception and abortion were optional, and many schools chose not to discuss them.

In 1997, the Ministry released a new curriculum for kindergarten through Grade 12 entitled Career and Personal Planning (CAPP). Though the majority of a student’s sexuality education is intended to be delivered in the CAPP curriculum, it is possible that sexuality-related topics may be addressed in Science 8-10, Biology 11 or 12, or Home Economics 8-12. While there is extremely little direct mention of sexuality in these latter IRPs, their recommended reading lists include materials (books and videos) on issues such as reproductive physiology (in Science and Biology), and family relations, conception, and childbirth (in Home Economics) (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Curriculum Branch, 1996, 1998a, 1998b; Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Standards Branch, 1996).

Though the primary responsibility for sexuality education curriculum in British Columbia lies with the Ministry of Education, the curriculum itself gives school boards, schools and teachers wide latitude in how they meet the broadly defined prescribed learning outcomes. Many school boards in British Columbia have their own sexuality education guidelines, but decisions are often left to individual schools and teachers as to how they can best meet the needs of their students and communities. Some observers (e.g. Beck and Marshall, 1992) see this type of downward dispersal of responsibility as a welcome opportunity for teachers to develop lessons and materials that best meet the needs of their often culturally and sexually diverse students.

In the case of North America, and British Columbia in particular, however, where the public discourse about sexuality education has seen intense and divisive struggle in recent
years, this “latitude” could also be perceived as a lack of official support for teachers who may want to teach “against the grain” with a program using social justice discourses. The debate generated by the recent developments in Surrey (mentioned above) has been heated, and may have reinforced the social messages teachers already receive that teaching sexuality education from a social justice perspective is potentially “dangerous” or “offensive” to parents and the community at large. Furthermore, parents who want to maintain close control of their children’s sexuality education are supported by the provincial policy which allows them to pull their children from sexuality education classes for “alternate” (read “home”) delivery, and by the current movement to establish traditional “back-to-basics” charter schools. All of these factors place pressure on sexuality education teachers to be “careful” and teach defensively. Sexual discourse, in both the community and education bureaucracy arenas, is still highly contested in British Columbia, and has the capacity to seriously influence the delivery of school-based sexuality education programs.

The provincial curriculum provides only one discursive contribution to each sexuality education classroom, and will combine or compete with discourses embodied in other resources provided by teachers and students. But as a blueprint from the ultimate educational authority, the curriculum carries a considerable, legitimizing weight, which teachers must accept or consciously reject in the face of pressures from school administrators, parents and the community. Indeed, sexuality education curriculum comprises for students their state’s (as a representative of their wider society) official interpretation of their sexuality, one of the overt media through which their bodies are intended to be surveilled and regularized. How that curriculum addresses sexuality – what discourses it uses to influence the conversation for teachers and for students – can serve to marginalize or privilege students through the lens of
their sexuality; to perpetuate or subvert social inequalities based on a number of socially constructed markers such as gender, sexual orientation and age.

**Research Question**

Though there is a very large body of research on the “effectiveness” of sexuality education with regard to adolescent behaviour, there has been relatively less examination of the discursive formations to be found in the curricula, and of how these serve to subvert or perpetuate certain power relations and social inequalities. To my knowledge, no critical discourse analysis has been performed on British Columbia’s sexuality education curricula, despite its potential power to normalize sexualities and perpetuate social inequalities, and its position as a flashpoint in a highly contested discursive arena.

Therefore, given the following:

1. The power of discourse as a mechanism to produce both “normal” and marginal sexual subjects, according to various constructed social markers;

2. The importance of schools as primary sites for the production and normalization of sexualities; and,

3. The discursive weight of official curriculum documents in highly contested arenas, such as sexuality;

I intend to address the following questions:

1. What sexual discourses are reflected in the Instructional Resource Packages and a selection of Recommended Learning Resources of B.C.’s curricula for Career and
Personal Planning, Grades 8-12; Science, Grades 8-10; Biology, Grades 11-12; and Home Economics, Grades 8-12?

2. How do the sexual discourses inherent in these documents position sexual subjects, according primarily to age, gender, and sexual orientation, but also to race, class and (dis)ability? Do they serve to construct or perpetuate social inequalities?

**Format of Thesis**

The thesis is divided into five chapters. In the introductory chapter I have shared some of the educational and other experiences that led me to the perspectives guiding my research interests. I have also situated B.C.'s sexuality education curricula as a set of artefacts in their particular social and historical context, and suggested their potential to normalize and marginalize secondary school students through the lens of their sexuality.

In Chapter II I explicate my theoretical stance as one of critical feminism with elements of a pragmatic, Foucauldian theory of power and discourse. As well, I review current understandings of the function of discourse in general, of sexual discourses in particular (as classified by McKay, 1998), and of both in the contexts of the institution of schooling, and of sexuality education.

In Chapter III I explain the process and my criteria for the selection of texts for analysis; I offer a conceptual framework for the thesis, derived from McKay’s classification of sexual discourses; and describe how this framework was operationalized, using the principles and practices of critical discourse analysis. Finally, I briefly discuss my positionality as a researcher.
In Chapter IV I offer the results of my analysis of the above-mentioned IRPs, and three selected recommended learning resources: *AIDS: Allie's Story* (video) from the CAPP curriculum; *Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life, Eighth Edition* (Chapter 45: Human Reproduction and Development) from the Biology 12 curriculum; and *The Living Family: A Canadian Perspective* from the Home Economics curriculum. Common sexual discursive themes and subject positionings are identified for all of the documents analyzed.

In Chapter V, implications of the findings are discussed, and recommendations are made, both for curriculum change and for further research.
Chapter II: Foundations for Research

Theoretical Stance

I approached this study with the hope that its results would have an emancipatory potential; that by making visible discourses embedded in B.C.'s sexuality education curricula and their capacity to subvert or perpetuate social inequalities, I might in some small way contribute to the restructuring of discourse about sexuality and the youth in our schools, and perhaps make less possible whatever processes of marginalization could emanate from new curricula.

As such, I approached the project with a critical feminist stance, which could be described as a fundamental alignment with material feminists in combination with an acknowledgement of post-modern insights regarding discourse and its role in positioning and (dis)empowering subjects. A critical feminist project would then work to restructure material distribution within society, and to bring the socially “marginal” to the “centre,” through the reshaping of dominant discourses (Kelly, 2000: pp. 8-9).

A feminist stance has significant relevance for this particular project, in part because sexuality is so deeply inflected with constructions of gender; because constructions of gender are closely linked to constructions of sexual orientation; and because critical feminism’s incorporation of an acknowledgement of “multiple axes of subordination and domination” allowed for an analysis of discourses of age, race, class and disability that were also central to my project (Kelly, 2000).

While I acknowledge the social power and material consequences of these social categories, I am also mindful of the need to steer away from the formation of essentializing
or totalizing narratives. Given that, I would argue for the incorporation of elements of a pragmatic, Foucauldian theory of power and discourse as elucidated by Nancy Fraser (1992). While emphasizing the normalizing function of discourse, this perspective also rejects it as a monolithic mechanism of top-down power, and allows for a multiplicity of points of local power. Foucault also allows schools to be theorized as sites of discursive struggle rather than monolithic mechanisms of power. Finally, though this theory emphasizes the local as the primary site for struggle, it does not deny the existence of broader, historical patterns of domination, such as patriarchy. Fraser (1992) argues that this balance of focus between broad patterns and local, situated narratives prevents analysis from either becoming totalizing, or from devolving into a mere description of isolated differences.

This same balance of perspective is also helpful in theorizing identity: its mediation through broadly constructed social categories, and yet its individual specificity in terms of lived experienced and agency. Moya (2000) has argued that the analysis of broad social categories remains a valid research project insofar as identities are still grounded in them, resulting in particular positions within socio-economic orders. In a similar vein, Bordo (1993) argues that attention to social categories, and to the binaries they often represent, is still a vital task; that if we try to transcend them entirely, we run the risk of leaving unchallenged and perpetuating the asymmetric relations of power that are still apparent in our dominant discourses.

At the same time, with Fraser (1992) and Kelly (2000), I acknowledge the risk of essentializing individual experience, and of merely reifying constructed categories and dualities. I agree with Bordo (1993) and Moya (2000) that while experience, especially bodily experience, is never unmediated by discourse and by social categories, the foundation
of experience is something that culture and discourse work upon but do not create. If, as some theorists suggest, the body and its experiences are a *tabula rasa* for discourse, individual and collective agency, as well as social or discursive change, would be moot.

Indeed, this criticism is often aimed at Foucault by feminist critics – that his theory of the subject as constructed through power relations, and his theory of social relations as inescapably permeated by power leave individuals and groups both devoid of agency and incapable of effecting real political change (Benhabib, 1994; Buker, 1990; Deveaux, 1994). Nevertheless, I would agree with Fraser (1992, 1997) that a pragmatic, Foucauldian approach – one she would term “weak” – is most useful for a critical feminist analysis (Fraser, 1992: 178). Such an approach would recognize the material and discursive power of constructed social identities, while situating them historically and culturally, allowing for a plurality of changing social locations, practices and identities. A pragmatic Foucauldian theory allows for the agency of marginalized subjects (though still positioned in asymmetric relation to the dominant discourse), for the struggle over discourse, and for a slowly changing dynamic of power. It also allows for the theorization of a non-monolithic identity, one where the subject can select from among his or her discursive resources to create new, hybrid narratives of the self (Fraser, 1992, 1997).

In brief, I trust that a critical feminist stance, with the incorporations of pragmatic, Foucauldian elements, can challenge (though not entirely resolve) the tension of the socio-economic victim-political agent dichotomy, as Kelly (2000) suggests, while addressing power relations, social practices and emancipatory alternatives. With Fraser (1997), I would agree that the “normalizing” political project of feminism should not be jettisoned in an attempt to avoid totalizing narratives. Rather, we should combine a recognition of the
complex plurality of identity with a continued commitment to seek social and economic equality. To do this requires the continuation of the feminist project, with the simultaneous understanding that it is historically and culturally situated, fallible, and subject to revision and self-reflection. It requires both the identification, analysis and deconstruction of social categories, and the continuous reconstruction of a feminist vision. For my own project – one that involves the identification of discourses and their potential to marginalize subjects – this approach proved most useful.

**Literature Review**

**Discourse and Society**

A discourse, as defined by Allan Luke (1995), is a recurrent wording, statement or theme, across different texts (spoken or written), that marks out an identifiable system of knowledge, meaning and belief. Discourse can also be conceived of as the use of language as a social practice, a communicative frame within which people interact (Fraser, 1992). Each discourse is historically specific and contingent upon its social, cultural, institutional and situational contexts. A discursive formation combines strands of different discourses around a subject in a particular way, e.g. sexual discourse. A subset of the discursive formation is the discursive strategy – a combination of discourse elements around a particular practical or political tendency, e.g. moral traditionalism (Epstein and Johnson, 1998).

It has been argued that discourse, as a mechanism, directly links power with knowledge, and by extension links power with society. Power, through the production, accumulation and circulation of discourse(s), shapes the knowledges and “truths” by which communities and individuals define themselves and are governed. Power produces social
categories, institutions, identities, ideas and realities through discourse (Foucault, 1980).

According to Foucault, there is no part of the social world that is outside either power relations or discourse. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony can be useful for analyzing the function of discourse as a mechanism for influencing the less socially powerful to act in the interests of the more powerful. Discourse can, indeed, be used to legitimate control, and to “naturalize” social inequality (Gramsci, 1971; van Dijk, 1993).

It would, however, be an error to view discourse in such purely monolithic terms. As Luke (1995) has pointed out, discursive “truths” are accepted and incorporated idiosyncratically at the individual and community level. Though dominant discourses tend to carry particular weight, people accept, reject, and combine discursive elements differently according to their access to other discursive resources, and to their specific social, cultural and situational contexts. In this way, change can occur across different sites and over time, perhaps leading to a change in the dominant discourse (Fraser, 1992; Luke, 1995).

I think it is useful here to consider Foucault’s concept of modern power as a producer, not just of dominant, normalizing categories and discourses, but of marginal discourses as well. According to Foucault, the definition of a dominant discourse in itself produces the definition of a multiplicity of marginal, “deviant” discourses in relation to it. These “deviant” discourses, by their very existence, hold power, though only in asymmetrical relation to the dominant discourse. Nevertheless, this multiplicity of points of power allows for contestation, for the struggle over the dominance of particular discourses. From this standpoint, one can say both that discourse constitutes society and that society constitutes discourse (Foucault, 1975; Fraser, 1992).
The concept of discourse is also helpful in an analysis of identity. According to Foucauldian theory, discourse defines, constructs, categorizes and positions human subjects in power relations with each other contingent upon their historical, cultural and situational context, e.g. the doctor-patient relationship within medical discourse (Luke, 1995). Each individual’s social identity is composed of a plurality of subjectivities that can be prominent or recessive according to particular time and situation (e.g. mother, lesbian, Asian-Canadian) (Fraser, 1992). And, just as discourse defines the dominant, “normal” subject (e.g. masculine, white), so too does it produce the marginal, “deviant” subject (e.g. feminine, black), and ascribe each subject category power (though asymmetric) (Foucault, 1975). Change in social groups – the alliance or dissociation of individuals – occurs with shifts in individual members’ social identities and through struggle over discourse. Thus, subjects have agency, though in varying strengths, to shape discourse, and to effect social change (Fraser, 1992).

**Discourse and Sexuality**

According, once more, to Foucault, sexual discourse is a particularly dense arena for struggle because sexuality is so central to the control and functioning of a modern, industrialized society. He posits that because our economies are reliant on the regularization of bodily action for the extraction of time and labour, the normalization of sexual practices has become central to the administration of both individuals and populations as a whole. And, as above, when a dominant discourse produces a “normal” category of sexual practice (e.g. heterosexual, reproductive, genital), it produces a multiplicity of “deviant” relational behaviours (e.g. homosexual, primarily for pleasure, oral) (Foucault, 1975).
Sexual practice, however, is not the only defining feature of sexuality. As Foucault writes, “[s]exuality is not a “stubborn drive” but an especially dense transfer point for relations of power between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, and administration and a population” (1976, p.103).

One could add between heterosexual and homosexual, Whites and people of colour, the working class and the middle class and elites, and between those who are labelled “disabled” and those constructed as “able-bodied.” Sexuality is not merely an act, but “an identity with a bodily basis” (Epstein and Johnson, 1998, p. 37). This identity is deeply inflected with, and constructed around, social markers such as gender, sexual orientation, age, and race, and positioned according to the power relations of those particular factors.

Often, as can be seen in the Foucault quotation above, identities are socially constructed as asymmetrically powerful, opposing poles on binary axes. While these oppositions present us with a simplicity of meaning which is both essentialist and illusory, and though they fail to recognize the non-linear complexity and uncategorical multiplicity of human identity (individuals and groups), the construction of binarisms is to some extent unavoidable. As Stuart Hall (1997) argues, all meaning is relational; an object or concept (such as self-identity) first requires a contrastive difference with an “Other” in order to attain its own symbolic classification. It follows that this first step in cultural differentiation would be crude, extreme, and fail to recognize diversity within, and inter-relationships (even inter-dependence) between, the binaries. Regardless of how unfixed and contestable the classification of these binaries is, or becomes, Hall argues that as this first step is a function
of both human and cultural meaning-making, it can only be identified, deconstructed and transcended after the fact, rather than avoided altogether.

One illustration of this process is the growing recognition of the complexity of sexual identities through the identification and deconstruction of sexual binarisms, and the marginalizations they engender. Studies on the experiences of marginality have led to the conclusion that identity elements are not additive; marginality does not regularly increase or decrease according to the number of “marginal” markers ascribed. Rather, membership in multiple (constructed) groups (e.g. black, male, gay) changes qualitatively the nature of experience and sexual identity; it is possible that some elements would be of social benefit while others not. Sexualities, like the discourses that shape them, are contingent upon historical, social and cultural contexts and should be considered fluid, not fixed (Raymond, 1994).

At this point, I will take the opportunity to broadly survey the sexual discursive formations that have been most prevalent in North America and other Western countries in the 20th century, and discuss how they have affected the construction of social identities (often binary) for groups or individuals with particular characteristics (e.g. women, gays and lesbians, etc.).

As sexual discourses come in a wide range of characteristics, shadings, and names, too many to discuss here, I will follow Alexander McKay’s example and risk oversimplification by discussing their qualities under two broad umbrella terms: restrictive and permissive. Though I realize the latter term can have negative social and moral

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1 I would argue that the risk of simplification is, for this project, outweighed by the value these frames provide as points of reference during analysis. I would also argue that making visible these discourses where they occur in sexuality education provides a very useful context for the analysis of marginalizations and subject positionings within the text.
connotations, I will retain its use as the best descriptor of that particular group of discourses (McKay, 1998).

Restrictive sexual discourses\(^2\) are those that, as the name implies, seek to restrict consensual sexual behaviour and expression, and can be broken down into three major representational themes: Traditionalist, Romanticist and Progressive. Traditionalist discourse has its roots in Judeo-Christian and other religious traditions, and equates sex with sin, shame and animalism, to be legitimately practiced only within a heterosexual marriage for the purposes of procreation. Abortion, contraception, masturbation, homosexuality, sexual pleasure in general, and extra-marital (including adolescent) sex are constructed as deviant and dangerous. In the late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries, Traditionalist discourse found new expression through the biological sciences in the medical model. This discourse generally portrays sexuality as a potentially pathological entity, as biologically, psychologically, socially and emotionally threatening (Carlson, 1992; McKay, 1998).

Though it shares some characteristics with the Traditionalist discourse, a Romanticist sexual discourse has some distinctive characteristics. Instead of constructing sexuality as irredeemably “bad,” the discourse portrays it as potentially emotionally, physically and psychologically beneficial, but only if adequately controlled within the confines of a monogamous, emotionally and spiritually intimate relationship. In Romanticist discourse, the only truly healthy form of sexual relationship is a family- focussed heterosexual marriage. Both Traditionalist and Romanticist discourses share a biologically (and genitally) determined focus that is centred on the act of heterosexual intercourse, and a construction of

\(^2\) All sexual discourses discussed in this chapter are presented in further detail in the Conceptual Framework section of Chapter III.
human sexuality and its relationship to nature and/or the divine as fixed (Carlson, 1992; McKay, 1998).

Finally, Progressive sexual discourse, though it falls generally in the restrictive discourse group, has some aspects in common, and is often combined, with elements of permissive sexual discourses. Progressive sexual discourse has strong links to social utilitarianism; centres rational, scientific thought and concepts; and was most prevalent in its earliest form in the U.S. in the early 20th century. Progressive discourse legitimizes state intervention to manage socio-sexual problems such as unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. To that end, the discourse portrays contraception and abortion as unpleasant but necessary, and best kept legal for better regulation. The discourse also constructs sexual pleasure as necessary, though not a cause for celebration, and as requiring self-control or “moderation.” Though Progressive discourse diverges from Traditionalist and Romanticist discourse in its moral flexibility and its pragmatic, individualistic construction of sex, it still shares their negative focus on the “problems” of sex and individual behaviour, and their downplaying of the social factors and forces that shape human sexuality, e.g. gender, race, class and sexual orientation power inequalities (Carlson, 1992; McKay, 1998).

These restrictive discourses on sexual behaviour, when combined with the more traditional, and often still prevalent, discourses on particular identity elements, such as gender and sexual orientation, have a tremendous impact on the construction of sexualities as a whole. Though it is impossible to address, in the space this chapter allows, all of the possible combinations and constructions, I will present a very general overview.

In traditional Western discourse, the “normalized” or “given” subject is most often constructed as adult, male, heterosexual, white, middle or upper class, and “non-disabled.”
This sets up a group of “deviant Other” social markers that include child/adolescent, female, homosexual, non-White, working class and “disabled.” Each of these “marginal” markers is expressed in restrictive sexual discourse in different ways, though all display a tendency toward binarism in relation to the “central” markers. It should be noted that both “central” and “marginal” identity constructions, as opposite ends of binary axes, become essentialized, and that their internal diversity and complexity are not recognized.

Adolescence, a category constructed relatively recently to serve as a transition stage from childhood to adulthood (and therefore to sexual maturity and legitimacy), is fraught with sexually discursive tension (Raymond, 1994). Since adolescents reach physical, reproductive maturity before their constructed social maturity, they are often the object of adult confusion and fears (Whatley, 1994). As a reflection of those fears, dominant sexual discourses often portray “good” adolescents as asexual, or trivialize their sexuality as “cute,” while constructing overtly sexual teens as “dangerous,” “out of control,” or titillatingly “naughty.” Most often, teens are portrayed as not yet capable of emotionally mature, intimate, “legitimate,” sexual relationships (Clark, 1994; Irvine, 1994; Lee and Berman, 1992; Lesko, 2001; Taylor, 1994; Whatley, 1994).

This tendency toward binarism is also reflected in the construction of genders in the dominant discourse. While boys are often constructed as sexual subjects, possessed of an almost uncontrollable but legitimate sexual drive, girls are portrayed as asexual and desireless, as wanting “love” rather than “sex,” as status objects or prizes for the boys who can get their way, and thus as responsible for the regulation of the sexual relationship (Fine, 1988; Whatley, 1994). In this discourse, girls can fall into two camps: the asexual girl who is “innocent” and therefore a potential victim; or the sexually assertive and knowledgeable girl
who is a dangerous “slut” (Raymond, 1994; Kelly, 2000; LaCerva, 1992; Szirom, 1988; Tolman, 1994). At the same time, Kimmell (2000) has noted that men experience as much restriction in their gender self-identity and -expression as women, and that where women experience the marginalization of sexual objectification, men experience the constant insecurity of defending their positions as “legitimately male” subjects.

The construction of sexual orientation identities is deeply inflected with the power relations inherent in gender. Since heterosexuality is the “given” orientation in our society, any male who admits a sexual attraction to other men could be seen to be “acting like a woman” (especially if he displays other stereotypically “feminine” traits), thereby abandoning his power as a sexual subject. Heightening the tension is the fact that orientation is not physically visible. This means that heterosexual males who are concerned with overtly defining themselves as such to preserve the power of their subjective position, could find homophobic and heterosexist behaviour an effective way of marking themselves off (Kimmell, 2000). Lesbians, on the other hand, could be constructed in the dominant discourse as attempting to usurp the sexual power of men, especially if they display other “masculine” traits. Their threat, however, to the straight male position is moderated by their gender position, which some would argue makes them more marginalized than gay men. For GLBT adolescents, sexuality that falls outside the heterosexual “norm” is sometimes constructed as a phase that one should outgrow, which marks as trivial adolescent sexuality, and as stunted and deviant adult sexuality that “transgresses” orientation boundaries (Khayatt; 1995; Lenskyj, 1994; Raymond, 1994; Whatley, 1994). Sumara and Davis (1999) have noted that the often dominant and oppositional constructions of both homosexuality and
heterosexuality impose restrictive identities that fail to recognize the fluid and evolving nature of all sexual desire.

Race and class constructions each add their particular inflections to sexual identity as well. As the central sexual subject is constructed as White in dominant discourse, people of colour are often constructed as “deviant,” or as particular objects of a sexual gaze or assessment, rather than as legitimate sexual subjects. Though the particular stereotype varies with each constructed racial category, marginalization is the common theme. For example, in the dominant sexual discourse, Blacks and Latinos (especially men) can be constructed as hypersexual and potentially dangerous. Further, Asian males can be portrayed as either asexual, or hypersexual but inadequate, whereas Asian females have traditionally been portrayed as both sexually docile and especially heterosexually available. It has been argued that these latter stereotypes are consistent with their construction as a “model sexual minority” whose function is to act as a wedge between the dominant centre (Whites) and the more marginal groups (Blacks and Latinos) (Whatley, 1994). Class constructions in the traditional discourse function in similar ways, with the middle and upper classes portrayed as central, and working class people portrayed as promiscuous, sexually “irresponsible” and potentially dangerous (Kelly, 2000).

Finally, dominant discourse treatments of physical disability emphasize marginality as well. Wendell (1997) notes a general lack of recognition in dominant western discourse of physical disability as at least in part a social construct. She argues that to become “disabled” requires not simply a particular biological reality, but an exclusion from culturally
determined "norms" and roles on that basis; the lack of social, material and psychological inclusion and opportunity is the primary "disabler," not a particular physical condition. Wendell also notes that the "Othering" of the disabled is rooted in western society's idealization and fear of the human body, a perspective that denies the complex diversity of ability and weakness embodied in each individual. This denial of the legitimate embodied experiences of the disabled has implications for their positioning as sexual subjects (or objects) as well. Rousso (1994) notes that when people with disabilities are framed in the dominant discourse, they are often constructed as somehow damaged or not entirely intact as sexual beings, or as altogether asexual. Though this construction would present difficulties for disabled men in that it displaces them somewhat from their powerful position as male sexual subjects, the discourse may present a greater obstacle for disabled women, whose cultural identification as desirable women depends more heavily on appearance and an ideal of physical perfection. However, the most prevalent discursive method for marginalizing the sexuality of people with disabilities is their exclusion from texts, especially those whose main focus is sexuality, such as sexual health curricula or resources.

Permissive sexual discourses, as opposed to the restrictive discourses discussed above, tend to make individuals' subjective judgment and desire central, rather than the sexual acts themselves. They construct sexual pleasure and expression as wholly positive and beneficial to self-fulfillment and psychological health. As a result, these discourses legitimize a much wider range of sexual behaviours. Though still not dominant in the public arena, permissive discourses have been gaining strength in North America since the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s. However, the 1990s and early 2000s have also seen a retrenchment of political, religious and moral conservatism in North America, as well as a
sexual panic caused in part by the AIDS epidemic (Sears, 1992a), despite gains made in areas such as gay and lesbian rights, and the fight for same-sex marriage. The result is a public sexual discourse arena that is highly contested.

Three major discursive formations can be considered permissive: Naturalist, Liberal and Libertarian. Naturalist discourse portrays all sexual behaviours as “natural” and therefore morally acceptable, without reference to the divine or any external authority. It also does not construct emotionally intimate sex as the only legitimate form of sexual relation. Liberal sexual discourse has much in common with Naturalist discourse, in that it makes moral and sexual autonomy central, and legitimizes the right of the individual to make decisions regarding sexual expression. It does retain a morally normalizing function, however, in that it portrays individuals as responsible for ensuring mutual consent, for refraining from inflicting physical harm, and for conducting the sexual relationship in an honest, respectful and equitable fashion. Libertarian discourse builds upon Naturalist and Liberal discourse by constructing sexuality as political. It portrays sexual expression as a means not just for personal gratification and development, but for the potential subversion and elimination of gender, class, and other social inequalities. In this sense, it shares a characteristic with restrictive sexual discourses in that it portrays sexuality as a potential threat to the social status quo, but it constructs this threat in a positive rather than negative light (Carlson, 1992; McKay, 1998).

When elements of these discourses, especially the Libertarian discourse, are combined with discourses that have emerged from social justice movements such as feminism, anti-racism, and gay and lesbian pride, they can serve to centralize sexual identities that were previously marginalized. Through these discourses, adolescents, women,
people of colour, the poor and working class, people who identify as GLBT, and people with disabilities could be constructed as powerful and legitimate sexual subjects.

I should restate, however, that all of the sexual discourses and identity constructions discussed thus far are merely general types, not monolithic realities. The lived experience of sexuality involves the bringing together and uneven foregrounding of various strands of sexual discourse and identity elements; all instances of sexual discourse use and identity construction are contingent on their particular historical, social, cultural and situational contexts. Each individual has agency in constructing his or her own sexual discourse and identity, though this is limited by the discursive resources at their disposal. Nevertheless, as the purpose of this study is, in part, to make visible the stereotypes and marginalizations embodied in curriculum, an awareness and a discussion of the binarisms often located in sexual discourses is necessary.

Sexual Discourse and Schooling

The discourse that shapes the culture of schooling necessarily springs from and reinforces the inherent tensions of child-adult power relations mentioned briefly above. As Epstein and Johnson (1998) argue, the category of “adult” in Western culture is constructed as sexually “normal,” while children are constructed as a sexually “deviant” category. Children do, however, reside within the sexual domain of family relations, and to a large extent their sexual knowledge and identities are constructed in that sphere. This creates a special conundrum for adults, who, in an attempt at resolution, will often represent children as asexual, innocent and requiring protection, or as sexually “precocious” and potentially dangerous. This is especially the case with adolescents, who reach reproductive maturity
before they are admitted into the adult arena as legitimate sexual subjects (Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Haywood, 1996).

The school, in addition to the family, is an important site not only for the production of children’s sexualities, but also for the repression of their sexual expression. Foucault theorizes that schools act as a primary site for the normalization of sexualities (and bodies), as is required for the success of an industrialized economy. Through disciplinary techniques such as spatial organization, segmentation and examination, schools maximize their surveillance of individual students to incite their docility and to ensure their adoption of official knowledges or “truths,” including sexual norms (Foucault, 1975, 1976).

Teachers play a large role in this process. Because they are the official power-holders, but are vastly outnumbered by their students, surveillance and control are often a large part of their concern, and of the discourse of schools. As adults, teachers are also responsible for desexualizing the school for the purpose of maintaining the sexual boundary between children and the adult world. In practice this can mean the strict enforcement of dress codes, the discouragement of markedly sexual behaviour or language, and the conflation of sexual expression with disruptiveness or threat. It also means that the teachers themselves must become outwardly desexualized to set an example as sexual moral guardians. This displaces sexuality from the teachers to the students, further reinforcing the binary relation between student (object) and teacher (subject) (Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Klein, 1992).

This “moral guardianship” places teachers in a special bind, especially those who are GLBT, as western discourse tends to unfairly construct them as either hypersexual or solely sexually defined, and as outside the sexual norm. In addition, the guardian role conflicts
with teachers’ stated goal of attracting and engaging students with certain subjects, a process that is meant to incite passion and excitement, and which could be defined as seductive or erotic in the broadest sense. Finally, it makes any but the most restrictive conversation with students about sexuality a potentially dangerous proposition (Epstein and Johnson, 1998).

Where teacher culture and discourse tend to centralize surveillance and control, student culture and discourse tend to focus on undermining school authority and counteracting approved norms. Sometimes this can take the form of making overt their officially trivialized sexuality through wearing forbidden clothing or engaging in officially discouraged behaviour or talk. Though students do have agency to construct and express their sexualities, it is constrained by the degree to which they have access to alternate discursive resources, from such sources as family, friends and popular culture. Generally, within schools, “[t]he forms of sexuality present in schools and the terms by which identities are produced are heavily determined by the power relations between teachers and students, and the dynamics of control and resistance” (Epstein and Johnson, 1998, p. 108).

**Discourse and Sexuality Education**

Though many sexuality education programs in North America reflect discursive strands from both restrictive and permissive discourse groups, the majority have a restrictive ideology at their core, most often Traditionalist. These include abstinence-only programs, which enjoyed a growth in popularity through the 1990s, and bare-bones medical model programs that Lenskyj has termed “plumbing and prevention.” Both program types focus on the potentially dangerous act of heterosexual intercourse alone, and neglect to address alternate practices and issues such as homosexuality, pleasure, masturbation, contraception, abortion, oral and anal sex, and relationship negotiation (Irvine, 1994; Lenskyj, 1990).
They also tend to leave unaddressed the multifaceted power relations inherent in sexual relationships, and to perpetuate the sexual marginalization of adolescents, women, people of colour, people who identify as GLBT, the poor and working class, and the physically "disabled." Though these identity elements are not often directly portrayed as sexually devalued, restrictive programs tend to offer the White, male, straight, middle class, "able-bodied" adult as the assumed sexual subject. One example of this phenomenon in the curriculum is a "missing discourse of desire" for girls (Fine, 1988), that constructs them as both asexual and responsible for making "good sexual decisions," which can only mean refusing the pressure of the expected male sexual advance (Kelly, 2000; Sapon-Shevin and Goodman, 1992). Those who identify as GLBT, and others with marginalized social markers such as people with disabilities, are often left out of the curriculum altogether, a not-so-subtle message that they are indeed outside the social sexual norm. This message is often reinforced by the lack of teacher role models, the failure of schools to intervene in cases of harassment, and even punitive disciplinary measures against students who express themselves beyond the bounds of the sexual norm (Phillips and Fine, 1992; Sears, 1992b).

Sexuality education programs within a permissive discourse, especially from the Libertarian strand, can be radically different from those informed by restrictive discourses in form, scope and content. In such programs, the marginalization of sexual behaviours and identities could be directly addressed and challenged. For example, women and those who identify as GLBT could be portrayed as powerfully and legitimately sexual; the emphasis on heterosexual marriage and nuclear families as the preferred family form could be deconstructed; and a wide variety of sexual practices, identities and issues could be
addressed and affirmed, including the right to contraception, abortion, pleasure, and equal power in sexual relationships.

Outside of the Netherlands, however, the implementation of this type of program (as an official curriculum) is rare, especially in North America. For the most part, this is due to the fact that sexuality education curricula and classrooms cannot be discretely disengaged from either the sexual discourse of schooling or public discourse on sexuality. Because, as noted above, adolescence is such a condensation point for adult fears and anxieties surrounding sexuality, sexuality education teachers face extreme pressure, both inside and outside the classroom, to conform to socially discursive norms.

As Epstein and Johnson (1998) make clear, the sexuality education classroom has been constructed as a kind of internal “ghetto,” in which it is expected that the desexualizing role of the teacher will be stood on its head, and within which sexuality can be “contained.” Neither students nor teacher, however, can so readily disengage themselves from the “dynamics of control and resistance” that govern the school’s production of sexualities, nor from the dominant sexual discourses that play themselves out at home and in the media. As one illustration of the contested nature of the sexuality education classroom, Epstein and Johnson (1998) describe an instance where the attempt to de-marginalize homosexuality in a class discussion triggered a very noisy disruption by male students, most likely a form of heterosexual panic. Teachers also receive strong messages about the “dangers” of teaching sexuality education, and are often encouraged to avoid offending parents and the community at all costs. Combined with the teacher’s own discomfort at their anomalous role in the sexuality education classroom, this can often result in “defensive teaching” that tends toward the “plumbing and prevention” model (McNeil, 1986; Whatley, 1992). Finally, though there
are many sexuality education teachers in North America who successfully use permissive methods and discourses, they often do so as quietly as possible, with the full knowledge that they place themselves in jeopardy of being stopped, or even disciplined, at any time (Haywood, 1996). The power of sexual discourses, and of discourse in general, to shape our identities and sexualities can be discerned at every level of society, and in every institution.
Chapter III: Methodology

Text Selection

In order to conduct an in-depth analysis of B.C.'s secondary-level sexuality education curricula, I focused the study on carefully selected Instructional Resource Packages (IRPs) and their recommended learning resources. My criteria for selecting these documents were two-fold: sexuality content and level of usage.

Since the Provincial Government mandates IRPs as teaching guidelines in all subject areas, level of usage for these documents was not an issue. To determine sexuality content, I surveyed all secondary-level IRPs, including their descriptions of recommended learning resources, for any evidence that they address, or could address, sexuality issues. Accordingly, I selected IRPs for Career and Personal Planning (CAPP), Science and Biology, and Home Economics, all of which explicitly address sexuality, or recommend learning resources that do so.

Selecting particular recommended learning resources for analysis was not as straightforward as selecting IRPs, as individual teachers in British Columbia have the option to select textbooks and other resources from both the Ministry of Education lists associated with each IRP, and from school district lists that have received Ministry approval. In theory, teachers may select any approved learning resource, but in practice they may be constrained by budgetary considerations, and by school and community attitudes toward sexuality education.

To get a sense of the level of usage of sexuality-related recommended learning resources for CAPP 8-12 (the IRP that most explicitly and regularly addressed sexuality
issues), I conducted an informal poll of all school districts in the Greater Vancouver Regional District. I predicted that feedback from these school districts would be helpful as they are located in the most densely populated region of the province, and have both high numbers of secondary students and high levels of student and community diversity. I contacted ten school districts, including Abbotsford, Burnaby, Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam-Port Moody, Delta, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, North Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver and West Vancouver. Of these, the suggested contacts in Burnaby, Surrey and Vancouver (CAPP and guidance counselling coordinators) could offer no insight into which recommended learning resources are used on a district-wide basis. Staff in Richmond and Abbotsford sent me lists of resources contained in their own locally-developed sexuality education curriculum packages. Teaching resource centre librarians in Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows and North Vancouver sent me lists of recommended resources that had been checked out and used by teachers most frequently in the past two years. Finally, curriculum coordinators in Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam-Port Moody, Delta and West Vancouver conducted their own polls of teachers or guidance counsellors to determine which resources were most in use at their schools. I considered all types of data in my selection, though I weighted information gathered by this last method most heavily.

After considering all data, I selected the video *AIDS: Allie's Story*, which is recommended for use in the Personal Development (Healthy Living) units of Grades 11 and 12 CAPP. It is frequently used according to North Vancouver resource centre records, and according to a poll of teachers in the Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam-Port Moody District.

The IRPs for Home Economics 8-12, Science 8-10 and Biology 11-12 – unlike the CAPP IRP – have comprehensive textbooks recommended for all grade levels. *The Living*
Family: A Canadian Perspective (1991) is recommended for Home Economics Grades 9-12, and is the most highly recommended comprehensive text for Grades 11 and 12 Family Studies units. According to Home Economics IRPs, The Living Family is relevant to more prescribed learning outcomes than any other recommended comprehensive text. It also addresses a variety of sexuality-related topics, including adolescent sexual development and attitudes, reproductive decision-making, family formation and homosexuality.

Similarly, the comprehensive textbook Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life, Eighth Edition (1998), is relevant to more learning outcomes in Biology 11-12 than any other recommended comprehensive text, according to Biology 11 and 12 IRPs. It also contains a chapter on human reproduction and development that could serve as the primary learning resource for Biology 12's "Reproductive System" unit.

The fact that both these texts are listed in their respective IRPs as "comprehensive" (as opposed to "additional"), and are recommended for more grades and units than other texts would likely make them attractive selections for teachers and schools concerned with ease of use, continuity, and budgetary considerations. I consequently chose these texts as relevant analysis subjects.

Text Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis

As the most useful methodology or methodological stance for the project of this thesis, I have chosen critical discourse analysis (CDA). Allan Luke (1995) describes the central function of CDA as the intervention in institutional talk and text to highlight the power relations and inequalities (material and symbolic) perpetuated by discourse. In
addition, Luke argues, a critical discourse analysis in the field of education should attempt to generate agency among students, teachers and others by offering tools to uncover the power relations and representations inherent in discourse (Luke, 1995). As Luke suggests, I have attempted to denaturalize the everyday language and make visible the taken-for-granted in B.C.'s sexuality education curricula and a selection of its recommended resources.

In association with this stance, I have paid especially close attention to both interdiscursivity – how discursive elements combine and play out within particular curriculum documents and learning resources – and intertextuality – how discursive elements translate across different texts (Fairclough, 1992; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, and Vetter, 2000). van Dijk has argued that there are two dimensions to discourse: the production and the reception (van Dijk, 1993). That being the case, I acknowledge that I am researching only half of the discourse equation; I cannot know how the discourses inherent in the curricula documents and associated texts are received by their intended audience, nor how teachers incorporate, reject or combine them in their classroom practice. Bordo (1993) argues that a text alone cannot be considered transformative (or repressive) unless it generates an empirical effect. Therefore, I have limited myself to discussing the curricula's social, political and discursive potential.

Finally, I must acknowledge that critical discourse analysis is in itself a normalizing process, what van Dijk describes as a case of applied ethics. Practitioners of some other types of discourse analysis may attempt to maintain a “neutral” research stance as they seek to contribute to their particular disciplines. However, because the immediate goal of CDA is to address social injustice and inequality through an improved understanding of discourses, critical discourse analysts adopt an explicit stance aligned with the socially and politically
marginalized. Far from being "neutral," CDA ultimately seeks to effect social change – to bring the "marginal" to the "centre" – and its success can be measured by its contribution to that change (van Dijk, 1993, pp. 252-253). I found this approach to discourse analysis to be most appropriate to my goal of identifying discourses embedded in sexuality education curricula, and examining their potential to perpetuate or subvert social inequalities through subject positionings.

**Conceptual Framework: Sexual Discourses and Questions for the Texts**

In order to address my principal research foci in the analysis of the texts (the presence in the texts of sexual discourses, their positioning of sexual subjects, and their perpetuation or subversion of social inequalities), I used two broad strategies.

First, in order to systematize my analysis of sexual discourses present in the text, I adopted the use of McKay's (1998) classification of sexual discourses as a guide. Each discourse identified by McKay was first broken down into its most basic constituent elements, many of which are shared and combined among different sexual discourses. Next, for each discourse element, I developed a list of key concepts, words or phrases that might signal or express the presence of that discourse element within a particular text. (In Table 1, discourse elements (such as “Moral Frame”) are listed as sub-headings, with element descriptions, relevant sexual discourses, and key concepts listed to the right.) Texts (including a transcript of the video *AIDS: Allie's Story*) were then analyzed and coded to determine the presence of these discursive signals. Note was made of ways in which the same or similar signals combined or conflicted across and within various texts, indicating the presence of various discursive strands.
Table 1 (1 of 8):

**Conceptual Framework: Sexual Discourses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Discourse Element</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sexual Discourse(s)</th>
<th>Key Words/Phrases/Concepts in Curricula and Learning Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macro-Discourse Frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional / Judeo-Christian</td>
<td>Sexuality framed as sinful, shameful</td>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular humanist</td>
<td>Sexuality framed as &quot;natural&quot; needs and desires</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Libertarian</td>
<td>desires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naturalist</td>
<td>&quot;natural&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Discourse</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sexual Discourse(s)</th>
<th>Key Words/Phrases/Concepts in Curricula and Learning Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral Frame</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral absolutist</td>
<td>Fixed view of human nature, sexuality and morality; Decision-making relegated to external authority (e.g. religion)</td>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>&quot;good&quot; decision-making, sexual refusal skills, abstinence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral flexibility</td>
<td>More fluid, diverse view of human nature, sexuality, morality; Decision-making relegated to individual</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>&quot;good&quot; decision-making, relationship negotiation, safer sex techniques, values clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Discourse Description</td>
<td>Sexual Key Discourse(s)</td>
<td>Words/Phrases/Concepts in Curricula and Learning Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essential View</strong> of Sexuality <strong>Negative force</strong></td>
<td>Biologically, psychologically, emotionally, socially and spiritually dangerous</td>
<td>Traditionalist negative consequences (STDs, pregnancy, emotional damage) abstinence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potentially Beneficial if</strong> beneficial force &quot;controlled&quot;; otherwise dangerous</td>
<td>Beneficial if &quot;controlled&quot;; otherwise dangerous</td>
<td>Romanticist self-control Progressive self-protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive or Benign force</strong></td>
<td>Biologically, psychologically, emotionally, socially and spiritually beneficial</td>
<td>Naturalist desire Liberal pleasure Libertarian sexual diversity physical &amp; emotional exploration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Discourse Element</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sexual Discourse(s)</td>
<td>Key Words/Phrases/Concepts in Curricula and Learning Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act-centred</td>
<td>Focuses on the sexual act (e.g. coitus)</td>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>physiology, STDs, pregnancy, abstinence, heteronormativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-centred</td>
<td>Focuses on the individual; Emphasises individual choice, rights and responsibilities</td>
<td>Liberal, Libertarian</td>
<td>sexual diversity, negotiation skills, values clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society-centred</td>
<td>Focuses on the societal function and control of sexuality</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Negative social and economic impacts of teen pregnancies, STDs, relationship fluidity, child abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Discourse Element</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sexual Discourse(s)</td>
<td>Key Words/Phrases/Concepts in Curricula and Learning Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Legitimacy of Sexuality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For procreation only</td>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>sin</td>
<td>denial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Romanticist</td>
<td>nuclear family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within heterosexual, monogamous marriage only</td>
<td>Romanticist</td>
<td>emotional</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>intimacy/danger</td>
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<td>commitment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>seriousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>When connected to social, emotional, and spiritual intimacy only</td>
<td>Naturalist</td>
<td>choice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Legitimate to separate sexuality from intimacy</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>exploration</td>
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<td>Libertarian</td>
<td>pleasure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on Gender</td>
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<td>Explicitly patriarchal</td>
<td>male dominant/female submissive fixed gender roles</td>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>male aggressor/female victim slut vs. virgin female responsibility for regulating sexual contact</td>
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<td>Patriarchy</td>
<td>Gender role fluidity and equality</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
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<td>encouraged; doesn't necessarily work to counter</td>
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<td>choice</td>
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<td>Under all</td>
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<td>Naturalist</td>
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<td>Liberal</td>
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<td>Based on Age</td>
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<td>Anti-adolescent sexuality</td>
<td>Under all circumstances</td>
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<td>necessarily celebrate</td>
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The second strategy I employed was to develop a set of more open-ended questions founded in critical discourse principles and derived from the works of Gee (1999), Hardy and Phillips (2002), and van Dijk (1993) to ask of the texts. My intent in doing so was to ensure that I remained open to the possibilities of each text, and that counter-patterns be given the opportunity to arise outside of the necessarily restrictive framework based on McKay's (1998) classifications. Following is the list of questions used:

1. What is the genre of the text? (e.g. educational film, textbook, curriculum)
2. What is the main activity or action?
3. What is the setting?
4. What speech acts take place e.g. assertions, allegations, attacks?
5. What words/phrases are chosen? How do these shape the discourse?
6. What rhetorical strategies are used, e.g. metaphors, rhetorical questions, repeated phrasing, contrasts, "storytelling"?
7. How are arguments justified? Are they coherent? Are there alternative possibilities?
8. Which information is highlighted or described in a detailed way? Which information is ignored or presented vaguely?
9. What assumptions are made?
10. How are concepts, objects, and subject positions constituted?
11. What identities and relationships are relevant to the situation? How are they transformed or stabilized?
12. Is there a division constructed between some actors and others? Are some actors privileged, while others disadvantaged?
13. Whose interests are represented?
14. What is the speaker’s or writer’s position in relation to the speech act?
15. What system of knowledge or belief (ideology) is relevant to the text?
16. What social goods are relevant? How are they made and in what ways?
17. What institutions are being reproduced?
18. How is the text interdiscursive? Intertextual?

Each text was coded according to the sexual discourse conceptual framework, and notes were made on the texts in response to the questions. Several coding and note-taking passes were made for each text before patterns and discursive themes were developed. In the final stages of analysis, the texts were re-examined for evidence of themes alternate or counter to the themes already distilled.

**Research Validity and Researcher Positionality**

Using discourse analysis as a research methodology can, as Hardy and Phillips (2002) argue, put the researcher in an unusual spot with regards to research validity. They posit that as discourse is inherently constructed, the concept of capturing the “real” is irrelevant. Likewise, they argue that as discourse analysis depends entirely upon interpretation (as, in fact, all methodologies do at some point), and as it emphasizes the exploration of multiple meanings, no results are truly “repeatable” or traditionally “reliable.” That said, van Dijk (1993) and Lather (1986) each provide bases for judging the validity of a critical discourse analysis. Van Dijk argues that such analysis can be judged valid insofar as it is successful in effecting social change and diminishing social inequalities. In a similar vein, Lather argues for the standard of catalytic validity: the degree to which a project contributes to the
reorientation of its subjects to the realization and resistance of their own oppression. I believe that this thesis has the potential for validity according to both criteria: if seriously considered by policy-makers and curriculum-developers, it could effect a change in sexuality education curricula that could incorporate students participating in deconstructing oppressive socio-sexual stereotypes that have limited their agency as sexual subjects.

Critical discourse analysis also demands an unusually overt role for the researcher. As a sole interpreter of discourse, it could be said that what I have really written about is myself – that I have interpreted the texts with the discursive resources already at my disposal, garnered from my particular experience, for example, as White, female, heterosexual, middle-class, “able-bodied,” and university-educated. I do accept this argument to a certain point. I make no claims of universal truth about my interpretations, nor would I expect another analyst, with a necessarily different background and history of experience, to reach identical conclusions. Still, I would expect elements of my analysis to overlap those of another, especially where experiences or a critical stance have been shared.

It is this tension, between the benefits of the critical project and the risk of imposing an “imperial voice,” that is taken up by both Fine (1994) and Lather (1991). I agree with both that the relation of the researcher to the researched needs to constantly be reflected upon, so that we do not easily reproduce the totalizing narratives we work to deconstruct. To that end, I would place myself in a position of essentially speaking “about” the B.C. Ministry of Education, and how they speak “about” students – how they are defined and acted upon. In one sense, I speak “with” students of sexuality education, as one who has shared a history in the classroom. In another sense, however, I speak from a position of privilege; my experience as a sexuality education student is in the past, and is now mediated by my
additional history as an “adult,” a university student, a university bureaucrat, and a general negotiator of academe. Nevertheless, I would agree with Fine that while this declared use of a position of privilege could be considered “imperial,” it also opens a necessary conversational space about the marginalization of students in sexuality education.
Chapter IV: Running Threads: Results of Analysis

Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, my selection of the following curricula and recommended resources for analysis was determined by two factors: sexuality content and use in the classroom. Once established that IRPs from three relatively unrelated curricular subjects met these criteria, it might reasonably be assumed that a variety of sexual discourses and sexual-subject positionings might arise from the analysis. For the most part, however, this was not the case. Though, of course, the documents did not yield identical results, they do exhibit some strong, common themes. These include a tendency toward an essentially negative view of sexuality, expressed most often in Romanticist or Progressive sexual discourses. Emerging from, or intersecting with, these discourses are some fairly strong marginalization tendencies that seriously limit the socially legitimate sexual agency of women, youth, and those who identify as GLBT. At the same time, race and class surfaced often as bases for sexual marginalization, while the sexuality of people with disabilities was treated with an exclusive silence. Nevertheless, each document offered up unique embodiments and combinations of a variety of sexual discourses and marginalizations, as can be seen in the following detailed analyses.

Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) 8-12

Instructional Resource Package

As stated earlier, the secondary CAPP program is intended by the Ministry of Education to be the primary delivery vehicle for sexuality education in B.C., though
sexuality can be addressed in other courses. In Grades 8 to 10, this program takes the form of a half-year (four- to five- month) course, consisting of three major units (Planning Process, Personal Development and Career Development) and addressing sexuality in three of the seven Personal Development sub-units: Healthy Living, Child Abuse Prevention and, especially, Family Life Education (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Curriculum Branch, 1997). The program is currently mandatory for Grades 8 to 12, and the Grade 11 and 12 courses are provincially prescribed graduation requirements.

Interesting to note is the fact that in the combined Grade 11 and 12 CAPP IRP, the years which serve as graduation requirements, sexuality is not addressed at all in the Family Life sub-units, though it continues to be addressed in the Healthy Living and Child Abuse Prevention sub-units. In practice, this results in a cessation of discussion on issues such as sexual decision-making and relationship negotiation, while STDs, sexual abuse, harassment and violence continue to be addressed. Since all grades of CAPP are mandatory, it is difficult to discern the reasoning behind this shift in strategy.

Also of note is the “warning” teachers receive about teaching CAPP in the Introduction to the IRP, in a section titled “Sensitive Content.” Included in this section are instructions to teachers to inform parents before addressing “sensitive topics” in class. Though these “topics” are not specified, one could conclude they refer at least in part to issues involving sexuality. Teachers are also advised to explore “alternative delivery methods” (meaning home-schooling) with parents who do not wish their children to be exposed to material they find “sensitive,” in accordance with Provincial policy. Finally, teachers are instructed to ensure that all guest speakers (frequently used in sexuality education) are cautioned on what topics to avoid, are instructed to stay on-topic, and have
been reviewed for "appropriateness." While these measures could ensure a productive
dialogue between teacher and parent about the education of their children, I would argue they
also represent an example of the means by which sexuality education is constructed for
teachers as "dangerous," acting as a possible impetus for defensive, rather than
comprehensive, teaching. This "warning" places the responsibility for pleasing a great
variety of parents not with the Ministry, District, or school, but with individual teachers.
With little support for teaching about sexuality comprehensively (or at least not without the
possibility of angering parents and losing students), warnings of this type could prompt
teachers to revert to a cautiously planned "bare bones" curriculum, depriving students of the
opportunity to receive relevant information and discuss the wider social implications of
sexuality.

In terms of the content of the CAPP curriculum itself, the language regarding
sexuality in the IRP is very vague. Generally, sexuality is framed as a negative "health"
issue, a physiological change associated with adolescence that poses the threats of STDs,
unwanted pregnancy, sexual harassment, dating violence and possibly child abuse. No
mention is made of the more positive aspects of sexuality, e.g. pleasure and fulfillment.
Much emphasis is placed on the individual "responsibility" of sexual decision-making, with
abstinence the foregrounded and implicitly preferred option. Several suggested exercises
metaphorically pit "sexual activity" against "abstinence" polarizing their consequences on a
safe/dangerous scale, and entirely eliminating consideration of safer sex techniques. In the
Grade 10 course, there is an additional emphasis on the impact of the individual’s sexual
decisions on not just themselves, but on their community and society.
Due to this essentially negative construction of sexuality as dangerous and potentially irresponsible (though less so if properly “controlled”), I would argue the IRP exhibits primarily a Romanticist sexual discourse, with a strand of Progressivism in its negative focus on sexuality as a social function.

**Recommended Learning Resource: AIDS: Allie’s Story**

*AIDS: Allie’s Story* (Buddy, 1989) is an episode of the American television news program *20/20* that was originally entitled “Could This Be Your Daughter?” (The new title was devised for the video’s use in classrooms.) The story profiles Alison (Allie) Gertz, a college-age woman with AIDS, and documents her attempts to publicize the dangers of AIDS, the effects of her illness on her and her parents, and the disease’s spread on college campuses in the U.S. The video is recommended in the Grade 11-12 CAPP curriculum for the unit “Personal Development (Healthy Living).”

While the video attempts to maintain a “neutral/objective” perspective on AIDS through its use of a “removed” journalistic stance and interviews with a medical “expert,” it also works overtly to garner sympathy for Allie’s condition and for her parents, and to warn parents of children with similar backgrounds of the dangers of AIDS, as is reflected in the show’s original title. The video demonstrates that it cannot always achieve all discursive goals at once; they sometimes come into conflict, allowing alternate and competing discursive strands to break through the surface of the carefully packaged narrative. This is not surprising in the context of the heightened and contested discourses that surround the topic of AIDS and sexuality in North America.

As could be expected in a document with the expressed goal of warning the public about an STD, the video’s essential framing of sexuality is negative; it is presented as a
dangerous activity that should at the very least be controlled if not avoided altogether, rather than explored or celebrated. An extremely heavy emphasis is placed on the consequences of Allie’s sexual behaviour on her physically, and on her and her parents emotionally and psychologically. Allie speaks in detail of her initial illness, her shock at the news she had contracted AIDS, her “violent anger and frustration,” her physical limitations and her loss of a “future.” The video also shows footage of Allie talking to a group of high school students about how “careless sex can be fatal.” In addition, there are long interview segments with Allie’s parents, who are visibly shaken as they describe their own shock and disbelief (including their inability to “stop crying”), and their constant concern about Allie’s physical condition. Finally, the video highlights the “unexpectedly high preliminary findings” of a study of AIDS on U.S. college campuses that “we [are] just finding out about.”

This negative presentation of sexuality and its consequences for young adults is framed by discursive strategies that exhibit an overt secular humanism and moral flexibility, as well as a more covert moral traditionalism. The journalistically “neutral” stance of the video, in addition to its sympathetic identification with Allie, the college students she represents, and their parents, prevents the video’s interviewer and narrator from making any overt judgments about Allie’s or the other students’ sexual behaviours, treating them as a medical, epidemiological issue rather than a moral one. The video also lauds a sexual health peer education program at the University of California at Berkeley for its success in helping students overcome their embarrassment about sexuality and acquire the “skills” they require, including safer sex techniques, to protect themselves from AIDS. These elements imply that sexuality is a natural phenomenon that should be expressed (within limits) and discussed openly.
At the same time, repeated and negative reference is made, not to unsafe or unprotected sex, but to “promiscuity,” a factor that becomes much less relevant in AIDS transmission if safer sex techniques are in use and one that takes on more of a moral tone. Allie’s father advises other young adults to “avoid promiscuity,” and one female student in a peer education discussion criticizes friends for “go[ing] merrily on their way, sleeping with whoever they want,” marking desire and sexual expression as negative rather than unprotected sex in particular. The video narrator tells viewers that, at the time of Allie’s infection, “she was active sexually, but insists she used no drugs and was not promiscuous.” This latter example especially could be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, highlighting the low number of Allie’s sexual partners could be intended as a warning about the virulence of AIDS and the requirement of only one exposure for transmission. On the other hand, and especially in light of the other examples, this discourse of “promiscuity” could also be interpreted as an attempt to garner sympathy for Allie and those like her, while relegating the truly “promiscuous” to a lower moral category, possibly more “deserving” of STD contraction. It should also be noted that, though “promiscuity” is mentioned more than once, implying the unacceptable end of a sexual behaviour axis, it is in itself never defined, leaving a significant spectrum of sexual behaviours and frequency rates vulnerable to the “promiscuity” label.

The issue of a sexual moral “duality” arises again in Allie’s description of the encounter that led to her infection with AIDS:

And we made a date with each other, and that’s all it was. It was one night. And it was very romantic. There was candlelight and flowers and champagne and all that. And we went to bed together, um, and that was it.
One possible interpretation of this excerpt could be, again, that only one exposure is required to contract AIDS, and that even the most benign and pleasant encounter can be dangerous. Again, however, it could also be said that in Allie’s “romanticization” of the encounter, as well as in the use of “diminishing” language (“that’s all it was,” “that was it”), a play for sympathy and identification is made through a qualification – a diminishment – of Allie’s sexuality or sexual behaviour. Had Allie’s encounter been described in more physical terms, with Allie’s desire, satisfaction and agency foregrounded instead of the “candlelight, flowers and champagne,” sympathy and identification would most likely have been more difficult for morally traditional viewers. The excerpt could be interpreted to imply that limited, emotionally charged sexual encounters are more morally acceptable than more frequent, emotionally detached sexual interactions, marking their participants as less “deserving” of STD infection. This emphasis on sexual limitation and emotional attachment for sexual legitimacy aligns well with a Romanticist sexual discourse in opposition to the more overtly pursued moral “neutrality” in the rest of the video.

In addition to the multiple moral discourses apparent in the video, the piece also exhibits multiple levels of focus (act/person/society) with implications for discourse about sexuality. The first level of focus is most obviously on the individual, as personified by Allie as an “ideal type” and as further exemplified by the college students in Berkeley’s Sexual Health Peer Education Program. Great emphasis is placed on their individual attitudes and motivations, their responsibility to make “good decisions” and behave “responsibly,” as well as the consequences for them (as personified in Allie) should they fail to do so. As well, in the positive profile of the Berkeley program, the video implies that the students have a right to sexuality education – the opportunity to learn about safer sex techniques and relationship
negotiation skills – in an environment geared to their comfort levels. Some factors (alcohol, rape and the gender double-standard regarding sexual behaviour) are briefly discussed as factors that may detract from an individual’s ability or motivation to determine a sexual situation, but these are overshadowed by the focus on the individual as the locus of sexual rights and responsibilities. This focus best aligns with a Liberal sexual discourse, in that it focuses on the individual to determine sexual legitimacy.

At the same time, the video exhibits an alternate focus at a higher level: on college students as a group and on society’s responsibility to control or affect their sexual behaviour. At this level, college students are discussed as a definable social sector with characteristic behaviours and aggregate HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection rates. The video places great emphasis on the responsibility of parents and colleges to educate students about AIDS and to change their attitudes, motivations and behaviours. This framing strategy best aligns with a Progressive sexual discourse, in that it focuses on the societal function of sexuality to determine legitimacy, and emphasizes society’s responsibility to control the sexuality of the individual.

 Altogether, with the video’s overtly “neutral” moral stance, its more covert emphasis on sexual limitation and emotional attachment, and its dual focus on the rights and responsibilities of both the individual and society to control individual behaviour, AIDS: Allie’s Story exhibits elements of Liberal, Romanticist and Progressive sexual discourses. In terms of identity construction, these discourses combine and compete to aid in the marginalization of viewers on the basis of class, age, gender, race and sexual orientation.
The first of these social markers, class, is used through overlapping discourses of "privilege" and "alarm." Allie is described as an "unpredictable" candidate for AIDS by virtue of her upper-class background:

It is not a disease or a life anyone would have predicted for Allie. A child of privilege, she was raised in Manhattan by a doting family with access to the good life: an apartment on Park Avenue, a house in the country, private school.

Allie's father discusses his attitude toward AIDS before Allie's infection as disbelief in its ability to "touch their only child," and as dismissal of published AIDS statistics as a "myth" used to extract taxes from people of his income level. Colleges, for the most part populated by members of the middle- and upper-classes, are singled out for special concern, and framed as former "safe havens" that are now coming under siege by AIDS. Rhetorical questions and statistics are used to heighten the sense of alarm about the safety of these often class-oriented institutions:

Why is AIDS making in-roads among college students? And why are we just finding out about it?

Health officials now believe that of every one thousand college students two to three are infected with the AIDS virus. Those unexpectedly high preliminary findings, from a study done by the Centres for Disease Control, are the first documented proof of the spread of AIDS on campus. [emphasis added]

The result is a discursive construction of the middle- and upper-classes as "us" — a surprisingly endangered "us" — and a marginalization of the poor and the working-class as irrelevant to the video. This exclusion could imply that devastating disease should be
expected or even accepted among these latter groups, and that the need for alarm or simple
discussion about their endangerment is therefore not as pressing. It should be noted that this
double emphasis on class and alarm would most likely be effective in gaining recognition
and identification from viewers in the middle- to upper-class income range. While this
strategy might be effective in reaching those groups with an important message about AIDS
prevention, its use in high school classrooms with diverse student class backgrounds and
academic goals could serve to alienate lower-class students — to create the impression that
they are not as deserving of AIDS education or protection as their middle- and upper-class
classmates.

In addition to excluding viewers based on class, the video also infantilizes and
essentializes college students based on age, and on their status as objects of the institution of
“school.” Though college students are usually constructed as adults in both physical and
social terms, the video employs discourses of “danger” with regard to their particular sexual
behaviour and motivations in order to justify their objectification by the video and viewers,
as well as various attempts to externally control that behaviour by their colleges. Repeated
references are made to dangerous behaviours purported to be particular to college-age
students:

... the lethal virus is being silently transmitted in large part because young people,
eager to experiment and still shaping their judgment, are simply so vulnerable. For
one thing, at their age, they think they’re immortal. For another, many are simply
embarrassed to talk about sex.

Alcohol plays an enormous role in sexual activity on campus ... and drunk sex is
never safe sex.
The frequency of unconsented sexual activity is an enormous problem. We’re talking about acquaintance rape. This is date rape. It’s a very common problem.

You aren’t painting a very responsible picture of young people on campuses today.

In addition to constructing a stereotype of an immature, irresponsible and “out of control” college student, the discourse of the video separates that stereotypical behaviour from that of a “real” adult; the implication is that adults, unlike college students, do not have poor judgement, are not embarrassed about sex, do not have sex drunk, and are not sexually violent – an unsupportable claim. However, it is an argument that could appeal to 20/20’s intended viewership, most of whom would be beyond college age, and many of whom would be parents of college students, as reflected in the segment’s original title (“Could This Be Your Daughter?”).

This separation of college students from adulthood into a liminal “danger zone,” one usually inhabited by adolescents, allows for their legitimacy as objects of investigation and control by both parents and colleges, as suggested in the video. Despite the contention that students often “just won’t pay attention” to AIDS education, the video emphasises that “it is the responsibility of every college and university directly to educate every student [about AIDS]” with the express goal of “getting them to change their sexual behaviour.” Finally, the video also constructs parents as legitimate authorities for surveillance and involvement in their college-age children’s sexual lives, as is evident in an interview with Allie’s father:

Interviewer: The Gertzes feel strongly that that change starts with the family ... What do you say to other fathers of daughters who might be in the same situation?
Jerry Gertz: ... Tell 'em to tell you, to confide in you, to work with you, to be a, a team, support each other.

Altogether, the direct appeal of the video to “real” adults, the reduction of college students to dangerous, “not quite” adults, and the authorization of their sexual containment and control through surveillance and behaviour modification by both parents and schools serves to marginalize young adults and reduce their legitimacy as full-fledged sexual subjects and agents.

Gender, and the stigma attached to women’s sexual expression, also become a basis for identity marginalization in the video, especially with regard to Allie’s “infection” story. As previously discussed, Allie uses romantic and diminishing language to describe the sexual encounter that led to her contraction of AIDS:

And we made a date with each other, and that’s all it was. It was one night. And it was very romantic. There was candlelight and flowers and champagne and all that.

And we went to bed together, um, and that was it.

As noted, this downplaying of sexual desire and agency could be construed as an attempt to warn viewers of the dangers of AIDS in all unprotected circumstances, including the most tender and isolated encounters. However, the fact of Allie’s gender raises the possibility that her sexual diminishment and romanticization could be a manifestation and (because it goes unanalysed) a perpetuation of the double-standard associated with female sexuality: that for women, unlike men, sexual desire and satisfaction, especially with regard to “casual” sex, is immoral.
Later in the video, though this gender double-standard is described as a "major obstacle to practicing modern safe sex," the footage of student discussions chosen to illustrate this point does little to deconstruct it:

Female student: What are you gonna think about a girl who goes around carrying condoms? What kind of image is she going to portray that way?

Male student: The guy can basically do whatever ... he wants, and the girl's supposed to be, you know, nice and pure, she hasn't done anything. And so the guy does not want to ... realize that she may be just like he is, and it's kind of intimidating for a guy.

Though the students make clear they recognize the existence of the double-standard, there is no attempt (in the video) to challenge it in moral or feminist terms. The excerpt could even be construed as a justification for the double-standard (women should protect their image; men are intimidated by female sexuality). With no alternate vision for female sexual behaviour, the diminishment of female sexual desire and agency remains a discursively consistent strategy for appealing to viewer sympathy and identification.

People who identify as GLBT also come in for marginalization in the video, in ways that sometimes overlap with issues of gender. First, gays and lesbians are explicitly marked as "other" in terms of both the students profiled in the video and the intended audience. Part of the video's discourse of "alarm" is aimed specifically at the infection of heterosexual young adults, a phenomenon that is treated with surprise and urgency, as opposed to the infection of homosexuals, who are framed as inherently and expectedly "high risk." In the introduction to the episode, a journalist describes Allie, our object of sympathy, as follows:
“And she’s not one of the high risk people. She got it even though she’s not an IV drug user, she’s not a haemophiliac and she is heterosexual.” Allie claims, “[t]his is not a disease that just hits the homosexual population or the drug addicts. You don’t have to be a ‘different’ person to get this disease.” Finally, the narrator of the segment adds sexual orientation to class and age as justifications for “alarm” in the following: “Allie Gertz is right. What happened to her is happening to more and more young women and men – heterosexuals – in a place considered relatively safe from AIDS: America’s college campuses.” While, again, this insistent focus on heterosexual infection could be intended to reach a “new” audience with a vital warning about AIDS, its very explicit exclusion of GLBT viewers as “different” could construct them as less deserving of public concern, protection and AIDS education.

This marginalization is supported and given greater complexity by other scenes in the video. In the significant amount of footage of students discussing AIDS prevention, there is an assumed heteronormativity; all discussion revolves around issues of heterosexual dating and intercourse. As well, in a dramatic interview at the beginning of the video, Allie points to the sexual orientation of her partner as the critical element in her infection:

Interviewer: Did you ask any questions? Did you have protection that night?

Allie: … I remember thinking, just being a little suspicious, and asking him the night that we ended up being together, I said, “Court, are you bisexual?” And he said, “No.”

Interviewer: As it turns out, according to Allie, Court was bisexual and later died of AIDS.
The interview contains no further questions or qualifications on the issue of Allie’s (non)use of safer sex techniques, or any aspect of her infection. The effect of this excerpt is to go beyond constructing those who identify as GLBT (and especially bisexual men) as inherently “high risk” and frame them instead as contagions in and of themselves and, possibly, untrustworthy ones at that. It is notable that in introducing the episode, a journalist says that Allie’s story “should make everyone ask, ‘Do I really know the person I’m sleeping with?’” implying the need for suspicion and special vigilance. When combined with the video’s construction of Court as a disguised and inherent contagion, it furthers the notion that non-heterosexuals (or at least bisexual men) pose a special threat to the health of heterosexuals justifying their treatment as objects of alarm and exclusion.

Rather than frame Court as a fellow victim of AIDS, he becomes the victimizer, contaminating Allie not just with AIDS but with his transgression against a heteronormative standard. This pattern of victimization is also consistent with a gender construction of women as desire-less victims of male sexual pressure, and of men as sexually-obsessed aggressors. From this standpoint, Allie could be framed as a double victim – of gender and orientation – whose sexual desire and agency (to participate and to protect herself) is diminished by discourses of both romanticism and hidden, inherent contagion. It is important to note that, due to the cultural pervasiveness of such gender constructions surrounding sexuality, and their effects on identity construction and sexual behaviour, Allie’s agency to insist on the use of safer sex techniques could very well have been compromised. However, the failure of the video to address this issue, and its diversion to her partner’s sexual orientation as the critical factor in Allie’s infection, serves only to marginalize or even demonize those who identify as GLBT in keeping with the general discourse of “difference.”
Finally, *AIDS: Allie's Story* raises issues of marginalization based on race in terms of both a severe imbalance of representation among the college students filmed, and an overt support of a racial sexual stereotype. Many shots of students on college campuses are used as background for narrative exposition by the 20/20 host; there is also a significant amount of footage of the peer education sessions at Berkeley. In all of this footage, showing approximately 75 students, there is not a single African-American person; this could contribute to a construction of African-Americans as poor and as academic underachievers. Their exclusion could also imply that African-Americans aren’t worthy of the same AIDS education and protection as other students. In addition, the only non-White students included in the video are two students of Asian heritage (male and female) in a situation that calls into question the man’s sexual potency. As the female Asian-American student says she knows some men who can’t “keep a condom on” due to their small penis size, the camera swings very quickly first to a bowl of condoms, then to the male Asian-American student while other students in the group laugh. This mixture of race constructions (predominant, valuable Whites; impotent Asians; and entirely absent Blacks) is a startling example of the discourse of racial marginalization prevalent in North American society.

Overall, I found this video to be an example of a text where a supposedly “objective, journalistic” discourse gives way to more substantial but covertly expressed sexual discourses of Romanticism, Liberalism and Progressivism. These then combine and compete to both support the individual sexual rights and responsibilities of students, as well as their construction as objects of control by schools and parents. Furthermore, in its unquestioned expression of “class alarm,” its Romantic stereotyping of women’s (and men’s) sexuality, its perpetuation of racial sexual stereotypes, its pathologizing of GLBT sexuality, and its silence
on the sexuality of people with disabilities, the video serves to marginalize and objectify its subjects and viewers according to class, gender, race, sexual orientation, and disability. In the video's essentially negative framing of sexuality, and in its emphasis on both individual responsibility and consequences for society, I would judge it to be consistent with the Romanticist (with a strain of Progressive) sexual discourses of the CAPP IRPs.

Science 8-10 and Biology 11-12

Instructional Resource Packages

Sexuality content in the Science and Biology IRPs is heavily concentrated in Biology 12, a course not required for graduation (Grade 11 Biology fulfills the graduation requirement). The IRPs for Science 8 and 10 make no mention of sexuality or sexual reproduction at all. Science 9 does contain two units out of six, titled “Body Systems” and “Factors Affecting Body Systems,” which potentially could address sexuality. The only hint that this might be intended is a suggestion in the latter unit for teachers to invite guest speakers on AIDS or prenatal development to their classes (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Standards Branch, 1996). Like Science 9, Biology 11 makes only a tangential reference to sexual reproduction, as a function of population evolution and adaptation (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Curriculum Branch, 1996).

Biology 12, however, contains one unit (out of sixteen), titled “Human Biology (Reproductive System)” (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Curriculum Branch, 1996). Not surprisingly, the IRP for this unit very strongly exhibits a medical/scientific discourse with regard to sexuality, with a complete concentration on the physiology of the reproductive system. Sexuality is presented in essentially negative or
scientifically “neutral” terms. There is a strong and repeated emphasis on AIDS and STD prevention, some discussion of birth control methods, and a discussion of the dangers pregnant women can pose to fetuses through inadequate nutrition, substance abuse, etc.

In terms of gender construction, male aspects are always listed first in discussion of paired male/female traits. There are also disproportionately more assignments suggested on male reproductive systems than female. Where one assignment is purported to check the students’ understanding of the entire process of fertilization, the IRP suggests the teacher “check” that knowledge by quizzing students on the sperm’s role alone. Together, these factors could serve to construct women’s sexuality, even in physiological terms, as marginal and secondary to that of men.

Also of note is the exclusion of GLBT sexuality (as well as some non-reproductive heterosexual interaction) in the IRP due to the narrow focus on sexuality as a function of reproduction alone.

**Recommended Learning Resource:** *Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life, Eighth Edition*

*Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life, Eighth Edition* (Starr and Taggart, 1998) is a textbook recommended for use in Grades 11 and 12 Biology in the B.C. secondary curriculum. In particular, it is one of the texts recommended for the Grade 12 unit entitled “Human Biology (Reproductive System).” I confined my analysis to the chapter in the text that would most likely be used to support this unit, a chapter entitled “Reproduction.”

As the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the physiological dimension of human reproduction, it is not surprising that, for the most part, it employs a scientific/medical discourse regarding sexuality, focusing almost solely on the act of coitus, its physical prerequisites, and its consequences. However, there are elements of competing, additional
discourses threaded throughout the chapter on reproduction that work to undermine the intended clinical "objectivity" of a purely medical discourse.

The essential discourse frame for the text's discussion of sexuality is a pragmatic but negative secular humanism. The physical and emotional pleasures to be derived from sexual contact are acknowledged briefly in the text, though only in the context of reproductive function, in a very detached and clinical tone, and not in any sort of detail. The clitoris and penis are described as "responsive to sexual stimulation" (pp. 768-769), especially during coitus, which also involves "emotional intensity" (p. 773). At orgasm, men are described as experiencing "strong sensations of release, warmth, and relaxation," while women experience "similar sensations" (p. 773). Aside from these very limited references to the personal benefits of sexuality, and outside of the text's discussion of fetal development, the discourse of the chapter focuses on the negative potential consequences of sexual interaction (STD transmission, unwanted pregnancy, and population pressure on natural resources), with a heavy emphasis on "controlling human sexuality and fertility," rather than exploring or celebrating it (p. 789).

Furthermore, the text makes clear that responsibility for this control rests primarily with the individual, the abrogation of which has far-reaching negative effects not just for him or her, but for society, the species, and even the entire planetary ecosphere. Acting "responsibly," according to the text, involves preventing oneself or one's sexual partner from conceiving an unplanned pregnancy, or preventing oneself from receiving or transmitting an STD. Any lapse in this responsibility is presented as not just a physical but a personal moral lapse, which contributes to a strain on the whole population. No situation or extenuating
circumstance (e.g. poverty, rape, birth control failure) is offered in which total control might be unachievable, thereby attenuating the moral failure.

At the same time, the authors briefly acknowledge factors in addition to failure of self-control that contribute to negative outcomes (e.g. unplanned pregnancy, STD spread), though these factors are treated as secondary and not explicitly connected to individual behaviour. They claim that "... complex social factors have contributed to a population growth rate that is out of control" (p. 784), and that "[u]rban poverty, prostitution, intravenous drug abuse, and sex-for-drugs are fanning the [AIDS] epidemic" (p. 786). However, for the most part, society at large is framed as a victim of reckless individual behaviour rather than one of its causes, as in the following passages:

The economics of this health problem [STDs] are staggering. In 1993, the Centers for Disease Control related to us the annual cost of treating the most prevalent STDs: herpes, $759 million; gonorrhea, $1 billion; chlamydial infection, $2.4 billion; and pelvic inflammatory disease, $4.2 billion. This does not include the accelerating cost of treating patients with AIDS. In many developing countries, AIDS alone threatens to overwhelm health-care delivery systems and to unravel decades of economic progress. The social consequences are sobering ... behavioral controls can limit its spread ... many still don't realize that the medical, economic and social consequences affect everyone" (p. 786). [emphasis original]

... a great number of people are not inclined to exercise control. Each year in the United States alone, there are 1 million teenage pregnancies... And each year, there are 1.6 million abortions among all age groups (p. 784).
According to the text, the only solution to the social problems of unwanted pregnancies and STDs lies not with social change but entirely with individual behaviour. Rhetorical questions are repeatedly posed that point to individual self-control as a solution to the social “problems” of sexuality, such as “… how can we reconcile the marvel of individual birth with growing awareness of the astounding birth rate for our whole species?” (p. 784), and “[h]ow will we reconcile our biological past and the need for a stabilized cultural present?” (p. 785).

Further, the text emphasizes that practicing abstinence is the only guaranteed way for an individual to fulfill his or her sexual responsibility (unless planning to have a child). Though the authors admit this ideal is unrealistic, they still frame the failure to practice abstinence in moral terms, as foolishness or irresponsibility, especially among youth:

A few centuries of moral and ecological arguments for its [sex’s] suppression have not stopped all that many unwanted pregnancies. (p. 784)

STDs also are rampant in high schools and colleges … [Students] reject the idea that no sex – abstinence – is the only safe sex. (p. 786).

Failing the practice of abstinence, less reliable methods of disease prevention and birth control are discussed in detail as alternative, though much inferior, strategies. A wide array of birth control devices and drugs and their success rates are discussed. Much though the authors foreground abstinence, this information on options shifts the discourse slightly from one about individual responsibility toward the realm of individual reproductive rights and choices, though the continued moral inflexibility about the potential “failure” of these methods does not let the individual “off the hook”. In addition, STD prevention is described
as an extremely risky enterprise that flummoxes even the medical profession, making even relatively tame activities fraught with personal and social danger. The authors claim that “[m]ost health-care workers advocate safe sex, yet there is great confusion about what ‘safe’ means ... no one should participate in open-mouth kissing ... Caressing is not risky if there are no lesions or cuts” (p. 786).

Similarly, abortion, though described as safe, painless and legal, is also framed as a controversial moral failure. Like birth control and “safer sex” methods, the text’s authors frame legal abortion as a distasteful and unfortunate option necessary to stem a tide of unwanted children – a strain on social and natural resources – and botched back-alley abortions that otherwise would be loosed upon society by the sexually irresponsible. While the authors claim that “[y]our choice of the “right” answer to the morality of abortion will be just that – your choice – and one that can be based on objective insights into the nature of life” (p. 788). They twice pressure the reader with their assertion that

...for both medical and humanitarian reasons, the majority of people in this country generally agree that the preferred route to birth control is not through abortion.

Rather, it is through sexually responsible behaviour that prevents unwanted pregnancy from happening in the first place. (p. 788)

Though the authors technically offer the reader the right to decide their own reproductive practices, morally and socially they are not as flexible. According to the text, if one must make a personal decision about abortion, one has already failed in a personal and social sense, and has become socially marginal, no longer part of the moral “majority.” Legal abortion is implied to be the means by which society can diminish the damage done by the sexually irresponsible to themselves and to society as a whole.
In brief, these multiple discursive frames running throughout the text complicate the overarching scientific/medical discourse of objective detachment. Strands that acknowledge the potential physical and emotional benefits of sexual interaction; the individual's right to make reproductive choices about birth control, disease prevention and abortion; and social factors affecting STD spread and population growth are all present, though very weak. Far more robust are those discursive strands that frame sexuality as dangerous; as primarily the moral responsibility of the individual toward society, and of society toward the sexually "responsible"; and as an issue of self-control. I would argue that these elements align most neatly with first, a Progressive sexual discourse, in that they frame sexuality in negative terms, as a "problem" for society that requires regulation through birth control and abortion, neither of which are entirely moral but necessary nonetheless. Also in alignment with a Progressive sexual discourse is the text's heavy emphasis on the rational behaviour of the individual and his or her social duty to control their sexuality, and the comparative neglect of social forces and factors that shape individual sexuality, such as gender, class and sexual orientation.

One could also interpret the text's passages on birth control techniques, and on individual moral choice regarding abortion, as elements of a Liberal sexual discourse, in that they emphasize the individual's rights to reproductive choice and to moral and sexual autonomy. I would argue, however, that these elements are secondary to, and largely overshadowed by, the restrictive Progressive discourse of the rest of the chapter.

Both actively and through silences, the text's chapter on reproduction also works to marginalize sexual subjects by age, race, orientation, (dis)ability and, especially, gender. While the discourse of the text frames men as active sexual subjects, primary and central to
the reproductive process, women are constructed at different points as nurturers, victims, threats, contagions and, especially, as passive and secondary to the reproductive process.

This dichotomous positioning of men's and women's reproductive roles is expressed through various discursive strategies. First, all discussion of reproductive systems, functions and roles is separated by gender, with the male element listed or discussed first throughout virtually the entire chapter (one exception will be discussed later in this section). On the level of phrase, sentence, paragraph or section, there is no alternation of the order of discussion; female characteristics and functions are preceded by the male the vast majority of the time. This strict ordering frames male sexuality as, literally, primary and female sexuality as secondary.

Second, the text's description of (heterosexual) intercourse is blatantly male-centred, framing the male as the active and necessary sexual subject, and the female as passive and so little discussed as to seem almost an unnecessary bystander to the whole process. In total, the text's description of coitus contains thirty-six lines of text on male stimulation, arousal, action, ejaculation and orgasm; it contains slightly less than four lines on female stimulation and orgasm with no description of female desire, arousal or action. Even at that, what little reference to the female role and experience in coitus there is is “tacked on” to the end of a statement about male experience, or made only in reference to the male, as the following examples illustrate:

During coitus, [male] pelvic thrusts stimulate the penis as well as the female’s clitoris and vaginal wall. (p. 773)

At orgasm, the end of the sex act, strong sensations of release, warmth, and relaxation dominate [for the male]. Similar sensations typify female orgasm. (p. 773)
Compounding this presentation of women as secondary participants in coitus are the section’s final two lines: “It is a common misconception that a female cannot become pregnant if she doesn’t reach orgasm. Don’t believe it” (p. 773). While demystifying what might be a commonly-held notion in the interest of increasing student agency to prevent unwanted pregnancy, in the context of the whole description of coitus, the statements could also serve to further marginalize women’s sexual experience and role. The text’s narrow focus on what is reproductively “necessary” in heterosexual intercourse frames women’s desire, satisfaction or even willing participation as irrelevant, and the woman herself as a passive sperm receptacle rather than an active sexual agent.

This “downgrading” of women’s sexual agency is further illustrated in the text’s description of women as permanently “receptive” “female primates” as follows:

... female primates, including humans, follow a menstrual cycle. Such females are fertile intermittently... heat is not synchronized with their fertile periods ... female primates of reproductive age can become pregnant only at certain times of year, but they may be receptive to sex at any time. (p. 768)

While the intention of the chosen terminology may have been to indicate a scientific objectivity, or to make students aware of connections between human and animal biology, in the context of a chapter devoted wholly to human biology it could also work to reduce women to something possibly less than human, associated more strongly with an inchoate “natural” realm than with the abstract thought required for decision-making and full agency.

It should be noted that at no point in the chapter are men referred to as “primates” or compared to any other animal.
Further polarization of male and female sexualities occurs in the text’s discussion of sexual processes at the microbiological level. With reference to male fertility, testosterone is described as stimulating “sexual and aggressive behaviour” (p. 766). No other motivation for this type of behaviour is discussed, nor is any indication given that women have testosterone as well. In addition, no behavioural effect of sex hormones in the female reproductive system is described. While in and of itself, the statement reflects scientific fact, several commentators have noted that without sufficient contextual discussion, this type of selective information on sex hormones can contribute to stereotypical constructions of men as sexually aggressive and/or serve as justification of male sexually aggressive behaviour. In further support of this notion of the “naturally aggressive” male, the text’s discussion of the fertilization process characterizes sperm as active, almost personified agents, whereas eggs are passive, the mere object of the sperm’s action. Sperm “encounter,” “penetrate,” and are “propelled,” whereas the egg “receives,” and is “released,” and “swept.” Though the text does mention the contraction of vaginal muscles that pull the sperm deeper into the vagina – a female function often left out of sexual health textbooks – it manages to ascribe the action to the male system, as follows: “… prostoglandins (from the male seminal vesicles) induce contractions in the female’s reproductive tract and thereby assist sperm movement through it” (p. 765). While this may seem a niggling point, Lenskyj (1990) (among others) has noted that the tendency to project active/passive gender stereotypes onto the fertilization process has undermined accurate portrayals of the female role, and has served to perpetuate essentializations of both male and female sexualities.

Further evidence of the marginality of women’s sexuality in the text is the authors’ treatment of cancers associated with men and women’s reproductive systems or secondary
sexual traits. The text describes prostate and testicular cancers as having a surprisingly high mortality rate and receiving little media attention, whereas breast cancer, whose mortality rate is "not much higher" is "highly publicized" (p. 765). The authors then proceed to give very detailed instructions on testicular self-examination, and to refer female readers to their "...physician or the American Cancer Society (listed in the telephone directory) for a pamphlet on recommended [breast] examination procedures" (p. 783). The text makes no mention of cervical or ovarian cancers or of the need for annual pelvic examinations. The intention of this uneven coverage may well have been to fill in a perceived "gap," but the result is a marginalization of women's sexual health as secondary to men's. As a recommended resource for secondary schools, this textbook might be the first written material female students encounter that could instruct them on how to prevent or detect common forms of cancer. The authors' assumption that they already have "too much information" is a dangerous one, and their suggestion that they seek information elsewhere is both unrealistic and deliberately exclusive.

Finally, the textbook's illustrations, though perfectly functional as "objective" representations of physiological structures and processes, could serve to reinforce the marginalization of women as objects of sexuality rather than active subjects. Whereas all illustrations of males in the text are either of internal organs only, or are extremely abstract with no clear surface details or faces, two illustrations of females depict nude women frontally with sharp surface detail including faces. One of these illustrations depicts seven stages of female development from two months after fertilization through to adolescence and early adulthood. Though textbook illustration selection can admittedly be difficult, and authors must often work with what can be obtained from standard image banks, the
importance and potential discursive effect of illustrations and their selection should not be underplayed. The selection of the above-mentioned female illustrations is important because the surface detail and the faces render them not just biological specimens but recognizable persons, made culturally vulnerable by their nudity. In combination with the gender-marginalizing and -polarizing potential of the text itself, these illustrations could reinforce the perceived passivity and objectification of women’s sexuality by offering women’s bodies to a proprietary gaze (the reader’s), while the men of the text, the active sexual agents and subjects, rise above our surveillance.

In addition to the polarization of men’s and women’s sexualities as respectively active and passive, the text also polarizes women themselves around two axes: as special victims/contagions of STDs, and as nurturers/threats to fetuses. With regard to the first axis, the text claims that “women and children are hardest hit” (p. 786) by STDs, though it cites no sources or evidence for this claim. The text then goes on to state that many STDs are “rampant,” not due to social factors such as poverty, sexual violence, or a lack of prevention education, but because “women experience no troubling symptoms during early stages” (p. 787). It should be noted that the two-page section in the chapter dedicated to STDs is the only place where the “male listed first” rule is reversed. For each description of an STD, the female symptoms and effects are listed first, along with information on whether the particular disease can be transmitted across the placenta to a fetus. Though not stated, the intention of the authors might be to warn women about their previously unperceived vulnerability to STDs. The effect, however, of foregrounding women in a section on STDs, when their role has been marginalized in the rest of the chapter, could be to merely associate them more strongly with the diseases themselves. It could, indeed, serve to reinforce the moral
traditionalist discourse of sexually active women as somehow “unclean,” as failed regulators of human sexual relationships who are dangerous to their families and society as a whole. Overall, the text’s polarization of women as victims or perpetrators where STDs are concerned leaves very little space for women’s recognition as legitimate sexual agents.

In a similar vein, the chapter also polarizes women as both nurturers and threats to the fetuses they carry, as is succinctly expressed in the section heading, “Mother as Provider, Protector, Potential Threat” (p. 780). This section, in particular, details to a small extent how a pregnant woman’s body nurtures the development of the fetus through the provision of nutrients, but for the most part it describes how a pregnant woman can harm a fetus by contracting infections, ingesting prescription drugs, alcohol, and cocaine, and inhaling cigarette smoke (first- or second-hand). Previous sections on embryo and fetus development also describe the nurturing function of the pregnant woman, though only very briefly. While it is assumed, of course, that fetal development takes place in the female body, the text of these sections treats the process as a virtually “disembodied” process. Of the seven pages that describe fetal development, there are only eight lines that discuss the “interaction” between the fetus and expectant mother. When it comes to the female-fetus relationship, much heavier emphasis is given to the dangers posed by the expectant mother. It should be noted that, as the text focuses narrowly on reproductive function, responsibility for nurturing the fetus is placed entirely with the expectant mother. There is no mention of a potential father following the section on fertilization, or of that father’s potential to nurture (assist with income or nutrition) or threaten (substance abuse before conception, or smoking or domestic violence during pregnancy) a fetus. There is also no mention of social factors that could contribute to, or detract from, a woman’s ability to maintain a healthy pregnancy, such as
poverty, gender or racial discrimination, or a general lack of social support. Though primary responsibility for fetal health can only rest with the expectant mother, the text’s failure to address these other factors, and its heavy emphasis on the mother as potential threat, could serve to further marginalize women as objects of concern and control, rather than as agents deserving of support. It also illustrates again the text’s alignment with a Progressive sexual discourse – one that focuses heavily on the responsibilities of individual women and their potential threat to society, while neglecting their right to support from their male partners and society in general.

In addition to women, youth and their sexuality are also essentialized by the text’s discourse. Though the authors allow that teens reach “sexual maturity” between the ages of thirteen and nineteen (p. 783), they frame teens, especially sexually active teens, as particularly irrational and irresponsible, and as objects of control by parents or other adults. Their behaviour, such as their above-mentioned rejection of “the idea that no sex – abstinence – is the only safe sex” and their tendency to avoid thinking about the potential negative outcomes of sexual interaction (p. 786) is framed as an indicator of their youth and immaturity, with no concession that these attitudes are common among adults as well. The text also exhibits a number of assumptions about teen sexuality that allow the authors to further mark them off as separate from adults, as a special “social problem,” as illustrated by the following:

... a great number of people are not inclined to exercise control. Each year in the United States alone, there are 1 million teenage pregnancies. (Many parents actually encourage early boy-girl relationships without thinking through the great risks of premarital intercourse and unplanned pregnancy.) (p. 784)
The framing of the text indicates an assumption that heterosexual teen relationships are or should be the provenance of parents to ensure adequate control of their sexuality. Second, the authors assume that without adequate parental or external control, these relationships will automatically become sexually active or even procreative (i.e. "irresponsible") as teens lack the maturity to practice self-control (i.e. abstinence or birth control). Third, the authors frame all teen pregnancies as both unplanned and as "social problems." While assuredly the former is the case for many teen parents, studies have also shown that a significant number of teen pregnancies, especially those of women in their higher teens, are planned, sometimes in the context of a committed relationship or marriage (Luker, 1996). Furthermore, studies have shown that teen parenthood is not automatically a "problem"; that, though they may face different challenges, teens can make good parents given adequate financial, emotional and social support – the same factors that contribute to good "adult" parenthood (Luker, 1996). Finally, the text makes the assumption that there are no circumstances that could compromise or detract from an individual's ability to "control" their sexuality or fertility, such as rape, poverty or a lack of prevention education. Taken together, the assumptions made in this excerpt and throughout the chapter illustrate an essentialization and Progressive delegitimization of teen sexuality: a focus on teens as potential social threats and objects of social control, and a failure to address social factors that shape and affect teen sexuality, such as class and gender relations.

Finally, though there is very little text that refers to issues of race, sexual orientation or disability, what is present, and especially what remains silent, has the potential to marginalize. For example, the following excerpt, from a section on AIDS, is the only overt reference to race or sexual orientation in the chapter:
HIV was not identified until 1981, but it was present in some parts of Central Africa for at least several decades. In the 1970s and early 1980s, it spread to the United States and other developed countries. Most of those initially infected were male homosexuals. Now a large part of the heterosexual population is infected or at risk. (p. 786).

Though this description of AIDS' epidemiological "disease path" is scientifically valid, without contextual discussion (there is none), this text could serve to construct Africans, African-Americans and -Canadians, and gay men as particularly contagious or sexually dangerous. Certainly, they could be marked as "different" from a "mainstream" sexual population, a notion that is supported by their exclusion from the rest of the chapter. Of the dozen anatomical illustrations and photographs in the chapter where skin tone is visible, the illustration subject is White or relatively light-skinned. Further, since the focus of the chapter is on reproductive function alone, GLBT sexuality is never addressed. The only tangential connection that could possibly be made to gay male sex would be the text's mention of the anus as a possible infection site for some STDs, though this could equally apply to sexual practices of people who declare other sexual identities, including heterosexual. In the sections of the text on non-AIDS STDs, transmission is assumed to be heterosexual, and no specific mention is made of infection prevention for those who are GLBT. This foregrounding of Whites and heterosexuals as "standard" sexual subjects and the highlighting of Africans and gay men as particular disease victims and sources is both exclusive and marginalizing, and fails to represent and serve the diversity of the Canadian student body.
The same could be said for the text's silence on the sexuality of people with disabilities. Their complete absence from the text could serve to construct them as sexually marginal or as altogether asexual, not worthy of instruction or reference. However, though there is no direct mention or illustration referring to the sexuality of people with disabilities, one excerpt does have implications. After describing the process of in vitro fertilization, the text continues as follows:

Each attempt at in vitro fertilization costs about 8,000 dollars, and most attempts aren't successful. In 1994, each “test-tube” baby cost the nation's health-care system about 60,000 to 100,000 dollars, on average. The childless couple may believe that no cost is too great. But in an era of increased population growth and shrinking medical coverage, is the cost too great for society to bear? (p. 788).

As with teen pregnancy and AIDS treatment, the text frames in vitro fertilization (a treatment for the “reproductively disabled”) in terms of the social costs and population stress caused by individual needs and behaviour, rather than as a matter of reproductive opportunities and rights. Again, this is in alignment with the text's Progressive approach, foregrounding individual responsibilities toward the social good.

Overall, I would argue that the “Reproduction” chapter in Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life offers an example of a text that utilizes both a supposedly “objective, scientific” discourse, and a primarily Progressive sexual discourse that frame sexuality both as potentially dangerous and as limited to reproductive function, with a heavy emphasis on the consequences to society of sexual interaction. By definition, the reproductive limitation almost entirely eliminates discussion of GLBT sexuality from the text, excluding and marginalizing GLBT readers in the process. The text also exhibits strong evidence of the
marginalization of women’s sexuality, and a devaluing of women as powerful sexual subjects. Finally, several elements in the text could serve to marginalize readers on the basis of age and race, and to exclude readers on the basis of disability. In its limitation of sexuality to a function of reproduction, in its Progressive view of sexuality as potentially dangerous, and to some extent in its discursive devaluing of women’s sexuality, the text is consistent with the discourses in the Biology IRPs.

Home Economics 8-10; Home Economics 11-12 (Family Studies Units)

Instructional Resource Packages

No aspect of sexuality is directly referred to in any grade of the Home Economics IRPs. Sexuality is only alluded to implicitly as “courtship,” and only as a function of general “relationships” and family formation. The use of the somewhat old-fashioned term “courtship” implies an assumption of a heterosexual relationship whose intended destination is marriage. Though I would argue that the use of a single word is too little evidence to categorize a sexual discourse for an entire group of documents, I would also argue that this particular word suggests a Romanticist discourse, where emotional and spiritual commitment are necessary prerequisites for the legitimate expression of sexuality. I would also argue that the implication of heteronormativity has the potential to marginalize GLBT students (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Curriculum Branch, 1998a, 1998b).

Recommended Learning Resource: The Living Family: A Canadian Perspective

The Living Family: A Canadian Perspective (Jarman and Howlett, 1991) is a textbook recommended as “comprehensive” for Family Studies units of Home Economics,
Grades 9-12. The declared approach of the text is sociological, providing students with information on how Canadian families live, while prompting students to think about their own situations, preferences and future options. Most of the information on families presented is statistical in nature, garnered from surveys.

The sexual discourse most prevalent throughout the text is a Romanticist one, which constructs sexuality as legitimate, or at least preferable, in heterosexual, emotionally intimate relationships, and most notably within marriage. Though in isolated spots, the authors do concede that sexual interaction does not necessarily take place in the context of emotionally intimate relationships, the vast majority of the text assumes that to be the ideal situation. In one diagram illustrating the characteristics of different types of relationships, "physical touching" is associated only with an "intimate" relationship, involving "high vulnerability, emotional closeness, a bond, high similarity of world view, high degree of exclusivity, long-term commitment, high degree of self-disclosure, and a history together" (p. 111). To achieve this "intimacy," emphasis is placed on "exclusivity" as follows:

People in an intimate relationship will confine certain behaviours, such as making personal disclosures or having sex, to the other person in the intimate relationship as a demonstration of their trust and affection. This exclusivity serves as a bond in the relationship (p. 114).

Sexual relationships in non-exclusive circumstances are referred to as "promiscuous," a loaded term that points to the authors’ negative view of the potential consequences of sexual interaction outside monogamous relationships. This view is further illustrated when the authors equate sexual expression with other social "problems," as follows: "[w]hile conformity in dress fashions is less rigid than in the past, ‘doing your own thing’ has
unfortunately been applied to drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and sexual freedom with less happy results” (p. 343).

This Romanticist discourse of sexual containment and potential harm is combined with, and supported by, a structural functionalist focus on the nuclear, heterosexual family. As the stated purpose of the text is to study Canadian families, the authors focus a great deal of attention on the majority responses from statistical surveys on family structures, relationships, gender roles, and sexuality. These results (e.g. most people get married) are presented as de facto or even ideal patterns for living for which students must prepare. The overall progression of the textbook moves from preparing students for a heterosexual marriage to maintaining that marriage, raising children and adolescents, and effectively transitioning to the "post-parental stage" (pp. iv-vii). People who stray from this pattern are constructed as aberrations, if not outright "problems." Single mothers, for instance, are painted in an especially negative light. According to the text, they must often “cut short their education,” suffer a “far greater chance of living in poverty,” are “frequently isolated socially,” and, most distressing, have difficulty finding a “suitable partner” (pp. 234-235). In fact, the text states that most single mothers “marry within three to four years,” “likely ... opt[ing] for a less than ideal marriage to escape from poverty, exhaustion, and loneliness” (p. 235). While true that single parents face special challenges, the text tends to construct their "singleness" as the problem, rather than inadequate social support.

This heavy emphasis on heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family as ideal goals unfortunately leads the text’s authors to make several assumptions about students and their sexuality, and to fail to address the concerns or needs of students who don’t fit the "approved" life pattern, marginalizing them in the process. For example, there is an
extremely explicit assumption of heterosexuality throughout almost the entire book. As the
heterosexual, nuclear family is the major focus of the text, sexuality in general is constructed
as a function of heterosexual family formation. Entire chapters devoted to dating and family
relationships discuss only male-female interactions; GLBT partnerships or parenting do not
seem to fall within the authors’ definition of “family,” or, at least, not a “mainstream” one.
All photos and illustrations of “couples” in the book depict one man and one woman. Sexual
maturation and all forms of sexual interaction are relentlessly described in terms of relating
to “the opposite sex,” and the most frequently used term for sexual or life partner is “mate”
implying both heterosexuality and procreativity. In fact, dating is described as “our society’s
way of allowing people of opposite sexes to get to know each other and commence the
process of mate selection” (p. 149).

Four pages out of 438 make mention of homosexuality at all, and when it is addressed
briefly, it is constructed as an “alternative lifestyle” that while becoming more “tolerated” is
still not entirely positive. The sections that do discuss homosexuality are set apart from the
“regular” text of the book on “issue” pages. This “ghettoization” of homosexuality within
the text both discursively contains and marginalizes gay and lesbian sexuality; no recognition
of homosexual sexuality or family relationships is permitted to “leak” into the “mainstream”
text. On one such page, placed at the beginning of the first chapter and titled “Is the Family
Dying?” homosexuality is constructed in very negative terms, as follows:

... people who are concerned about the family also point to a variety of social
problems that affect the family unit. These include the increase in abortions; violence
within the family; higher rates of drug and other substance abuse; and increasing
incidence of homosexuality (p. 2).
This portrayal of gays and lesbians not only marginalizes their sexuality, it demonizes it as a threat to social cohesion, ideally to be eliminated. Gay men are also particularly and curiously associated with AIDS. According to the text, the disease has made gay men “more cautious” about having sex with multiple partners, where they were previously not inclined to sexual “exclusivity,” unlike heterosexual and lesbian couples (p. 214). Students are also asked to discuss the question, “Do you think that AIDS has made society more or less tolerant of homosexual cohabitation?” (p. 214). Though there are several possible interpretations of this approach, in the context of the overall discourse of the text, it is possible to detect a covert (and unconscious?) approval of the disease, insofar as it encourages gay men toward monogamous and emotionally intimate sexual relationships, more in line with the Romanticist sexual discourse expressed throughout the text.

The construction of gay and lesbian sexuality also overlaps with the text’s problematic and stereotypical constructions of gender: on another special “issue” page titled “Homosexual Cohabitation,” the text states that lesbians are “more pair oriented,” “less open and aggressive,” more “egalitarian,” more sexually exclusive, and more likely to have children (from previous heterosexual relationships) than gay men (p. 214). Generally, though the heteronormativity of the text constructs gays and lesbians as threatening and marginal, lesbians, by virtue of their feminine “non-aggression” are portrayed as somewhat less so.

These constructions again fall into line with a Romanticist sexual discourse that paints men and women – heterosexual or homosexual – as sexually aggressive and passive, respectively. Though this stereotype is sometimes qualified in the text with brief passages about how things have “changed” recently, or may change in the future, the authors’ heavy
emphasis on selected behavioural and attitudinal surveys, and their failure to deconstruct or contextualize the results from those surveys, merely reifies the stereotypes and presents them as patterns for living.

Adolescent girls who mature sexually ahead of their peers, for example, are explicitly constructed as "embarrassed by their . . . advanced development," whereas boys who mature earlier are said to experience increased popularity (p. 291). Women are said to prefer men who are older than themselves, while men prefer women who are younger (p. 140). Men are said to engage in more premarital sex, and are "more sexually aggressive" while women "tend to focus on the emotional aspects of the relationship" (p. 132), a difference the text ascribes to both "social expectations" and possibly "chromosomal (genetic) and hormonal differences." These latter are said to create a "susceptibility or predisposition at birth to aggression" for men which is then reinforced by "socialization" (p. 257). This ascribed "difference" is especially problematic in light of the text's discussion of "date abuse," including sexual violence. In keeping with the Romanticist and stereotypical gender constructions in the rest of the text, the authors place the responsibility for "making changes" in an abusive relationship with the woman, advising that she needs to make "a choice not to be a victim," while her male abuser will require "professional help" (pp. 134-135). Women are constructed by default as responsible for responding to male aggression "correctly" and for the regulation of sexual and emotional relationships. This special status for adolescent girls – desireless (or at least repressed) victims and regulators – makes them, according to the text, objects "of particular concern" to their parents (p. 316). According to the text, women and adolescent girls seem to have very little sexual agency, and very little recognition as sexual subjects in their own right.
Finally, the most troubling aspect of the text’s marginalization of women’s (as well as GLBT) sexuality is the insistence that a critical element of adolescent social development is “accepting gender identity” without a deconstruction of how that “identity” might be problematic (p. 292). The text goes on to discuss what society and adolescents consider to be “sex-appropriate” behaviour, including demonstrations of “physical strength, athleticism, courage, involvement in sex, and drinking” for boys, and a focus on “social skills and appearance” for girls. The text notes that adolescents who behave in ways considered inappropriate to their sex can suffer from ridicule and ostracism from their peers, though this is a more serious problem for “feminine” boys than for “masculine” girls (p. 310). Again, though there may be truth in these statements, their presentation as de facto elements of Canadian society to which adolescents must somehow conform, without a deconstruction or a challenge of their sexist and heterosexist implications, simply reifies sexual stereotypes and perpetuates the marginalization of all who step outside them.

To some extent, this marginalization is also aimed at all adolescents on the basis of age. On one hand, the text acknowledges that the age category of adolescence is culturally, rather than biologically or inherently, defined; that the transition to adulthood is a matter of arbitrary social recognition (p. 293). At the same time, much more space in the text is occupied by arguments for adolescents’ mental and behavioural inferiority, which impairs their ability to make “good” decisions about engaging in sex, or planning to have children. Teens are described as “impulsive” and selfish; as focused on “instant gratification”; as particularly given to “magical thinking” and delusions of “omnipotence”; and as unable to predict the consequences of their own actions (pp. 294, 338). While this is no doubt true for
many teens, the text offers no possibility that these characteristics might not apply to all, or that they apply to many “adults” as well.

This construction of adolescents leads the authors to support sexuality education in schools, in part to remediate students’ “sexual illiteracy” and in part in concession to the fact that “it is impossible to persuade [adolescents] to abstain from sex ... until they are ready for a committed, monogamous sexual relationship” (p. 341). Thus, a strain of Progressivism—the acceptance of adolescent sexuality as a distasteful but unavoidable fact—can be detected. Nevertheless, a Romanticist sexual discourse remains dominant, especially in the emphasis on teens as unfit for the ideal sexual context—heterosexual marriage—due to their immaturity. Indeed, adolescent dating is trivialized by the authors as less “serious” because it does not (or should not) lead to marriage, as adult dating does (p. 131). Finally, despite an overt “tolerance” of adolescent sexuality, the text also explicitly pathologizes it. Teens who engage in sexual activity “more often” are constructed as more likely to come from troubled homes, where they have problems in their relationships with their parents (p. 317). The logic that a bad home produces bad behaviour constructs teen sexuality generally as negative, rebellious and dangerous. This construction is again reflected in a question intended for student discussion: “[w]hat influences encourage teens to think about sex? Do you think these should be more strictly controlled by the government?” (p. 317). This discourse of control, combined with those of sexual difference and inferiority, serve to undermine the notion of adolescent sexual agency—the right and capacity to make decisions about their own bodies—and to marginalize teens as objects of surveillance rather than sexual subjects.

Finally, the text includes a discussion of sexual relationships (or “mating”) within or outside one’s social group that has discursive implications for race, class and religion. In a
section titled “Socialization and Mate Selection,” the authors state that marrying “homogamously” or within one’s racial, religious or class group, is common due to a sense of comfort and shared values between the partners. While the text states that barriers to marrying “exogamously” or outside one’s racial, religious or class group are gradually falling, and that the practice is becoming more common due to greater “tolerance of differences,” it heavily foregrounds the difficulties constructed as inherent in such matches. For example, its first mention of exogamy indicates that it “may in some cases be prohibited by law” and goes on to cite pre-1967 American State laws, and pre-1970 Catholic law, before reverting back to a discussion of the “comfort” of homogamous marriages (pp. 138-139). In another section, the text states that, though happy exogamous marriages are not impossible, “when the backgrounds of two people who marry are dissimilar, problems can arise” (pp. 210-211). Finally, the discourse of the text subtly pathologizes marriages between racial, class and religious groups by associating homogamy with healthy family relationships, as follows:

Whether or not people marry homogamously may depend on how positive their feelings are toward their parents. Sociologists contend that people who have strong positive feelings for their parents are more likely to marry someone with similar traits to those of their parents than people who view their parents negatively (p. 138).

The implication is similar the text’s previous statement regarding adolescent sexuality: a sexual partner of a different race, religion or class may indicate a troubled home, constructing inter-group relationships as somehow suspect if not symptomatic of some fundamental flaw. The discussion takes on a particularly racial tone due to the photographs used to illustrate the terminology: one of a heterosexual couple of South Asian ancestry, and one of a White
woman arm-in-arm with a Black man. Again, while the statements the authors make might be true in a statistical sense (though no supporting references are offered), their unchallenged and decontextualized presentation could serve to reinforce social divisions, stratifications and marginalizations.

Overall, I would argue that *The Living Family* presents an example of a text that utilizes a supposedly "objective" "social science" discourse with negative consequences. Far from remaining "objective" (an impossible task in any case), this discourse works to shield the more fundamental operative of the text: a Romanticist sexual discourse which validates sexual interaction only in emotionally intimate relationships, and preferably within a narrowly-defined "family" – heterosexual and nuclear. Though the text offers some small qualifications, this Romanticism generally works to marginalize women's sexuality as passive or inert, adolescent sexuality as invalid (but unavoidable), and homosexual sexuality as threatening. The "social science" discourse, especially in its tendency toward structural functionalism, also serves to reify problematic stereotypes and social divisions, for the most part leaving questions of inequalities and injustice unchallenged. Though, as previously stated, the Home Economics (Family Studies) IRPs offered little evidence of *any* sexual discourse, what little there was seemed to tend toward the Romantic, and therefore could be considered discursively consistent with this recommended learning resource.

**Conclusions**

Though IRPs and recommended learning resources from a number of disciplinary perspectives were examined, and differences in approach and detail were detected, a surprising similarity in discursive themes and marginalizations often arose from the texts.
Though many texts framed their contents to be read as “neutral” or “objective” (in the traditions of journalism, science and social science), strong evidence of Romanticist, Progressive or both sexual discourses was apparent in virtually all documents. Both of these discourses are defined by McKay (1998) as “restrictive” in that they construct sexuality as potentially beneficial but only if brought under sufficient control. McKay also notes that they focus primarily on the “problems” of sexuality, affecting either individuals or society as a whole, which are framed as arising from individual behaviour. As a result these discourses, and the documents analyzed, fail to take into account social factors that affect sexual agency and marginalization such as racism, sexism, homophobia, class stereotypes, and poverty.

Consistent with these overarching frames, most documents analyzed employed sub-discourses of control, containment and potential danger regarding sexuality, and tended to position many sexual subjects in ways that contributed to their marginalization. The most prevalent bases for this marginalization were sexual orientation and gender, though the legitimacy of adolescent sexuality was also strongly undermined. In addition, class and race served as bases for the explicit stratification of “valued” sexualities, and the sexuality of people with disabilities was marginalized through almost total silence and non-representation. Overall, I would argue that all of the recommended learning resources, and to some extent the IRPs themselves, have the potential to perpetuate stereotypical identity constructions and social inequalities through the lens of sexuality. I will discuss the implications of these findings and recommendations for change in the following chapter.
Chapter V: Conclusions

Implications

The possible implications of a sexuality education curriculum that employs primarily Romanticist or Progressive sexual discourses, and which tends to marginalize students most strongly on the basis of gender, sexual orientation and age (but also on the basis of race, class and disability) are many, and are tied to the social, cultural and political context of the curriculum. At the individual level, the non- or mis-representation of students’ sexualities has the potential to diminish their sexual agency and capacity for self-determination, and to disempower them generally based on socially constructed and stereotypical identity categories. Sexuality education curricula have a particularly strong capacity to perpetuate these inequalities through the prism of sexuality because it carries the normalizing weight of the state. It stands symbolically for the community-at-large in determining a student’s social and sexual legitimacy. In B.C., however, students (and especially female and GLBT students) must generally look outside their schools, and beyond their official sexuality education, to encounter discourses that frame their sexuality as legitimate.

The development of such negatively-framed curricula is not, however, unpredictable in a discursive arena as contested as sexuality and schools in British Columbia. Edelman (1988) has noted that governments and their curriculum developers have strong incentives to define needs and provide policy or curricula solutions that satisfy the most strategic or largest group of people. Therefore, conditions that affect groups with few or no resources receive less attention, and political obliviousness toward an issue by the general public or certain groups leaves governments free to find solutions for those who are most vocal or powerful.
Though this dynamic can lead governments to develop sexuality education expressly within the domain of the most dominant sexual discourse(s), I believe it more likely in B.C. that sexuality education curricula are developed defensively, with an eye to eliminating any element that could cause offence. At its most minimal, Edelman (1988, p. 24) would term this a “gesture as solution,” a vaguely worded curriculum devoid of significant content. I would judge this to be the case regarding much of B.C.’s sexuality education curricula, and certainly relevant to the CAPP IRPs, purportedly the primary delivery vehicle for sexuality education. As can be noted in my document analyses, it appears to be the recommended learning resources, rather than B.C.’s sexuality education IRPs, that provide a *de facto* and rather covert curriculum.

In B.C., this tendency toward “defensive” sexuality education that enlists dominant, potentially oppressive discourses is supported by several factors: the downward dispersal of responsibility (but not authority) for sexuality education to individual teachers, leaving most teachers without official support for offering sexuality education that challenges dominant discourses; the option for parents to remove their children from sexuality education, which could be perceived as threatening to teachers; and the general North American discomfort regarding sexuality (especially the sexuality of adolescents) that discourages parents with more moderate views from closely examining, or becoming more vocal about, their children’s sexuality education. Entirely missing from the discursive struggle are the students themselves, the nominal beneficiaries of the curricula, who are rarely, if ever, asked to participate in defining their own needs.
Limitations of the Study

Prior to offering my recommendations for further research and action, I think it wise to review some limitations of this study and the conclusions it reaches. First among these are the limitations that arise from the text selection process. While the selection of the video AIDS: Allie's Story from the CAPP curriculum was made on the basis of information received from teachers and librarians in school districts where the resource is used, and as part of a larger informal poll of ten school districts in the Greater Vancouver area, that poll was not based on a random sample, and the information derived from it thus needs to be interpreted with caution. The production of the usage information relied on the research of various people (e.g. curriculum coordinators, resource centre librarians) in uncontrolled circumstances using a variety of methods with no standard criteria or procedures (e.g. e-mailing teachers, checking resource centre records). Furthermore, the selection of the two textbooks (Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life, and The Living Family: A Canadian Perspective) was made based on assumptions about their usage derived from their high recommendations as comprehensive texts for their respective curricula (Biology 12 and Home Economics). While one could conclude that the use of the video and the texts in Vancouver's schools is likely, their selection still rests upon a best guess. Teachers in the Greater Vancouver area use a wide variety of learning resources in the classroom, including many approved at the district level. It would be extremely difficult to determine the widespread use of any text without performing an exhaustive study of resource use at each school.

The second limitation relates to the impact of each document studied on the instruction of students in the classroom. As van Dijk (1993) has argued, discourse involves
two dimensions: the production and reception. In one sense, I have studied only half of this equation; I cannot know how the IRPs or their related recommended learning resources, or in fact the discourses embodied in them, are received, incorporated, used, accepted or rejected by both teachers and students; I have no knowledge of the texts’ empirical effects. That being the case, this study can only speak to the documents’ potential to perpetuate or subvert dominant discourses in the classroom. At the same time, my interpretation of that potential constitutes an empirical effect in and of itself. I have “received” the texts and indicated my particular acceptance or rejection of their discourses. As I stated earlier, in one sense, my research could be interpreted as limited to my own experience, rather than generalizable. I have no way of knowing if others would reach identical conclusions. However, this is an issue that plagues all research to one extent or another, and I make no claims to a definitive discursive knowledge of the documents studied. I would, however, argue that this study, though limited, could open an important conversational space for the further investigation and discussion of sexual discourses in B.C.’s sexuality education curricula, and in curriculum in general. In that sense, I believe the study has value.

**Recommendations**

**For Further Research**

Were I to move forward from this project, my next step would be examining how the discourses and potential marginalizations uncovered in B.C.’s sexuality education curricula play out in classrooms. As my research addressed only the production of sexual discourses in various texts, I would want to explore their reception in schools. I would focus on the discourses selected and employed by teachers in sexuality education classrooms, and how
those discourses are experienced – accepted or rejected – by students, their intended objects. I would explore how the curriculum, its texts and their particular usages make students feel about themselves, their sexuality, and their relation to others.

For Curriculum Developers

Following are particular recommendations for developers of sexuality education curricula:

1. Include students in the development of curricula to allow them a voice in defining their own needs, in developing and selecting materials that reflect and validate their social and sexual experiences and identities.

2. Expand the curricular definition of whose sexuality is legitimate to affirm sexual fluidity and diversity, through more and better representation of the student body including students who identify as GLBT.

3. In addition to offering students physiological information, open spaces for the discussion of sexuality as a socio-cultural lens for power relations, and for the deconstruction of socio-sexual categories and sexual stereotypes. This should most definitely be done in classes designated as “sexuality education,” but should also count as a valid topic for exploration in other curricula that address social phenomena, such as English, Social Studies, and Home Economics.
For Teachers

Following are particular recommendations for teachers:

1. Create a safe, mutually respectful space for students to openly discuss sexuality issues in the classroom, including sexuality as a social phenomenon. Allow students a voice in determining their own educational needs regarding sexuality.

2. Directly address and deconstruct socio-sexual categories and sexual stereotypes, and offer alternative constructions of sexuality based on recognition, inclusion and social justice principles. Allow space for the discussion of sexuality as a socio-cultural lens for power relations.

3. Redefine “legitimate” sexuality to affirm sexual fluidity and diversity through more and better representation of the student body, including students who identify as GLBT.

4. Carefully select learning resources and guest speakers that reflect recommendations 1-3.

5. Advocate for the development of curriculum, or develop locally-approved curriculum, that reflects recommendations 1-3.

These recommendations apply both to those designated as “sexuality education” teachers, and to teachers of subjects in which social issues are regularly addressed, such as Social Studies, Home Economics and English. While I would applaud any teacher who might implement these recommendations, I am also cognizant of the institutional and community
pressures on them to teach about sexuality narrowly or defensively, or to avoid the topic wherever possible.

**For Teacher Education Programs and Educational Leaders**

Following are particular recommendations for teacher education instructors, developers of teacher education curriculum, and instructors and developers of continuing professional development programs for teachers:

1. Develop curriculum or entire courses preparing teachers for the sexuality education classroom. Very few teacher education programs in Canada now address sexuality education at all, despite the fact that many teachers are required to teach it.

2. Within that curriculum, redefine sexuality to affirm sexual diversity and fluidity; include significant representation and validation of GLBT sexuality; challenge and deconstruct sexual stereotypes and offer alternate constructions of sexuality based on social justice principles; and address sexuality as a socio-cultural lens for power relations.

3. Encourage future teachers of subjects that address social phenomena to allow space in their classrooms for students' self-definition of their educational needs, to address sexuality as a lens for power relations, and to challenge sexual stereotypes.

4. Advocate for change in the secondary-level curriculum that reflects recommendations 1-3.
For Sexuality Educators Outside the K-12 System

Following are particular recommendations for sexuality educators who work directly for organizations other than schools, such as public health nurses and speakers from Planned Parenthood:

1. Redefine “legitimate” sexuality to affirm sexual fluidity and diversity through more and better representation of the student body, including students who identify as GLBT.

2. Create a safe, mutually respectful space for students to openly discuss sexuality issues in the classroom, including sexuality as a social phenomenon.

3. Challenge socio-sexual stereotypes and offer alternate constructions of sexuality based on social justice principles.

4. Allow spaces for students to define their own sexuality education needs.

5. Advocate for change in schools’ sexuality education curricula to reflect recommendations 1-4.

6. Regarding guest speaking in schools: wherever possible, while respecting the constraints placed upon you explicitly by the school or teacher, and while respecting the constraints under which the teacher operates, try to “fill in the gaps” in schools’ standard sexuality education curriculum in terms of challenging sexual stereotypes, addressing sexuality as a socio-cultural lens for power relations, and affirming sexual diversity and fluidity.
Sexuality educators from outside the standard school system have a somewhat surprising amount of influence over what gets taught in schools’ sexuality education classrooms due to their widespread use as guest speakers. Since most school-based teachers have not received training in sexuality education instruction, and as many feel uncomfortable discussing sexuality due to both public sexual discourses of danger and shame, and their positions as “de-sexualizers” of the classroom, they often call on guest speakers from outside organizations to carry out their sexuality education duties. In fact, guest speakers often constitute the entirety of a school’s sexuality education program.

This provides outside sexuality educators with both an opportunity and a dilemma. On the one hand, outside sexuality educators in schools may be able to address content and employ approaches that a school teacher might feel unable to use due to their position as easily located objects of surveillance for both parents and the institutions they serve. A guest speaker might be able to remove from teachers some pressure to allow only defensive treatments of sexuality in the classroom by taking some responsibility for direct instruction themselves. On the other hand, teachers are still ultimately responsible for what happens in their classrooms, including instruction by guest speakers. In that sense, guest speakers have the power to jeopardize school teachers and their relations with parents and their employer. For this reason, I would recommend that guest speakers try to implement the recommendations listed above, while at the same time working closely with teachers and making informed and sensitive judgments about the contexts of their work.
For Youth Advocates

Following are particular recommendations for youth advocates:

1. Advocate for the inclusion of youth in the sexuality curriculum development process, allowing them a space to define their own educational needs.

2. Advocate for the maintenance and development of highly accessible sexuality education programs or sexuality information services for youth outside the highly contested arena of the K-12 school system.

3. Advocate for changes in schools’ sexuality education curricula to include the affirmation of sexuality diversity and fluidity; the challenging of sexual stereotypes and the offering of alternate constructions of sexuality based on social justice principles; and the provision of space to discuss sexuality as a lens for power relations.

4. Directly challenge sexual stereotyping in the media, in government services, or in any other public venue.

While I have hope that these recommendations will be seriously considered, I am also cognizant that they present a challenge to the dominant negative discourses on sexuality in North America, and to the general deligitimation of youth in society and especially in schools as determiners of their own needs.
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