

University of Alberta

Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

by

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DEDICATION

To Bruno and Sandra Mangiardi

Pa, it is because of you I started, endured, and finally, completed this degree. Your commitment and dedication to work and, more importantly, family have inspired me. Ma, you face a challenge every day with a sheer force of will that is indescribable. Seeing you struggle has taught me that nothing can ever pull, and keep, me down. In the face of adversity, I can, and will, get up because you have shown me how. I am incredibly proud and honoured to call you both my parents.

ABSTRACT

Educational decision-makers rarely legitimize youth's perspectives in constructing 'effective' sex education. In this study, I concentrated on what students have to say about this aspect of their educational experience, and learned how decision-makers respond to youth's perspectives.

I draw on Michel Foucault's notions of discourse, power, and resistance to understand the importance of listening to students' marginalized voices and legitimizing their subjugated knowledges. I then discuss the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, drawing attention to its assertion that youth have rights to learn about sexual health and to participate in sex education. I also draw on constructs of democratic education and student empowerment to argue that youth have expertise and so can express 'what is' and 'what must be' in dialogue with decision-makers.

With the goal of initiating and facilitating Youth Participatory Action Research, I entered Bellman Secondary where I mobilized a research collective with youth partners. The youth learned about research ethics and the interview method prior to addressing the following questions: (1) What are students' perspectives of their sex education at Bellman? (2) How would students change the sex education offered at Bellman, if they could? The youth interviewed Grade 12 students, inviting them to problematize their sex education experiences, critique the curricular rules, and cross the disciplinary limits with the aim of identifying transformative possibilities that would satisfy their sexual health

needs. The collective analyzed the data and showcased our findings in an action plan, titled *Sex-E-cation*.

In order to incite and inform curricular change, the team presented *Sex-E-cation* to students and two decision-makers—a Health Teacher and School Administrator—with the aim of informing dialogue. Given that these decision-makers failed to participate in the study, it is unclear if they took students' perspectives into consideration to make sex education more relevant to their lives. While those inside Bellman never participated by responding to the action plan, two outsider decision-makers—a School Nurse and Learning Coordinator—did participate in this way. They planned to take transformative action to rectify problems, and thereby improve students' sex education so it satisfies their expressed needs.

Keywords: sexual health education, youth, Foucault, democratic education, expressed needs

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Acknowledging the Voices of Unauthorized Experts	1
Research Curiosities	2
Morally Suspect	3
Sexual Hypocrisy	5
Normative and Expressed Needs	8
Need-Claims for Sexual Health Education	13
Foucauldian Guidance: The Limits of Sexual Health Education.....	15
Authorized and Unauthorized Experts.....	18
From Debate to Dialogue.....	20
A Dialogical ‘Launching Pad’	21
CHAPTER TWO: Obtaining Methodological Guidance from the Literature	24
Aim to Induce Curricular Change.....	24
Review: Needs Assessment/Elicitation Studies.....	26
Review: Evaluation Studies	32
Youth Participatory Research at Bellman Secondary	50
CHAPTER THREE: Constructing a Foucauldian Framework of an Educational Power Structure.....	55
An Educational Power Structure.....	56
Disciplinary Power	57
Régime of Truth.....	61
Marginalized Voices and Subjugated Knowledges	62
Resistance	64
CHAPTER FOUR: Understanding Unauthorized Experts and Their Expressed Sexual Health Needs.....	68
‘Subjects’ with Rights: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.....	69
Youth’s Right to Sexual Health Education.....	70
The Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education	74
The Ontario Health and Physical Education Mandated Curriculum	78
A Protective Discourse	81

Sexual Health Education: The Ideological Battleground.....	84
Restrictive Ideology and Abstinence Sexual Health Education	85
Permissive Ideology and Comprehensive Sexual Health Education..	86
‘Effective’ Sexual Health Education	87
Unauthorized Experts: Expressed Sexual Health Education Needs	90
Democratic Education.....	92
Youth’s Perspectives Contribute to Dialogue.....	95
CHAPTER FIVE: Shifting Disciplinary Limits of Sexual Health	
Education by Initiating Youth Participatory Action Research.....	100
My Paradigmatic Position: Critical Constructivism	101
Foucauldian Guidance: Examining an Educational Power Structure	104
Foucauldian Guidance: Constructing a Counter-Discourse.....	105
A Participatory and Problematizing Process	108
Participatory Action Research.....	109
Youth Participatory Action Research.....	112
Responsive Evaluation	119
Problematization.....	120
Foucauldian Conceptual Tools at the Disciplinary Limits	121
Using Critique at the Limits	122
Using Effective History at the Limits.....	124
My Facilitating Role	125
CHAPTER SIX: Taking Action to Co-Construct the Action Plan	
An Overview of the Bellman YPAR Spiral.....	131
Starting Point: Obtaining Approval From the Decision-Makers	132
Loop 1: Recruiting Student Participation.....	134
Loop 2: Facilitating the First Class Discussion.....	135
Activity 1: Word Association.....	136
Activity 2: Defining Sex Education	141
Activity 3: Guided Discussion	143
Problems with Sex Education at Bellman Secondary	146
Loop 3: Selecting Youth Research Partners.....	146

Loop 4: Coming Together as a Research Team	148
Decision 1: What are our research questions?.....	151
Decision 2: Who will be invited to participate in an interview?	152
Decision 3: What questions will the interview guide include? ...	155
Decision 4: What format will the action plan take?	157
Decision 5: Whom, among all possible decision-makers, did I need to recruit to participate in an interview, and thereby respond to the action plan?	157
Loop 5: Debriefing the Partners' Interviews	158
Loop 6: Analyzing Qualitative Data	163
Loop 7: Constructing the Action Plan	164
Loop 8: Responding to a Call from Educational Powers	166
Loop 9: Finalizing the Action Plan	168
Loop 10: Presenting the Action Plan and Initiating Class Discussion	169
CHAPTER SEVEN: Soliciting Students' Feedback to the Action Plan	173
Loop 11: Obtaining Feedback from Students	173
Question 1: Does the Action Plan Represent Students' Perspectives?	147
Question 2: How Would Students Improve the Action Plan?	185
Question 3: How do Students Suspect Teachers will Respond to Action Plan?	186
CHAPTER EIGHT: Soliciting Decision-Makers' Responses to the Action Plan.....	191
Loop 12: Obtaining Responses from the Top	191
Waiting for a Response from Insider Powers.....	191
Sharing the Action Plan with Outsider Powers	194
Phase 1: Role and Responsibilities	194
Outsider: School Nurse	194
Outsider: Learning Coordinator for Health and	

Physical Education.....	197
Phase 2: Response.....	200
Positionality	200
Sexual Health Knowledge.....	203
Youth's Sexual Health Needs	208
Phase 3: Intended Action for Curricular Change	213
CHAPTER NINE: Beginning Again	215
Incomplete Loop 13: Sharing the Responses from the Top.....	215
Curricular Change.....	216
Revisiting the Research Curiosities	217
Research Curiosity 1: Youth's Views and Visions.....	217
Research Curiosity 2: Students' Feedback and Decision-Makers' Responses.....	220
Validity or Authenticity?	223
The Usefulness of the Action Plan.....	230
Challenges Inform the Emergence of New Spirals.....	231
REFERENCES	235
APPENDIX A Courses in Health and Physical Education.....	258
APPENDIX B Sex Education Problems at Bellman Secondary	261
APPENDIX C Class Discussion: Confidentiality Agreement.....	265
APPENDIX D Research Partner: Confidentiality Agreement for Interviews ...	266
APPENDIX E Team Discussions: Confidentiality Agreement	267
APPENDIX F Principal/Teacher Information Sheet	268
APPENDIX G Principal Consent Form.....	270
APPENDIX H Student Information Sheet.....	271
APPENDIX I Student Assent Form.....	274
APPENDIX J Parent/Guardian Information Sheet	276
APPENDIX K Parent/Guardian Consent Form.....	279
APPENDIX L Student Interviewee Information Sheet	281
APPENDIX M Student Interviewee Assent Form.....	283
APPENDIX N Student Interviewee Information Sheet for Parent/Guardian	284

APPENDIX O Student Interviewee Consent Form for Parent/Guardian	286
APPENDIX P Decision-Maker Information Sheet.....	287
APPENDIX Q Decision-Maker Consent Form	289
APPENDIX R Interview Guide: School Nurse	290
APPENDIX S Interview Guide: Learning Coordinator.....	291
APPENDIX T Envisioning Our Ethical Research.....	292
APPENDIX U Conducting Research Interviews.....	303

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Courses in Health and Physical Education, Grades 9 to 12	79
Table 2 Written Responses from the First Class Discussion	145
Table 3 Who the Research Partners Interviewed	163
Table A Courses in Health and Physical Education, Grade 9 to 12 Specific Expectations: Healthy Growth and Sexuality; Personal Safety and Injury Prevention.....	258

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 The Bellman YPAR Spiral	131
Figure 2 Student Feedback Form: Question One.....	174
Figure 3 Student Feedback Form: Question Two	185
Figure 4 Student Feedback Form: Question Three	186
Figure 5 Outside Decision-Maker Response to the Action Plan	200

CHAPTER ONE

Acknowledging the Voices of Unauthorized Experts

When I embarked upon doctoral studies, I did so with the expressed aim of learning about youth's perspectives of sexual health education and amplifying their voices as experts in the curricular process; but I soon learned that not everyone shared my convictions. In this chapter, I outline select encounters with skeptics and describe how I impressed upon them that sexual health education is a subject worthy of research. I also recount incidents from my own 'ineffective' sex education, and explain how these experiences propelled me into a graduate program.

From the personal, I transition to the empirical. I identify common misconceptions about what students need to learn during school-based sexual health education and explain how these misconceptions spring from personal past experiences and/or media reports. I then debunk these misconceptions by drawing upon what 'experts' have said about 'negative/unwanted' sexual health outcomes, such as unplanned pregnancy and STI transmission. Although I reference 'authorities' in the field, I also question whether they can truly know what youth need when it comes to sex education. I argue that educational decision-makers who use only expert/legitimate sources of information when developing their understanding of youth's sexual health run the risk of developing a curriculum focused on normative sexual health needs alone. I maintain that decision-makers must stop regarding students as the lowest-ranking public within an educational power structure. Only then will they be able to broaden their thinking, legitimize youth perspectives, and listen to youth's expressed needs—what students themselves say they need/want when it comes to their sex education.

Next, in order to conceptualize a school as a power structure, I apply Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) understanding of discourse to curriculum. I draw upon his description of discourse to argue that a curriculum of sexual health education includes and excludes, and as such has disciplinary limits. Moreover, I rely on Foucault's case against the 'repression hypothesis' to make sense of the

way decision-makers put sexuality into discourse and, at the same time, limit what is said.

I then explain why as an outsider I believed it critical to work with insider ‘experts’ within a secondary school to construct a counter discourse of sex education by problematizing students’ sex education experiences, critiquing the curricular rules and regulations, and crossing the disciplinary limits. In my description of insider experts, I distinguish between the authorized—teachers—and the unauthorized—students. The perspectives of authorized experts dominate the current debate about sex education while the views of unauthorized experts are typically disregarded. I close this chapter with a synopsis of the participatory study involving unauthorized experts—youth research partners—that I initiated with the goal of instigating and informing, not debate, but dialogue about changing sex education at a local school.

Research Curiosities

As one firmly committed to the fundamental premise that youth can isolate problems, identify solutions, and dialogue with decision-makers about these solutions, I decided to enter a secondary school and work with youth research partners to focus on improving students’ experiences of sexual health education. I planned to invite youth to participate in all steps of a study (Camarrota & Fine, 2008; Creswell, 2011; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). In this respect, I refused to act as the expert researcher, who stipulates the research questions. Instead, I wanted to dialogue with youth partners to identify relevant questions for study. Nevertheless, I recognized that my own research curiosities about sexual health education were important, for they would shape my contributions to the dialogue. I have distilled my curiosities into two questions:

- (1) What are youth’s perspectives of their sexual health education experiences? That is, what are youth’s views of, and visions for, the teaching and learning of sexual health?

- (2) How do students and decision-makers (e.g., teachers, department heads, administrators) respond to an action plan that showcases youth's perspectives of sexual health education for a particular school?

With these curiosities in mind, I set out to work with youth research partners to construct an action plan aimed at inciting decision-makers to consider youth's perspectives. My hope was that decision-makers would subsequently utilize these perspectives to improve the teaching and learning of sexual health at a specific secondary school in Southwestern Ontario.

Morally Suspect

My research curiosities came into focus as I engaged in incidental discussions with others. Many people were shocked when I mentioned that my doctoral research would deal with sexual health education or, in colloquial terms, 'sex ed.' Invariably, as I offered this information, I saw jaws drop, eyebrows raise, and/or eyes roll.

A number of people were reluctant to talk about such a hush-hush subject. Some nervously laughed and nonchalantly changed the topic of discussion. Others eventually managed to overcome reserve or distaste. After the discussion had become amiable, and the giggles had subsided, these individuals overcame their reticence to say, "Can I ask you... umm... a personal question?" From what I could gather, they perceived me as open-minded and therefore felt comfortable enough to pose their own sex-related questions. Even though I prefaced these chats with the proviso that I held no credentials as a counselor or therapist, my discussants seemed to conceive of me as an expert-in-training, one who was learning the nitty-gritty of sexuality.

Other people responded with overt challenges. As the conversations began, many would immediately query, "You'll be a *Doctor* of what... sex?" Although I quickly responded, "not necessarily," they paid little attention to my reply. Instead, they fixated on some apparent absurdity in my situation, often exclaiming, "you're joking!" I was not joking; neither was I amused. As far as I was concerned, my commitment to pursuing doctoral studies in sexual health

education was not something to laugh at and dismiss. Others were even more blatantly dismissive. Rudeness knew no bounds in their incredulous double takes. I vividly recall one such person. While accompanying my partner to a business convention, I was approached by a man who cordially introduced himself. He had just earned a graduate degree in business and inquired about the nature of my graduate studies. When I said ‘sex education,’ he immediately pounced. “Why sex education?” Before I could offer a response, he powered on with a stream of rhetorical questions in an obvious attempt to reject and trivialize my studies. “Why not study this... or...that...or, possibly...?” For some time, he droned on, identifying an array of what he deemed safe and sanitary subjects. As far as he was concerned, the only appropriate areas of study were those related to business. As a result of this encounter, it became clear to me that, for some people, sex education would never qualify as an acceptable program of study.

As I tried to understand why people reacted so strongly to the topic of my graduate work, I detected an interesting paradox. We live in a technological age: today people can, and do, turn to the internet to research sex. On *Google* a person can obtain an inconceivable number of hits under the search term ‘sex’ (Cooper, 1998; Cooper & Griffin-Shelley, 2002; Smith, Gertz, Alvarez, & Lurie, 2000), and then go about his/her ‘research’ in clandestine ways. In my conversations with people, I sensed that this type of behaviour was generally regarded as inevitable, while my open, formal and academic study of sexual health education was seen as ‘kinky.’ Ironically, I was the one seen as “morally suspect” (Weeks, 2002, p. 27). Those of us who bring the subject out into the open for meaningful dialogue, it would seem, are the ones deemed subversive. Was I wrong to think that people must challenge rules and regulation that limit sexual health education? No. I believed it acceptable and appropriate to think about, talk about, and—yes— even conduct research about the limits that regulate and restrict what youth experience when it comes to their sex education. Despite public disapprobation, I would not shift my position.

Ironically, these skeptics, dubious of the legitimacy of my studies, proved in the exuberant sharing of their own youthful sex education experiences just how

necessary and helpful such discussion can be. A few recalled positive experiences, offering such comments as “I learned everything I needed to know,” and “Mr. So-and-so was an awesome teacher because he cracked jokes most of the time.” Frequently, however, they used descriptors such as “boring,” “sterile,” and “irrelevant.” Focusing on this notion of irrelevancy, I probed deeper by inquiring whether the teachers in question ever asked what information and/or skills the students themselves believed they needed. Many of the respondents candidly revealed that this was never the case; instead, to satisfy their needs, they had turned to friends, television, and magazines. With the benefit of hindsight, these individuals recognized that their friends had been just as confused about sexual health as they were; that television programs had presented largely a world of fantasy; and that the reading materials they had been able to access typically contained sensationalized sex-talk, at best. Thus, once these skeptics acknowledged that as youth they had obtained irrelevant, inaccurate, and/or incomplete information to satisfy their sexual health needs, they realized the importance of discussing and examining sex education in a serious manner. In the end, these impromptu conversations with non-believers served an important purpose, for they motivated me to move forward with sex education as the object of study.

Sexual Hypocrisy

While engaged in discussions with people about the study of sexual health education, I was often asked if my own sex education experiences had anything to do with examining this area of research. The inflection in my voice as I responded yes left them speculating no longer. My sex education experience was hindered by what I have termed ‘sexual hypocrisy’ (Mangiardi, 2004). As a youth seeking to understand my sexuality, I had to reconcile two prevalent positions, one evident in the society at large, the other characteristic of the Catholic school system in which I was educated. On the one hand, I had been raised in a sexualized society, bombarded by sexual expletives, provocative clothing, and titillating images. On the other hand, teachers never encouraged me to express my concerns, comments,

and/or curiosities about sexual health. Caught in this catch-22, I felt stymied in my desire to understand my sexual self.

When it came to my secondary school experiences in the Toronto, Ontario, Catholic school system, lessons about sexual health prompted more questions than they answered. I recall in Grade 9 Health and Physical Education completing a weeklong unit in a sex-segregated setting. While I do not remember the curricular details, I do remember beginning the unit with the desire to see and touch a condom. By the end of the week, my curiosity about condoms had only intensified: during the unit of study, I had not touched, much less seen, a condom. Admittedly, I could have raised my hand and asked the teacher a question or two about condom use; but, given the atmosphere in the classroom, I was too embarrassed to do so. Instead, I waited for the teacher to talk about the topic—little did I know that the unit would end without the teacher even mentioning condoms as a viable form of protection/contraception let alone explaining the specifics of condom use. I was perplexed. Had she purposely avoided talking about condoms because they were ineffective? Or had she thought herself too inexperienced with this method of protection/contraception to clarify its use? Perhaps she thought that a class of girls had no need to learn about condoms—after all, boys are, from an anatomical standpoint, the ones who technically ‘use’ condoms. The most likely reason for her silence finally dawned on me many years later. This teacher worked in a Catholic school and the Catholic Church denounces the use of condoms. I realized then that she had perpetuated the church’s teachings by talking about some sexual health topics while overlooking others.

During the following year—Grade 10—I learned more about the school’s position on sexual health education. One day I heard my peers talking about Kate. Kate, who was enrolled in my Grade 10 geography class, was skipping more classes than she was attending. I remember thinking that she was surely setting an unprecedented record for absenteeism. Where was she? Why was she not in school? Student gossip provided answers to some of my questions. It seemed “Kate had gotten herself into trouble,” code for ‘Kate was pregnant.’ Years later, I

wondered if the outcome would have been different had Kate, during that Grade 9 sex education unit, learned about condom use. I also wondered what precise role teachers and administrators had played in her lengthy absence from school. Had they pushed her out? Had they conveyed to Kate that she needed to keep her ‘troubles’ out of the classroom?

Looking back, I realize that my teachers failed to engage my peers and me in ‘relevant’ sex education. What was relevant to me seemed extraneous in the minds of my teachers. But their failings went beyond not providing relevant information. I needed someone with whom I could talk about my sexual health needs. As far as I was concerned, who better to turn to than a teacher? Unfortunately, my peers and I could not turn to our teachers to have our needs met. Given the scope of the curriculum and the prevailing religious attitudes towards sex, our teachers taught us that sexuality was synonymous with secrecy; consequently, we felt too embarrassed to express our sexual health needs.

Relief, however, came unexpectedly one Sunday night when I discovered a call-in radio show, *The Sunday Night Sex Show*, hosted by Sue Johanson. After a few months of listening to Sue, I noticed that callers were expressing annoyance and frustration over the mediocrity of their sex education. Sue frequently validated their remarks by expressing her own discontent with the limited sex education in schools. Although I never called Sue to voice my dissatisfaction, I did share the callers’ sentiments, and began to question why schools, sanctioned sites of learning, were depriving youth of relevant sex education. I felt myself becoming increasingly annoyed with the irrelevance and ‘ineffective’ nature of school-based sex education. I came to believe that youth, who were failing to complement (or compensate for) their sex education by listening to Sue, were at a disadvantage. While I was now having my own sexual health needs satisfied, courtesy of Sue, I knew that those who had to rely on the school-based sex education program to satisfy their sexual health needs were losing out.

Normative and Expressed Needs

To determine what the youth of today ‘need’ when it comes to sex education, some adults erroneously draw on decades-old memories of their own youthful experiences of sex. I have heard people say, “Teenagers need to wait until they are older to have sex, like we did....” Yet, Maticka-Tyndale (2008) has argued that during the 1970s youth ventured into sexual activity at relatively the same age as they do today. She drew on statistics compiled over the last thirty years to show that most youth become sexually active between the ages of 16 and 18, while between 15 and 22% experience intercourse for the first time before age 16. I have also heard people argue that today’s youth have no respect for the emotional significance inherent in making love. They go on to claim that youth need to understand that their ‘casual’ attitude towards sex is inappropriate. Maticka-Tyndale debunked this misconception as well. By defining ‘casualness’ in terms of number of sexual partners, she demonstrated by way of a comparative analysis (Boyce et al., 2006; King et al., 1988) that the number of partners young people currently report is actually lower than that reported by youth in the past. On this basis, Maticka-Tyndale concluded that youth are less casual about sex today than they were in the past. Countless people have also expressed to me the belief that earlier generations were more responsible or careful in avoiding sexual dangers than today’s youth who are engaging in unprotected sexually activity and putting themselves and their partners at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies. These people propose that, in order to address this concern, youth need to understand the degree to which unprotected sex is risky. Maticka-Tyndale, however, demonstrated that Canadian youth currently access contraception and use condoms more than ever before. Moreover, Boyce et al. (2003) reported that 90% of sexually active Grade 9 students (approximately 14 years of age) and Grade 11 students (approximately 16 years of age) used contraception during their most recent experience of intercourse (see also Boyce et al. 2006). If behaviour is an indication of sexual understanding, today’s youth do seem to understand the risks associated with unprotected sex. Nevertheless,

many people continue to base their claims about youth's sexual health needs on misconceptions arising from an idealized view of the past.

Many adults also turn to the media for assistance in determining what students need to learn in sexual health education. This approach, though, can be as problematic as relying on distorted perceptions of past personal experience. Given the media's propensity for limiting reporting to 'hot' sexual topics, misconceptions about youth's sexual behaviour can run rampant. Barrett (2004), a Toronto sexual health educator, believed this surge in media attention has alarmed parents, teachers, and counselors; in her words, it "has generated... much passion, anxiety, uncertainty and 'heat'" (p. 197). This 'heat' emanates from the journalistic practice of basing reports on the compelling anecdotes of a few youth (McKay, 2004b) and, then, exaggerating to make sweeping generalizations. Researchers such as Maticka-Tyndale (2008) and McKay have noted that some journalists (e.g. Crawford, 2009; Jackson, 2004; Jayson, 2005; Lewin, 2005; Stepp, 1999) give the public the impression that we are in the midst of a "new teen sexual revolution" (McKay, 2004b, p. 201), driven by sex-crazed youth caught up in an epidemic of oral sex. By portraying matters in this light, journalists fan the flames of public concern. If the more reputable among them were to review the research about youth's sexual health (taking into account methodological shortcomings) and use these sources as the basis for their articles, the public could become adept at distinguishing the sensible from the sensationalistic.

A case in point, as I noted above, concerns oral sex. A more rational discussion concerning the subject of oral sex among youth is likely to ensue when one has an understanding of McKay's (2004b) comparative analysis of data collected by Boyce et al. (2003) and Warren and King (1994). McKay reported a modest increase in the number of youth engaged in oral sex between 1992 and 2003. Recently, Malacad & Hess (2010) noted that respondents to their survey reported that their first experience of coitus and oral sex occurred at approximately 17 years of age; however, if one breaks the data down for each behaviour, 27% of those who said they were sexually active had their first oral sex

experience before 16 years of age compared to 16% for coitus. This type of research is far more helpful when it comes to determining what youth need for sex education. If, rather than believing sensationalistic media reports, people sought out research and understood its implications, they could challenge their misconceptions. Moreover, if researchers, rather than ignoring the general public, helped people to understand the data, they could decrease the heat's intensity and ultimately ease public concern.

While an understanding of research can help people develop a more realistic picture of how sexual health issues impact youth, educational decision-makers who rely solely on such research to inform their curricular design run the risk of inadvertently narrowing the focus of the curriculum. Consider, for example, the issue of teen pregnancy. In 1974, *Statistics Canada* began calculating a teen pregnancy rate to account for the number of live births, stillbirths, and abortions experienced by females aged 15 to 19 (McKay, 2004a). This rate is noteworthy because many assume that the pregnancies are unplanned (Henshaw, 1998; McKay & Barrett, 2010). McKay and Barrett examined this rate between 1996 and 2006, and reported an overall decline of 36.9%; specifically, they noted that the rate declined in each consecutive year, from 44.2 per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19 in 1996 to 27.9 in 2006. One cannot assume this decline means a concomitant decline in youth's sexual activity. While the teen pregnancy rate has dropped over the years, the percentage of youth engaged in sexual activity has remained relatively constant (McKay, 2004a). To make sense of this declining trend, McKay and Barrett suggested it could reflect increasing levels of contraceptive use, greater access to reproductive health services, and exposure to sex education. Hence, a review of statistical data can lead to the conclusion that today's youth are, in general, taking measures to avoid unintended pregnancies.

One might ask whether the same applies to the 'negative/unwanted' outcome of sexually transmitted disease(s)/infection(s). Over the past few decades, health care officials have commonly used the term 'sexually transmitted disease' (STD) to describe an array of infections; more recently, in order to include asymptomatic infections or, in layman's terms, silent infections, they have

adopted instead the phrase ‘sexually transmitted infection’ (STI). HIV/AIDS is, perhaps, the most widely discussed infection of our time. Generally, rates of AIDS infections have remained low among the Canadian youth population (Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC], 2012). The proportion of youth (between 15 to 29 years of age) with AIDS decreased steadily from 34.6% in 1982 to a low of 7.5% in 1999, and since then increased slightly to 11.8% in 2008 (PHAC, 2010). Select subgroups of youth are at a higher risk of contracting AIDS. These groups include street (Roy et al., 2004), gay (Hogg et al., 2001), and aboriginal youth (Larkin et al., 2007). Moreover, physicians who diagnose any one (or more) of three bacterial STIs—syphilis, gonorrhea, and/or chlamydia—are required to report the case(s) to authorities. Among these STIs, the PHAC (2007) identified chlamydia as the most commonly reported STI. Chlamydia is contracted by unprotected oral, vaginal, and anal sex; when it goes untreated (that is, antibiotics are not prescribed) there is an increased likelihood of complications including pelvic inflammatory disease which can potentially lead to chronic pelvic pain, ectopic pregnancy, and infertility (Society of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists of Canada, 2005). In 2009, the total number of cases of chlamydia infections for youth aged 15 to 19 was 23,460. In the same year and among the same age group, the rate of chlamydia infections for males was 394.4 per 100,000, while for females it was 1720.3 (PHAC, 2011). Clearly, these rates reveal a disproportionately higher incidence of chlamydia among the female youth population. In summary, today’s youth are at decreased risk of having an unplanned pregnancy, but increased risk of contracting STIs, especially chlamydia.

How does one explain the high rate of chlamydia infections in this population when research shows a high percentage of youth reporting the use of protective measures during sexual intercourse? (McKay, 2004a) Rekart and Brunham offered seven hypotheses, including increased adoption of more sensitive testing technologies and more frequent testing (as cited in McKay & Barrett, 2008); but attending to youth’s sexual behaviours and decision-making may also shed some light on this statistical result. Rotermann (2008) indicated

that although three-quarters of youth aged 15 to 19 reported using condoms during their most recent act of intercourse, their use of condoms decreases with age and is less common among those who take oral contraception. Boyce et al. (2003) survey research addressed this decision to ‘not’ use condoms. Their results indicated that Grade 11 students frequently cite having a ‘faithful partner’ as the reason to forgo condom use. McKay argued that such reasoning is misguided because youth seem to equate faithfulness with monogamy and, in turn, monogamy with safety. He explained that youth in monogamous relationships are likely to think of condom use as a method for preventing pregnancy rather than as a means for reducing the risk of contracting STIs. In other words, as partners develop their relationship, and become monogamous, they tend to terminate condom use without requesting the long-time or ‘faithful’ partner to have a STI/HIV test. Discontinuing condom use under these circumstances suggests a shift in focus from STI prevention—assuming this was an original concern—to pregnancy prevention, prompting the exclusive use of oral contraceptives. However, if either of the partners had an asymptomatic STI(s) prior to their faithful relationship and/or had been ‘unfaithful’ with partners who are positive for STI(s), the decision to suspend condom use increases the risk of contracting STI(s). Moreover, because youth are likely to move from one monogamous relationship to another (McKay, 2004a)—a phenomenon known as serial monogamy—and repeatedly stop using condoms at the point in time when they deem the relationship ‘faithful,’ they place themselves at an even higher risk for contracting an STI. The impact of serial monogamy, according to McKay, is cumulative: as more youth engage in unprotected sexual activity, more youth risk contracting STIs, such as chlamydia. Those who hope to make sense of statistical research, therefore, must analyze data carefully, working through contradictions, inconsistencies, significance, and implications. Often such research is misinterpreted and those *mis*-understandings are used to justify a curriculum based solely on avoiding negative and undesirable outcomes.

While research findings can give decision-makers a broad understanding of youth’s sexual health needs, concentrating only on what experts or

professionals propose tends to produce a curriculum focused on normative needs (Bradshaw, 1972, 1994). In the case of sexual health, such a curriculum focuses on solving perceived sexual health problems. A problem-solving curriculum fixes or prevents sexual health problems with the aim of protecting youth (see, for example, PHAC, 2008; Government of Ontario, 1999, 2000). Such a curriculum aims to protect youth from having an unplanned pregnancy and contracting an STI(s). While it is important for teachers to talk about unplanned pregnancy and STI transmission, there are other needs that must also be considered. Teachers must conceive of youth's needs as broadly-based and not simply the wish to avoid 'negative/unwanted outcomes.' Ultimately, educational decision-makers must construct sex education by going beyond the experts' identification of normative needs to listening to youth's expressed needs (Bradshaw, 1972, 1994).

Need-Claims for Sexual Health Education

All needs pertaining to sexual health education point to a relationship. As Fraser (1989) explained, if x has a need and y has the responsibility to provide for this need, there is an obvious relationship between x and y . Here, x represents young people, y denotes decision-makers—namely teachers—and the needs in question pertain to sex education. Although this seems straightforward, the relationship between having sexual health needs and satisfying those needs is complex because the relationship is forged within an institution of power relations: teachers exercise power over students and, in the process, satisfy (or not) students' needs for sexual health education.

Fraser's (1989) conceptualization of a 'chain of needs' held together by a network of "in-order-to" relations (p. 163) helps me understand the complex nature of this relationship. To metaphorically construct a chain of needs for sex education, one poses a question which then prompts another. For example: Do young people need school-based sexual health education 'in order to' be sexually healthy? What school policies must be in place in order to satisfy students' sexual health needs? What kind of sex education program is necessary in order to meet youth's sexual health needs: abstinence-only, abstinence-plus, broadly-based

sexual health, democratic sex education...? Who must engage the students in the chosen program in order to have the desired behavioural effect: a health educator, school nurse, guidance counselor...? This list of questions (far from exhaustive) illustrates the multifaceted and complex nature of the relationship between youth with a need for sexual health education and teachers responsible for satisfying this need. Evidently, with each link (question) the chain of needs becomes longer (the number of questions posed multiplies), the links become interconnected (the ways in which questions are related become increasingly complex), and the weight of the chain becomes more intense (the significance of the 'in order to' relations among the links soars). People who recognize the intricate nature of a chain of needs for sex education appreciate not only the relational structure of need-claims, but also the political nature of these claims.

The satisfaction of students' sexual health needs is a political practice subject to dispute by various publics. According to Fraser (1989), a political endeavour is one that plays out within the context of an institution and is contested across a range of different publics voicing differing need-claims. Sexual health education clearly meets these criteria; hence, it can be classified as a political endeavor. In any political endeavor, one must consider not only the need-claim itself, but also the particular public making the claim in the first place. Some of these publics, Fraser explained, "are large, authoritative and able to set the terms of debate" (p. 167). Policy-makers constitute this type of public: they interpret research findings to define youth's needs for sex education and then communicate these needs to teachers by developing and distributing mandated curriculum materials. Teachers represent yet another public because they are responsible for referring to these documents when planning a sex education program. Both of these publics are liable to disregard the counter-interpretations of groups 'from below,' in particular, the group that, despite being "small, self-enclosed, and enclaved, unable to make much of a mark beyond [its] own borders" (Fraser, 1989, p. 167), is, nevertheless, a third, critical, interested public. Given that this public occupies a lower ranking position, its members are likely to have their voices silenced and their need-claims discredited. In the rare event that

a space is carved out for them to express their needs, the decision-makers ‘from above’ may dismiss the youths’ needs as merely wants. Indeed, one way in which decision-makers impose their values is by distinguishing needs from wants, which then allows them to reject expressed needs by labeling them frivolous wants (McGregor, Camfield, & Woodcock, 2009).

Foucauldian Guidance: The Limits of Sexual Health Education

To deepen my understanding of the way in which an educational power structure addresses and satisfies certain sexual health needs while dismissing and ignoring others, I consulted Michel Foucault’s (1926-1984) notion of discourse and applied it to a curriculum of sexual health education. Foucault referred to discourse as “the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualized group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (as cited in Mills, 2003, p. 53). Sex education, then, is a form of discourse—a collection of statements about sexual health and practices, governed by a set of covert and overt rules, which lead to the distribution and circulation of certain utterances and statements about the subject. Additionally, Foucault (1981) explained that discourse is constrained, and so constructed, by a complex set of procedures. I draw upon four of Foucault’s procedures to better conceptualize a curriculum of sexual health education. First, taboo. According to Foucault, a taboo limits what is said and what is not said about a subject. Given that sexuality is considered a taboo subject, it is especially difficult for teachers and students alike to talk about it. Second, the division between truth and false statements. As opposed to the ‘true’ or authorized statements about sexual health as presented by teachers, false or unauthorized statements are attributed to those who fail to occupy positions of authority, namely, students. Third, the function of disciplines. Sexuality is legitimized as a subject only when assigned to disciplines such as biology and health. These disciplines have strict rules governing expansion. As long as new propositions comply with the defined limits, will they be added to the disciplinary knowledge base. Thus, the limits of a discipline establish the line between what is included as

authorized knowledge and excluded as unauthorized knowledge. Fourth, the rarefaction of the speaking subject. By ‘rarefaction,’ Foucault meant the limitations placed on who can speak authoritatively. As he stated, “none shall enter the order of discourse if he [*sic*] does not satisfy certain requirements or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so” (pp. 61-62). The common mechanism in rarefaction is ritual. Tradition prescribes a set of ritualistic actions for teachers. These actions identify teachers as authoritative speakers of discourse. As long as teachers performing the expected rituals also comply with the prescribed rules of discourse (the mandated learning expectations), they will be regarded as authoritative speakers who circulate truth. Foucault stressed this point by posing a rhetorical question:

What, after all, is an education system, other than a ritualisation of speech, a qualification and a fixing of the roles for speaking subjects, the constitution of a doctrinal group, however diffuse, a distribution and an appropriation of discourses with its power and knowledges?” (p. 64)

In the end, an application of Foucault’s understandings of discourse to a curriculum of sexual health education requires that one focus on limitations. In other words, I needed to ask myself the following questions: what is *not* said about sexual health?; what type of discourse is *not* authorized?; who does *not* speak about this subject?; and what needs are *not* satisfied?

In order to address these questions, I would need to invite people to critique the disciplinary limits of sexual health education. Was such critique possible? Some people take the position that sexuality is repressed, and as such cannot be critiqued. Foucault (1984g) disproved this “repression hypothesis” (p. 298) by examining ways institutions of power put sexuality into discourse. Specifically, he (1984e) stated,

[i]t would be less than exact to say that the pedagogical institution has imposed a ponderous silence on the sex of children and adolescents; instead, it has multiplied the forms of discourse on the subject; it has established various points of implantation for sex; it has coded contents and qualified speakers. (p. 311)

How do ‘pedagogical institutions’ multiply the forms of discourse of sexuality? Foucault (1984e, 1984f) explained that as institutional powers or qualified

speakers “speak *of* [emphasis added] sexuality and *to* sexuality” (1984f, p. 269), they treat people as an object and target. In doing so, such powers/speakers intensify people’s awareness of sex as a “constant danger” (Foucault, 1984e, p. 312), creating an incentive to protect it, which prompts further and more detailed discussion. Specifically, schools serve as a site where sexuality is constructed as something that must be controlled and regulated in accordance with “strict rules” which govern, as Foucault (1984e) asserted, “where and when it [is] not possible to talk about such things...in which circumstances, among which speakers, and within which social relationships” (p. 301). These rules, however, serve paradoxically to put sex into discourse, prompting a proliferation of the very practice the rules attempt to silence. That is, they prohibit discussion of what lies beyond the disciplinary limits of sexual health education, and by doing so provoke precisely that which they seek to eradicate.

Foucault (1984g) believed it was not only possible to speak about the ‘repressed’ but also a vital necessity if one hoped to instigate change. As he put it, to defy the rules and be subversive is to speak about the ‘repressed’ and “conjure away the present and appeal to the future, whose day will be hastened by the contribution we believe we are making” (p. 295). People who defy curricular rules are treating their experiences of sex education “as a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance, and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (Foucault as cited in Ball, 1990, p. 2). With the present as a starting point for resistance, they are able to look ahead to a different future. This process gives rise to a “counter-discourse” (Foucault, 1977, p. 208), which is crucial if one intends to incite transformations. Foucault (1984g) underscored “that more than one denunciation will be required in order to free ourselves from it [repression]; the job will be a long one” (p. 298). In terms of sexual health education, it seemed to me an appropriate time for an act of denunciation. Someone needed to speak out about the policies and practices that limit youth’s experiences of sexual health education. This person would need to initiate a research process and facilitate the construction of a counter-discourse to incite transformative action. Was I a qualified candidate for the task?

Authorized and Unauthorized Experts

Those who champion the outsider position in research typically presuppose that outsiders—specifically, those from a university—can apply their expertise, identify problems, and propose reforms in an unbiased manner. This belief system, however, is deeply flawed. First, it assumes that the gold standard of research is objectivity or neutrality. Second, it assumes that objectivity can, in fact, be achieved. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (2005), this assumption is rooted in the positivistic fixation that the researcher must act like a “detached secretary to the universe” by focusing his/her attention on the “the Other” (pp. 569-570). Thus, to assume that the researcher can disconnect him/herself from the inquiry process for the sake of reporting objective truth is tantamount to supporting what Kincheloe (2005) called a pseudo-science, divorced from the complex web of reality (see also Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Many people fail to recognize this point. They uphold the erroneous belief in objective truth as the foundational premise for the argument that expertise held by people in the academy is somehow superior to that held by ‘Others’ within the institution under study. This is a view that must be challenged.

When I became a ‘doctoral candidate,’ I worried that people might take the title to mean that I was now knowledgeable and skilled, an ‘expert’-in-training who could offer a legitimate outsider, or *etic*, perspective of the problems pertaining to the teaching and learning of sexual health. While I was prepared to acknowledge that I had acquired expertise by virtue of my doctoral studies, I was uncomfortable with designating myself *the* expert. I had honed analytical skills and constructed knowledge while engaging with colleagues in a faculty of education, speakers at academic conferences, and authorial voices within published articles; but I did not want to privilege my knowledge and skills over the knowledge and skills of those positioned within the school. I was not interested in legitimizing only the knowledge and skills that someone like me learns in the academy. Given that I agree with the assertion by Torre and Fine (2011) that “expertise is widely distributed, but legitimacy is not” (p. 116), I was

determined to legitimize the knowledge and skills of other implicated parties. No matter how sincere and diligent my efforts as the outsider ‘expert,’ I knew that I could not, in good faith, conduct research that ignored insider experts. I could not, and would not, unilaterally diagnose a school’s sex education problems and offer a myriad of restorative transformations. To do so would reinforce the traditional notion of expertise (Torre & Fine, 2011) while denying the legitimate expertise of those inside the school.

Although all insiders have emic perspectives, only those granted legitimacy are given the opportunity to express their perspectives of sexual health education (Levine, 2002; McKay, 1999; Trudell, 1993). To determine who has the legitimate and illegitimate perspectives, I focused on the educational hierarchy and conceived of each insider group as occupying a position or rank with a corresponding vantage point. For instance, administrators and teachers each occupy hierarchal positions with corresponding vantage points of sex education, which shape their individual perspectives. In both cases, professional training, buttressed by years of experience working within the educational structure, garners these people respect, authority, and legitimacy. I refer to insiders such as these, whose emic perspectives are deemed meaningful, as ‘authorized experts.’ When it comes to discussion about how to improve the teaching and learning of sexual health, the emic perspectives most often elicited and heard are those of administrators and teachers because, in part, they occupy higher-ranking positions than ‘unauthorized experts’.

For my purposes, I identify ‘unauthorized experts’ as those occupying the student position within the education hierarchy. This position affords youth a vantage point from which to construct their emic perspectives. Obviously, there are a considerable number of student perspectives, each complex and unique. However, it is only youth themselves who, by reflecting on their respective experiences, beliefs, and needs, can construct authentic perspectives of sex education—no other group, in and of itself, can genuinely occupy a student position and construct a corresponding perspective (see Kincheloe, 2005). However, in dialoguing with students—listening to their views and contemplating

their visions—decision-makers can come to appreciate and learn from students’ perspectives (Beane & Apple, 1995; Fraser, 1989; Lodge, 2005). Such dialogue is rare. Authorized experts typically disenfranchise students, marginalize their voices, and disqualify their knowledges with the aim of delivering education ‘to’ them, rather than co-constructing education ‘with’ them (Shor, 1992). Such a state of affairs is undeniably unjust and warrants immediate attention. If youth are willing, they can voice invaluable emic perspectives of sex education with the intent to transform their experiences of it.

If unauthorized experts were encouraged to express their views, would they disrupt a school’s sex education by identifying problems and disturbing the limits? Paolo Freire (1986) explained that oppressors or, as I call them, authorized experts, use their views of reality as the basis for educational plans, never once eliciting the perspectives of the ostensible beneficiaries of these plans, the unauthorized experts, the students. According to Freire, such plans are likely to “fail” (p. 83). If students were to assert that their sexual health education is ‘failing’ or, in less harsh terms, ‘problematic,’ they could then position themselves at the limits to critique the rules, inspect the “untested feasibility” (p. 93), and propose curricular changes that would otherwise go unidentified by teachers, the authorized experts.

From Debate to Dialogue

Authorized experts assume many argumentative positions when it comes to sex education. For the sake of simplicity, however, I turned to McKay (1997). He delineated two sides of the debate: on one front, people who fervently support abstinence education and, on the other, people who ardently defend comprehensive sexual health education (see also Elia, 2000; Elia & Eliason, 2010; Irvine, 2002; McKay, 1999; Stranger-Hall & Hall, 2011). As these authorized experts take up their positions, they also fail to attend to the voices of the unauthorized. Trudell (1993) noted that people preoccupied with this heated and acrimonious debate neglect to listen to the voices of students (see also Measor, Tiffin, & Miller, 2000). Coleman, Kearns, and Collins (2010) asserted there is

“scant if any regard [given] to the notion that young people are entitled to a voice in matters concerning them” (p. 63). Additionally, Cahill (2007) insisted that students’ perspectives are not necessarily ‘new’ to some people, specifically those who have long justified silencing youth’s voices and disqualifying their views. Hence, during the course of debate, authorized experts speak ‘for’ and ‘about’ students without recognizing that some youth want to, and can, speak for themselves.

Rather than enter into debate—an adversarial encounter—decision-makers can engage in dialogue about sexual health education—a collaborative endeavour—by listening to students’ perspectives and responding in a collegial fashion (Lodge, 2005). A dialogical exchange challenges the traditional communication practice in which decision-makers such as teachers exercise power over students by speaking ‘to’ rather than ‘with’ them (Lodge, 2005). Dialogue grounded in democratic ideals deviates from this long-accepted practice by disturbing the status quo and disrupting the educational hierarchy (Beane & Apple, 1995). While some decision-makers unilaterally deliver education (in other words, fail to dialogue with students), others democratically co-construct educational experiences by creating spaces within which they listen and respond to students’ perspectives (see Arnstine, 1995; Beane & Apple, 1995; Dewey, 1916). Even if decision-makers show themselves open to dialogue, students might not feel the same way. When decision-makers treat students as ‘objects’ rather than ‘subjects,’ (Shor, 1992) it should not surprise them if youth become cynical and apathetic and decide to forgo dialogue about improving students’ experiences of sex education. Despite this possibility, I remained optimistic that some students would want to engage in dialogue and some decision-makers would want to listen to students’ voices and respond to their perspectives. Such a scenario could shift the debate about sex education into meaningful dialogue.

A Dialogical ‘Launching Pad’

If I was to encourage dialogue about sexual health education between students and teachers, I needed to select a methodology that would support my

aims. I used Foucault's (2003b) insights to help me select such a methodology. I began by pondering Foucault's observation of the penal system: "the problem of prisons isn't one for the 'social workers' but one for the prisoners" (p. 256). I then applied his logic to the problem of schools: sexual health education is a problem not for the teachers but for the students. In other words, contrary to popular belief, the people positioned at the upper ranks of an educational hierarchy are not the only ones who can exercise power to identify transformations. As Foucault asserted, transformations must be based on "a long work of comings and goings, of exchanges, reflections, trials, [and] different analyses" (p. 256). As I applied Foucault's assertion to an educational context, I realized that students could engage in such exchanges, reflections, trials, and analyses—or, in other words, dialogue—with teachers about the ways in which the teaching and learning of sexual health can potentially improve.

Why is this dialogical exchange critical? For the simple reason that students are the ones immediately affected by problems and impacted by reforms; on this basis, they must have a say in matters that influence their lives (see Lansdown, 2001). Teachers are best positioned to listen to students speak for themselves, while students are best positioned to identify and articulate their own perspectives (Atweh, Christensen, & Dornan, 1998; Bragg & Fielding, 2005). Guided by this principle, I assumed that young people would welcome the opportunity to identify problems with their sex education and propose desirable transformations. Thus, if students were dissatisfied with their sex education experiences and keen to participate in a study, it made sense to me that they would not only describe what was happening, but also explore what could happen (see Fine & Torre, 2004). Such insights were critical; and it was crucial that youth express them in dialogue with teachers.

Intent upon encouraging such a dialogue and inducing curricular change, I turned to Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). Based on the premise that youth or, as I call them, unauthorized experts, want to problematize their sexual health education, explore transformative possibilities, and express those possibilities in dialogue with authorized experts, I entered a school to mobilize a

research collective and work with youth as research partners. (I assign this school the pseudonym, Bellman Secondary.) In doing so, I was conscious that we needed to avoid blaming the teachers if we were to inform curricular change. Had we held the teachers solely responsible for the curricular problems, they would have likely reacted in a resistant fashion and so taken no transformative action. Instead, I believed it necessary to explain to the partners that the teachers were not in opposition to our efforts. Even though such decision-makers were for all intents and purposes the gatekeepers of reform, we needed to conceive of them as sympathetic to our goal: curricular change. To perpetuate such a view, I adopted the role of research facilitator (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This role aligned with my beliefs, namely that young people can undertake serious and significant research, contribute knowledge about teaching and learning founded upon their daily experiences of schools, and be trusted and supported in research (Bland & Atweh, 2007; Bragg & Fielding, 2003, Cook-Sather, 2010). Together, we identified the following research questions:

- 1) What are students' perspectives of their sex education at Bellman Secondary?
- 2) How would students change the sex education offered at Bellman Secondary, if they could?

Guided by these questions, the research team designed an interview guide, reviewed interview techniques, and analyzed interview data. Subsequently, we constructed an action plan and titled it *Sex-E-cation* (see enclosed compact disk). The team presented this plan as a dialogical “launching pad” (Camarota & Fine, 2008, p. 6) during two class discussions with the aim of generating further ideas, plans, and strategies that could transform students' experiences of sex education. I then interviewed decision-makers in order to solicit their responses to students' views of, and visions for, sex education. Hence, the team began this study anticipating that teachers and other decision-makers would act as an “audience of worth” (Fine & Torre, 2008, p. 413) by seriously considering students' perspectives and, subsequently, taking action to improve the teaching and learning of sexual health at Bellman Secondary.

CHAPTER TWO

Obtaining Methodological Guidance from the Literature

My understanding of conducting research on sex education required that I contribute to its transformation. In the discussion that follows, I demonstrate how my understandings were formed and informed by the literature I read prior to initiating an inquiry on the teaching and learning of sexual health. I concentrate on eleven relevant studies and organize them into two groups: three studies that elicited students' perspectives to inform development of sex education, and eight studies that solicited such perspectives to evaluate existing sex education programs. I conclude this chapter by identifying the ways in which the study at Bellman Secondary was methodologically grounded in literature focused on youth's views of, and visions for, sexual health education.

Aim to Induce Curricular Change

Prior to reviewing the literature, I made a commitment to initiate an inquiry process that would, first, invite students to problematize their sex education experiences, second, identify transformations that they deem desirable in meeting their perceived sexual health needs and, third, encourage dialogue about changing sex education, making it more relevant to students. I began my literature review with Harry Wolcott (1992). Wolcott wrote that all inquiry is idea-driven. He presented a three-part typology to describe the ideas that undergird inquiry: theory-driven, concept-driven, and reform or problem-focused. Wolcott explained that reform-driven inquiry begins with the researcher assuming that "things are *not right* [emphasis added] as they are or, most certainly, are not as good as they might be" (p. 15). This sort of inquiry resonated with me because I assumed that sex education is 'not right' in secondary schools and that students have little to no say in making it right. Hence, I concluded that I would be planning a problem-focused inquiry in which I would be working 'with' youth to construct an action plan that would showcase students' views of, and visions for, sex education.

My planning of this inquiry started with a review of the pertinent literature. To focus my efforts, I identified three aims. First, I wanted to examine elicitation studies/needs assessments to learn about students' expressed sexual health needs. I paid particular attention to the way such knowledge informed action; that is, I identified if decision-makers responded to students' perspectives and, then, reformed policies and/or practices related to the teaching and learning of sexual health. Second, given that I foresaw myself conducting an evaluation of sorts, I intended to review evaluation studies to learn about students' critiques of their sex education experiences. Third, I sought methodological guidance on how best to hear youth's voices and honour their perspectives. I considered it helpful to deviate from a chronological presentation of studies to one focused on methodological considerations (Machi & McEvoy, 2009). Specifically, I ordered the studies by concentrating on the researchers' methods and moved, by degree, from those that curtailed youth's expression to methods that encouraged the expression of students' perspectives. Hence, with these three aims in mind, I turned to the literature to review both elicitation and evaluation studies.

Given that I was planning to initiate a study in a Southwestern Ontario secondary school, I began by limiting my literature review to studies conducted in Ontario. Since this search restriction yielded few studies, I broadened the geographical criteria to encompass all Canadian provinces and territories. This change, however, had little effect. Given the paucity of Canadian studies, I abandoned geography as a search criterion, and soon found relevant studies originating in New Zealand (NZ), the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (USA). With a broader pool of studies to review, I discovered that researchers working in different nations employed varied terms for what I reference as 'sexual health education' and 'sex education.' For instance, researchers outside Canada label the field of study Sex and Relationship Education, and Sexuality Education. In an attempt to honour the country-specific terminology, I have maintained the author's choice of language. Hence, in what follows, I review Canadian and international studies that call attention to youth's perspectives of sexual health education.

Review: Needs Assessment/Elicitation Studies

In order to gain insight into students' self-perceived sexual health needs or, alternatively, students' expressed sexual health needs, I turned to the elicitation research conducted by McKay and Holowaty (1997) in Ontario, Canada. McKay and Holowaty regarded elicitation research as the critical first step in planning 'effective' programs that "help adolescents avoid sexual health problems (i.e., unintended pregnancy, STD infection, [and] sexual harassment/abuse) and...enhance sexual health (i.e., positive self-image [and] mutually satisfying relationships)" (pp. 29-30). They argued that decision-makers, who concentrate on adults' perspectives to the exclusion of students' perspectives, succeed in alienating students and planning ineffective programs. Hence, as far as McKay and Holowaty are concerned, decision-makers who plan programs without taking into account students' self-perceived sexual health needs likely have their words fall on deaf ears.

As a way of demonstrating the utility of elicitation research in planning sexual health education, McKay and Holowaty (1997) created a questionnaire and facilitated its administration to a youth sample. Unlike some studies that failed to identify the individuals involved in developing the survey, such as Byers et al. (2003), reviewed below, McKay and Holowaty noted that representatives from a local school board and public health unit—people who I identify as authorized experts—formed a committee tasked with constructing the questionnaire. While I appreciate the expertise that the committee members brought to the table, I am dubious of the questionnaire itself because the very people who were to have benefited from the questionnaire did not partner with the authorized experts during any stage of its development. If youth had this opportunity, they could have modified questionnaire items, making them more relevant to the student respondents. In such a case, McKay and Holowaty would have likely administered a different questionnaire, and thus collected data possibly more representative of youth's sexual health needs.

Although they failed to include youth's input in developing the questionnaire, McKay and Holowaty (1997) called attention to the importance of considering youth's perspectives in planning sexual health education. Four hundred and six students in Grades 7 to 12, within a rural Ontario school board, completed the questionnaire. Approximately 89% of the sample agreed with the following statement: "It is important for teenagers to receive sexual health education" (p. 33). As well, 61% believed that their school was 'doing a good job' at providing the sex education they needed. Although this proportion of a sample could be considered substantial, McKay and Holowaty emphasized the importance of the remaining 40% of students who were dissatisfied with, or unsure of, their school as a source of sexual health information. When given a list of possible sources, 55% of the students selected 'school' as their current source of information; from the same list, 58% of the students identified 'school' as their most preferred source. What topics did youth think were important to learn at school? McKay and Holowaty presented students with a list of 14 topics. (These topics included: preventing sexually transmitted diseases; sexual assault/rape; how to get testing and treatment for STDs; methods of birth control; conception, pregnancy, birth, building good/equal relationships; making decisions about sexuality and relationship; saying no to sex; parenting skills; talking with girlfriends/boyfriends about sexual issues; peer pressure; puberty; talking with parents about sexual issues; and gay/lesbian issues.) From this list, students rated the following five topics as highly important: preventing STDs; sexual assault/rape; how to get testing and treatment for STDs; methods of birth control; and, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Clearly, students considered 'negative outcomes' associated with sexual activity and/or ways to avoid such outcomes as critical content for sexual health education. Given the close-ended nature of the questionnaire, the students were unable to provide in-depth, contextual information to elaborate upon the high degree of importance they were attributing to 'negative' sexual health outcomes.

Despite this limitation, McKay and Holowaty (1997) conducted their study with the explicit aim of impacting teachers' planning so that they could

integrate youth's perspectives into sexual health education. McKay and Holowaty cautioned teachers to avoid generalizing from the reported findings. Indeed, they advised teachers to attend to context by underscoring that "elicitation research should become a standard component of sexual health education development *in order to ensure that the group-specific needs of particular target audiences are met* [emphasis added]" (p. 37). Whether the School Board implemented the elicitation findings from the study that McKay and Holowaty conducted is unknown; if the findings were implemented, there is also no information revealing whether McKay and Holowaty conducted follow-up research on the implementation. Such an effort would have demonstrated whether decision-makers at the Board attended to the results of the elicitation research and changed policies and/or practices.

Unlike McKay and Holowaty (1997), who arranged for 'authorized experts' to develop a questionnaire focused on youth's sexual health needs, Cairns, Collins, and Hiebert (1994) invited 'unauthorized experts' to participate in constructing a needs assessment tool. Although the study they conducted in Calgary, Alberta, Canada was described as a general needs assessment, it satisfied the same function as the elicitation research carried out by McKay and Holowaty. Moreover, while Cairns et al. never acknowledged youth as experts in their own right, I propose that their actions reflected a high regard for youth's abilities to participate in matters affecting their lives. Specifically, Cairns et al. facilitated a two-round *Delphi* process during which a group of youth rated and ranked the importance for each listed health need. The criteria upon which they selected the participating youth went unexplained. Also, Cairns et al. failed to specify how many youth participated in the process. Despite this unpublished information, I do appreciate the process they undertook to construct a needs assessment tool. At the conclusion of the first round, they collated the youth's ranks, ratings, and recordings and, subsequently, made eliminations and additions to the questionnaire. Then, Cairns et al. re-administered the revised questionnaire to the same group of youth for the second and final round of the *Delphi* process. At the

conclusion of this round, they finalized the tool to administer it to the larger school community.

The analysis revealed that the youth attending this school wanted teachers to address sexual health as one of students' general health needs. The health needs assessment tool was administered to students, with a mean age of 16.5, who were in any one of seven English classes. Given that English classes were mandatory, Cairns et al. (1994) proposed that the sample was representative of students in that specific school. In total, 81 students, or one-sixth of the school population, completed the needs assessment tool. According to the results, the youth identified the following three general health education needs: (1) coping with problems, (2) managing family relationships, and (3) understanding sexuality. Cairns et al. delved deeper into this third need to discover that youth listed, according to priority, STD/AIDS prevention, STD/AIDS information, parenting/birth control information and services, and sexual decision-making. When students were offered an open-ended question to record additional health needs, they identified the following three: school condom vending machines, information about sexual functioning, and pregnancy. Cairns et al. closed their report about youth's sexual health needs with a compelling rhetorical question, "Who should decide what adolescents need?" (p. 250). Among the many groups of people invested in stating what youth need when it comes to sexual health education, Cairns et al. homed in on parents and teachers, suggesting that these groups have distinctly different perspectives, and that they potentially stand in contrast to those of youth. Indeed, they argued that teachers would do students a disservice if programming carried on oblivious to students' expressed health needs.

Much like Cairns et al. (1994), Forrest et al. (2004) conducted a needs assessment by constructing a questionnaire in consultation with youth; notably, however, they believed it necessary to develop the questionnaire with teacher input, as well. While Cairns et al. did not stipulate their rationale for turning to youth, Forrest et al. argued that sex education could increase in relevancy, accessibility, and appeal to students if it went beyond normative needs to

expressed needs. In order to understand youth's expressed sexual health needs, Forrest et al. initiated the construction of an assessment questionnaire. Importantly, though, they thought it advisable to invite teacher comments. One might argue that teachers' input was extraneous given the ultimate purpose—to identify youth's sexual health needs, which only youth, not teachers, could express. Forrest et al. offered no justification for inviting comments from both youth and teachers. I suggest that they were intent on amassing a broad compilation of potential needs; whether these needs were proposed by teachers or students was inconsequential.

In contrast to the elicitation research conducted in schools within one board by McKay and Holowaty (1997) and the needs assessment carried out within one school by Cairns et al. (1994), the study conducted by Forrest et al. (2004) was significantly larger in scale as it included 13 schools. Specifically, 4,353 students in Year 9 (aged 13 or 14 years) completed the questionnaire. Forrest et al. isolated the topics to which youth agreed or strongly agreed needing more information, then ranked them on the basis of frequency counts. In descending order, these topics included the following: "other diseases caught from having sex; HIV/AIDS; where to get medical advice; pregnancy; contraception; how not to have sex when you don't want to; sexual feelings, relationships, and emotions; what people do when they have sex; how young people's bodies develop; [and] lesbian and gay relationships" (p. 341). Even though Forrest et al. identified the topics of need to youth, they noted that the questionnaire's close-ended structure limited their understanding of these topics.

Forrest et al. (2004) obtained detailed information about each topic by arranging that peer educators visit Year 9 classes to facilitate a suggestion box activity. The students in the classes had the opportunity to submit within the box any number of anonymous questions that they would like addressed during their sex education. Forrest et al. sorted the 2,259 questions into themes; next, they matched the themes with the topics that students ranked highly on the questionnaire. For instance, Forrest et al. matched the topic ranked highest—other diseases caught from having sex—with the following themes: descriptions and

definitions; transmission and infection; symptoms, effects, and treatment. While reviewing the findings from Forrest et al., I am reminded of the argument mounted by McKay and Holowaty (1997) that elicitation research must be conducted at the local school level to identify group-specific needs that can later be addressed. Forrest et al., on the contrary, had students from 13 schools participate. Therefore, I suspect that their findings would have been separated by school so that the teachers could learn about the students' expressed sexual health needs and then respond accordingly. In reviewing the article, though, I am unable to confirm this suspicion.

Based on the study findings, Forrest et al. (2004) claimed that there was a dissonance between what youth wanted to know about sexual health and what the UK government mandated. In their view, the mandated curriculum listed specific topics aimed at reducing rates of unwanted teenage pregnancy and STDs. Even though Forrest et al. proposed that the curriculum identified topics matching those reported by the students, they failed to retrieve information from the curriculum detailing "what should be covered" (p. 348) for any one topic. Moreover, Forrest et al. recognized that as long as the decision-makers could choose to respond to the findings of the needs assessment, action could not be assured. Thus, rather than simply direct the decision-makers to their findings, Forrest et al. initiated and organized training for alternate instructors or, in other words, older youth. By launching peer-pupil led sex education consisting of three sessions focused on contraception, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and relationships, Forrest et al. were able to see that at least some of the questions submitted in the box would be addressed. Notably, Forrest et al. failed to explain how or why they selected these three specific topics. Given that the instructional sessions were conducted within the schools, I assumed that Forrest et al. were restricted by the mandated curriculum. They likely referred to this curriculum to determine the three topics and then examined their findings to identify the students' expressed needs related to those topics. Thus, rather than address all of the youth's questions, Forrest et al. seemed to have addressed only those complying with the UK curriculum.

Review: Evaluation Studies

Thus far, I have reviewed elicitation or needs assessment research that focused on youth's expressed needs, studies that were conducted to inform policy and/or practice; now, I turn to evaluation studies aimed at determining the degree to which students' sexual health needs were satisfied and the changes decision-makers could implement to improve the teaching and learning of sexual health. Initially, I turned to Byers et al. (2003), who investigated students' opinions about sexual health education and their perceptions of the extent to which their sexual health needs were satisfied. Similar to McKay and Holowaty (1997), Byers et al. employed a survey design. Their survey consisted of seven parts, comprised primarily of Likert scales; additionally, it incorporated one qualitative open-ended question. This survey was administered in New Brunswick and it yielded data from 1,663 students in Grades 9 through 12. The results showed that 92% of the youth either agreed or strongly agreed that sexual health education ought to be provided at school. However, only 13% rated such education as excellent or very good, whereas 55% reported it as fair or poor. Moreover, only 28% agreed or strongly agreed that they had received information about topics of interest to them. When asked to consider 27 topics, between 79% and 99% of students responded that they wanted to learn about all of them at some point during their education. (These 27 topics included: personal safety; correct names of genitals; being comfortable with the other sex; body image; sexual coercion and sexual assault; puberty; menstruation; wet dreams; abstinence; menstruation; reproduction and birth; pornography; sexual behaviour (e.g. French kissing); homosexuality; sexually transmitted diseases/AIDS; communication about sex; dealing with peer pressure to be sexually active; sexuality in the media; attraction, love and intimacy; sex as part of a loving relationship; sexual problems and concerns; teenage prostitution; sexual decision-making in dating relationships; sexual pleasure and orgasm; building equal romantic relationships; teen pregnancy/parenting; birth control methods and safer sex practices.) Specifically, students reported that learning about STDs and birth control methods were extremely important. They also considered the topics of sexual coercion and

assault, personal safety, sexual decision-making, reproduction, and puberty all very important. These findings were consistent with those of McKay and Holowaty (1997) who reported that students deemed it highly important to learn about ‘negative’ sexual health outcomes. Furthermore, Byers et al. explained that students rated sexual pleasure and enjoyment, abstinence, and correct names for genitals as less important. More than 50% of students, supported learning about controversial topics such as masturbation, pornography, homosexuality, and teenage prostitution. When it came to teaching methods, students identified videos, lectures, and the question box as the most frequently used; and, among the most helpful methods, youth reported the question box, videos, and group discussions. Hence, Byers et al. collected information that decision-makers could consider when contemplating changes to the teaching and learning of sexual health; however, aside from publishing their results, Byers et al. failed to explain ways they prompted decision-makers to attend to youth’s perspectives. Admittedly, they may have overlooked this knowledge translation phase of research; nevertheless, without learning about the strategies that Byers et al. had in place to inform specific audiences of youth’s perspectives, I am left wondering whether youth’s views of, and visions for, sex education were ever heard and considered as the basis for change.

While reviewing this study, I noted three other problematic aspects that Byers et al. (2003) failed to note. First, unlike Cairns et al. (1994), Forrest et al. (2004), and McKay and Holowaty (1997), all of whom identified the ‘experts’ that participated in constructing their respective surveys/questionnaires, Byers et al. overlooked identifying who participated in developing their survey. Given that Byers et al. were planning to distribute the survey to a sample of youth, it only makes sense that they would have invited youth to participate in constructing the survey. By doing so, the youth could very well have shed light on constructs that would have otherwise been ignored or misunderstood by authorized experts. Second, by using closed-ended questions, similar to the work of McKay and Holowaty, Byers et al. created a situation wherein respondents were restricted in choosing from response categories that best reflect the researchers’ views. Thus,

rather than welcome students to share their perspectives in their own words, Byers et al. succeeded in putting words into the mouths of the respondents. Admittedly, Byers et al. recognized this disadvantage of survey design, and thus included one open-ended question, requesting students to identify two sexual health questions that they would like addressed at school. They collected a total of 897 student-generated questions. After conducting a content analysis, Byers et al. reported that students' questions fell into one of three themes or, alternatively, seven topic areas. The themes included facts and information, practical skills, and values clarification; specifically, the seven sexual health topics consisted of birth control/abstinence/safe sex; reproduction/biological functions; sexual techniques/activities; sexually transmitted diseases; sexual decision making/dating relationships; sexual violence (personal safety/sexual coercion/sexual assault/sexual abuse); and, sexual pleasure and enjoyment. Notably, although students responded to an open-ended question using their own words, they were limited by the request of generating only two questions. Third, unlike Forrest et al. (2004) who mobilized peer educators to address the questions submitted into the question box, Byers et al. failed to address the student-generated questions. Arguably, by asking students to identify questions about sexual health, Byers et al. had an ethical responsibility to ensure that the students' questions were addressed. Hence, although Byers et al. investigated students' perspectives, they could have addressed youth's expressed sexual health needs by complementing current efforts aimed at offering youth 'effective' sexual health education.

In order to understand what students conceive of as 'effective' sexual health education, I turned to the work of Allen (2005), who asserted that the New Zealand curriculum implicitly communicated that effective sexuality education decreases the rates of 'negative' or 'problematic' sexual health outcomes (that is, unintended pregnancies and STIs). Allen wondered if youth conceptualized 'effective' sexuality education in the same way. Her research was similar to that of Byers et al. (2003) in that Allen distributed a survey containing an open-ended question. Allen asked the students how "the sexuality education received so far at school could be improved" (p. 390). Unlike Byers et al.'s open-ended question

which invited students to list two of their own questions, Allen's question was far more encompassing: it requested that students go beyond identifying what sexual health questions they would like addressed to proposing how teachers could address these questions. In other words, Allen's open-ended question enabled students to reflect on their experiences and project into the future to identify ways sex education could be made more effective. The anonymity of the survey afforded students the opportunity to honestly express their views to this question. However, Allen acknowledged that the research design prevented her from eliciting in-depth replies, which would have been possible had she conducted individual or focus group interviews. Had she conducted such interviews, she would have, first, nullified anonymity (she could have only offered participants confidentiality) and, second, needed more resources to collect the same number of replies (N=1,180) yielded by the survey method. Clearly, although Allen sacrificed depth of response, she gained in the overall number of responses concerning what youth constitute as 'effective' sexuality education.

Allen (2005) posed her open-ended question to youth between the ages of 16 and 19 who were attending one of 15 schools and obtained a total of 1,180 responses. As a result of her thematic analysis, she identified three emergent elements of pedagogy. First, she noted that youth offered recommendations pertaining to the way classroom activities could be structured. These recommendations included offering sexuality education throughout secondary school, increasing the number of allotted hours, incorporating more interactive activities, introducing more practical or hands-on activities, inviting guest speakers to discuss their sexual experiences, and distributing pamphlets and condoms. According to Allen, these recommendations demonstrated that the youth wanted "more real-life information and a practically-based curriculum" (p. 395). Allen argued that if decision-makers were to listen to students' suggestions for curricular change, it was possible that youth "would perceive programmes as having greater relevance to their lives" (p. 395). The second element of pedagogy related to curricular content. The youth critiqued the content as boring, irrelevant, and repetitive, noting that they were already familiar with the sexual information

reviewed at school. Instead, they requested detailed information about “same-sex attraction, homophobia, transgendered issues, teenage parenthood, pregnancy, as well as emotions in relationships” (p. 398). In reviewing their comments, Allen argued that young people considered themselves as “sexually knowing subjects” and were frustrated at sexuality education that failed to acknowledge them in this way. She proposed that “without expanding upon it [sexuality education] each year, sexuality education depreciates young people’s own knowledge and experiences, positioning them as child-like rather than as young adults” (p. 397). The final and third element of pedagogy related to teachers’ comfort and competency in dealing with the curriculum. Some youth remarked that teachers were close-minded, prudish, and uncomfortable. Allen argued that teachers who exhibited such characteristics “contribute[d] to young people’s resentment at being denied the complete picture about sexual issues” (p. 400). Youth proposed that teachers were unable to discuss the ‘complete picture’ because they were inadequately educated in sexual health; some suspected that teachers compensated for this by inviting outside “experts” or “professionals” into the classroom (p. 401). Hence, in reviewing these three elements of pedagogy, I conclude that youth have suggestions regarding ways their sex education could potentially improve; however, I am left wondering if decision-makers ever did take heed of youth’s suggestions by reforming policies and/or practices pertaining to sexuality education.

Selwyn and Powell (2007) conducted a study in England to examine the role that schools played in young people’s acquisition of information and advice relating to sex and relationships. They solicited the participation of 401 youth between the ages of 12 and 19 (approximate mean age 14 years) to complete a questionnaire, and administered it at either one of three schools or six community settings. Similar to Byers et al. (2003), Selwyn and Powell overlooked explaining who participated in constructing the questionnaire. They simply noted that the questionnaire was comprised of items focused on demographics, information on students’ sexual health attitudes and behaviours, and details of their sex and relationship information and advice seeking. The results of the questionnaire

revealed that youth used a wide range of sources to obtain sexual health information; cited most frequently were school lessons, followed closely by friends. On the basis of these results, Selwyn and Powell concluded that youth were less likely to talk to people with whom they had a ‘formal’ relationship (such as teachers or school nurses) and more likely to speak with people with whom they had an ‘informal’ relationship (such as boyfriends, girlfriends, and mothers). Moreover, youth preferred to consult passive sources of information over active ones (such as reading magazines versus telephone help lines). Selwyn and Powell also analyzed the questionnaire data to understand how frequently youth received lessons in sex and relationship education; they acknowledged that such data revealed “little about the nature, quality and perceived effectiveness of the information and advice received” (p. 223).

To explore these matters, Selwyn and Powell (2007) facilitated 12 same-sex focus group interviews with youth between the ages of 13 and 18 who were ‘friends’. Selwyn and Powell believed that same-sex friendship groups of three to eight participants would ensure the critical comfort level needed for youth to suggest materials, content, and/or instructional practices to improve sex and relationship education. The researchers, however, remained vague in their description as to how they recruited participants from existing networks of friends. Did they use a snowball sampling technique, whereby one participating youth would identify friends with whom he/she would feel comfortable engaging in a talk about sex and relationship education (see Creswell, 2011)? Even if the Selwyn and Powell succeeded in recruiting networks of friends, they neglected to consider the degree to which the facilitator impacted the ‘friendly’ discussions.

Although Selwyn and Powell (2007) failed to clarify how the friendship-based focus group interviews were organized, they afforded youth the opportunity to elaborate upon school lessons (as stated above, the most frequently cited source of sexual health information and advice) and to specify possible improvements to these lessons in sex and relationship education. Selwyn and Powell reported that a few young people believed their education in this area was useful and interesting; however, others considered their education inadequate and offered suggestions.

First, some students complained that lessons were heavily focused on biological factors and health risks, which they regarded as boring. According to Selwyn and Powell, the sterile nature of lessons stemmed from “the predominantly, one-way, top-down, delivery of lesson content” (p. 224). Their statement prompts me to wonder if two-way, bottom-up sexual health education would be more stimulating for youth. Second, students noted that their interest in sex and relationship education waned with each academic year. Selwyn and Powell attributed this reaction to educator apathy and repetitive content. This finding prompts me to mull over the necessary conditions for sustaining and restoring educator interest. Third, although some students mentioned approaching teachers for information and advice about sexual health matters, many were reluctant to do so because of concerns relating to embarrassment and confidentiality. Such issues could have been addressed if students visited the nurse who was available to them within the school itself; however, Selwyn and Powell learned that youth, by and large, were unaware that they could make appointments with the nurse. Assuming that students wanted to visit the school nurse, I wonder if they would still feel embarrassed and reluctant to discuss their sexual health needs with him/her. Essentially, the students expressed a need for more lessons in sex and relationship education. Selwyn and Powell proposed that students wanted teachers to consider

treating young people with respect; providing information and advice in forms which were contemporary, confidential and/or fun; making school lessons more interesting, less didactic and ensuring that no-one feels singled out and embarrassed. (p. 228)

In reviewing these suggested improvements, it became evident to me that youth can identify where problems exist and can voice what changes decision-makers can adopt to improve the teaching and learning of sexual health.

Similar to Selwyn and Powell (2007), Measor, Tiffin, and Miller (2000) attended to students’ perspectives of sex and relationship; to do so, however, they attempted to work with youth. Measor et al. designed a study so that it “focused on *working with* [emphasis added] adolescents in the setting where they were offered sex education” (p. 12), yet they failed to explain how they went about working ‘with’ youth. Measor et al. did, though, report that they “experimented

with a strategy of *peer researchers* [emphasis added]” (p. 14); in their words, this strategy allowed them to turn “pupils who were key informants into *data collectors* [emphasis added]” (p. 14). I argue that this is a perplexing statement. How did the youth take on the role of peer researcher? What method did these peer researchers employ to collect data? If Measor et al. restricted students’ responsibilities to data collection, they succeeded in underestimating youth’s capabilities as peers or partners—surely, Measor et al. did not conceive of a researcher as someone who simply collects data. In the end, they stated that having youth as “data collectors” was “unsuccessful” (p. 14). Rather than note that they may have misconceived of youth participation in research, Measor et al. deemed it inappropriate to partner with youth to examine sex education. In their words, “within pupil informal cultures it is not acceptable to ask questions about sexuality of your peers” (p. 14). In my view, this reasoning was unconvincing, particularly, in light of findings documented by Selwyn and Powell that youth cited friends as their second most frequent source of sexual health information and advice.

Although their efforts to work with youth in collecting data was unsuccessful, Measor et al. (2000) did manage to collect data by conducting participant observations of sex education, unstructured interviews, and focus group interviews with teachers, health professionals, and youth within five schools. At each of the five schools, students had the opportunity to learn about reproduction, conception, contraception, and STDs. However, they reported numerous gaps or “failings” (p. 122), meaning that students wanted more information in two areas. First, students noted that their sex education avoided addressing emotional content. When Measor et al. examined this theme in greater depth, they recognized a gender distinction. For instance, a young woman reported “there was no chance to talk about the feelings side, it’s all just the biology and the facts, and about what goes where and that” (p. 125). Most males did not comment on the absence of content on emotions. However, one young man noted, “[i]t is alright in that it shows all the equipment, but it doesn’t tell you how to have good relationships” (p. 123).

Second, students objected to both a lack of explicit information and a lack of breadth in the content presented during class. On the one hand, females criticized the curricular content for focusing on the silences around feelings and desire. Many commented about the lack of discussion of desire; for example, one female said that her sex education was “OK, but it could [have been] more personal. My school is quite open, but it never discusses very intimate things. We discuss contraception, but not sex” (Measor et al., 2000, p. 125). On the other hand, males lamented the curricular message that inextricably linked desire and danger; Measor et al. (2000) surmised that this relationship was attributed to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. One male said, “[a]ll they ever do is talk about the dangers of sex and that, and nothing about the pleasure” (p. 126). Moreover, students commented that the concept of sexuality was too narrowly defined and that the teachers focused on intercourse to the exclusion of other sexual behaviors. They indicated that their education “had not dealt with a wide enough variety of sexual behaviours and, as a result, had not met their needs” (p. 127). Students also wanted open discussion; one complained, “[w]e were only told what to use not how to do it” (p. 127). In an effort to obtain such details about the “sexual activities leading up to sex” and the “different ways of having sex,” such as oral sex (p. 128), males reported that they turned to pornography. Hence, if educators had listened to students’ perspectives of sexual health education, they would have changed their practices by discussing the emotional dimension of sexual health and offering details about a range of sexual behaviors.

Like Measor et al. (2000), Eisenberg, Wagenaar, and Neumark-Sztainer (1997) used focus group interviews at five specific schools to learn about students’ perspectives. According to them, “students have insights into the programs currently being used, and they are the only ones who can give testimony on how they receive such programs” (p. 322). Given this viewpoint, Eisenberg et al. initiated a study in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, to understand students’ perspectives and assist in improving school-based sexuality education. They solicited students’ opinions on the following five points: what they liked and disliked about their classes and teachers; when, over their school careers, they

experienced sex education; how much sex education they received; what topics they would like to learn more about; and what effect sex education has had on their own sexuality. Eisenberg et al. recruited 29 participants in Grade 9 through 12. While Eisenberg et al. made note of the gender and racial composition of the focus groups, they failed to clarify whether the groups were distinguished in terms of the school they attended. In other words, did they organize students from one particular school into a single focus group with the aim of discussing their own school's sexuality education?

Before reviewing the themes that emerged from the focus group interview data, I recognized the need to consider the method of data collection. Eisenberg et al. (1997) acknowledged that the data obtained from focus group interviews relies upon participants' willingness to speak openly about a subject, in this case, sexuality education. They underscored the limitations of using focus groups to collect data: the views expressed during the focus group interviews do not necessarily reflect the views of either the participants who refrained from speaking when certain points were under discussion or the non-participants who opted to forgo taking part in the study. Although Eisenberg et al. acknowledged that comfort-level impacts participants' responses and, in turn, the study's findings, they failed to describe how they created the climate within which students felt comfortable to voice their views. Presumably, same grade-level students participating in a focus group would feel more at ease talking about sexuality education than would participants in a group made up of members whose grade levels ranged from 9 through 12. Eisenberg et al. identified neither the grade-level composition of the focus groups nor the number of students in each group. They did, however, recognize that within a focus group, a group dynamic is generated that contributes to participants feeling comfortable to share and explore their beliefs, opinions, and experiences about sexuality education in greater depth than if they had participated in individual interviews.

In their analysis of the focus group interview data, Eisenberg et al. (1997) employed an inverse outlining strategy that resulted in five themes. The first theme was 'Topics in the Ideal Class'. Although students had received some form

of sexual health education at some point during their schooling, they agreed that too much time had been allotted to “the wrong stuff” (p. 324). Many described this information as redundant and irrelevant in relation to the sexual decisions they have had to make. For instance, a Grade 10 female participant stated that her education contained “too much of the stuff we don’t need to know and not enough of the stuff we need to know” (p. 324). For the most part, students described their ideal sexuality education class as containing three aspects including: the basics, such as sexuality and reproduction; consequences of sexual activity, such as those related to unwanted pregnancy and STDs; and sensitive topics, such as homosexuality and abortion. Moreover, according to the students, an effective curriculum concentrated on issues pertinent to their life choices, such as “how to abstain from sex without jeopardizing a relationship, where to obtain condoms, or how to defend against date rape” (p. 324). Eisenberg et al. identified the second theme as ‘Timing of Instruction’. Most students reported that sexuality education must start at an earlier age than it had for them because, as some noted, by the time topics were addressed in class, students already “knew it all,” having learned it from friends, media, and personal experiences (p. 324). Many noted that the benefit of earlier sex education is that students have the opportunity “to giggle and get the embarrassment out of their systems so they can benefit from more detailed information in later years” (p. 324).

With regard to the third theme, ‘Teacher Qualifications’, some students stated that sexuality education is directly related to the teacher. For some students, it was physical education teachers who were responsible for sexuality education. Many students believed this was problematic because they felt uncomfortable talking about sexuality with their coaches. To rectify this difficulty, the participants suggested that teachers invite guest speakers to address sexuality education because students would feel free to pose questions and engage in discussion without embarrassment. Eisenberg et al. (1997) identified ‘Openness and Honesty’ as a fourth theme. According to most students, whether the instructor was a guest speaker or a physical education teacher, he/she must create a climate of openness and honesty by being “open, willing to talk,

straightforward, nonevasive, and comfortable with the subjects they are teaching” (p. 325). Participants suggested that teachers talk with, rather than lecture at, the students about sexuality. Moreover, they proposed teachers need to understand that the messages they convey are extremely powerful in developing an emotionally ‘safe’ environment. Some students were offended by negative messages or moral judgments—what young people should not do—to the degree that any subsequent positive message lost its impact. The fifth theme that Eisenberg et al. identified was ‘Relating to Students’ Lives’. Students emphasized that as teachers speak with students, they must listen to the kids for both content and instructional ideas. In other words, students advised teachers “to include a broad range of topics and find out what information students have and what information they lack” (p. 326). Given that the researchers failed to address how the findings improved sexual health education, I propose that the five themes could have guided decision-makers in determining what actions they could take on this front.

In the same vein as Eisenberg et al. (1997), DiCenso et al. (2001) conducted focus group interviews providing youth with the opportunity to voice their opinions about sexual health services (including sexual health education) and to identify strategies to improve such services. DiCenso et al. conducted their study at one rural and one urban school within the Haldiman-Norfolk and Niagara regions of Southwestern Ontario, Canada. At each school, they randomly selected students from Grades 9 and 11 to participate in focus group interviews. Unlike Eisenberg et al., who failed to identify the grade level of the members in the focus groups, DiCenso et al. reported that all participants in each session were in the same grade. During each focus group interview, the topics of discussion were restricted to “sources and quality of sexual health information, knowledge and use of sexual health services, gender differences, factors that influence sexual behaviour, and suggestions for improving sexual health services” (pp. 35-36). Although DiCenso et al. might have considered it appropriate to direct the group interview to these topic areas, they set the focus, and thereby delimited the discussion. In other words, DiCenso et al. wanted to hear students’ views as long

as they elaborated upon what was of interest to the researchers, rather than what was of interest to the students.

DiCenso et al.'s (2001) analysis resulted in five categories. Unlike Eisenberg et al. (1997), who employed an inverse outlining strategy, DiCenso et al. did not specify the strategy they used to analyze their data. They simply noted that the “results were categorized into five main areas: formal sources of sexual health information, informal sources of sexual health information, knowledge and use of services, gender differences, and students’ suggestions” (p. 36)—notably, these categories correspond to the areas of discussion during the focus group interview. I am intrigued by the distinction between the formal from the informal sources of sexual health information. Among the students who elaborated upon their formal sex education, many explained that they learned about the ‘basic plumbing’ or ‘the technical stuff’, which they did not deem useful. In order to fill in the gaps with the important stuff, they turned to their friends. Such findings were consistent with Selwyn and Powell (2007), who reported that friends were among the most common informal source of sexual health information. Recognizing that sex education had to change to satisfy their needs, the students in DiCenso et al.'s study offered a myriad of suggestions. For instance, when it came to proposing topics that teachers ought to consider adding to the curriculum, they identified the following: “how STDs are transmitted and prevented, accurate information about AIDS, sexual activity options other than abstinence and intercourse, pregnancy and birth control options, emotional aspects of sexuality, relationship issues, communication with partners, and gender differences” (p. 37). Moreover, students preferred teachers who

used everyday language; were specifically trained in teaching sexual health and provided accurate information; were dynamic, non-judgmental, relaxed, respectful, and sex-positive (providing individuals with knowledge specific to their own sexual health concerns while respecting different individual values and social customs relating to sexuality); used humor; shared information in ways that increased student comfort and decreased their embarrassment and fear in voicing their concerns and asking questions; and used demonstrations where appropriate (e.g., how to put on a condom). (DiCenso, 2001, p. 37)

Unquestionably, if decision-makers were to read DiCenso et al.'s study, they would learn that youth offer suggestions for improving sexual health education. Notably, though, they would find these suggestions in the researchers' own language. This leaves me wondering what the participants' actually said during the focus group discussions. Granted, the DiCenso et al. were restricted by the journal's publication criteria but their decision to elaborate upon the themes without presenting the students' comments was problematic. Indeed, I question whether the DiCenso et al. achieved their goal: "to provide adolescents with an opportunity to *voice* [emphasis added] their opinions about sexual health services and to identify strategies to improve their delivery" (p. 35). The obvious question is: to whom did the youth voice their opinions? Surely, DiCenso et al. wanted youth's voices to be heard by an audience beyond those members participating in the focus group. As a reader of the study, I ostensibly serve as a member of this audience; however, in reading the article, I am unable to learn what the youth themselves had to say about sexual health services and education. Admittedly, DiCenso et al. did note that if one wanted a more "detailed report of the findings including quotes from the participants" one had only to submit a request (p. 36). This statement implicitly communicates that while DiCenso et al. wanted to offer youth a chance to voice their views, their analysis of what the youth said took precedence, and thus warranted publication.

For insights into how I could attend to the voices of youth at a single school, I turned to Hirst (2004), who completed her study in England. Remarkably, she examined a school's sex and relationship education on the basis of youth's actual sexual experiences. Hirst noted that teachers who plan sex and relationship education do so largely by relying upon their own understandings of youth's sexual health needs. She wondered if there was a match between what young people experience sexually and what educators make available to youth in sex and relationship education. This was a unique study within the literature that I reviewed: no other study invited youth to evaluate their sexuality education on the basis of their sexual experiences. Indeed, researchers more often than not face tremendous hurdles seeking institutional approval and parental consent for a study

dealing with even the relatively uncontroversial and ‘safer’ aspects of sex education such as youth’s access to, and understanding of, sexual health information (see Raymond, 1993). Seemingly, Hirst did not have these hurdles to overcome; she stated that her “access to participants was negotiated via the head teacher, the coordinator for sex and relationship education, and the form teacher” (p. 116). Presumably, once she obtained the necessary consent from the applicable parties, Hirst proceeded to organize focus groups, unstructured individual, and small group interviews with 15 youth between the ages of 15 and 16. Hirst understood the importance of fostering trusting relationships with participants and creating a space within which they could reveal intimate details. Indeed, in attending to candidness exhibited by the youth participants, I was shocked by the level of trust that Hirst was able to develop.

Youth pointed out striking differences between their lived sexual experiences and their teachers’ assumptions about those experiences, assumptions that served as the basis for the school’s sex and relationship education. For example, youth stated that their sexual encounters usually occurred hastily, outdoors at public venues with friends nearby. Specifically, Julie, a participant, shared: “I’ve always had my clothes on or most of ‘em. I’ve never done it inside, in a comfy warm bedroom or bed even and I’ve been wet and freezing loads of times” (Hirst, 2004, p. 118). Teachers, on the other hand, taught from the belief that youth negotiated for indoor and private spaces within which they would have sexual encounters. The polarity between youth’s actual experiences and teachers’ description of sexual experiences is exemplified by Josie, one of Hirst’s participants, who told her “it’s horrible really to think you have to get all mucky and get leaves on your bum [sex in the park]. It’s not like you thought it were gonna be, like in films and sex education lessons” (p. 118). Furthermore, youth identified an extensive repertoire of safer sex practices, including “‘heavy petting,’ or foreplay (kissing, stroking, mutual masturbation, and oral sex)” (p. 119). Teachers, in contrast, limited class discussion of sexual activity to vaginal penetration. Participants referred to this activity as ‘real sex,’ ‘going all the way,’ ‘doing it properly,’ and ‘getting down to the basic thing’. Thus, according to

Hirst, youth came to regard vaginal penetration as the ‘proper’ or ‘real’ way of behaving sexually. Jo (another participant) connected this assumption with her sex education lessons: “[n]ever thought about it before, but suppose it’s what you get given in sex education” (p. 119). Julie bewailed the heteronormative nature of the program by stating that “[t]here’s nothing for me in sex education” (p. 120). She claimed that she knew “all the stuff about how to have a baby but they don’t tell us owt [*sic*] about other types of sex. It’s stupid ‘cos it makes you think you’re maybe a bit weird ‘cos you’re not having *proper* sex” (Julie’s emphasis, p. 120). Additionally, participants had little to say about sexual pleasure and only elaborated on it after Hirst questioned them about the matter. Many claimed that teachers failed to talk about pleasure and desire and, indeed, some questioned the prevailing belief that desire is driven by raging hormones. Maisie stated: “I’ve always done it ‘cos I wanted to ...not ‘cos me hormones made me. My brain and my feelings made me” (p. 121). Hirst concluded that it would be pragmatic for teachers to privilege youth’s perspectives and prioritize youth’s interests when deciding what curricular content is important. She suggested that this would be a “novel” experience that could be “clearly appreciated for its contrast to top-down, less-negotiable forms of learning and teaching” (p. 124).

I conclude this literature review with an article that extensively encouraged the expression of students’ perspectives. Noon and Arcus (2002) conducted an evaluation study in a suburban school district near Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada with the aim of exploring students’ experiences of a curricular unit on human sexuality and their perceptions of its relevance to their lives. Noon and Arcus collaborated with two teachers to design their research. For example, the teachers recommended a purposive sampling strategy by directing Noon and Arcus to recruit students from two Grade 10 Physical Education classes that had recently completed a human sexuality unit. Additionally, these teachers wanted to select the most articulate students to contribute substantively during the individual interviews. While I acknowledge that interview data is limited by the participant’s ability to articulate his/her views, I question the teachers’ motives in identifying the participants. Presumably, they had been told that Noon and Arcus

were neither evaluating the extent to which each teacher satisfied predetermined criteria nor seeking to identify the more effective sexual health educator. Even if the teachers were told the purposes of the study, they may have feared that the study could be used to evaluate their respective professional abilities. Thus, the teachers likely directed the researchers to a certain type of student—one who would perhaps articulate positive views of his/her classroom experience. I wonder whether the teachers selected student participants on the basis of grades, assuming that those who earned high grades would comment favourably on their classroom experiences. In the end, despite the possibility of selection bias, Noon and Arcus went on to conduct semi-structured individual interviews with 14 Grade 10 students to address the following six major categories: content, teaching methods, teachers, teaching messages, relevance of sexual health education, and importance of sexual health education.

When I reviewed the findings for each category, I focused on students' critiques of sexual health education and their suggestions for improvement. First, in terms of content, nearly all students commented on the repetitive nature of the unit's material. Some claimed that the repetition helped them better understand the information; others remarked that this prevented them from learning anything new. Students reported they were rushed through the unit, explaining that 10 hours was insufficient time to thoroughly address the planned content, or that the teacher was uncomfortable with the content and so hurried through it. Almost all students recommended that the timeframe be extended by at least one week, giving them an additional five hours, which translated into a 50% increase in instructional time. Although the teachers addressed the topics of contraception, teen pregnancy, and STDs, according to the majority of students, these topics were not given the attention they deserved. Next, regarding teaching methods—some students commented positively on class videos, but many more described them as outdated. They claimed the videos failed to accurately portray current youth relationships and lamented the teachers used these videos without recognizing or responding to students' existing knowledge. To rectify these shortcomings, students advised the teachers to invite guest speakers to address the

class—for example, a young person parenting a child or a person living with AIDS—people who could offer something ‘new’. Third, students commented on the two teachers who delivered the human sexuality unit. Most of them believed the teachers were knowledgeable, approachable, friendly, and comfortable teaching the subject. Moreover, they believed the “teachers were aware of what they [the students] wanted and needed to learn, had addressed their major questions, and had specifically selected topics of interest and relevance to them” (Noon & Arcus, 2002, p. 51). However, a few students stated that the teachers followed the curriculum without considering students’ needs and interests. Fourth, students maintained that the teachers conveyed messages about sexual health that were appropriate, realistic, and relevant to their lives. Most students reported that the teachers portrayed abstinence as the only way to protect oneself from pregnancy, HIV, and other STDs; but, the students pointed out that neither teacher presented abstinence as the ‘only’ acceptable activity. Indeed, all students suggested that such a message would have been inappropriate and ineffective; a few students suggested that if some youth had heard this message, they would have rebelled by becoming sexually active. Fifth, most students mentioned that the sex education they received was personally relevant; however, a female student, who had postponed sexual activity, reported that the unit was irrelevant to her needs. More than half stated that the unit increased their awareness of the potential negative consequences of certain sexual behaviours. Indeed, one student said, “you have to be really, really careful, cause if anything goes wrong, then you’re screwed...” (p. 18). As well, most of the students reported that the unit would indeed influence their future sexual decision-making. With regards to the last and sixth category, nearly all the students stressed the importance of sexual health education, suggesting that it be classified as mandatory and that it begin in Grade 6 or 7 and continue in each subsequent academic year. In reviewing this study, I draw one inescapable conclusion from these findings: the interview data illustrates that, across all six major categories, students can not only speak critically about their sexual health education, but can also identify ways in which their sexual health education can improve.

I am intrigued by the insightfulness of the student's critiques and impressed by their suggestions for improvement; I wonder to what degree the two teachers shared my views. Once the study ended, did these teachers feel compelled to take steps to change the human sexuality unit? I realize that they were more likely to advocate for change if they had believed that such a need existed. This leads me to ask: Who initiated this study? Had the teachers approached Noon and Arcus (2002) with the suggestion that they evaluate the human sexuality unit for reasons undisclosed in the report? Alternatively, did Noon and Arcus first contact the two teachers who consented to have their unit evaluated by the researchers? I believe that such information could bring about greater insight into how the findings were implemented. Presumably, if the teachers had initiated the evaluation, they would have remained open-minded to seriously consider the students' perspectives. However, if the researchers themselves (for all intents and purposes, outsiders to the school) had initiated the study with input from teachers who were not strongly committed to the enterprise, it is far less likely that the study's findings would have led to in-school change. Essentially, my concern is this: if the findings—in whatever manner and to whatever degree—did suggest change, to what extent did that change involve attending to the students' voices? Noon and Arcus did not report whether the students' critiques and suggestions had any impact on the human sexuality unit. This suggests to me that reform was not (if it came about at all) immediately forthcoming.

Youth Participatory Research at Bellman Secondary

As I reviewed the literature and examined how researchers conducted elicitation and evaluation studies of sexual health education, it became clear to me that students appreciated the opportunity to express their perspectives. Notably, none of the researchers suggested that decision-makers must plan and/or change sex education based solely on what youth have to say. Instead, they proposed that decision-makers must take into account youth's perspectives when developing and/or reforming policies and/or practices pertaining to the teaching and learning

of sexual health. This recommendation sounds like an endorsement of listening to students' perspectives and inviting student participation. But is it? To what extent, I wondered, did researchers recognize that their research designs and/or methods constrained what students could say and how they could say it?

With the aim of listening to youth's views and visions, I re-examined my literature review for guidance on the most appropriate methodological choices. In particular, I turned to Byers et al. (2003) and Allen (2005) and their respective uses of survey design. I concluded that adopting this design (Creswell, 2011) would entail administering an anonymous questionnaire with at least one open-ended question, analyzing the data, and offering recommendations for reforming a school's sex education program. This course of action was incongruous with my beliefs for three reasons. First, by developing the survey myself or relying upon one devised by authorized experts, as was the case in the study conducted by McKay and Holowaty (1997), I would have been the one identifying the sex education components deserving of attention. Notably, such choices may have failed to align with students' choices had they been given the opportunity to express them. Second, I would have been presenting students with limited response categories, which may have failed to represent their views of, and visions for, the teaching and learning of sexual health. Even if I had provided participants with categories reflecting their respective responses, I would have certainly, to some degree, misinterpreted and misrepresented their perspectives by using my language. Third, by offering student respondents open-ended questions, I would have encouraged them to use their own language, but restricted them to finite space and time to note their replies. Hence, in viewing these three points, I affirmed my initial belief that employing a survey research design to call attention to youth's perspectives of sex education would have been inappropriate.

Alternatively, I could have collected qualitative data by conducting focus group interviews like Selwyn and Powell (2007) and DiCenso et al. (2001), or individual interviews like Noon and Arcus (2002); however, while this would have made it possible to hear students critique their experiences of the teaching and learning of sexual health, I was reluctant to develop the interview guide. Had

I done this, I would have heard students' views pertaining to aspects of sexual health education that *I* deemed important. As an outsider to a secondary school, I had no experiential knowledge of the school's sex education and had no understanding of the students' sexual health needs, which was the purpose for conducting the study in the first place! Even if I had such knowledge, I could have subconsciously moved, during the course of the interview, towards topics I believed warranted attention and, perhaps, away from the very topics the youth wished to address. Consequently, I was uncomfortable with the prospect of facilitating focus group interviews or conducting individual interviews and, then, analyzing the data to propose reforms for improving sex education at a school.

Like Hirst (2004) and Noon and Arcus (2002), who conducted their respective studies at individual secondary schools, I wanted to direct my attention towards a single secondary school. I aimed to understand its context-specific policies and practices from students' perspectives, and to induce decision-makers to consider these perspectives and enact change. But how was I to do this? Rather than conduct elicitation research in the manner of McKay and Holowaty (1997), Cairns et al. (1994), and Forrest et al. (2004), I intended to facilitate a study during which youth would problematize their experiences of the teaching and learning of sex education, critique the rules and regulations, express their sexual health needs, and propose possible transformations. This sort of research objective would be similar to the evaluation studies by Eisenberg et al. (1997), DiCenso et al. (2001), and Selwyn and Powell (2007). Collectively, these researchers suggested that students are willing to engage in critique based on what they experienced during sex education, what they believe they need to know about sexual health, and how sex education ought to be taught. Moreover, the studies showed that students do identify a myriad of transformative possibilities for improving sexual health education.

Whether the researchers conducted elicitation or evaluation research, they called attention to the importance of acknowledging youth's perspectives of sexual health education; however, upon examining the various methods, the researchers' views emerged as dominant. Arguably, a researcher who honours

youth's voices, acknowledges their expertise, privileges their perspectives, and prioritizes their agenda would design a study to maximize opportunities for youth to become partners in each step of the research process. On this basis, I believed it necessary to initiate and facilitate a participatory effort, to work 'with' youth as research partners. As a research team, we would strive to call attention to students' perspectives of sexual health education, showcase our research findings in an action plan, and present this plan in dialogue with decision-makers, namely teachers.

Although I was intent on working with youth to investigate sex education, I was unable to find a participatory study that could function as an exemplar. As I noted above, Measor et al. (2000) attempted to work with youth as peer researchers; however, given that their efforts were reportedly unsuccessful, their study offered me minimal direction. I believed that the working relationship needed to be mutually respectful and collaboratively structured; it had to be a partnership between the youth and myself. For insight on forging such a partnership, I looked to Hirst (2004), who acknowledged youth as 'experts' on their sexual health experiences and thus knowledgeable in contributing to their sex education. Even though Hirst's research design did not constitute, strictly speaking, a participatory study, she privileged and prioritized youth's perspectives by conducting unstructured interviews. Similar to Hirst, I regarded youth as 'experts' and planned to invite them to decide 'what is important' by sharing research responsibilities with them. In other words, I intended to work with them in examining sex education by calling attention to students' critiques, their expressed sexual health needs, and their proposed reforms for improving the teaching and learning of sexual health at their school.

Even though I was keen to initiate a participatory process with youth, I was aware that decision-makers needed to listen and respond to our research findings and, then, take action to implement the suggested transformations. I was unable to find a study in the literature that integrated the following three aims: first, to elicit students' perspectives of their sexual health education; second, to initiate a dialogue between students and teachers focused on youth's views and

visions; and third, to document the ways in which the decision-makers responded or not to youth's perspectives. Although many researchers did call attention to youth's perspectives, they did not report whether they encouraged dialogue between students and teachers. In my view, this step was vital in any effort to induce curricular change that could potentially take into account students' perspectives. I was determined to take that critical step in the study I would initiate at Bellman Secondary.

CHAPTER THREE

Constructing a Foucauldian Framework of an Educational Power Structure

In this chapter, I discuss the ideas of Michel Foucault as a framework for understanding an education system as a power structure. I begin with Foucault's views on the nature of power and the way it is put into practice. Here, discipline is a central construct: discipline enacted as power to train individuals and discipline as a procedure to constrain discourse. I describe the ways in which teachers employ disciplinary power to train students, explaining Foucault's three disciplinary instruments and relating them to the educational context. I also explain how disciplinary tactics satisfy three criteria. I underscore the importance of these criteria by relating them to the teaching and learning of sexual health. Specifically, I draw on Foucault's understanding that disciplinary power invests in human bodies to subjugate them as objects of knowledge; on this basis, I argue that teachers of sex education use disciplinary power to target students' bodies.

Next, I explain that discipline constrains sexual health education by imposing limits on it. These limits mark the boundary between what is authorized, appropriate, and qualified and what is unauthorized, inappropriate, and disqualified. I emphasize that those who exercise educational power, namely teachers, comply with, and conform to, what Foucault calls, a 'régime of truth.' That is to say, while interacting with students, they exercise disciplinary power to construct a discourse or curriculum of sexual health education by circulating 'true' statements pertaining to it.

Finally, I challenge the common notion that power is repressive by highlighting its productive capacity. In the case of sexual health education, the teacher-student power relation is under constant tension and stress; consequently, as teachers impose rules to construct discourses, students break the rules to counter the discourses. Such efforts can be conceived of as an 'anti-authority struggle.' Ultimately, the limits of discourse will shift as power relations shift. I assert that students are best positioned to disturb and disrupt curricular limits by conducting a local criticism of the teaching and learning of sexual health.

Drawing on Foucault's view that power and knowledge are inextricably linked, I make the case that students, despite their marginalized status or low-ranking position, are experts on their own lived experiences, and as such can speak for themselves to produce knowledge, disturb the status quo, and ultimately change their sex education.

An Educational Power Structure

Foucault (1980d, 1984b) argued that power relations permeate, characterize, and constitute institutions. According to convention, power is something one claims to have or hold. Based on this premise, the 'head' of a power structure possesses the most power, while others positioned lower down the hierarchy possess less power in varying and relative degrees (Foucault, 1984b). Foucault (1980d), in contrast, suggested that even though there is an institutional 'head,' he/she does not pass power along in a linear fashion, from the top-down, because it "is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or [a] piece of wealth" (p. 98). This is the case because, as Foucault (1984a) asserted, power circulates as people put it into practice: it is something that one does thoughtfully and strategically. Since "power is exercised rather than possessed" it operates as "the overall effect of its strategic positions" (p. 174). In other words, an institutional power structure functions as a multiplicity of force relations, a network or web that produces power because people, distributed both horizontally and vertically throughout it, exercise power as they fulfill assigned responsibilities and satisfy stated expectations (Foucault, 1984b, p. 192). Therefore, as far as Foucault was concerned, power is transmitted by and through individuals, is harnessed in various strategies, and is contested by others during interactions where it bears the effects of domination or repression (see Foucault, 1980d).

Although Foucault never detailed the workings of an educational institution, he did recognize it as a power structure. Clearly, then, he would have challenged the conventional perspective of how power circulates within an education system. People often assume power resides with the School Board

Director, who then offers it, in a vertical fashion, to a decision-maker situated below him/her on the educational hierarchy, perhaps a Learning Coordinator, who then passes this power down the ladder of responsibility to another decision-maker, say a teacher, who ultimately applies it in the classroom. If, as Foucault (1984b) argued, institutional power is put into effect through people as they work to carry out assigned responsibilities and fulfill stated job expectations, then educational power circulates in a much more diffuse fashion than convention would dictate. Rather than being passed down from the Director, power is exercised by and through employees at all levels who harness it by means of various strategies. In the secondary school context, those at the local level—principals, department heads, and teachers—exercise power through the strategies, procedures, and techniques they employ as they work to fulfill their job mandates. Teachers are particularly important in this respect because they come into direct contact with students more frequently than any other institutional member. When these interactions with students bear the effects of domination or repression students can and will contest this exercise of power.

Disciplinary Power

According to Foucault (1984d), discipline is a type of power consisting of calculated, minor and simple methods. In Foucault's words, disciplinary power refers to "a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, [and] targets" (p. 206). The chief function of such power is to "train" individuals as part of a means to a particular end (Foucault, 1984b, p. 188). For instance, teachers use disciplinary power to train students as they learn the sex education curriculum. Moreover, Foucault (1984e) asserted that institutional powers employ disciplinary tactics to restrain people's "precocious, active, and ever-present" sexuality (p. 310). He (1984e) claimed that these powers assume training and policing responsibilities by implementing an intervention, aimed at "regulat[ing] sex through useful and public discourse" (p. 307). They use a code of control, consisting of specified content and qualified speech, to communicate 'facts' about sexuality. By doing so, they fail to subject sexuality to a "plain and simple

silence” (Foucault, 1984e, p. 309). Sexuality, therefore, is not silenced but, more precisely, a subject of “many silences, and...[these silences] are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (Foucault, 1984e, p. 310). As educational powers strategically speak about sexuality, they decline to dialogue with students about certain topics. Nor do they allow students to name the topics for discussion. Students comply because, as Foucault (1984e) proposed, people have learned “where and when it [is] not possible to talk about such things... in which circumstances, among which speakers, and within which social relationships” (p. 301). When it comes to the teacher-student relationship, the silences about sexual health do not function as an absolute limit on discourse; rather, these silences operate as an element alongside what is said. In the context of the secondary school, then, teachers exercise discipline over students to control and constrain what is said, and not said, about sexuality.

Foucault (1984b) explained that the successful use of disciplinary power is based on three instruments. First, hierarchical observation. This refers to a collection of techniques that institutional powers enact to see clearly the effects of their practice. Prime among them is surveillance, the “physics of power” (Foucault, 1984b, p. 193), a technique used to order and control “human multiplicities” (Foucault, 1984d, p. 207). Although individuals enact surveillance, the surveillance network functions only by virtue of the network of power relations that train “vigorous bodies” (Foucault, 1984b, p. 190). Within an educational network of power relations, teachers ‘train’ students by employing the tactic of surveillance or supervision to homogenize a class of student multiplicities. Over time, students internalize the disciplinary code, resulting in a “panoptic modality of power” (Foucault, 1984d, p. 211). That is to say, even without the disciplinary power present, an unremitting supervisory gaze continues to scrutinize students. This residual effect impacts the students to such an extent that they comply with, and conform to, standards or norms upheld during ‘training sessions.’

Foucault’s (1984b) second instrument is normalizing judgment. Like surveillance, this disciplinary instrument not only homogenizes, but also

individualizes. Foucault clarified this apparent paradox by noting that normalization invites institutional powers “to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties, and to render the differences useful” (pp. 196-197). Teachers take part in these activities while evaluating differences among students against a norm, which is itself a tool used to impose homogeneity. By training students to learn the mandated curriculum—which one can construe as a collection of norms—they punish nonconformists and, in the process, compare, differentiate, hierarchize, homogenize, and exclude. In short, as Foucault asserted, institutional powers, such as teachers, normalize individuals.

Lastly, Foucault (1984b) identified the examination as a third disciplinary instrument. The exam combines observation and normalization. In Foucault’s words, an examination is “a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish; it establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (p. 197). Teachers commonly conduct examinations, treating them as a “constant exchanger of knowledge” (p. 198). By honouring this ritualized use of power, they watch over students to determine the degree to which they satisfy learning expectations or curricular norms.

Foucault (1984d) explained that all disciplinary tactics, though diverse in many respects, will fulfill three criteria (p. 207). First, a disciplinary tactic is linked with lowest possible cost. For instance, a teacher might avoid the ‘high cost’ practice of demonstrating the proper use of condoms on a model penis because he/she anticipates a negative outcome: specifically, that parents may feel uncomfortable with their children seeing and touching condoms and as such will condemn the exercise. So, in lieu of this exercise, the teacher may opt to use a strategy perceived to have ‘the lowest possible cost.’ For example, he/she may choose to distribute an innocuous worksheet outlining safer sex practices. Second, a disciplinary tactic bears maximum intensity and extends beyond the immediate time and space. In this respect, a teacher may dedicate more curricular time and attention to the safest form of sex, abstinence. In order to reinforce this view, he/she may show students a documentary detailing a person’s struggle with AIDS

and his/her imminent death. By presenting this documentary and, subsequently, reinforcing abstinence until marriage as the most effective way to prevent contracting AIDS, the teacher may believe that he/she is positively impacting students' lives both now and in the future. Third, a disciplinary tactic relates to an increase in both docility and utility. For instance, a teacher may assign a worksheet detailing the 'facts' of safer sexual practices rather than initiate discussion about the topic. This strategy calls for independent seatwork, and generates monotony as students 'fill in the blanks' with factual data. The worksheet, then, becomes the basis for a fact-based examination, a familiar instrument with which students will readily acquiesce. Given that the worksheet and evaluation satisfy curricular requirements, the teacher judges the worksheet useful and effective, and so files it away for future use. In this way, the disciplinary tactic ensures both docility among the students and a high degree of utility for the teacher.

Diverse disciplinary tactics (including those described above) make up what Foucault (1984f) termed a "bio-power" (p. 262), which centers on controlling and regulating sexuality so as to subjugate the body. Institutional powers, like those at a school, treat the body as a "machine" (p. 261), operating under the belief that "the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (Foucault, 1984a, p. 173). They employ disciplinary measures (maneuvers, tactics, and techniques, etc.) or micropowers (p. 174) to reach into the "very grain of individuals ...and insert...themselves into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 39). For instance, 'sex' is a crucial target that educational powers concentrate on as they lead ideological campaigns with the aim of raising standards of morality and responsibility (see Foucault, 1984f, p. 268); in this way, they endeavour to control and regulate not only individual bodies, but also the student-body. Clearly, then, bio-power is at work within schools as educational powers direct their disciplinary tactics and corrective efforts on the life of the body to ultimately achieve its subjugation.

Régime of Truth

As educational powers enact disciplines over students' bodies, they also treat sexual health education as a 'discipline,' that is to say, a disciplined body of knowledge. Here, 'discipline' takes on a meaning beyond a tactic of training. Foucault (1981) understood it as "a domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions *considered to be true* [emphasis added], a play of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments" (p. 59). In other words, a discipline like sexual health education controls and delimits discourse as institutional powers "push back a whole teratology of knowledge beyond its margins" or limits (p. 60). According to Foucault (1980c), every society has a régime which governs

the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as truth; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish truth and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; [and] the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as truth (p. 131).

This régime is constructed as authorized experts credit statements as truth or fact and, at the same time, discredit other equally valid statements (Mills, 2003). True statements are subsequently distinguished from false ones by a host of institutions, particularly "apparatuses of education," each of which employ strategies to affirm and produce the truth and, concomitantly, exclude and prohibit counter versions of events (Foucault, 1980c, p. 131). According to Foucault (1980d), "[w]e are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (p. 93). In the context of sexual health education, teachers comply with, and conform to a régime of truth in their relations with students, reinforcing and circulating 'true' statements about sexuality and, simultaneously, molding and modifying discourses or curricula for social appropriation (Foucault, 1981).

Foucault (1980d) stressed that power relations are established through the production, accumulation, and circulation of discourses of truth. These discourses represent "an effect of power" and "an instrument of power" (Foucault as cited in Mills, 2003, p. 54). A curriculum of sexual health education serves as an effect of power because decision-makers, including teachers, assume responsibility for its

construction and, in doing so, impose rules and regulations, delineating what is and is not off-limits. Truth, therefore, is ‘not’ discovered and accepted, but produced and transmitted. Additionally, a curriculum functions as an instrument of power because decision-makers expect students to perpetuate the truth falling within the curricular limits and deny additional truths lying beyond, rendering aspects of sexuality silent, taboo, and nonexistent. As Foucault (1980c) stated,

‘[t]ruth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. (p. 133)

This raises the question: how does one change a régime of truth? Foucault insisted that the answer to this question lies in the production of truth at the local level, that is, *within* systems of power and, in turn, among their respective networks of power relations which are in constant tension. Hence, it is within the system of power itself—a secondary school—that discourses of truth concerning sexuality, are not only constructed, but also changed.

Marginalized Voices and Subjugated Knowledges

Although Foucault (1980c) acknowledged that the effects of power are repressive, he insisted that they are also productive. Foucault challenged the “narrow, skeletal conception” (p. 119) that power is solely a law or force of prohibition. To mount his argument, he (1980b) concentrated on the relationship between power and knowledge, and termed this inextricable link, power/knowledge. In his words, “[t]he exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, [and] it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (p. 52). Hence, Foucault asserted that power produces knowledge; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; and that there is neither a power relation without a field of knowledge nor knowledge without a power relation. Given these central arguments, it follows that where there are power relations (like a school) between groups of people (like

teachers and students) there will be knowledge production. Foucault argued that the process of producing knowledge excludes valid forms of knowledge, maintains the status quo, and affirms current power relations (Mills, 2003). Thus, he contended it is critical to counter discourses of truth that are constructed and circulated by authorized experts. On this basis, countering a curriculum of sexual health education constructed and circulated by educational decision-makers is also critical.

Who is well positioned to take on this challenge? Foucault called attention to the oppressed and marginalized, in particular to their claim or struggle to exercise power, and thereby alter the status quo (see Mills, 2003). Indeed, he encouraged a marginalized group, specifically prisoners, to counter what he termed the intolerable discourse by speaking for themselves. As a member of *the Group d'Information sur Les Prisons* (GIP), Foucault believed that prisoners, although condemned to confinement, are the very experts whose knowledges about prison-life warrant attention, especially when it comes to understanding

what prisons are: who goes there, and how and why they go; what happens there; what the existence of prisoners is like, and also the existence of those providing surveillance; what the buildings, food and hygiene are like; how the inside rules, medical supervision and workshops function; how one gets out and what it is like in our society to be someone who does get out (as cited in Eribon, 1991, p. 225).

In the same sense that prisoners can struggle for changes to their confinement, students can struggle for changes to their education, specifically their sex education. Students can cross the curricular limits, identify truths and, subsequently, incite a repositioning of the disciplinary limits.

As far as Foucault (1980d) was concerned, crossing the limits is made possible through local criticism, which brings about an “*insurrection of subjugated knowledges* [original emphasis]” (p. 81). Power structures grant legitimacy to knowledges that are constructed by educational powers or authorized experts. Those who abide by these knowledges and obey their rules are, as Foucault (1981) put it, ‘in the true’ (p. 61). Foucault explained that people who cross the disciplinary limits, find themselves “in the space of a wild

exteriority:” no longer ‘in the truth,’ they are nevertheless now capable of speaking truths (p. 61). Subjugated knowledges encapsulate historical content and disqualified knowledge. While the former refers to that which “allows us to rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle...” masked by “systematizing thought,” the latter denotes “blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of...systematizing theory” (Foucault, 1980d, p. 82). Subjugated knowledges are “altogether different [from authorized knowledges], namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate...or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy” (p. 82). Foucault, in discussing the prison system, observed that within a penitentiary, low-ranking, unqualified, and disqualified knowledges come from the marginalized voices of prisoners; analogously, within an educational power structure, such knowledges come from the marginalized voices of students (Jardine, 2005). Formed out of past schooling experiences, students’ subjugated knowledges can emerge in the present and cause ‘ruptural effects’ so curricular impact can be realized in the future.

Resistance

Foucault argued, “where there is power there is resistance” (as cited in Mills, 2003, p. 40); therefore, it makes sense that resistance can be found alongside power in the school setting. The teacher-student power relation, then, is not forever fixed. One may assume that while teachers consistently stipulate rules and transmit authorized knowledge, students abide by these rules and receive such knowledge. Such is not the case. Even though teachers enact disciplinary power over students and impose upon them a subordinate position (Jardine, 2005), the teacher-student power relation is “constantly in tension, in activity...[in] perpetual battle” (Foucault, 1984a, p. 174). Students take part in this battle; therefore they must be ‘free,’ for as Foucault (1994a) argued, freedom must exist for a person to exert power and battle against the effects of institutional powers. Students, as free subjects, then, can exercise power to resist the effects of teachers’ disciplinary tactics and cross the disciplinary limits of sexual health education. Admittedly,

students are among those who have “an extremely limited margin of freedom” (Foucault, 1994a, p. 292); nevertheless, they can exercise power because, as Foucault (1984a) stated, “it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure on them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them” (p. 174). Hence, despite the popular belief that students are powerless, they are indeed free to comport themselves in resistant ways during localized “anti-authority struggles” (Foucault, 1994c, p. 329)

What might characterize these struggles in a particular school? According to Foucault (1994c), anti-authority struggles target the effects of power. Thus, because teachers’ disciplinary power affects students’ bodies, students may re-exert control over their bodies by overthrowing the “micropowers” (Foucault, 1984a, p. 174) and critiquing the teachers. It makes sense that students would concentrate their struggles on the teachers as opposed to other educational decision-makers because, as Foucault (1994c) noted, such struggles are against “immediate” (p. 330) relations of power or instances of power closest to the people mounting the critique. Additionally, Foucault (1994c) explained that anti-authority struggles “underline everything that makes individuals truly individual” (p. 330). This may be the case when students assert their right to be different by expressing needs that differ from those delineated within the homogenizing curriculum. Foucault (1994c) also noted that people participating in an anti-authority struggle might reject the way power is associated with knowledge, competence, and qualification. Thus, students may convey the message that although they are unqualified, they are competent to construct knowledge pertaining to their education. Hence, even though students are subjects upon whom power exerts its effects, they can participate in anti-authority struggles and, in the process give voice to their marginalized positions and subjugated knowledges.

Students struggling against educational powers can challenge the circulated discourse/curriculum by defying expectations, voicing different views, and diverging from conventions. A person who has learned not to discuss sexuality because it has been “condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and

silence,” can then choose to speak of it as a deliberate act of defiance or resistance (Foucault, 1984g, p. 295). According to Foucault, such a person acquires the speaker’s benefits because he/she “places himself [*sic*] to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; [and] he somehow anticipates the coming freedom” (p. 295). A student who draws attention, through deliberate acts of speech, to the silences hovering around sexuality, benefits from the cachet of the rebel who takes on a cause and so wins the support of those marginalized and subjugated. Thus, to speak out against educational powers that control and constrain what is said and unsaid, is

to utter truths and promise bliss; to link together enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures; to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervor of knowledge, the determination to change the laws, and the longing for the garden of earthly delights (Foucault, 1984g, pp. 295-296).

Hence, by contravening prohibitions, disregarding censorships, and challenging denunciations, students cross the disciplinary limits that educational powers defend.

How are anti-authority struggles received by the powers themselves? Those who listen to students’ voices and consider their subjugated knowledges avail themselves of “a particular, local, and regional knowledge, a differential knowledge” (Foucault, 1980d, p. 82). However, educational powers that become familiar with students’ knowledges, are typically undermined by the educational network which operates as a whole to treat students as targets of disciplinary power (Jardine, 2005). Thus, efforts at trying to understand students’ views and visions are generally banned, excluded, and/or repressed (Jardine, 2005), prompting the question: What prevents or, possibly, prohibits educational powers from dialoguing with students to listen to their knowledges? Since giving attention and/or credibility to subjugated knowledges is seen as akin to supporting disruption and disorder (Foucault, 1980d), educational decision-makers are likely to enact disciplinary power over students, which serves “the precise role of introducing insuperable asymmetries and excluding reciprocities” (Foucault, 1984d, p. 212). Hence, because they are accustomed to exercising power to control and constrain discourse (see Jardine, 2005), educational powers are likely

unwilling to listen to students' knowledges. In their refusal, they reinforce the existing disciplinary limits of sexual health education.

Even when teachers resist students' anti-authority struggles, a degree of change occurs because the teacher-student power relation weakens and vacillates for a short period of time. Foucault (1980a) argued that in the face of defiance, "power can retreat here, re-organise its forces, [and] invest itself elsewhere and so the battle continues" (p. 56). By enacting disciplinary measures to neutralize the effects of "counterpowers" (Foucault, 1984d, p. 209), institutional powers like teachers reinstate order to restore the disciplinary limits. Despite this continued battle, one must acknowledge that students are free to exercise power to resist the effects of power and, in the process, shift, even infinitesimally, the disciplinary limits of sexual health education by voicing their subjugated knowledges. On this basis, I mobilized a group at a secondary school to listen to students' voices and honour their knowledges when it came to the teaching and learning of sexual health. Whether the teachers and other authorized experts would resist this anti-authority struggle remained to be seen.

CHAPTER FOUR

Understanding Unauthorized Experts and Their Expressed Sexual Health Needs

In this chapter, I begin by reviewing the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) to underscore that Canada pledged to recognize young people as subjects who have an array of rights including the right to health. However, when sexual health and, in turn, sexual health education, are at issue division and discord arise. Some assert that youth must be protected from premature exposure to sex education, while others avow that youth are sexual beings with rights to sexual health and sex education. I position myself in the latter camp.

After establishing that Canada has pledged to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights enshrined in the *Convention*, I focus on the ways decision-makers have amended policies and practices to engage Canadian youth in sex education that addresses their sexual health needs. I turn first to the Federal Government's *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* and, then, to Ontario's *Health and Physical Education* curriculum. While the *Guidelines* suggest that teachers learn of students' expressed sexual health needs, the health curriculum proposes learning outcomes that can be construed as addressing normative sexual health needs. Some teachers believe that satisfying sexual health needs, whether they are normative or expressed, entails protecting students from the risks associated with sexual behaviour. I contend that this preoccupation arises from a protective discourse, which is grounded in the long-standing storm and stress model of adolescence: that is to say, youth are irrational, immature, and incompetent. Hence, they cannot be granted a say in their sexual health education. I assert that this depiction serves only to justify the practice of silencing students and denying them a space to express their perspectives and sexual health needs.

Next, I address what constitutes 'effective' sex education. I underscore the long-standing debate about sexuality and schooling by presenting two conflicting ideological positions and describing how each undergirds a distinct approach to programming: a restrictive ideology, which grounds abstinence-focused programs,

and a permissive ideology, which supports comprehensive sex education programs. I propose that these program approaches are classified ‘effective’ if they impact youth’s sexual behaviour. Many teachers employ a particular theory/model with the aim of impacting sexual behaviour. While I do not discount the importance of behaviourally effective programming, I do emphasize that it is important to understand who classifies a program as effective and what type of needs such a program satisfies. On this basis, I shift focus from authorized experts and the normative needs they emphasize to unauthorized experts and their expressed needs. In doing so, I ask: What do unauthorized experts consider ‘effective’ sexual health education? And, what are their expressed needs when it comes to sexual health education?

To address these concerns, I focus on youth’s “thick desire” (Fine & McClelland, 2006, p. 300) to contribute to the political enterprise of sexual health education by expressing their views and visions in dialogue with educational decision-makers. Despite this desire, youth are rarely invited to engage in this type of dialogue. Decision-makers tend not to create spaces in which youth feel free to identify problems and propose solutions. Many regard students as passive objects or recipients, instead of agents or contributors to their sex education, and, consequently, claim that dialogue is pointless. I oppose this portrayal of youth and argue that sex education must be co-constructed by teachers and students using an empowerment model that democratizes the way students experience sex education. I draw the chapter to a close by making the case that teachers must recognize students as experts and listen to their perspectives when it comes to changing educational policies and practices.

‘Subjects’ with Rights: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously approved *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989), which recognizes young people as bearers of human rights, making it unjust to treat them as objects. The *Convention* stands as a landmark, legally-binding treaty addressing, first, the status of children as persons with inherent human rights; and second, the

obligation of parents, adults, and state authorities (this would include educational decision-makers) to fulfill duties and responsibilities for ensuring that children's rights are fulfilled (Howe, 2007). Strictly speaking, the *Convention* applies the word 'children' to refer to human beings under the age of 12, and the term 'young people' to identify those between the age of 12 and 17 (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). In order to understand the scope of the *Convention's* 41 substantive articles covering all sorts of human rights including economic, social, and cultural as well as civil and political, Hammarberg (1990) highlighted the following three Ps:

Provision—the right to get one's basic needs fulfilled—for example, the rights to food, health care, education, recreation and play.

Protection—the right to be shielded from harmful acts or practices—for example, to be protected from commercial or sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or engagement in warfare.

Participation—the right to be heard on decisions affecting one's own life. (p. 100)

Although the framers of the *Convention* sought to establish universal standards of well-being, they also realized that the *Convention* would only gain international acceptance if its wording respected national and cultural variations (O'Neill & Zinga, 2008). When that was achieved, delegates from 191 countries expeditiously signed and ratified the document (Verhellen, 1999). According to Howe, the act of signing the *Convention* symbolized a country's official commitment, whereas, the act of ratifying the *Convention* indicated a country's actual commitment: that is, when a country executes the all-important process of ratification, it pledges to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights enshrined in the *Convention* by means of concrete measures, be they in the form of policies and/or practices (Howe, 2007). Canada ratified the Convention in 1991; the United States, however, has yet to do so. Hence, Canada is one of many countries that has pledged its commitment in taking children's rights seriously (Covell & Howe, 2001).

Youth's Right to Sexual Health Education

In considering the implications of Canada's ratification of the *Convention*, one must first address what the *Convention* means when it refers to 'health'. The

Convention stipulates that authorities must uphold their responsibilities for providing provisions to children, enabling them to exercise “the right...to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health” (UN, 1989, Article 24). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1998), the directing and coordinating body for health within the United Nations, “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p. 1). As Green and Kreuter (1999) observed, this definition goes beyond eliminating problems to capturing an “improved quality of life, efficient functioning, the capacity to perform at more productive and satisfying levels, and the opportunity to live out one’s lifespan with vigor and stamina” (p. 26). The WHO declared that health is a fundamental human right and, concomitantly, that ‘all people’ deserve access to resources for health. Clearly, the phrase ‘all people’ encompasses young people; hence, in the context of the *Convention*, young people (ages 12 to 17) have the fundamental right to health.

If young people have the right to health, surely it follows that they have the right to ‘sexual health;’ but what exactly is ‘sexual health’? Clearly, to be sexually healthy, a people must avoid infection and disease, and in the case of young people, unintended pregnancy (see Aggleton & Campbell, 2000). While these negative/unwanted outcomes may be preconditions for attaining sexual health, they do not define sexual health in its entirety. Health advocates acknowledge the difficulty inherent in advancing a single definition (Edwards & Coleman, 2004; Sandfort & Ehrhardt, 2004; PHAC, 2008); nevertheless, the WHO (2002), expanding upon its 1998 definition, defined sexual health as

a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being related to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the *possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences* [emphasis added], free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the *sexual rights of all persons* [emphasis added] must be respected, protected and fulfilled (p. 5).

Although communities may apply alternative conceptions of sexual health in order to reflect local concerns, the WHO definition has remained influential

because it makes key conceptual distinctions (Sandfort & Ehrhardt, 2004; Edwards & Coleman, 2004). For instance, it defines sexual health within a social framework and in an affirmative fashion (Sandfort & Ehrhardt, 2004). Despite these advantages, the phrase ‘all persons’ may be problematic. While intuitively one understands this reference to include young people, the implication that this specific group has the sexual right to the ‘possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences’ has been a point of contention. Some believe that young people must be protected from imminent dangers (see Archard, 2004; Pilcher, 1997), and as such argue that young people must be guarded from premature exposure to sexuality, including dialogue of its pleasurable aspects. Such dialogue might, as the argument goes, titillate youth and promote sexual experimentation resulting in first-hand experiences of sexual pleasures while, at the same time, exposure to risks. Hence, some people are inclined to interpret the WHO position on sexual health and its advocacy for sexual rights as germane only to adults.

Many health advocates affirm, however, that young people are sexual beings who have rights to sexual health, specifically sexual health education (Dixon-Mueller, Germain, Fredrick, & Bourne, 2009; Levesque, 2000). What might sexual health rights encompass? The WHO has explicitly noted that

[s]exual rights embrace human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus statements. They include the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to:

- the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services;
- *seek, receive and impart information related to sexuality;*
- *sexuality education;*
- respect for bodily integrity;
- choose their partner;
- decide to be sexually active or not;
- consensual sexual relations;
- consensual marriage;
- decide whether or not, and when, to have children; and
- pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life.

The responsible exercise of human rights requires that *all persons respect the rights of others* [emphasis added] (as cited in PHAC, 2008, p. 6).

Although the WHO is internationally respected as an authority in health initiatives, and many of its initiatives have been widely supported, it lacks legal jurisdiction to protect young peoples' right to sexual health or, specifically, sexual health education. The *Convention*, in contrast, is legally binding once a country ratifies it and pledges to operate in accordance with its articles.

The articles of the *Convention*, however, are open to interpretation, which can be problematic. The *Convention's* articles, notably, do not explicitly reference sexual health or sexual health education. Still, the *Convention* does stipulate that young people have the right “to seek, receive, and impart information of all kinds” (UN, 1989, Article 13), and “to an education” (Article 28 and 29). To assist policy-makers (from the ratifying countries) in interpreting the various articles, the framers of the *Convention* provided guidance in the form of key principles (Howe, 2001). One such principle states, “the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration” (UN, 1989, Article 3). And yet, according to Aggleton and Campbell (2000), few countries plan sexual health education within a human rights framework focused on young people's best interests. This state of affairs, Aggleton and Campbell reported, raises questions about the extent to which the interests and rights of youth are considered in existing policies and practices. Even though there are prevailing anxieties around framing sexual health education in accordance with the *Convention*, many still assert that doing so enables youth to exercise their basic fundamental right to pursue sexual health (Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Kennedy & Covell, 2009; van Vliet & Raby, 2008).

If policy-makers are dubious about the *Convention* (UN, 1989) protecting young peoples' right to sexual health education, they have only to review the *General Comments* published by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003a, 2003b). Just as the framers of the *Convention* provided general principles to aid policy-makers in interpreting the articles, the Committee addressed possible confusion surrounding the legalese of the *Convention* by issuing *General Comments* to guide policy-makers in their interpretation and implementation of the *Convention's* articles. The Committee confirmed that education systems play a critical role in providing young people with information

about sexual health (2003a). Indeed, it proposed that educational decision-makers must “contribute to an increased awareness and better understanding of this pandemic [that is, HIV/AIDS] and prevent negative attitudes towards victims of HIV/AIDS” (2003b, p. 6). Although the Committee (2003a) emphasized educating young people about the negative outcome of HIV/AIDS, it also underscored respecting, protecting, and fulfilling their right to access any information that is not censored, withheld, or misrepresented. In addition, by citing articles from the *Convention* related to education (UN, 1989, Article 28 and 29), the Committee called for student-relevant curricula (2003b). Rather than leave educational decision-makers wondering what is relevant and what is irrelevant, the Committee suggested that young people assume a participatory role in their own education (see also Center for Reproductive Rights, 2008). Hence, in its interpretation of the *Convention*, the Committee supported young people’s right to education concerning HIV/AIDS, STIs, and sexuality.

The Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education

It appears as though Canada has made good its intentions to support the aims of the *Convention* by amending domestic policies related to sexual health education. Although the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC, 2008) does not explicitly cite the *Convention* as informing its position on sex education, it does advise decision-makers to respect youth’s sexual rights and recognize their diverse needs when it comes to sexual health education. Given its status as a federal body, one might assume that it is within PHAC’s jurisdiction to mandate a sex education curriculum for use in all provinces and territories; however, such is not the case. This, though, has not prevented PHAC from publishing a document titled, *The Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* (2008) (henceforth, referred to as *Guidelines*). The *Guidelines* describe sexual health education by underscoring the following three points:

[1] Sexual health education is the process of equipping individuals...with information, motivation and behavioural skills needed to enhance sexual health and avoid negative sexual health outcomes.

[2] Sexual health education is a broadly based community-supported process that requires the full participation of educational institutions in our society. It involves an individual's personal, family, religious, social and cultural values in understanding and making decisions about sexual behaviour and implementing those decisions.

[3] Effective sexual health education maintains an open and nondiscriminatory *dialogue* that respects individual beliefs. It is sensitive to *the diverse needs of individuals* [emphasis added] irrespective of their age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, physical/cognitive abilities and religious background. (PHAC, 2008, p. 5)

Despite the stated importance of responding to diverse needs, the *Guidelines* do not elaborate and delineate such needs in any systematic manner. If teachers were to consult this document hoping to find a list of youth's diverse sexual health needs, prescribed content targeting these needs, and/or stipulated best practices to satisfy them, they would be disappointed. Although the *Guidelines* seek to assist teachers, its abbreviated content demonstrates that public policy documents cannot adequately prescribe content or pedagogical practices that will satisfy the diverse sexual health needs of Canadian youth. Moreover, the *Guidelines* seem to suggest that it is unrealistic to have such expectations. Yet, how are teachers to identify these diverse needs, not to mention satisfy such needs without some general guidance? PHAC suggests that teachers dialogue with students to learn about their diverse needs, and thereafter, engage them in relevant sexual health education.

The *Guidelines* function to provide teachers with a framework for planning a relevant sex education program. This framework is comprised of the following five guiding principles: (1) accessibility, (2) comprehensiveness, (3) effectiveness of educational approaches and methods; (4) training and administrative support; and (5) planning, evaluation, and updating and social development. For present purposes, the last principle looms large. It states:

Effective sexual health education programs are based on a broad assessment and understanding of individual, community, and social needs. This process involves *collaboration with persons for whom the programs are intended to be delivered* [emphasis added].

The content, delivery, and methodology of effective sexual health education programs emerge from the assessment of community needs supported by evidence that draws upon *input from community members, educators and researchers* [emphasis added] in a variety of disciplines. (PHAC, 2008, p. 32)

These statements invite teachers to envision curriculum development as a collaborative process and to recognize and respect young people as participants who have something to contribute. In other words, teachers can go beyond what community members, educators, and researchers say youth need to what youth themselves say about their sexual health education.

While the *Guidelines* advocate that students contribute to the planning of sex education, it takes no clear position on students' participation in evaluating their sex education. The *Guidelines* propose that teachers take heed of the following:

Effective sexual health education programs are evaluated based upon their stated objectives and not upon *opinions* [emphasis added] about what these programs should accomplish. (PHAC, 2008, p. 32)

Given this recommendation, teachers might deduce that those responsible for evaluating the program are those who best understand the stated objectives. Traditionally, teachers have established/interpreted objectives *prior to instruction*, so it follows that they would see themselves as the best candidates for evaluating those objectives. Unfortunately, in this context teachers can exercise power over students to advance and evaluate what they believe students need when it comes to sexual health education. Furthermore, even though teachers may have encouraged 'all' students to participate in setting objectives during the planning phase of the program, some youth may have been reluctant at that time to share their perspectives and their sexual health needs. Indeed, it may only be possible for some students to formulate their perspectives as the program unfolds. Are these students not entitled to voice their views, to evaluate their sex education based on what they believe the program should have accomplished? The *Guidelines* fail to take such a scenario into account. Given the precise wording of

the document, these students would be only offering ‘opinions’ which would seemingly deny them the opportunity to evaluate their sex education.

Does this mean that youth’s ‘opinions’ about, or perspectives of, sexual health education are meaningless? Rather than address this question, the

Guidelines recommend that

[i]ndividuals who receive effective sexual health education are given regular opportunities to assess the usefulness and relevance of such programs. Evaluation tools should be used to detect *outcomes that might be missed* [emphasis added] by focusing on specific, pre-defined outcomes. (PHAC, 2008, p. 32)

This seems contradictory: the recommendation portrays students as passive recipients of a sex education program, yet it suggests that they can assume an active role in assessing its usefulness and relevance. Could students not reflect on their past sex education, taking into account their sexual health needs, to identify not only those outcomes that were pre-defined and unsatisfied, but also those that were never identified during the program planning phase and, most likely, never satisfied during the course of the program? The *Guidelines* do not seem to advocate for such an approach. Instead, the document explains that teachers ought to construct and, then, distribute a tool focused on the outcomes that structured the sex education program in the first place. Yet how are students to contribute to identifying ‘missing outcomes’ if the evaluation tool they are asked to complete is structured around pre-defined outcomes? The *Guidelines* seem to support the following position: youth can only evaluate their sex education as long as they focus on outcomes that decision-makers prescribe as useful and relevant for youth—other outcomes, particularly those that students identify, reflect simply opinions, which are extraneous, if not irrelevant, when it comes to evaluating and then revamping sex education.

The Ontario Health and Physical Education Mandated Curriculum

Since no overriding federal body governs education in Canada, teachers cannot regard PHAC's *Guidelines* as a mandated curriculum; rather, they must rely on their provincial or territorial governments for official curricular documents. As with all subject matter, sexual health education comes under the purview of the ten provincial and three territorial governments. Consequently, one finds throughout the country a variety of sexual health education curricula. In each province and territory, policy-makers outline health education curricula to reflect regional needs, culture, and history. Regional distinctions mean, for example, that decision-makers in British Columbia consult a different curriculum than decision-makers in Newfoundland. Differences notwithstanding, all provinces and territories provide young people with some form of health education containing a sexual health component (Mangiardi & Doherty, 2007). Thus, because no single mandated curriculum organizes what all Canadian youth study in the name of sexual health education, one must focus on a particular province/territory and, thereafter, consult the corresponding curricular documents. I chose to focus on the province of Ontario. Hence, in order to learn what decision-makers stipulate that students need regarding their sexual health education, I examined the published curriculum for Ontario's Health and Physical Education program.

The Ontario Ministry of Education mandates a series of courses within the Health and Physical Education curriculum (Government of Ontario, 1999, 2000); some of these courses contain learning outcomes related to sexual health. Students must successfully complete at least one credit in Health and Physical Education at some point between Grades 9 and 12 to meet the requirements for a Secondary School Diploma. They may earn this credit by enrolling in any one of seven possible courses, each outlined by the Ministry of Education and presented to teachers as a list of learning outcomes. One course is offered in Grade 9, one in Grade 10, two in Grade 11, and three in Grade 12 (see Table 1). Only the courses from Grades 9 to 12 titled Healthy Active Living Education have a sexual health component (see Appendix A); consequently, of the seven Health and Physical Education courses, four integrate learning outcomes related to sexual health. Even

though the Ministry does not mandate, or even recommend, that students enroll in one course over the others, teachers suggest that students entering secondary school register in Grade 9 Healthy Active Living Education (personal communication, Mangiardi, 2004, p. 36). This may be the case because teachers believe that students must learn about sexual health in Grade 9 before advancing to senior grades. For those students who do enroll in any of Health Active Living Education courses, their parent(s) has the right to remove them from the sex education unit. Additionally, students eighteen years of age or older may choose to exercise “the right to withdraw” from this unit on the basis of religious beliefs (Government of Ontario, 1999, p. 5). Hence, it is possible that youth will graduate from secondary school without ever having met the Ministerial learning outcomes for sexual health education.

Table 1

Courses in Health and Physical Education, Grades 9 to 12

Grade	Course Name	Course Type	Prerequisite
9	Healthy Active Living Education	Open	None
10	Healthy Active Living Education	Open	None
11	Healthy Active Living Education	Open	None
11	Health for Life	Open	None
12	Healthy Active Living Education	Open	None
12	Exercise Science	University	Any Grade 11 university or university/college preparation course in science, or any Grade 11 or 12 open course in health and physical education
12	Recreation and Fitness Leadership	College	Any Grade 11 or 12 open course in health and physical education

(Government of Ontario, 2000, p. 5)

Although teachers must structure their practice in accordance with the Ministerial learning outcomes for sex education, they are left wondering how to conceptualize the construct ‘sexual health.’ The four Healthy Active Living Education courses are structured to include four strands: Physical Activity, Active Living, Healthy Living, and Living Skills. The Healthy Living strand is organized with two specific expectations, “Healthy Growth and Sexuality” and “Personal Safety and Injury Prevention” (Government of Ontario, 1999, p. 6). Subsumed under each of these expectations are a series of learning outcomes (reproduced in Appendix A). Teachers who consult these outcomes for an explicit definition of sexual health are left speculating why the Ministry mandates sexual health education without defining the subject itself. While the Ministry offers no reason for this absence, the *Guidelines* (PHAC, 2008) explain that it is impossible for anyone to conceptualize a single, universal meaning that would adequately capture the diversity of “values and norms about sexuality and health [that] come from a variety of sources including social and religious viewpoints, science, medicine and individual experience” (PHAC, 2008, p. 7). The *Guidelines* also clarify that teachers encounter youth, all of whom have valid understandings of sexual health; consequently, these teachers must negotiate discussions with sensitivity towards students’ individually-constructed and ideologically-informed meanings (PHAC, 2008). Clearly, while the Ministry policy-makers are justified in abstaining from defining the construct ‘sexual health,’ they are remiss in *not* stating that teachers must, as the *Guidelines* advise, respect students’ diverse interpretations.

Additionally, the Ministry policy-makers mandate sexual health outcomes, which are ultimately subject to divergent interpretations (see Appendix A). For instance, within Grade 9 Healthy Active Living Education, under the specific expectation Healthy Growth and Sexuality, teachers find the following outcome: “[b]y the end of this course, students will describe the factors that lead to responsible sexual relationships” (Government of Ontario, 1999, p. 10). Teachers might ask: what actually constitutes a ‘responsible sexual relationship’? Many are likely to find this curricular ambiguity frustrating. In the end, they may construct

sex education without a thorough understanding of what exactly the Ministry entrusts them to teach. While the Ministry documents are not as definitive as some teachers might wish, they state that the curricular strands do change between grade levels to account for the “evolving needs of students” (p. 3). Clearly, the Ministry acknowledges that students’ needs change. Perhaps, then, it takes up sexual health education as a set of nebulous outcomes so that teachers have the leeway to interpret them in tandem with the ‘evolving’ needs of a local group of students. Hence, it would seem that the Ministry indirectly invites teachers to interpret the outcomes while constructing a sex education program that addresses the needs of students within a health class.

A Protective Discourse

Some teachers believe that addressing students’ needs entails protecting youth from sexual dangers; such thinking is grounded in a protective discourse influenced by a long-standing focus on human development. In 1904, G. Stanley Hall (1844-1924) published an influential two-volume book, *Adolescence: Its Psychology, and Its Relations to Anthropology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*, in which he coined the phrase ‘storm and stress’ to refer to adolescence as a stage triggered by ranging hormones and marked by turmoil and trauma. Many have credited Hall as the first to identify adolescence as a worthy area of study (Dubas, Miller, & Petersen, 2003; Wyn & White, 1997); indeed, Lesko (1996) dubbed him the “father of adolescence” (p. 144). Hall called attention to the biological processes involved in puberty, particularly the abrupt nature of maturational forces and hormonal upheavals, and linked these to an expressed array of oscillating tendencies (see Muuss, 1996). For instance, he described youth’s behaviours as vacillating between extremes along various continuums—energy and lethargy, gaiety and gloom, conceit and bashfulness, and narcissism and self-doubt (Dubas, Miller, & Petersen, 2003; Muuss, 1996). This storm and stress model claims universality; that is, all ‘normal’ young people have the status of would-be adults as they experience the pubertal process of becoming (Oakley, 1994) and arriving at the complete state of ‘normal’ adulthood (Oakley,

1994; Wyn & White, 1997). Even though the storm and stress model of adolescence originated in the early twentieth-century, it continues to impact policy and practice within the educational context today (Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Griffin, 2004; Stevens et al., 2007).

The term ‘adolescence’, however, is highly controversial. Wyn and White (1997) asserted

[t]he popularity of the term ‘adolescent’ is perpetuated not by young people themselves and not by those who take serious account of their perspectives and experiences. The use of the term ‘adolescent’ is a signal that the young people being referred to are being objectified, categorized, and judged. (p. 56)

Those who think of adolescence as a developmental stage beset with natural trials and tribulations disregard the degree to which the social world constructs adolescence as a problematic stage of life (e.g. Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Lesko, 2001; Stevens et al., 2007). I align myself with both Levine (2002) and Lesko (1996, 2001) who stressed that the social world is a critical factor that one would be remiss to disregard. For Levine (2002), what is natural/normal has little to do with biology and more to do with “what most people do or what some people consider healthy, moral, regular, or natural, as opposed to sick, sinful, weird, or unnatural” (p. 48); because the parameters of natural/normal are in flux, no solitary meaning can ever be firmly established. Similarly, Lesko (1996) critiqued or, as she termed it “denaturalize” (p. 140), biologically-based ‘real truths’ that affirm the “natural adolescent” (2001, p. 5). She (1996) suggested that this so-called natural adolescent is socially-constructed as “problematic, out of control, and concomitantly, needing control by others” (p. 143). I contend that a term such as ‘adolescence,’ grounded as it is in biological determinism, has no place in a discussion of youth and sexual health education. Instead of the word ‘adolescents’, therefore, I employ the terms ‘young people’ and ‘youth.’

Unfortunately, many teachers rely heavily upon developmental understandings in their planning of a sex education program. They believe youth are not-of-age to identify their sexual health needs and as such deny them the space wherein they could express their perspectives. Wyn and White (1997)

explained that people commonly accept that a person's age refers to a biological reality. By sharing mutual understandings of life stages, these people establish a consensual construction that frames aging largely in biological terms. However, arriving at consensus about aging does not necessarily mean that this understanding reflects reality. One has only to refer to Guba and Lincoln (1989) who asserted that "[c]onsensus does not imply a greater degree of reality for whatever is agreed upon;" instead, consensus "simply means that those in agreement have come to share a construction that has reality for them" (p. 9). Decision-makers who agree that youth's age points to their inability to have a say in their education, succeed in perpetuating what Lesko (2001) called the "epidemic of signification" (p. 4): when an age signifier corresponds to common significations of a specific stage of development. For example, even before a teacher meets a class of 16-year-old girls, he/she might surmise that these young women are emotional, unpredictable, impressionable, moody and, even, possibly, boy-crazy. These inferences are drawn from using age 16 as a reference point and, then, considering characteristics or signs considered natural/normal teen(age) development (Wyn & White, 1997). Teachers who resort to signification run the risk of judging youth not-yet-of-age, that is, too developmentally immature to contribute substantively to their education. On the basis that youth are too young to have a say, some teachers unilaterally articulate standards of behaviour, impose procedural controls, and determine curricular content. In doing so, they strip youth of their subjectivities, denying them a space to act as sexual agents and voice their sexual health needs (Allen, 2007a; Fine, 1988).

As these teachers silence youth's voices, they perpetuate a protective discourse, which stresses that, as youth prepare to enter adulthood, they need safeguarding from problems or, more precisely, sexual dangers (Allen, 2007a; Stevens et al., 2007; Wyn & White, 1997). While Oakley (1994) criticized people for being preoccupied with youth's futures, Fine and McClelland (2006) underscored that teachers responsible for sex education are consumed with youth's present reality. As they noted, sexual health education is the "*only* [original emphasis] academic content area taught as if the knowledge gained in

the classroom is meant to exclusively serve the young person's present situation" (p. 328). Thus, instead of treating sex education as any other subject, whereby the knowledge and skills learned in the present are critical for the future, teachers structure sex education with a focus on the here-and-now. If these teachers conceive of youth's present reality by drawing upon a deficit-oriented perspective, they are likely to conceive of youth as lacking the capacities critical for negotiating the "risky business" associated with sexual activity (Allen, 2007a, p. 225): that is to say, they are apt to regard youth as a vulnerable group in need of protection (Coleman, Kearns, & Collins, 2010). As a result, these teachers are likely to structure sex education to reflect their own concerns, worries, and wishes (Hirst, 2004; Allen, 2007b). Despite their good intentions to protect youth from sexual dangers, these teachers ultimately 'deliver' a sex education that is highly problematic. Bay-Cheng (2003) identified three objections: (1) a preoccupation with the negative consequences associated with youth sexual activity to the exclusion of any positive aspects; (2) a perpetuation of prescriptive norms that are narrow and exclusionary; and (3) a propagation of sexist, racist, and classist notions of sexuality. Despite these valid objections, teachers believe that protecting students from behaviors deleterious to their health and, ultimately, detrimental to their futures is part and parcel of 'effective' sex education.

Sexual Health Education: The Ideological Battleground

As teachers construct 'effective' sexual health education, they may take a stand within a pervasive and passionate debate about sexuality and schooling. Over the years, the debate about sex education has shifted from whether it should be taught to the kind of sex education that must be taught (Pruitt, 2007). Is there one particular kind of sex education that is right for youth, while all others are downright wrong? In addressing this question, some decision-makers defend their ground in what Rubin (1999) called the "charmed circle" (p. 153). They perpetuate dominant western notions of what is 'right,' 'good,' 'normal,' and 'natural;' Rubin described the territory within the circle in terms of heterosexuality, marriage, monogamy, and procreation. Other decision-makers

stake their position in the “outer limits” (p. 153) of the circle. Rubin explained that the territory beyond the limits is whatever western society labels as ‘wrong,’ ‘bad,’ ‘abnormal,’ or ‘unnatural.’ She described this infinite space in terms of homosexuality, promiscuity, and non-procreative sex. To use another prevalent metaphor, the inside and outside positions of the charmed circle are akin to a battlefield. Indeed, McKay (1997) asserted that this battle has been waged on a field of conflicting sexual ideologies, with each side supporting a type of sex education (see also Elia, 2000; McKay, 1999; Irvine, 2002).

Restrictive Ideology and Abstinence Sexual Health Education

According to McKay (1997, 1999), on one side of the battlefield one finds a restrictive ideology. This ideology serves as the foundation upon which decision-makers construct abstinence-focused education programs. A restrictive ideology, McKay (1997) explained, limits human sexuality to the monogamous marital relationship between a man and woman engaged in coitus-centered activity. Proponents of this view insist upon controls to regulate sexual practices and unions considered “unnatural, immoral, and destructive either to the person, society or both” (p. 286). These practices run the gamut from masturbation and anal intercourse to contraception and safer sex. As far as unions are concerned, homosexual and pre- or extra- marital relationships fall into this category. When a restrictive ideology undergirds sexual health education, teachers adopt or generate either abstinence-only or abstinence-plus programs. As the name implies, abstinence-only programs restrict information about contraception and stipulate that young people must abstain from sexual activity until marriage (Dworkin & Santelli, 2007). Abstinence-plus programs promote abstinence as the best means of protection and address safer-sex practices, such as condom use. Dworkin and Santelli explained that the ‘plus’ component is contentious. Some advocates of abstinence-only education suggest that this component undermines the abstinence message. Furthermore, those in favour of comprehensive sexual health education argue that this ‘plus’ component constitutes only a cursory reference to

contraception with a focus on failure rates (Dworkin & Santelli, 2007). These objections, however, have not curtailed abstinence-focused programming.

Is such programming ‘effective?’ By focusing on the degree to which they impact youth’s behaviours, Kirby (2007) reported a dearth of convincing evidence that such programs delay the initiation of sex, hasten a return to abstinence, or reduce the number of sexual partners. As well, he noted that abstinence programs fail to negatively influence youth’s use of condoms or other forms of contraception. Furthermore, others have noted that programs promoting abstinence to the exclusion of other sexual health options are problematic because they infringe upon people’s fundamental human rights (Dworkin & Santelli, 2007; Santelli et al., 2006). They have claimed that these programs instill fear and shame, and restrict youth’s access to critical information to protect oneself against pregnancy and STIs (Santelli et al., 2006). Indeed, Waxman (2004) examined 13 abstinence-only programs frequently taught in the United States and concluded that only two impart accurate information while the remaining 11 underestimate the effectiveness of contraceptives, misrepresent the risks of abortion, blur religion and science, treat gender stereotypes as scientific fact, and contain basic scientific errors. An evaluation of abstinence-focused education, therefore, prompts one to conclude that such programs are not only misleading, but also behaviourally ineffective.

Permissive Ideology and Comprehensive Sexual Health Education

McKay (1997, 1999) identified a permissive ideology on the other side of the battlefield. This ideology functions as the basis for decision-makers to plan comprehensive sex education. Unlike the restrictive ideology, which demeans, dismisses, and/or downplays emotional intimacy and physical pleasure, a permissive ideology supports these factors as contributing to a person’s self-fulfillment and psychological health (McKay, 1999). People who hold a permissive perspective believe sexuality is a natural and pleasurable part of life. When a permissive ideology undergirds sexual health education, teachers are likely to engage young people in comprehensive sex education. In contrast to

abstinence-focused programs, comprehensive programs encompass topics that go beyond abstinence: for example, masturbation, oral sex, and other forms of non-coital sexual activity (McKay, 1999). Hence, given McKay's description of a permissive ideology, one recognizes that this serves as the foundation upon which teachers plan comprehensive sex education.

Significantly, comprehensive sexual health education programs have been shown to be effective in protecting youth from negative/unwanted sexual health outcomes. Although critics argue that comprehensive programs persuade youth to initiate sexual intercourse early, increase the frequency of intercourse, and increase the number of sexual partners, Kirby's (2007) evaluation of comprehensive sexual health education programs demonstrated that these concerns are unwarranted. Indeed, he reported that 2/3 or 32 of 48 comprehensive programs delayed the initiation of sex, reduced the number of sexual partners, increased condom and other contraceptive use, and reduced the frequency of unprotected sex. Specifically, 30 percent, or 16 of the 48 comprehensive programs, reduced the frequency of sex, and more than 60 percent, or 29 of 48, reduced unprotected sex. As a result of his research, Kirby concluded that these programs were demonstrably effective in helping youth avoid becoming pregnant and/or contracting STI(s)/HIV.

'Effective' Sexual Health Education

What are the critical characteristics of sex education programs deemed effective by authorized experts? Kirby (2007) and McKay (2005) reviewed and analyzed programs/interventions in search of an answer to this question. Their respective reviews yielded two differing lists of characteristics. Even so, the efforts of both researchers underscore the importance of, first, employing a theory/model to ground the program, and second, ascertaining the relevant needs of the target group.

While Kirby (2007) did not encourage the use of a specific theory/model, McKay (2005) did support the *Guidelines* in its endorsement of the Information-Motivation-Behavioural (IMB) model. Developed in 1992 by Fisher and Fisher in

response to the HIV epidemic, the IMB model identified information, motivation and behaviour as the central elements of a sex education program. Since then, others have applied the IMB model in broader health promotion practices (see W. Fisher, J. Fisher, & Shuper, 2009 for a review) and specific educational settings (Fisher et al. 2002; Fisher et al. 1996). This model is based on the premise that people enact preventative and enhancing health behaviors if they understand ‘information’ pertinent to their sexual health needs; have the ‘motivation’ to apply knowledge in initiating and maintaining sexual behaviors; and possess the ‘behavioral skills’ to avoid risks and enhance sexual well-being. Essentially, Fisher and Fisher (1992) theorized that information, motivation, and behavioral skills are determinants for problem prevention and sexual enhancement.

Fisher and Fisher (1992) explained that teachers who adopt this model proceed through three phases: elicitation, intervention, and evaluation. As part of the elicitation phase, teachers gain an understanding of the target group’s pre-intervention needs and assets with regards to their sexual health information, motivation, and behavioral skills. Next, they design and implement an intervention, considering both the details obtained during the elicitation phase and the prescribed program objectives. Finally, these teachers evaluate the intervention and modify the program accordingly. Teachers, who employ the IMB model, focus on information, motivation, and behavioural skills throughout the elicitation, intervention, and evaluation phases to have, as McKay (2005) suggested, a greater chance of engaging youth in behaviourally effective sexual health education.

Notably, the elicitation phase of the IMB model incorporates the second critical characteristic that Kirby (2007) and McKay (2005) identified as contributing to effective sex education: ascertaining the relevant needs of the target group. One can learn a great deal about the process of ascertaining relevant needs by examining how the designers of effective programs identified the needs of their target audiences. According to Kirby, these designers looked to the rates of HIV and other STIs, pregnancy, and youth’s sexual behaviours to assist them in identifying the needs of the target group. These data helped them, as Kirby stated,

“determine which health goals to focus upon and which types of behavior to address and at what grade level” (p. 132).

Even so, the practice of consulting survey research to determine youth’s sexual health needs has two shortcomings. First, such research offers insight into normative sexual health needs (Bradshaw, 1972, 1994). Undeniably, youth need to learn about pregnancy and STI transmission; however, there is cause for concern if the program designers deduced that these needs were the only ones warranting attention. Surely, youth’s sexual health needs are far more encompassing. Second, the program designers obtained information about youth as a general ‘target group,’ and thereby failed to learn about the expressed sexual health needs of a local group. It seems program designers were aware of this second shortcoming and sought to ameliorate it by conducting focus groups with youth to learn what was relevant to their sexual lives (Kirby, 2007).

Still, one must ask who determined the focus for discussion. Kirby (2007) pointed out that the program designers

often tried to learn why teens engaged in risky sexual behaviour and what specific risk and protective factors prevented protective behaviour or encouraged risk behaviour (e.g., what specific beliefs, attitudes or skills should be changed). They also tried to determine what needed to be done to change those types of behaviour and what situations led to unwanted sex and unprotected sex. (p. 132)

Although the program designers talked with youth about sexual health, they seemed to have focused on preventing negative/unwanted outcomes.

Consequently, by identifying the focus of discussion, these designers failed to offer youth the opportunity to express for themselves their sexual health needs. Kirby’s review shows, first, that authorized experts are the ones to classify sex education as effective, and, second, that an effective program concentrates on encouraging youth to behave in ways that satisfy normative needs or, alternatively, avoid ‘negative/unwanted’ outcomes, such as teen pregnancy and STI transmission. This raises the following questions: What do unauthorized experts consider ‘effective’ sexual health education? And, what are their expressed needs when it comes to sexual health education?

Unauthorized Experts: Expressed Sexual Health Education Needs

Decision-makers accustomed to exercising power over students find the idea that youth have sexual agency and can speak for themselves about their sexual health education perplexing. Some of them point to the legal mandate, *in loco parentis*, to justify their position. They believe that acting as a substitute parent gives them the right to exercise power in deciding what youth should or should not know, and can and cannot do (Allen, 2007a, 2007b). Thus, these decision-makers prioritize normative needs and subordinate expressed needs, all the while structuring educational experiences that fail to resonate with youth's lives.

In contrast, those decision-makers intent upon re-conceptualizing the notion of effective sex education are inclined to listen to youth's voices as they put into words their felt sexual health needs. According to Bradshaw (1972, 1994), all people, regardless of age, have 'felt needs;' that is, everyone has wants and desires that may or may not be expressed. When youth occupy a space in which they are welcomed to voice their sexual health needs, felt needs become 'expressed needs' (Bradshaw, 1972, 1994). Decision-makers who value youth's expressed needs legitimize their voices as participants in the process of constructing effective sex education. When teachers offer youth a space to voice their views and express their needs, they not only legitimize youth's knowledge, but also acknowledge them as sexual beings and, more importantly, sexual agents (Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Allen 2007a; Fine, 1988). These decision-makers move beyond protective policies and practices, and dialogue with youth about their needs, wants, and, yes, even desires.

Allen (2005) insisted that teachers must re-focus their attention from negative/unwanted outcomes to the criteria that youth *claim* contributes to satisfying their expressed sexual health needs. According to Allen (2005), what teachers and students regard as effective likely differs (see also Aggleton & Campbell, 2000); all the more reason to elicit youth's criteria for effectiveness. Allen proposed that when teachers address such criteria they serve youth better

because they are encouraging youth “to look after their sexual health and well-being” (p. 401). Indeed, she argued that teachers who disqualify students’ views run the risk of engaging youth in irrelevant and ineffective sex education. By going beyond normative needs to addressing expressed sexual health needs, teachers can emerge as authorized experts who honour youth as agents in their own education.

One expressed need that teachers frequently ignore is the need to discuss the nature of sexual desire. Fine and McClelland (2006) drew attention to the silences around desire and pleasure within the classroom. They argued that youth are entitled to engage in the “political act of wanting” (p. 325), or desiring, a sexual health education that is relevant to their subjective/expressed needs. In other words, youth are entitled to a “thick desire” (p. 300), a desire to discuss sexual desire. Fine (1988) argued that teachers typically fail to accept a discourse of desire and, indeed, conceive of it as an “interruption” to the mandated curriculum. In her view, when such a discourse is allowed to emerge, teachers invite youth “to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable, grounded in experience, needs, and limits” (p. 33). This process depends upon a restructured educational space, one empowering youth so they can reveal and generate their own meanings about sexuality.

According to Fine (1988), the responsibility for creating such a space falls on teachers. Should they abdicate this responsibility, they will “prohibit an education which adolescents wholly need and deserve” (Fine, 1988, p. 36). Such an education is grounded in both dialogue and critique. Fine and McClelland (2006) illustrated this point by repeating the words of young people they met while conducting research. When they asked, “‘What do you need in the way of sexuality education?’ young people were clear: ‘More conversations like this, where we’re asked what we think, what we want to know’” (p. 326). When teachers understand youth’s subjectivities—that is, their needs, wants, *and* desires—they can respond by offering youth relevant sex education which fosters sexual agency, credits youth’s experiences and knowledges, and recognizes the positive and gratifying aspects of sexuality. Fundamental to this sort of learning

experience is social engagement: teachers must work ‘with’ youth as they express their ‘thick desire’ for sexual health education that is ultimately responsive to their sexual health needs. Such an experience epitomizes democratic sexual health education.

Democratic Education

Although the term ‘democracy’, as Beane and Apple (1995) admitted, is difficult to define, the definition offered by Dewey (1916) is exceedingly helpful. Dewey characterized democracy as “primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (p. 67). This definition deemphasizes what most people associate with democracy—political governance—and emphasizes what few consider—a mode of living. Since youth are expected to live democratically outside the classroom, Dewey reasoned that they must learn, while in the classroom, what this ‘way of life’ entails. On this basis, Beane and Apple (1995) argued that teachers have an obligation to introduce youth to democracy. They claim the democratic classroom has both powerful meaning and transformative impact (Beane & Apple, 1995). In other words, democratic schools afford teachers and students experiences emblematic of a way of being in the world within which people live out, struggle for, and strive towards ideals.

Unfortunately, as Beane and Apple (1995) observed, schools are “remarkably undemocratic” sites (p. 12). Here one finds (1) a top-down administration; (2) a tightly controlled curriculum; and (3) an idea that the teacher is the “dictatorial purveyor of orthodox, politically neutral and/or correct information” (Becker & Couto, 1996, p. 11). Taken together, these features constitute the regulatory conditions that some decision-makers believe uphold high standards for education. Arnstine (1995), however, claimed that “[s]chools are not so much in need of regulation as they are of inspiration. Of uniformity, they have had enough. What’s lacking is variety. For inspiration and variety, ideals are needed” (p. 25).

Decision-makers and students can find inspiration in an empowerment model for constructing or, more precisely, improving sexual health education.

According to Hagquist and Starrin (1997), this model has two dimensions: a bottom-up strategy for change and a wide contextual application. While the notion of empowerment can be conceptualized in many ways, Wallerstein (1992) defined it as a dialogical,

social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of life and social justice. (p. 198)

She described empowerment not in terms of any one group taking power to dominate others, but as a synergistic interaction among groups. As these groups interact, they exercise power to affect change (Wallerstein, 1988). Youth who are empowered to change their sexual health education are able to participate in problem-posing, which entails identifying problems and solutions (Wallerstein, 1993). According to Hagquist and Starrin, youth must be supported through this social-action process. A teacher—or, for that matter, a research facilitator like myself—shapes experiences to encourage youth in empowering themselves as they problematize ‘what is’ and, thereafter, construct an action plan of ‘what could be’ experienced at school (Hagquist & Starrin, 1997). Hence, when decision-makers adopt an empowerment model, they work together with students to democratize the way students experience sex education.

The logical place to begin this democratizing process is with the mandated curriculum. Indeed, Beane and Apple (1995), and Dewey (1938) called for democratic transformations involving the mandated curriculum. Schools, as Apple (2000) asserted, commonly endorse the traditional notion of curriculum as being limited to official or high-status knowledge. School officials seek to reproduce knowledge from the past and distribute it in the present like “educational food” (Dewey, 1938, p. 19) which, because of its nutritional value, students are expected to savour. By conceptualizing curriculum in this way, teachers implicitly communicate that the well-being of students depends on them regurgitating select truths and, then, living life accordingly. As Beane and Apple explained, this “selective tradition” (p. 15) reflects and legitimizes the truths of the dominant culture and older generations and, concomitantly, silences the voices and

disregards the knowledges of youth. The way in which decision-makers compile these so-called truths to form a mandated curriculum calls to mind Dewey's description of defective education. He asserted that there "is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active co-operation of the pupil in [the] construction of the purposes involved in his [or her] studying" (p. 67). In order to rectify this defect, Dewey advised teachers to "extract from them [students] all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile" (p. 40). "[T]he teacher's [curricular] suggestion," Dewey insisted, "is not a mold for a cast-iron result but is a starting point to be developed into a plan through contributions from the experiences of all engaged in the learning process" (p. 72). According to Beane and Apple, such a plan constitutes a democratic curriculum that

includes not only what adults think is important, but also the *questions and concerns* that young people have about themselves and their world. A democratic curriculum invites young people to shed the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of 'meaning makers.' (p. 16)

Hence, democratic education invites students to voice their views and visions as they participate in co-constructing a curriculum relevant to their questions, their concerns and, surely, their expressed needs.

Although decision-makers—positioned at the top of the educational hierarchy—are unaccustomed to having their authority challenged by students—positioned at the bottom—this should not keep them from dialoguing with students to learn how policies and/or practices can change. But first they must divest themselves of the notion that students function as passive objects and, accept the view that youth are agents of, what Dewey called, "experiments" (as cited in Jenlink, 2009, p. 31). Decision-makers who engage in these experiments of social inquiry listen to students' critiques of the present and their suggestions for the future: they accept that students can "influence what is still to happen" (Dewey as cited in Jenlink, 2009, p. 31). Moreover, these decision-makers become aware of (1) what students think is relevant content and skills for satisfying their sexual health needs; (2) how students believe that content and

those skills must be addressed; and (3) why students maintain that their views of, and visions for sexual health education must be considered (Spencer, Maxwell, & Aggleton, 2008).

Those striving to achieve democratic education must expect resistance. As Beane and Apple (1995) observe,

[a]t almost every turn, their ideas and efforts are likely to be resisted by both those who benefit from the inequities of schools and those who are more interested in efficiency and hierarchical power than in the difficult work of transforming schools from the bottom up. (1995, p. 12)

In such a climate, students who express their perspectives concerning ‘what can be’ are often ignored. One should not be surprised when they conclude their efforts were for nothing. And yet, insisting upon being heard is, in itself, a worthwhile endeavour. Although Dewey (1938) recognized that some people, such as students, might concede defeat in changing their social circumstances, he stated that “...conflict of peoples at least enforce[s] intercourse between them and thus accidentally enables them to learn from one another, and thereby to expand their horizons” (p. 100). Although efforts to engage in intercourse or dialogue in the face of such resistance are sure to be marked by “contradictions, conflict, and controversy” (Beane & Apple, 1995, p. 13), students who make these efforts do make a difference in bringing democratic education to life.

Youth’s Perspectives Contribute to Dialogue

According to Thiessen (2007), teachers tend to ascribe to one of two competing understandings concerning the role that students can play in changing educational policy and practice. On the one hand, teachers may consider youth as having the right to take their place in dialogue aimed at improving the present and to have their perspectives seriously considered (Cook-Sather, 2006). Proponents of this understanding defend the discovery-based model, which describes students as capable and active agents, who benefit from an enabling learning environment (Thiessen, 2007). Such a model depicts students as active contributors who embrace the “political potential of speaking out on their own behalf” (Lewis cited

in Cook-Sather, 2006). Teachers who favour this model of learning acknowledge students' rights to participation and expression.

On the other hand, teachers might ascribe to the traditional view of youth as “empty or evil creatures who need to be filled up, controlled, and contained” (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 9). According to Cook-Sather (2006), this understanding undergirds “adult-centric, infantilizing, and disempowering attitudes and practices” (p. 370). Teachers who think of students in this way support the transmission model of learning which portrays young people as unknowing neophytes who acquire knowledge from authorized experts as they transmit it in the course of classroom activities (Thiessen, 2007). Teachers supporting this model assume a superior position in relation to students; because they believe they know what is best for students, they feel justified in telling students what they need to learn (Levin, 2000).

This traditional view clearly undermines the possibility of democratic education. In accordance with tradition, teachers are typically the ones who frame both content and practice based on their understanding of youth's needs (Hirst, 2004). This understanding, however, is often seriously compromised. Rudduck and Fielding (2006) explained that teachers fail to know youth's opinions, experiences, and perceptions. As Fullan asserted, “[teachers] hardly know anything about what students think about educational change because no one ever asks them” (as cited in Levin, 2000, p. 159). Instead, teachers make assumptions about what students need and then proceed to plan programs of study on this basis. When teachers proceed in this undemocratic manner, they violate young peoples' rights to expression, silence their voices, and disqualify their views. To prevent this from happening, teachers need to ask themselves the following questions:

What do teens need from their parents and other adults? What do they need from schools? How can sexuality education classes be structured to have maximum impact on students? What can teachers do to communicate more effectively with teens? In what grade should sexuality education topics be introduced? What sorts of classroom materials would be most useful to teens? How can teens help to inform each other? In what risky

behaviours are teens engaging? Why? What would persuade them to change their behaviours? (Wilson, 2000, p. 20)

Of course, simply asking the questions is not enough. Teachers need to obtain answers to these questions *by dialoging with youth*. In doing so, they come to trust in youth's ability to participate in their education, and thereby see their role as something more than delivering or transmitting sexual health education to passive student recipients (see Cook-Sather, 2002).

Students can contribute, in their own right, to curricular planning by drawing upon the expertise they have gained from past experiences of the teaching and learning of sexual health. Even if one concedes that teachers, as authorized experts, possess certain types of expertise, this does not mean that they are necessarily experts on what young people need; nor does it negate the possibility that there are other experts in the classroom as well, experts who understand those needs much better—namely, the students themselves. Cook-Sather (2002) averred that “[b]ecause of who they are, what they know, and how they are positioned, students must be recognized as having knowledge essential to the development of sound educational policies and practices” (p. 12). This statement implies that youth, when afforded the opportunity, can ‘teach their teachers’ something and, in the process, present themselves as knowing subjects, agents, and, despite objection, even, experts. Furthermore, Thiessen (2007) explained that once teachers accept their own limited expertise they are able to recognize “students as knowledgeable and collaborative actors whose insights into and expertise concerning their own ideas, comments, and actions are critical to the development of a full understanding of what transpires and changes at school” (pp. 7-8)

When decision-makers acknowledge that students’ *counter* perspectives offer knowledges, they can begin to re-conceptualize sexual health education as a democratic process grounded in dialogue. When it comes to sexual health education, decision-makers often rely upon dominant knowledge to ascertain what youth need to become sexually healthy adults (Elia, 2000). Such knowledge, however, is limited, incomplete, and unfinished (see Jovchelovitch, 2001) because

it fails to recognize youth as sexual beings and agents (Allen, 2007a) and discounts youth's perspectives of sex education derived from first-hand experiences and felt needs (see Lansdown, 2001). Students, to use Fraser's (1989) term, form a counter-public. As Fraser explained, a counter-public disturbs dominant ways of conceiving of the world and disrupts common sense knowledge (see also Jovchelovitch, 2001). It offers new perspectives with new implications. When teachers come to credit the counter knowledges of students, they can reconsider the asymmetrical teacher-student power relation and, create a social space for dialogue. When this space is created, students will bring, as Weis and Fine (2001) argued, the necessary "fizz" to stimulate an "extraordinary conversation" (p. 520). Students who enter this "bubble of conversation" (Jovchelovitch, 2001, p. 175) will provoke what Weis and Fine called a 'disruptive pedagogy,' which critiques the present and draws attention to potential transformative actions. Most teachers would likely fail to apprehend such possibilities if they were to rely upon their own perspective of the present (Lodge, 2005). When teachers dialogue with students, they succeed in reconfiguring educational power relations, redefining the boundaries of educational possibilities, and re-conceptualizing students as agents in educational reform (Cook-Sather, 2002; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006; Thiessen, 2007).

And yet, how often do teachers and students come together to engage in dialogue with a focus on improving policies and practices? Fielding (2004) confirmed that "there are no spaces, physical or metaphorical, where staff and students meet one another as equals, as genuine partners in the shared undertaking of making meaning of their work together" (p. 309); and Cook-Sather (2006) noted that efforts at acknowledging students' voices are a "work in process," an ongoing struggle in re-positioning students and recognizing what they have to say (p. 361). Indeed, she stressed, "unless students' voices matter and are essential to action, we [decision-makers] run the risk of re-inscribing old patterns of power distribution and approaches to change" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 11). According to Grace, this risk exists because of an 'ideology of immaturity' (as cited in Rudduck

& Fielding, 2006). Teachers who ascribe to this ideology reduce students to subordinates, discount their participation, and silence their voices.

Only when decision-makers recognize the value in what youth have to say about their education, will they begin to listen to students and see them as a force in contributing to reform (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). Cook-Sather (2006) argued that decision-makers who come to acknowledge students' voices as meaningful can then take their knowledges into account to impact analyses of, and decisions about educational affairs. Regrettably, the vast majority of decision-makers proposing and implementing transformations today do so based upon a myopic view of the present school reality, and thereby draw from a limited pool of transformative possibilities (Cook-Sather, 2002). Moreover, teachers who are willing to 'see' beyond youth's developmental age and 'see' youth as responsible and capable (Ruddick & Fielding, 2006), can then initiate dialogue with students and 'listen' to their views. Unfortunately, too many teachers in classrooms today feel obliged to 'hear' student voices only to appease them with "surface compliance" (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006, p. 228). Such superficiality cultivates student skepticism because teachers ostensibly hear students while refusing to listen to their views and, then, respond insincerely (Rudduck, 2007). Simply hearing students is insufficient. In the words of Freire (1989),

[L]istening is an activity that obviously goes beyond mere hearing. To listen...is a permanent attitude on the part of the subject who is listening, of being open to the word of the other, to the gesture of the other, [and] to the differences of the other (p. 107).

As teachers listen to students' expressed needs and critiques, they come to realize that students can problematize present policies and practices, and identify ways the problems can be addressed. However, in the end, as Rudduck asserted, decision-makers remain the gatekeepers of change in schools: if they cannot find the time, are reluctant to hear students' views and visions, or refuse to respond, then students' voices are unlikely to have any evident impact.

CHAPTER FIVE

Shifting Disciplinary Limits of Sexual Health Education by Initiating Youth Participatory Action Research

In this chapter, I describe the ontological and epistemological beliefs that undergird my methodological choices, and identify myself as a critical constructivist. I revisit Michel Foucault for methodological guidance, concentrate on his ascending analysis of power, and return to the *Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons* (GIP) (used in Chapter 3 as an exemplar for conceptualizing a study within a secondary school) in order to detail Foucault's participation in the organization. I identify parallels between Foucault's work in underscoring prisoners' counter-discourse of incarceration and my effort in listening to students' counter-discourse of sex education.

Next, I outline my methodological framework. I begin by describing Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), declaring my commitment to acknowledging youth as experts who have knowledges about the teaching and learning of sexual health. I argue that youth can rely upon and extend such knowledges by diagnosing problems and identifying transformative possibilities with the aim of inducing and informing changes that could address their expressed sexual health needs. I then review Responsive Evaluation and explain its role within my methodological framework as a means by which youth can evaluate their existing sexual health education program. Finally, I describe Foucault's methodological process of problematization, and explain how I envisioned its strategic use by students in evaluating, or more specifically, problematizing, their experiences of sex education. Here, I draw upon two of Foucault's conceptual tools, critique and effective history. I conclude this chapter by reviewing the role I anticipated for myself as a facilitator who would work with youth research partners to incite shifts to the disciplinary limits or, in other words, prompt changes to the teaching and learning of sexual health.

My Paradigmatic Position: Critical Constructivism

Many scholars have stressed the importance of identifying one's paradigmatic position before beginning a study (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schram, 2006). The term 'paradigm' or 'worldview' (see Creswell, 2007) refers to "a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 13). Beliefs about ontology and epistemology constitute an integral part of one's paradigmatic position. Ontology refers to the nature of reality. The fundamental ontological question is "[w]hat is the nature of the 'knowable?'" (Guba, 1990, p. 18). Epistemology, on the other hand, refers to the origin, nature, and limits of knowledge. The all-important epistemological question is "[w]hat is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable?)" (Guba, 1990, p. 18). Ontological and epistemological assumptions are fundamental to one's worldview; consequently, they play a critical role in shaping one's research study. Guba, for instance, claimed that the researcher's paradigmatic position inevitably informs and guides the choices he/she makes during the course of the inquiry process. For the novice researcher, it is particularly important to examine how personal beliefs position one within a particular paradigm. To ignore this initial step would be to embark upon research with a sense of purpose, but without a well-defined perspective. Schram likened this situation to "setting out on a voyage without a means to orient your ship" (p. 41). By examining my paradigmatic position before setting sail on this research voyage, I hoped to avoid becoming lost in a sea of methodological possibilities.

Among the various paradigms outlined in the literature, critical constructivism, as described by Kincheloe (1993, 1997, 2005), resonated with me the most. Kincheloe (1997) explained that "[n]othing exists before consciousness shapes it into something we perceive. What appears to us as objective reality is merely what our minds construct, what we are accustomed to see" (p. 57). In other words, humans are incapable of objectively apprehending reality; we can never separate what we apprehend—the outside—from how we apprehend it—the inside—that is, from our unique minds, experiences, beliefs, and values. Critical

constructivists are dubious of supposedly conflict-free, objective, and/or authorized knowledge, for they believe the mind does not ‘reflect,’ but rather ‘constructs’ knowledge of the social world (Kincheloe, 1993)—and no one creation or construction can claim to be the absolute truth. Although critical constructivists might use the term ‘truth,’ they do not do so definitively. For them ‘truth’ is synonymous with ever more informed and sophisticated constructions, each context-specific, socially constructed, and historically informed (Kincheloe, 2005). In the process of constructing knowledge, critical constructivists question the dominant forces brought to bear within institutions where power shapes what is considered authorized and beyond question (Kincheloe, 1997, 2005). By means of critique, they seek to understand how power functions and what perspectives power forecloses. In this way, critical constructivists present “a dynamic and textured understanding of the way power works at both macro (deep structural) and micro (particularistic) levels to shape our understandings of the world and our role in it” (Kincheloe, 1997, p. 58). By examining where the macro and micro connect—places Kincheloe called “contact points” (p. 58)—critical constructivists are able to construct compelling truths.

I intended to initiate an inquiry process at just such a point of contact, one located within an educational power structure: that is to say, I wished to explore the point of contact between those at the macro level who make decisions and those at the micro-level who experience the consequences of those decisions and whose voices are often dismissed by educational powers. Like Kincheloe (1993), who believed it necessary to “disrupt the tyranny of the official text [by] break[ing] the power of...the curriculum developer [who] impose[s] authoritarian meaning” (p. 112), I considered it critical to disrupt the mandated sex education curriculum by underscoring the omnipresence of power and encouraging people at the bottom of the hierarchy to do as Kincheloe (2005) advised: “to use their pain as a motivation to find out what is not right and to discover alternative ways of constructing social and educational reality” (p. 16). Of course, Kincheloe was not referring to physical pain, but rather to the emotional pain resulting from unjustly having one’s voice dismissed. I wanted to work with people who experienced

such pain. I wanted to encourage them to fashion their voices by attending to the way educational powers limited their sex education. I wanted to contribute to inducing curricular change.

The first step in achieving my goal entailed encouraging those at the bottom of the hierarchy to examine their situation and enter into dialogue with those at the top who could bring about change. Freire (1986) argued that people who consider their situationality “develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* [original emphasis] they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (pp. 70-71). Furthermore, Shor and Freire (1987) stressed that the degree to which people remake or transform their reality depends upon the perspectives they are able to express during dialogue: in other words, when people engage in dialogue about their shared reality, they can succeed in making and remaking it. Given the premise that change to policy and/or practice must be informed, it follows that decision-makers—the gatekeepers of change—must come to understand people’s perspectives, especially the perspectives of those impacted by said policies and practices. Unfortunately, some decision-makers regard dialogue with ‘others’ as unimportant; these are the very decision-makers who have “grow[n]...accustomed to power and [have] acquire[d] a taste for guiding, ordering, and commanding” (Freire, 1986, p. 129). They often refuse to enter into dialogue due to a habit of speaking “their word without hearing the word of those whom they have forbidden to speak” (Freire, 1986, p. 129). These decision-makers treat students as objects when, in effect, they are subjects whose voices speak a plurality of truths. Yet, as Wallerstein (1993) maintained, the role of education is not to “prepare people to be objects of learning and to accept their place within the status quo... [but to] encourage people to question the critical issues of the day and challenge forces that keep them passive?” (p. 221)

Wallerstein (1988, 1992, 1993) regarded students not only as subjects who have the right to dialogue, but also as agents capable of *triggering* dialogue. She (1993) suggested that youth can prepare for dialogue by constructing a “trigger,” a concrete physical representation of particular problems that would then provoke

dialogue with decision-makers (p. 222). With this trigger in hand, youth can make a difference in their lives and the lives of those around them (Wallerstein, 1992). The perspectives expressed through the ‘trigger’ are not ‘new;’ but represent the authentic views and voices of people who have been marginalized, silenced, or ignored (Cahill, 2007). By presenting this trigger to decision-makers, youth can initiate dialogue and provoke critical thought, which will move dialogue from perceptions of problems towards actions that address those problems (Wallerstein, 1993).

This is not to suggest that a trigger representing youth’s perspectives offers decision-makers solutions that, if implemented, will succeed in creating a problem-free educational reality. Such a state is unattainable because circumstances and constructions inevitably change. Just as one person can continuously identify problems and propose transformations, another can continuously critique those problems and challenge those transformations. Consequently, dialogue about problems and transformation is a never-ending process (Kincheloe, 1993). Moreover, since the problems within an educational power structure are complex and preclude immediate solutions the dialogical process is not so much aimed at problem-solving as it is at problem-posing. Wallerstein (1993) was *not* suggesting that identifying and discussing potential solutions to problems is pointless. Instead, she acknowledged that because problem-solving develops over a prolonged period of time, problem-posing is a nurturing dialogic process in which teachers and students work with each other, guided by a trigger, to share views of what is, and visions of what can be.

Foucauldian Guidance: Examining an Educational Power Structure

As a critical constructivist seeking to encourage dialogue focused on what sex education can be at a specific school, I turned to Foucault for methodological guidance. Foucault (1980d) saw power as “something which circulates” or “functions in the form of a chain” (p. 98); hence, he advised that, when examining institutional power structures, one must concentrate on “how things work at the level of on-going subjugation” (p. 97). Foucault (1977) also recommended that

one focus on a localized “struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious” (p. 208). He stressed it was here where serious inquiry must begin: at “its [power’s] extremities, in its ultimate *destinations* [emphasis added], with those points where it becomes capillary; that is, in its more regional and local forms” (1980d, p. 96). Taking his words to heart, I focused my attention on the micro level, on the bottom of the educational hierarchy, as I began the search for a group of people who would be willing to assume the role of research partner alongside me. I was hopeful that these individuals would join me in “conduct[ing] an *ascending* [original emphasis] analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms” (Foucault, 1980d, p. 99). This bottom-up approach (see also Blacker, 1998, Mayo, 2000) would enable us to hear those at the bottom express their views of, and visions for, the teaching and learning of sexual health, and to direct their insights towards those positioned above. In this way, we would destabilize or rupture the present (see Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). Our ultimate goal would be to impress upon educational powers the need for relegating certain policies and practices pertaining to sex education to the past so that changes could be made in the present and find function in the future (see O’Farrell, 2005; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998; Roth, 1981).

Foucauldian Guidance: Constructing a Counter-Discourse

In an effort to understand the pragmatic implications of Foucault’s methodological advice, I turned to his work as a member of the *Groupe d’Information sur les Prisons* (GIP). Notably, I was not equating prisons and schools. I acknowledged, like Fine and Torre (2004), that while prisons are concerned with control, schools are interested in social reproduction. My aim, instead, was to concentrate on the ways in which Foucault and the GIP members offered prisoners the opportunity to express what they needed, what problems they saw, and what changes they desired when it came to penitentiary reform. In the end, I employed the GIP as an exemplar to guide me in conceptualizing a study in which I would encourage students to identify problems, propose

transformations, and induce curricular change that would account for their expressed sexual health needs.

The GIP created a platform from which prisoners' voices could be heard within and beyond the confines of the penitentiary. According to one member of the GIP, Deleuze (1994), the goal was "to produce *énoncés* (statements) [original emphasis] about prisons, including *énoncés* [original emphasis] produced by the prisoners themselves" (pp. 269-270). Determined to recognize prisoners as "experts on jails" (Defert, 2007, p. 243) but not to "speak in the name of the prisoners," the GIP provided inmates with an opportunity to state "what it is that goes on in prisons" (as cited in Eribon, 1991, p. 227). According to Deleuze (1977), by refraining from speaking for prisoners, Foucault was the first, "to teach...something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others" (p. 209). Foucault refused to speak for the prisoners, either by complaining about the insalubrious conditions in which they found themselves or by condemning the unjust treatment to which they were subjected (Brich, 2008). He reasoned that by acting as the prisoners' representative he would be subjecting the inmates to "double repression" (Deleuze, 1977, p. 209): repression at the hands of the prison system and repression at the hands of Foucault himself. Foucault also refused to identify and recommend reforms on their behalf (Brich, 2008). Foucault justified his position by stressing, "it was not our [the GIP members'] job to propose reforms, because nobody knows what a good jail is and proposing a good jail supposes you know" (as cited in Defert, 2007, p. 242). As Foucault explained,

we do not dream of some ideal prison: we hope that prisoners may be able to say what it is that is intolerable for them in the system of penal repression. We have to disseminate as quickly and widely as possible the revelations that the prisoners themselves make—the sole means of unifying what is inside and outside the prison, the political battle and the legal battle, into one and the same struggle. (as cited in Eribon, 1991, p. 227)

Rather than propose reforms, the GIP disseminated the views and revelations of the prisoners themselves in the form of four published pamphlets titled *Intolérable*. In this way, they brought the views and visions of the prisoners—previously unacknowledged by decision-makers—to the forefront. Thus, the

prisoners were able to contribute to dialogue, action and, ultimately, change (Defert, 2007; Eribon, 1991; Macey, 1993).

As a result of Foucault's efforts, the notion that confined people must speak for themselves gained theoretical significance. While working with the GIP, Foucault (1977) emphasized the relationship between theory and practice. He understood theory as "local and regional" (p. 208), arising within a domain of struggles where power is exercised; "'theory,'" Foucault asserted, "is the regional system of this struggle" (p. 208). He reflected,

when the prisoners began to speak, they possessed an individual theory of prisons, the penal system, and justice. It is this form of discourse which ultimately matters, a discourse against power, the counter-discourse of prisoners and those we call delinquents—and not a theory *about* [original emphasis] delinquency. (p. 209)

Foucault (1980b) was not interested in creating theories 'about,' but in theory/practice as a form of counter-discourse "aris[ing] within the prison... , [specifically] its constitutive elements, its means of functioning, along with its strategies, its covert discourses and ruses, ruses which are not ultimately played by any particular person, but which are none the less lived" (p. 38). The GIP's overriding goal was to make public the prisoners' counter-discourse of incarceration in order to improve inmates' lived experiences.

Foucault's GIP contributions in supporting the construction of prisoners' counter-discourse of penitentiary life and my plans for facilitating the expression of students' counter-discourse of sex education would differ in one critical respect: I could not adopt Foucault's surreptitious strategy for gaining access to the group in question. Given that distributing questionnaires inside Parisian prisons was illegal, Foucault and his GIP members asked visiting family members to smuggle in a copy to inmates (Brich, 2008). Although I was inspired by his determination to acknowledge prisoners' perspectives, I could not adopt his furtive approach in my effort to respect students' perspectives. My entrance into a school was contingent upon various levels of informed approvals: school board consent; principal consent; teacher consent; parent consent; and student consent. I assumed that if the study was granted such approvals—signaling that select

teachers and administrators were willing to allow me to conduct a study at their school—the student struggle against educational powers would be, perhaps, less arduous than the GIP-initiated prisoner struggle against penitentiary powers.

Notwithstanding this important difference, I identified six parallels between Foucault's work as a member of the GIP and the study I wanted to initiate as a facilitator of a research team. First, Foucault was an outsider to the Parisian prison system; I was also an outsider, but in this context, an outsider to the Ontario education system. Second, in much the same way that Foucault recognized prisoners as experts on jails (Defert, 2007), I respected students as experts on education, specifically sex education. Third, just as Foucault forged partnerships with former prisoners (Birch, 2008), I planned to build working relationships with students. Fourth, Foucault (1977) was dedicated to encouraging the expression of prisoners' counter-discourse of incarceration; I was also committed to encouraging the expression of students' counter-discourse of sex education. Fifth, Foucault wanted prisoners' perspectives to provoke public debate and prison reform (Birch, 2008), while I wanted students' perspectives to prompt dialogue and induce curricular change. Sixth, much like the GIP's *Intolerable* pamphlets, which disseminated prisoners' revelations about penitentiary life (Eribon, 1991), the team's action plan would showcase students' perspectives of sex education. In the end, Foucault's work with GIP members suggested a methodological framework to guide me in facilitating a participatory and problematizing process at the disciplinary limits of sexual health education at a local secondary school.

A Participatory and Problematizing Process

Given the importance of outlining a methodological framework for a participatory study (Creswell, 2007), I set out to review the literature on action research, eventually concentrating on Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). As I reviewed the principles underlying this approach, I began to envision the pragmatic realities of establishing a study with youth at a secondary school. I realized that the study I had in mind could be conceived of as an

evaluation of sorts. This realization struck me as problematic because my goal was not to determine if a school's sex education program met a prescribed set of criteria. Although I was adamant about not conducting an evaluation, my view changed when I learned about Responsive Evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I discovered that I could partner with youth to call attention to students' perspectives of sex education so that decision-makers could 'respond' and, then, take action to address points arising from the evaluation itself. YPAR and Responsive Evaluation have in common two critical practices: identifying problems and proposing transformations. These practices prompted me to think of the process Foucault called problematization. For guidance on conducting a problematization of sex education with youth, I turned to two of his conceptual tools: critique and effective history. In what follows, I outline a methodological framework based on the integration of various understandings. I begin with Kurt Lewin's insights about action research, which serves as the launch pad from which I construct this framework.

Participatory Action Research

Kurt Lewin's (1890-1947) original understandings of action research have spawned a "large family" (Noffke, 1997, p. 306; see also Dickens & Watkins, 1999; Hinchey, 2008) of related approaches to research. In his seminal 1946 publication, *Action Research and Minority Problems*, Lewin identified action research as a "spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the results of the action" (p. 38). The first step is to examine an idea or problem in order to identify what objective(s) must be achieved and what actions must be taken to achieve these objectives. The action is evaluated and the plan amended. Only then does one begin the second step of the research process. Lewin left few works detailing his views; consequently, his ideas have been open to interpretation (Dickens & Watkins, 1999). Today, researchers adopt "the term *action research* [original emphasis] to describe almost every research effort and method under the sun that attempts to inform action in some way" (McTaggart, 1997, p. 1). As Reason and Bradbury (2001) have noted,

there is no concise answer to the question ‘What is action research?’ (see also Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, & Zuber-Skerritt, 2002; Dickens & Watkins, 1999). Each manifestation of the methodology looks quite different as individual researchers adopt and adapt select forms to support their respective theoretical persuasions and visions for social research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Given the diversity of forms that go by the name action research, the novice researcher in search of an appropriate methodology can quickly become overwhelmed. One finds within the literature a confusing variety of names for the same general ‘action research’ process. For instance, Lewin’s pioneering work gave rise to what has been called ‘participatory action research’ (PAR), also known as ‘participatory research’ (see Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, & Jackson, 1993). According to McTaggart (1991), these multiple labels depict a “meaningless diversity” (p. 169) and serve to foster confusion. What is more, researchers’ interpretations of the process often differ, and even contradict each other, leaving the novice researcher at a loss as to how one should proceed.

In an effort to get my bearings, I returned to Lewin, specifically his two original models for action-oriented research. According to Lewin, people—or, in his words, “change agents”—execute an inquiry which he termed “diagnostic action research” (as cited in Marrow, 1969, p. 198). As part of this inquiry process, change agents “produce a needed plan of action... [they] *intervene* [emphasis added] in an already existing situation..., diagnose the problem, and recommend remedial measures” (Lewin as cited in Marrow, 1969, p. 198). Of course, the act of intervening is unnecessary when agents are positioned within the social situation itself and are prepared to participate in conducting an inquiry. Lewin called this activity “participant action research” (as cited in Marrow, 1969, p. 198). His concepts of participant action research reflect the belief that “ordinary people” have the skills to embark upon a research process that addresses their “private troubles” (Adelman, 1997, p. 81). Lewin’s concepts of diagnostic action research and participant action research lay the groundwork for a specific type of action research.

I identified in Lewin's description of diagnostic and participant action research two key PAR commitments: first, change agents, positioned within an institutional structure, examine their local social situation to 'diagnose' problems; and second, these agents 'participate' in all phases of an inquiry to propose transformative possibilities. Thus, PAR invites change agents to communicate research findings in the form of an action plan with the understanding that "unless the proposed cures [or transformations are] feasible, effective and acceptable to the people involve[d]... this design of action... [is] often wasted" (Lewin as cited in Marrow, 1969, p. 198). Clearly, PAR encourages people to recognize that their life experiences function as a basis for knowing and that such experiences are subject to change.

To deepen my understanding of PAR, I then turned to Torre and Fine (2006). In particular, they noted that this methodology

- attends to social struggles of 'what has been' and 'what is' to provoke an analysis of 'what could be' and 'what must be;'
- respects participation 'with' groups as opposed to 'on' or 'on behalf of' them;
- recognizes that commentary often originates in personal knowledge and experience at the bottom of a social hierarchy;
- appreciates local practices as sites for transformation; and
- investigates power relations and social positionality to expose injustices.

Torre and Fine regarded PAR as a contextualized, flexible, and responsive process that does not lend itself to a regime of rules that would limit how people take action to affect local change (see also Fine & Torre, 2008). It was clear to me that there was no pure PAR approach to adopt; instead, there were PAR commitments, such as those outlined by Torre and Fine, to guide one in working with a group of change agents through an empowering social research process.

Importantly, Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) underscored that PAR is a process that enables people to examine and transform specific practices within a social situation. They defined PAR as

a social process of collaborative learning realized by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world in which, for better or worse, we live with the consequences of one another's actions. (p. 563)

Kemmis and McTaggart drew upon Lewin's diagrammatical model of a spiral in their description of PAR as a fluid, open and responsive process. In their view, PAR invites a collective (1) to plan a change; (2) to act and observe the processes and consequences of the change; (3) to reflect on these processes and consequences; and (4) to re-plan, and so forth. In describing the PAR process, Kemmis and McTaggart employed the term 'exploratory action;' however, they failed to acknowledge that a collective cannot always implement transformations and, thereafter, 'explore' the resulting changes to the problematic social situation under study. In other words, even though PAR members embark upon the first step by planning an action plan, it is conceivable that they might be restricted from going through the cyclical process: they might not be able to enact changes, explore the consequences of these changes, evaluate these consequences, and re-construct the plan with the aim of addressing the initial problem. Ultimately, PAR members might have no immediate and observable consequences to explore. This is not to suggest that they must concede defeat when it comes to inciting change. I reason that PAR members can identify or, for that matter, 'explore' transformative possibilities by collecting pertinent data, analyzing the data, and making meaning of the data to generate an action plan or, as Wallerstein (1993) called it, a trigger. Subsequently, they can offer their plan to decision-makers as they engage with them in dialogue with the aim of moving exploration forward so that additional changes can be identified and improvements can be realized (Dickens & Watkins, 1999).

Youth participatory action research. Rather than view youth through a deficit model as a group that creates social problems, I was compelled, like others (e.g. Alderson, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998), to regard them as capable of conducting research that addresses problems: this led me to Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). YPAR invites young

people to exercise their right to engage in research on social problems that impact their lives (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Torre & Fine, 2006). A person contemplating YPAR might go through the following thought progression: ‘Now, don’t experts do research? Youth aren’t experts... Still, youth do know about some problems impacting their lives. They are smart. They can, if they want, learn about research. So... if youth have the capacity to learn and are willing to try, should they not be given the opportunity, to conduct research that aims to address problems and, so, improve their lives? Indeed, perhaps it is their right to do so.’ Precisely! Youth participation in research is exactly that—a right. The United Nations has enshrined participation rights so that youth (up to the age of 18) can speak for themselves. Notably, Article 12 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989) stipulates the following:

1. State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly or through a representative or appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

According to Lansdown (2001), Article 12 is a substantive right recognizing youth as agents who can participate in decisions affecting their lives; it also constitutes a procedural right, meaning that youth can take action to protect their best interests. This Article debunks the assumption that youth are simply ‘adults-in-waiting’ by introducing “a radical and profound challenge to traditional attitudes, which assume that children should be seen and not heard” (Lansdown, 2001, p. 2). While it is critical that youth have these participatory rights, it is equally critical that they have opportunities to exercise them. Torre and Fine (2005) proposed that such opportunities are made possible through YPAR because this approach acknowledges youth as capable of identifying, reflecting upon, and contesting policies and/or practices that impact their social lives.

Unlike conventional methodologies premised on the discrete and discordant poles of researcher and researched (that is, subject and object), YPAR treats youth—typically, the ‘researched’ and, so, the supposed ‘objects’ of study—as subjects. Unfortunately, some adult researchers comport themselves as though they were experts on youth’s lives. Taking on this role of expert, they offer reforms to rectify youth’s problems (Kellett, 2005a). In this way, they relegate youth to the fringes, exclude them from decision-making, silence their voices and, in the process, treat them as if they were inanimate objects. Such practices reinforce the subject-object dichotomy, which, according to Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991), is counterproductive. Admittedly, some youth fail to respond to changes occurring within their social world, and as such accept the role of impassive objects. Other youth, though, are dissatisfied with their social reality, and so struggle to affect change (see Cahill, 2007; Dentith, Measor, & O’Malley, 2009; Fine et al, 2003). These young people become active subjects who reject the view that their world is “a static and closed order, a given reality which [they] must accept and to which [they] must adjust” (Shaul, 1986, pp. 12-13). By treating reality as the object of scrutiny, they affirm their right to act as subjects, challenge the injustices committed against them, and identify transformative possibilities that could address their dissatisfying social experiences (Freire, 1986). Thus, as subjects or, as Fals-Borda (2001) put it, “thinking-feeling persons” (p. 30), they can offer their diverse views on a shared life experience while participating in research. What results is a subject-subject relationship. Freire highlighted the significance of such a relationship in the way he described a ‘subject.’ According to Shor (1992), for Freire a ‘subject’ is someone who

has conscious goals and seeks methods to reach them, someone who takes her or his place in the world as a thinking citizen, a codeveloper of her or his education, and a re-maker of society who questions the unequal order of things. (p. 99)

Thus, YPAR is a methodology that respects youth as subjects, offering them the opportunity to affirm themselves as experts on their life experiences.

According to Fine (2008), YPAR takes the question ‘who is the expert?’ and subverts the conventional response (see also Fine, 2006). It challenges the

assumption that professionals—those whom I call ‘authorized experts’—are the only people with the knowledge needed to design and conduct research. YPAR contests this traditional expert validity standard by issuing a “radical epistemological challenge” to the concept of expertise (Fine, 2008, p. 215). It confronts the conventional view that professionals are the only ones with expertise, and questions their practice of silencing youth’s diverse voices and disqualifying their local knowledges (Fine, 2008). Although authorized experts have theoretical knowledge which comes into play in any study about youth’s education, they lack the all-important local knowledge that youth themselves construct as they live within an educational power structure. YPAR honours youth’s “*plural and subjugated expertise* [original emphasis]” predicated on the assumption that they are among those groups “*most* [original emphasis] systematically excluded, oppressed or denied [and as such] carry specifically revealing wisdom about the history, structure, consequences, and the fracture points in unjust social arrangements” (Fine, 2008, p. 215,). By inviting these subjugated experts to participate in a research collective, YPAR legitimizes their perspectives while enabling them to rely and extend upon their knowledges to address institutional problems impacting their lives (Fine, 2008). Hence, by crediting youth at the bottom with expertise, YPAR opposes the claim that those at the top are the only experts who can shape research.

Moreover, Hart (1992, 1997) advised researchers to focus on *how* youth participate as much as if, or when, they do. In order to illustrate the significance of this point, he proposed a typology of child participation structured as an eight-rung ladder. The bottom rungs—manipulation, decoration, and tokenism—identify the manner in which adults posture towards participation with youth. Hart (1997) stressed that these bottom three rungs of the ladder are exploitative: they must be avoided at all cost. In his view, the resulting fraudulent participation divests youth of the opportunity to take part in activities and decisions that affect them directly. The next three rungs up the ladder describe low-levels of youth participation: assigned but informed; consulted and informed; and adult-initiated and shared decision-making. However, the top two rungs point to research efforts

that focus fully on child participation: child-initiated and directed; and child-initiated and shared decision-making with adults. Hart (1997) cautioned that *The Ladder of Participation* must not be used as a measuring stick with the aim of assessing the quality of a study because one must consider the contextual factors that affect the extent to which youth can participate in any research effort. I envisioned a study falling on the sixth rung of Hart's ladder, adult-initiated and shared decision-making.

Identifying the level of participation for the youth in this study, however, was insufficient; I also needed to consider the quality of that participation. While some might think the distinction between 'involvement' and 'participation' negligible, McTaggart (1991) insisted that each term carries distinct meaning. 'Involvement' means to "entangle... implicate... [or] include;" whereas, 'participation' denotes to "share or take part" (p. 171). Given this difference in meaning, adult researchers can neither expect nor impose participation. Greenwood, Whyte, and Harkavy (1993) regarded this as both naïve and morally suspect. Participation, they believed, is a collaborative process during which decisions are made jointly. McTaggart (1991) also took pains to specify how the participant "shares" or "takes part" in the research project. "Authentic participation" (p. 171), he explained, entails (1) establishing the agenda of inquiry; (2) partaking in data collection and analysis; and (3) controlling the use of research outcomes. Cammarota and Fine (2008), on the other hand, coined the phrase "deep participation" (p. 8) This, they argued, begins with the study itself as youth identify problems, frame the inquiry, create interview schedules and protocols, conduct interviews, analyze and interpret data, design a research product, and present critical truths to audiences of worth. Both McTaggart's concept of 'authentic' participation and Cammarota and Fine's notion of 'deep' participation suggest the sort of participation that is arguably central to YPAR. No matter which term one references, ultimately, the PAR process enables youth to take their place as experts and bona fide research 'partners.'

In an effort to clarify how youth would partner with me during the course of the study, I turned to Flutter and Rudduck (2004), and Bragg and Fielding

(2005), each of whom created typologies; ironically, they have only generated more confusion because each typology attributes a different degree of participation to the role of ‘student as researcher’ and ‘student as co-researcher.’ Flutter and Rudduck explained that the role of co-researcher affords students the greatest degree of participation in a study; conversely, Bragg and Fielding argued that such participation is associated with the role of researcher. I contend that those who ascribe the label of ‘researcher’ or ‘co-researcher’ to students must give this greater consideration. An adult who thinks of youth as researchers might overlook their need to learn research-specific skills, the very skills that adults have had years to hone. Furthermore, using the label, researcher, may convey the sense that the adult’s role in the inquiry process is minimal and, perhaps, unnecessary. Similarly, an adult who considers students as co-researchers may communicate an equal status between the adult and youth. In point of fact, equality is an illusion. The adult must acknowledge that a power disparity exists, no matter how covert, and that this inequality impacts his/her partnership with the youth. In the end, the problematic meanings conveyed by the descriptors ‘researcher’ or ‘co-researcher’ compelled me to describe the youth who would participate in this PAR study as research ‘partners.’

Skeptics who believe it impossible to partner with youth fail to recognize their own adult deficiencies in addressing problems that specifically impact students. On the basis that they were once youth themselves, they presume that they can readily adopt the mindset of a youth. However, as Kellett (2005a) has noted, adults “cannot discard the adult baggage they have acquired in the interim and will always operate through adult filters, even if these are subconscious” (Section 5). Youth have an advantage over adults: they are capable of homing in on understandings and circumstances that adults might neither recognize nor acknowledge (Mayall, 2008). For instance, they can obtain responses from their peers in ways that would otherwise be impossible for researchers given issues of power and generational differences (Jones, 2004; Kellett, 2005a; Mayall, 2008). Quite simply, adults examine a youth problem from the ‘outside’ whereas youth, in partnership with adults, examine the same problem from the ‘inside.’

Skeptics respond by arguing that being on the ‘inside’ has limited value when the youth partner lacks necessary problem-solving skills. They view research as an advanced-level activity, best conducted by adults, who are trained for, and experienced in conducting such a complicated task. As Mayall (2008) described, critics go so far as to claim that youth are “incompetent, unreliable, and developmentally incomplete” (p.110). Consequently—so the argument goes—whatever research they conduct and present will inevitably be tainted by a myriad of mistakes.

While youth may have little experience making research decisions, they can and do make many important decisions in various aspects of their lives (Matthews, Limb & Taylor, 1999): it follows then that in partnership with an adult researcher they can learn the skills required in making research-specific decisions (Kellett, 2005b). Alderson (2000, 2008) goes even further. She argued that youth do, in fact, come to research with all the necessary fundamental skills. Since they spend an inordinate amount of time at school, they “are used to enquiring, scrutinizing, accepting unexpected results, revising their ideas, and assuming that their knowledge is incomplete and provisional” (Alderson, 2000, p. 245). These are the very skills that adult researchers have the opportunity to develop in relation to an inquiry process (Alderson, 2000). If, as Alderson suggests, youth already possess basic research skills and need only to hone them, why do some adults deprive youth of the opportunity to refine these skills by participating as research partners (Kellett, 2005a)? YPAR is a methodology that not only values youth’s emergent research skills, but also recognizes the adult’s responsibility for providing opportunities for those skills to evolve. Akom, Cammarota, and Ginwright (2008) went so far as to propose that YPAR is a methodology that functions simultaneously as a pedagogy enabling youth to learn skills in partnership with adults. Clearly, in its attitude toward youth and the ways in which they can enrich the research process, YPAR offers a powerful approach to studying a social experience like the teaching and learning of sexual health education.

Responsive Evaluation

As I envisioned partnering with youth to call attention to students' perspectives of sex education, I realized that I was conceptualizing an inquiry process similar to what Guba and Lincoln (1989) described as Responsive Evaluation. Prior to engaging with their work, I was uneasy about the descriptor 'evaluation'. I associated the term with authorized experts measuring effectiveness in accordance with prescribed norms, criteria, and/or objectives. Eventually, I came to understand that this was not what Guba and Lincoln had in mind. They argued that preemptively defining 'evaluation' functions to halt dialogue around what purposes evaluation serves and how it ought to proceed. Guba and Lincoln explained that Responsive Evaluation is based upon the fundamental belief that "all stakeholders put at risk by [the evaluation] have the right to place their claims, concerns, and issues on the table for consideration (response)" (p. 12). Hence, a responsive evaluation brings all stakeholder groups into the process.

In my efforts to work with a youth stakeholder group to study, or 'evaluate,' sex education at a school, I focused on those whom Guba and Lincoln (1989) termed the "beneficiaries" (p. 40), those who could potentially benefit from the responsive evaluation. Like Guba and Lincoln, I believed it critical for this group to participate as "equal *partners* [emphasis added] in every aspect of design, implementation, interpretation, and resulting action of [the] evaluation" (p. 11). This is not to suggest that I wanted to ignore other stakeholders such as the health teachers and school administrators; clearly, they would have claims, concerns, and issues that warranted attention as well. Before engaging with these decision-makers, though, I wanted to help the beneficiaries/partners construct an action plan to showcase not only what students believe they want/need when it comes to sex education, but also how students would improve existing sex education to make it relevant to their expressed needs. I believed it critical that the research team have this plan in hand when they dialogued with decision-makers; this would give decision-makers the opportunity to 'respond' to student-identified problems and student-proposed solutions.

Problematization

Given that Responsive Evaluation entails an identification of problems, I reasoned that Foucault's process of problematization could be useful in this endeavour. According to Foucault (2007), one uses problematization to study experiences that constitute political problems. Sexuality, he explained, is "a field containing a number of points that are particularly fragile or sensitive" (p. 137); as such, it "doesn't exist apart from a relationship to political structures, requirements, laws, and regulations that have a primary importance for it" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 21). If sexuality constitutes a political problem, so too does sexual health education. Since sex education is politically shaped, I wanted to subject it to a problematizing process. According to Foucault (2003a), this process entails examining a situation or experience by identifying obstacles and difficulties, regarding these as problems and, then, proposing possible transformations. Only by detaching oneself from the experience can one engage in the process of problematization. In order to initiate this process, I took my lead from Foucault (2003a) and acknowledged that something prior to my arrival at the school would need to have taken place so students could "step back" (p. 23) to identify difficulties with the teaching and learning of sexual health (see also Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xviii). As Rabinow and Rose (2003) claim, this certain something could simply be the passage of time; on this basis, it follows that students could, after some time, reflect on their experiences of sex education to identify problems and propose desirable transformations while keeping in mind their needs for sex education.

As for encouraging students to offer transformations relevant to their needs, I once again turned to Foucault for advice. He (2003c) stated,

a transformation that would remain within the same mode of thought, a transformation that would only be a certain way of better adjusting the same thought to the reality of things, would only be a superficial transformation... as soon as people begin to have trouble thinking things the way they have been thought, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult and quite possible. (p. 172)

In other words, when one experiences difficulty thinking about a situation as it is typically conceived, one begins to consider possible transformations, even if they are diverse and, at times, contradictory (Foucault, 2003c). Despite their conflicting nature, the proposed transformations must modify thinking or else they run the risk of being digested by the institution (Foucault, 2003c). Hence, I envisioned working with youth partners by embarking upon a problematizing process with them in order to construct an action plan that would incite decision-makers to change, first, their thinking and, then, their practice.

I anticipated that some staff at the school where I planned to initiate this study would dismiss my efforts. For instance, some decision-makers might assert that sex education is an insignificant component of the overall curriculum and as such is not deserving of study. If they were to express this concern, I was prepared to echo Foucault's (1994b) claim that "there is an overabundance of things to be known: fundamental, terrible, wonderful, funny, *insignificant* [emphasis added], and crucial... And there is an enormous curiosity, a need, a desire to know" (p. 325). Furthermore, others might contend that I was wasting my time because the school's sex education is currently problem-free. Drawing upon Foucault, I would defend myself by explaining that one can problematize "an unproblematic field of experience or set of practices which [are] accepted without question..." and, then, after reflection, the field "becomes a problem, raises discussion and debate, incites new reactions, and induces a crisis in the previously silent behavior, habit, practices and, institutions" (as cited in O'Farrell, 2005, p. 70). Despite the possibility that decision-makers would raise objections, I was hopeful that some would set aside their reservations, and offer me the opportunity to initiate a problematizing process with youth research partners.

Foucauldian Conceptual Tools to Problematize the Disciplinary Limits

I relied upon Foucault's works to identify conceptual tools that would assist me in making sense of the problematizing process that I would initiate at a secondary school. Foucault conducted his "experiments... with [n]o recipe, [and] hardly a general method" (as cited in O'Farrell, 2005, p. 52). These experiments,

he explained, were neither for “an audience” nor for “readers,” but rather “for users” (as cited in O’Farrell, p. 50). Foucault stated, “I believe the freedom of the reader must be absolutely respected... thus, he who writes does not have the right to give orders as to the use of his writings” (as cited in O’Farrell, p. 55). In other words, Foucault refused to constrain and control users in the way they applied his works to plan their own experiments. Even though I regarded myself a ‘user’ of his works, I was encouraged not to apply them stringently:

a book is made to be *used* in ways not defined by its writer. The more, new, possible or unexpected *uses* there are, the happier I shall be... All my books are little tool-boxes. If people want to open them, to *use* [emphasis added] this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or spanner to short-circuit, discredit systems of power, including eventually those from which my books have emerged...so much the better. (Foucault as cited in Mills, 2003, p. 7)

Although Foucault never examined an educational power structure, he did state that users could apply his tools to different contexts to make for new possibilities. Honouring Foucault’s wishes, I rummaged through his large tool-box in search of specific tools to help me conceptualize a study that would problematize students’ experiences of sex education.

Using Critique at the Limits

The first tool I selected—critique—requires that members of a research collective have a certain attitude both in order to use the tool and to promote its use among other students. The youth partners joining me in this study would need to assume what Foucault (1994d) called a “limit-attitude” (p. 315). Foucault explained that people who cast judgment cannot be characterized as having a limit-attitude: these people condemn from a position of assumed moral superiority. On the other hand, those who assume a limit-attitude critique “what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory... and the product of arbitrary constraints” (Foucault, 1994d, p. 315). My task would be to encourage the partners to ascertain what “things... [were]n’t good the way they...[we]re” (Foucault, 2003c, p. 172), and to determine what forces had shaped their sex education experiences. I would support the partners in their efforts to invite other

students to challenge the curricular limits. I would encourage them to do this not because they regarded the limits as dangerous and sexy, and so thrilling to explore, but because they wanted the limits to shift so students' experiences of sex education could ultimately change (see Butler, 2002). With a limit-attitude the partners could join me at the limits of sex education; there, we would employ the tool of critique and invite students to join us in identifying transformations that would change their sex education experiences in ways that would satisfy their expressed needs.

I assumed that, for the sake of sustained school governance or order, some decision-makers would protect the curricular limits from critique. In light of the "great preoccupation" (Foucault, 2003d, p. 265) with governance, I would encourage the partners to regard their sexual health education in terms of "how not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an object in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them" (Foucault, 2003d, p. 265). Addressing some of these points with youth partners would likely provoke opposition from decision-makers satisfied with the status quo. Indeed, Foucault (2003c) acknowledged that critique creates opposition or, in his words, a "turbulent atmosphere," and that transformation provokes "conflict, confrontation, struggle, [and] resistance" (p. 172). On this point, he (2003b) offered the following advice: "[u]nder no circumstances should [you] pay attention to those who tell [you]: 'Don't criticize, since you're not capable of carrying out a reform'" (p. 256). For Foucault, such a charge is unwarranted and its justification specious. A position of privilege does not give one the right to exclude those without privilege from identifying problems, contemplating solutions, and executing transformations. Thus, students could use the tool of critique to resist 'what is' and propose 'what can be;' during this process, the team would induce a shift of the disciplinary limits so that the teaching and learning of sexual health could improve.

Using Effective History at the Limits

I knew that by problematizing students' experiences of sex education the research collective would be critiquing the present by drawing on the past; this led me to select a second Foucauldian tool—effective history. Foucault (1998) explained the importance of using history in an effective fashion. He used history less to retell and reconstruct the past than to comprehend and critique the present. Indeed, he described his study of the prison system, *Discipline and Punish* (1979), as a “history of the present” (pp. 30-31) to put forward “a history that starts off from this present day actuality” (Foucault, 2007, pp. 136-137). According to Foucault (1984c), one who uses effective history regards “[the world as] a profusion of entangled events...a ‘marvelous motley, profound and totally meaningful’” (p. 89). Moreover, one has “no fear of looking down...from above and descend[ing] to seize the various perspectives, to disclose dispersions and differences, [and] to leave things undisturbed in their own dimension and intensity” (p. 89). I believed that, in the context of this study, students could use the tool of effective history to help them identify and claim their perspectives of sex education. By inviting them to recall and critique events, students would be able to gain access to critical ‘counter-memories,’ reconstructions that conflicted with dominant understandings.

‘Counter’-memories, as the prefix denotes, are not monolithic, but heterogeneous (Foucault, 1984c); they are related to mainstream discourses in that they rely upon them to inform a present agenda for change (Law, 2006). These counter-memories would offer marginalized perspectives and disqualified knowledges of the teaching and learning of sexual health. Moreover, these memories contribute to what Foucault (1984c) termed a “curative science” (p. 90). He crafted this analogy between effective history and medicine to stress that counter-memories amount to knowledge that “is not made for understanding,” but “made for cutting” (p. 88). In his analyses, Foucault concentrated on effective history to help ‘cut’ or change the present by placing it in a counter relation to the past. Similarly, I envisioned the research partners using history in an effective

manner—that is, by identifying counter-memories in order to ‘cut’ the present limits of sexual health education.

My Facilitating Role

When I identified a need to evaluate sex education by problematizing students’ experiences, critiquing the curricular limits, and prompting counter-memories of sexual health education, all with the aim of listening to students’ expressed sexual health needs, I recognized a concomitant need to mull over the possible roles I would assume while working with the youth partners. Foucault (1980c) described the possible role of the ‘universal’ intellectual (p. 126). The researcher who assumes this role conducts a general study, collects and interprets data, writes a logically argued analysis, and then, in the presence of decision-makers, pontificates, “Here is what you must do!” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 62). Had I adopted this role, I would have needed to take on the ‘lead role’ as researcher, comport myself as the spokesperson of educational truth, and propose universal solutions. In effect, I would be treating sex education as the same across schools and, in doing so, I would be discrediting and disqualifying people’s knowledges at a local school. This was precisely what I did not want to do. As someone vehemently opposed to rendering the school context insignificant, I was determined to avoid taking on the role of the universal intellectual.

Fine’s (1994a, 1994b) imperative that researchers must avoid ‘Othering practices’ also reinforced my resolve to take on a more equitable role in this study. Although Fine did not reference the phrase ‘universal intellectual,’ she did describe research practices that are clearly compatible with this role. She writes of researchers whose work constitutes only a glimpse of the interior workings of an institution. These researchers learn and write ‘about’ people, not ‘with’ people. Ultimately, they end up Othering the very people they intend to help with their proposed social reforms. If a researcher with this mentality were to focus on youth’s social world within an educational power structure, he/she may very well employ Othering practices to silence youth’s voices, propagate the perception of youth inferiority, and render them passive. These sorts of practices assign youth a

lower status than that given to adults, and perpetuate the notion that research is an adult enterprise, an endeavour that cannot be shared with youth. In contrast, I believe that youth can act as constructors of knowledge and agents of change. I am committed to listening to youth's voices and legitimizing their perspectives. Othering practices are contrary to my research philosophy.

Fine (1994b) advised researchers to abandon Othering practices in favour of 'working the hyphen,' that is, examining the social world 'with' those who have been Othered. According to Fine, the task of the researcher is to examine the "hyphen at which Self-Other join in the politics of everyday life" (p. 70). He/she does this by dialoguing 'with' the Othered about "what is and is not 'happening between,' that is, within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequences" (p. 72). This research role appealed to me. Therefore, I planned to work the hyphen, presenting my Self—the skills, knowledge, experiences, and characteristics that contribute to who I am—while dialoguing with youth partners about the nature of the study. With this dialogic process in mind, I understood that I could not 'arrive' at, but only struggle 'between' Self and Other (Fine, 1994b). In other words, there was no way I would ever gain complete understanding of students' Othered perspectives of sexual health education; yet, by recognizing and respecting their diverse voices in the inquiry process, I could gain a more sophisticated and informed understanding. In this research study, then, I endeavoured to work the hyphen between the partners and myself by engaging in a participatory and, in particular, a dialogical, research process.

Although I envisioned my role as working with youth and engaging in dialogue with them, I needed to establish precisely what tasks would be my responsibility during the course of the study. To address this concern, I returned to Foucault (1980c) and his notion of the "specific intellectual" (p. 126). Foucault (1988) clarified that the role of a "[specific] intellectual is not to tell others what they have to do. By what right would he [*sic*] do so?" (p. 265). Rather, a specific intellectual is concerned with hearing from the people involved in, and familiar

with the current social and political problems. This is the type of person who will undergo the problematizing process and propose localized transformations. The specific intellectual plays a critical role in the research process. According to Foucault (1977), a specific intellectual positions him/herself “alongside those who struggle for power” (p. 208) and encourages them to voice truths back to those who exercise power over them. “What the [specific] intellectual can do,” Foucault (1980a) explained, “is to provide instruments of analysis” in order to support local struggles and assist those who do the struggling (p. 62). When it comes to localized analyses, he/she helps people “to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and institutions... [and] to participate in the formation of a political will” (Foucault, 1988, p. 265). Thus, as a self-identified specific intellectual in the Foucauldian sense, I determined that I was accountable for organizing, encouraging, prompting, and coordinating the research collective while also helping with the sequencing and structuring of the study (see Bragg & Fielding, 2005).

Just as it would be impossible to assume a neutral role in working with the partners, it would also be impossible to assume an ‘equal’ role. Although I could have acted as ‘one of them,’ any effort on my part to bridge the generation gap would have been perceived as superficial attempts at egalitarianism (Jones, 2004; Robinson & Kellett, 2004). I would not support such pretense. Furthermore, it would have been irresponsible to deny my skills and knowledge and disingenuous of me to lie about or purposely overlook my positioning as a doctoral student at the University of Alberta. The University has prestige and power: through my affiliation with it, these qualities were affixed to me. What is more, I could not expunge my academic association because I was accountable for ensuring that the research partners abide by the University’s research ethical standards (Jones, 2004). I knew these realities would inevitably influence my partnership with the youth. Even though there may have been advantages in assuming an equal role with the youth research partners, I had responsibilities that fell under the auspices of an “authoritative adult” (Jones, 2004, p. 113).

In addition, the youth were likely to perceive my role as that of an outside-adult with authority over the participatory process, and this would understandably impact our partnership. After all, I was from a University, older, and more educated. On these grounds, the youth partners might have actually looked to me to “install unilateral authority” (Shor, 1996, p. 18), which would have run counter to the democratic principles upon which YPAR is founded. Given that the youth partners would have been accustomed to following or frustrating adult authority figures, specifically teachers, they would have been unaware of the ways in which they could exercise power with me, supposedly an authority figure standing in the place of a teacher. So infrequent is this opportunity that the prospect is simply beyond them (Shor, 1996). And yet, had I initiated the study by denying my position of authority, I might have led the youth to mistakenly conclude that ‘anything goes’ in the name of research (Shor, 1996). I had no alternative, then, but to acknowledge that I could not instantly shed or deny the authority that I would bring to this study as a university-affiliated researcher.

While I acknowledged an asymmetrical power relation between the youth partners and myself, I could still treat them as subjects while encouraging them to join me in exercising power throughout the research process. Shor (1996) suggested that the experiential nature of such an effort alters the traditional subject-object relationship. By initiating a study and inviting youth to participate as research partners, I would be establishing a subject-subject relation. However, as Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991) admitted, this difficult undertaking depends upon building trust over time. Even after the passage of many days and perhaps months, one may not be able to establish partnerships secured by trust with each member of the collective. Furthermore, the youth may act in ways that overtly suggest a relationship of trust while covertly maintaining a skeptical attitude; or they may act in ways that I mistakenly interpret as evidence of a partnership based on trust. I was prepared to acknowledge that forging a *true* subject-subject partnership with the members of the collective and exercising power with them was wishful thinking on my part. Nevertheless, I would invite them to conceptualize phases of this study, participate in collecting and analyzing

information, design and develop an action plan, and present it to “audiences of worth” (Fine & Torre, 2008, p. 413). Although I would launch this process, I did not want to exert sole authority within or over it; rather, I planned to ‘facilitate’ the process to see that the research collective achieved objectives and met deadlines.

Some might argue that a facilitator is simply a director. Those who hold this view might criticize me for treating the youth partners more like actors in a production of my own direction than as partners in a research enterprise. I did not see my role in these terms, however. In assuming the role of facilitator, I took my lead from Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) who explained that a researcher could collaborate with people, such as youth, by supporting them in achieving shared aims. Kemmis and McTaggart proposed that a facilitator

should not be understood as an external agent offering technical guidance to members of an action group but rather should be understood as someone aiming to establish or support a collaborative enterprise in which people can engage in exploratory action as participants...in response to [the] legitimization [of] deficits. (p. 595)

A facilitator supports this collaborative enterprise by using his/her unique skills and knowledge in strategic ways. Ultimately, the facilitator contributes to the collective by helping members achieve objectives in order to move the research process along (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Thus, I determined that my primary role in this study would be as a facilitator who, by fostering a partnership with youth, would listen to students’ voices and, in turn, assist in presenting their views of, and visions for, sex education to decision-makers in order to induce curricular change.

CHAPTER SIX

Taking Action to Co-Construct the Action Plan

In this chapter, I argue that with some important modifications Lewin's (1946) heuristic model for action research can function as a useful model for delineating the phases of the study that unfolded at Bellman Secondary.

Lewin depicted the action research spiral as a series of commitments (rather than methods or procedures) for problematizing a social situation through a dynamic and continuous social inquiry process (McTaggart, 1996). He illustrated these commitments as a spiral of steps, each of which he represented with a circle. In ascending order, these included identifying a problem, conducting fact-finding, constructing an action plan, acting on that plan, and evaluating or exploring the consequences of those actions.

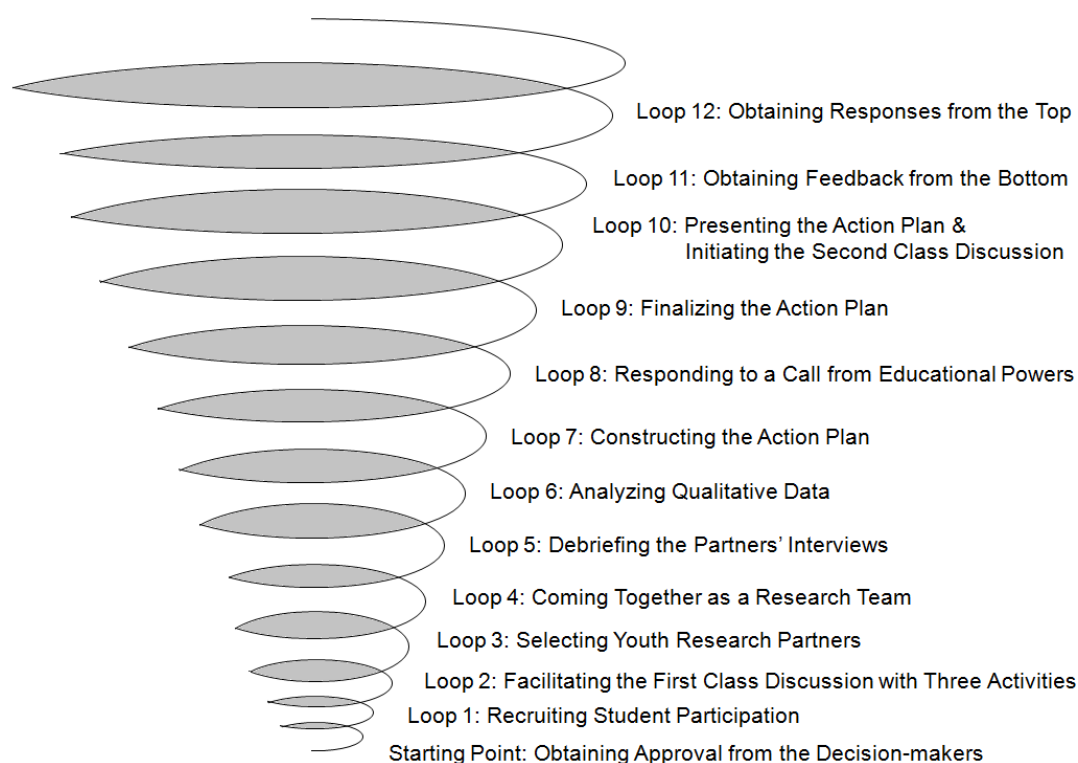
I contend that the problem with Lewin's spiral heuristic of action research lies with the relationship between its component parts. A circle is a closed figure, while a spiral is not. The two are incommensurable. Hence, a series of closed circles does not readily convey a continuous inquiry process.

In order to convey the dynamic and continuous nature of the inquiry process in the heuristic model, I have modified Lewin's spiral by replacing each closed circle with an open, interconnected loop. Much like Lewin's original circles, each loop represents a phase in the research process but, taken together as a whole, the loops form a true spiral that effectively symbolizes the fluid, contextual, and responsive way the team conducted the study (see Figure 1).

I then describe at some length the actions associated with each of the loops in my modified version of Lewin's heuristic *as they transpired in the Bellman study*. (In this chapter, I discuss the spiral's first ten loops; in the next two chapters, I examine loops eleven and twelve.) I explain that the study at Bellman entailed all but the last of Lewin's commitments. While participants acted by presenting an action plan to decision-makers with the aim of engaging them in dialogue with students, the team did not evaluate or explore the consequences of our actions to the teaching and learning of sexual health.

Figure 1

The Bellman YPAR Spiral



An Overview of the Bellman YPAR Spiral

Before I could set the spiral in motion, I needed to secure approval from three key decision-makers to initiate YPAR at Bellman Secondary. The first loop of the spiral developed as I visited prospective student participants in two Grade 12 Exercise Science classes. The second loop took shape as I facilitated two class discussions; at this time I invited student participants to reflect on their sex education experiences and to propose curricular changes that would improve these experiences, all the while keeping in mind their sexual health needs. My efforts in forming a research team of randomly-selected partners from the classes served as the beginning of Loop 3. The fourth loop emerged when the youth research partners joined me for a day-long workshop, during which I taught them about research ethics, outlined the interview research method, and worked with them to

construct an interview guide. Loop 5 developed during a debriefing session as the partners discussed their experiences interviewing their peers. The team's efforts in conducting a thematic analysis of the qualitative data served as the beginning of Loop 6, with the spiral's seventh loop expanding as the team used those findings to design and develop the action plan. The basis for Loop 8 emerged as the team discussed how we would handle a possible request from the teachers to see the action plan earlier than planned. Loop 9 took shape as the team reviewed and finalized the action plan before its unveiling to the two classes. In the spiral's tenth loop, the partners presented the action plan—*Sex-E-cation*—to these classes in order to initiate dialogue about improving sex education at Bellman Secondary.

Starting Point: Obtaining Approval From the Decision-Makers

In order to conduct YPAR within the Willowdale Public School District in Southwestern Ontario, I needed to obtain approval from three key decision-makers: the manager of research activity, the principal of the local school, and the teacher who wished to become involved in the study. In November 2007, the Manager of Research and Assessment, Mr. Thompson (a pseudonym), granted me permission to initiate the study within a secondary school in the district; he did not, however, specify a school site. Consequently, I distributed an information sheet (Appendix F) to six potential schools, all located within the district's urban center. After reviewing the information, a Health and Physical Education Teacher (henceforth, referred to as HPE Teacher) at Bellman Secondary requested a meeting to learn more about the study. Bellman Secondary had approximately 65 teachers on staff and 1000 students, ranging from Grades 9 to 12. Although it had a rich athletic history, the school was primarily known for its academic success. During the meeting at Bellman, the HPE Teacher reasoned that the students who would be assuming the role of research partner would also be satisfying the Grade 12 learning objectives for the Exercise Science curriculum; on this basis, she proposed that the students who would participate in this study ought to receive course credit. Although I agreed that there would be learning opportunities for the partners, I asserted that I could not evaluate them to determine what knowledge

they constructed and/or what skills they honed. I explained that doing so would intensify the existing power relation between myself and the students, and thereby conflict with my efforts to work ‘with’ them as partners. To allay my concerns, the HPE Teacher said she would be the one to evaluate the students by requiring them to write an essay about their experience conducting research. Additionally, she noted that she would be teaching two sections of Exercise Science and wanted students in both classes to have the opportunity to participate. By the end of our meeting, the Teacher had approved of having the Grade 12 students from both classes participate in the study. Along with her approval, I needed consent from the School Principal. I subsequently met with her, presented her with the information sheet (Appendix F) and consent form (Appendix G), and obtained her approval as well.

As I sought approval from these three educational decision-makers, I was reminded of Foucault’s understanding of power and the way it is put into practice. Mr. Thompson exercised power, within the context of his managerial responsibilities, by assessing the study’s aims and then approving the project. His approval, though, did not presuppose that the School Principal and the HPE Teacher would in turn offer their consent. Had Mr. Thompson informed them that I would, in no uncertain terms, be conducting research at Bellman, his action would have been consistent with the conventional perspective of power, which purports that power resides with a select few—in this instance, Mr. Thompson—who offer it in a top-down manner to other decision-makers—the School Principal and the HPE Teacher—who then apply it. Foucault (1984a, 1984b) opposed this conception of power. In his view, power is a practice, which operates within a network of power relations and circulates among these relations to have an overall effect. By applying this understanding to the context of this study, I came to recognize that power operated as a network within the Willowdale District, was transmitted by and through the Manager, the School Principal, and the HPE Teacher, all of whom occupied strategic positions within the hierarchy, to have its overall effect: granting me approval to conduct a study with youth at Bellman Secondary.

Loop 1: Recruiting Student Participation

To launch the study, the HPE Teacher welcomed me into the two Grade 12 classes of Exercise Science. I designated one group of students Class A (22 students) and the other Class B (19 students). In both classrooms, I supplied students with an information sheet (Appendix H), assent form (Appendix I), parental information sheet (Appendix J), and parental consent form (Appendix K). I identified two ways in which the students could voluntarily participate in the study:

- (1) They could take part in three class discussions:
 - First Discussion (Loop 2): Participants would reflect on their sex education experiences at Bellman to identify problems and propose curricular changes that could satisfy their sexual health needs.
 - Second Discussion (Loop 10): Participants would learn about the study's findings by reviewing the proposed action plan, and offer anonymous feedback about this plan. Additionally, students would dialogue with peers and the teacher about improving students' experiences of sex education at Bellman.
 - Third Discussion (Loop 13): After the action plan was presented to decision-makers in the Willowdale School District, the participants would learn how these decision-makers responded to the study's findings and how they planned to change policies and practices pertaining to sexual health education.
- (2) Students could assume the role of research partner, and join me in forming a research team to call attention to youth's perspectives of sex education at Bellman. Research partners would conceptualize parts of the study, conduct semi-structured interviews with at least two peers, analyze the qualitative data, impart the findings in an action plan and, finally, present this plan to the student participants and HPE Teacher during the abovementioned second class discussion.

As an outsider to Bellman, I was not regularly present to retrieve the assent and consent forms from the students; consequently, the HPE Teacher

collected them on my behalf. Of 41 students enrolled in the two classes, 39 consented to take part in the three class discussions (all 22 in Class A and 17 of the 19 enrolled in Class B), while 26 expressed interest in being a research partner (15 from Class A and 11 from Class B).

Loop 2: Facilitating the First Class Discussions

I thought the HPE Teacher would chose to leave the room during the discussions; however, I soon discovered that she wanted to stay and hear what the students had to say about their sex education experiences. I realized that her presence would impact the students, causing them to either censor their speech or abstain from the discussion altogether. (I assume that she realized this as well.) With this possibility in mind, I reminded the Teacher that she would have the opportunity to view the action plan in which the research findings would be showcased and, then, to dialogue with the students about the findings. In the end, the Teacher left me on my own to facilitate the class discussions.

I wanted to create comfortable spaces where the participants could talk freely about what was important to them. At the outset of the discussions, therefore, we reconfigured the desks from rows into a circle, a seating arrangement conducive for engaging in dialogue (Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). Next, I distributed the confidentiality agreement (Appendix C) and reviewed its terms, impressing upon the participants that they would be agreeing to keep all comments confidential. During our dialogue, I refrained from stipulating the issues under discussion because, as Shor (1992) noted, such externally-imposed topics might have been irrelevant to these students. I did, however, set the focus on sex education, treating it as our “topical theme” (Shor, 1992, p. 55), a subject with which students are familiar, but have not yet subjected to critical discussion. Since the participants were senior students, I assumed they had experiences of sex education at Bellman. I explained that I would be inviting them to take part in three activities so they could reflect on their experiences, identify problems, and propose changes, all the while keeping in mind their needs for sex education.

Activity 1: Word association. I began a word association activity by writing the word ‘Sex’ on the whiteboard and asking “When we hear the word ‘sex,’ what do we think of?” By using the inclusive pronoun ‘we,’ I communicated that I wanted to be an active participant. I conceived of this activity as an ‘ice breaker’ that would help participants become comfortable talking about sexual health matters, even those typically unspoken in the classroom. To convey that I was not assuming the role of an authoritative teacher who stands before a class to regulate the discussion, I sat amid the participants and invited a student volunteer to record the participants’ responses on the whiteboard.

In Class A, as the volunteer assumed the traditional teacher role, pointing to students and asking them to articulate sex-related terms, the rest of the class adopted the customary classroom practice of raising their hands for permission to speak. I encouraged them to disregard these conventional practices and respond freely with whatever words came to mind. At first, the participants stared at each other, seemingly surprised at my invitation. Soon, however, participants offered terms such as “boy/girl,” “intercourse,” “STDs,” “pregnancy,” and “birth control.” I observed that although these terms were related to sexual health, they pointed to topics already in the sex education curriculum. To convey that they could cross the curricular limits, I pointed out that they could identify slang terms. A male participant then responded with “fucking.” Presumably, in expressing this potentially offensive term, he was attempting to determine whether I was genuine in my request for any word. No doubt, the class expected me to behave like a teacher and reprimand him for using offensive language. Instead, I simply made eye contact with other participants as a way of communicating that I was waiting for the next term. One by one, participants of both genders began offering a litany of terms: “hand job,” “rusty trombone,” “one night stand,” “prostitution,” “rape,” “orgasm,” “orgy,” “swingers,” “doggy-style,” “lube,” “ménage-a-trois,” and “strippers.” The participants could have continued but we ended the activity when no space remained on the whiteboard.

When I considered this word association activity in light of Foucault's conceptions of discourse and power, I recognized three distinct phases. The first began with the student participants satisfying an expectation of educational powers. Given that the mandated sex education curriculum functioned as an "instrument of power" (Foucault as cited in Mills, 2003, p. 54), it made sense that the students would do exactly what they had learned from this curriculum: to forgo speaking about sexuality indiscriminately. That is to say, the students behaved as expected by perpetuating what is authorized within the curricular limits and ignoring what falls beyond. Foucault (1984e) explained that people modify their speech by taking into account social relationships, like the teacher-student power relation. Presumably, the student participants looked to their surroundings—the health classroom—to deduce that interacting with me would be akin to relating with a teacher. On this basis, they tailored or censored their contributions to the activity. Had I assumed the role of teacher, I would have regulated the activity and policed the students, allowing them only to speak or, precisely, repeat words pointing to the authorized truth in the curriculum. In other words, I would have exercised disciplinary power to 'train' the participants in perpetuating only that which complied with the teachers' intervention or, in educational terms, the school program (Foucault, 1984e). To communicate that I was interested neither in acting as a teacher nor in exercising power in a repressive way, I did something uncharacteristic of most teachers: I invited the students to voice slang expressions. By doing so, I intended to make clear for them their freedom to resist the effects of disciplinary powers by crossing the disciplinary limits into what Foucault (1981) called the "space of a wild exteriority" (p. 61). I wanted also to encourage the participants to exercise power by mounting an anti-authority struggle (see Foucault, 1994c) so they might begin producing a counter-discourse of sex education. With these aims in mind, I supported not only a disruption to the teacher-student power relation, but also a challenge to the educational order related to the teaching and learning of sexual health. For the student participants to entertain such possibilities, though, they

needed to move beyond the first phase of the word association activity, typified by their compliance to the status quo.

This necessary push into the second phase of the activity came when one participant defied the rules, crossed the curricular limits, and offered the term “fucking.” One might argue that this participant used his experiences of the mandated curriculum as “a point of resistance” (Foucault as cited in Ball, 1990, p. 2) to give rise to a counter-discourse (see Foucault, 1977). Through a deliberate act of resistance—voicing the potentially offensive word and identifying a silence hovering around the mandated curriculum—he experienced the benefits of placing himself outside the reach of educational power in anticipation of freedom (see Foucault, 1984g). As the first to diverge from conventional classroom decorum and cross the disciplinary limits, this participant established himself as a radical figure, who garnered the support of some marginalized and subjugated peers. When they followed the radical participant beyond the curricular limits by speaking supposedly off-limit terms, the word association activity transitioned into its third phase. As these participants offered additional ‘taboo’ words, they gasped and giggled; this reaction is indicative of the pleasure associated with speaking against power (see Foucault, 1984g). Hence, during the three phases of the word association activity, the student participants came to understand that they can give rise to a counter-discourse of sex education by challenging the rules and crossing the disciplinary limits to incite curricular change.

Both male and female student participants in Class A took part in the word association activity; in Class B, however, males dominated the activity and only one female made a contribution. Harvey was the first to participate, offering the word “intercourse.” He was so excited by the activity that he began to urge his classmates to speak terms associated with sex, prompting the following exchange:

Harvey: Doing the dirty. Don’t be shy guys [encouraging his peers to contribute].

Male Participant: Sexual relations.

Harvey: Maybe, oral.

Rose: Just shout them [the words] out. What do we think of when someone says ‘sex’? What words come to mind?

Female Participant: Love.

Harvey: No! Anal. That’s good stuff.

The boys followed Harvey’s lead, expressing the terms “STDs,” “porno,” and “masturbation.” Rather than explicitly encourage competition between the males and females, I indirectly asked the females to participate by looking at some and posing the question: “Are those all the words we can think of when it comes to sex?” Harvey responded to my challenge with the disclaimer “I don’t want it to get too dirty,” but then proceeded to add the term “dirty-dog.” His male peers followed his example by offering “angry pirate,” “orgasm,” “toys,” “semen,” “games,” and “domination.” Observing how the males were dominating the activity, I brought it to an end. Immediately, the students began chatting among themselves, prompting Harvey to attract their attention by raising his voice to ask me a question:

Harvey: Actually, I have a really quick question for you. You asked us what we think of when we hear ‘sex.’ What do you think of when you hear the word sex?

Rose: I think of ‘desire.’ I think of ‘pleasure.’

Harvey: Impressive [he says softly; participants laugh].

Rose: What do you think of?

Harvey: I already said most of mine, all that stuff [pointing to the words written on the whiteboard]. Desire? That’s not up there. That’s interesting. I wasn’t expecting that one at all.

Rose: What did you think I was going to say?

Harvey: I don’t know. [pause] I don’t know. [peers laugh] You said that word, you made me think about it. It’s like...fuck [muttering under his breath]. It’s interesting. [peer laugh]

Rose: Okay.

Harvey: It’s interesting. I’m interested.

As Harvey confirmed his interest in the class discussion, the other participants refrained from chatting with their peers.

While I was interested in encouraging the participants to express words related to sex, even those typically unspoken in the classroom, Harvey was interested in hearing a specific subset of unspoken words. When a female participant expressed the word ‘love,’ Harvey objected, stating that ‘anal sex’ was ‘good stuff’ and implying that ‘love’ was not. Rather than contemplate why Harvey thought himself entitled to approve or disapprove his peers’ words, I considered what type of words garnered his approval by examining those he had voiced during the activity. He had offered terms associated with sexual activity (e.g. intercourse, oral, and anal) and related them to ‘dirty’ (e.g. doing the dirty; dirty dog). It seemed as though Harvey expected his peers to express words related not only to sex, but also to ‘the dirty.’ This expectation calls to mind Rubin’s (1999) conception of the charmed circle, a metaphorical means for describing dominant western notions of sexuality. Given that the participants were familiar with the circle’s inner space by virtue of the ‘good,’ ‘right,’ and ‘acceptable’ sex education curriculum, Harvey likely envisioned the word association activity as an opportunity for them to venture beyond the authorized curriculum, or what he might have characterized as a ‘sterile’ curriculum. That is to say, Harvey expected his peers to explore the ‘bad,’ ‘wrong,’ and ‘unacceptable’ outer limits of the charmed circle or, in other words, its ‘dirty’ space. Furthermore, by rejecting the female participant’s contribution to the word association activity, he implicitly communicated to his peers that they ought to disregard what he seemed to construe as sterile topics—like love—and concentrate on the ‘dirty’ ones.

When Harvey asked me to express a word associated with sex, I interpreted this as a challenge to the power position that I invariably assumed while interacting with the students. It seems likely that students saw me as having much the same position and status as a substitute teacher. They expected me, as a teacher-substitute, to speak a word typically spoken by teachers. Among the

various words that immediately occurred to me was the term ‘desire.’ By sharing this term, I remained true to the spontaneous nature of the activity. Harvey’s reaction seemed to suggest that no teacher in his experience had uttered the word ‘desire’ during class let alone presented sexual desire as a viable topic for discussion; desire is often a topic overlooked by teachers because, as Fine (1988) has explained, they conceive of such discourse as an interruption to the mandated curriculum. But I wondered if Harvey was impressed not simply because I had uttered a word he was unaccustomed to hearing in the classroom, but also because this was a word that defied his dual categorization system, a word that he could not easily fit into the categories of sterile or dirty. Harvey admitted that the word ‘desire’ provoked him to think. Was he reconsidering his characterization of sexual health education? Desire may be a topic overlooked by teachers and an aspect of sexuality relegated to the outer limits, but, does this necessarily mean that desire is ‘dirty’? Moreover, if desire is not dirty why is desire excluded from the curriculum? This paradox may have been what piqued Harvey’s interest.

Activity 2: Defining sex education. I introduced Activity Two so participants would feel comfortable thinking and critiquing their sex education experiences at Bellman using their own definitions of sex education. Had I proposed a definition, such as the ones from WHO (2002) or PHAC (2008), I would have been adopting an authoritative position over the students by preempting their thoughts and language, and dismissing their expertise in defining sexual health education for themselves. Additionally, I would have been mounting my own “thematic hobbyhorse” (Shor, 1992, p. 70) by expecting participants to explore sex education in terms that made sense to me. Hence, I sought to democratize the power relation by encouraging them to talk about sex education in their own words, and thereby establish the idiom of our discussion (see Shor, 1992).

In both classes, the participants began by first defining formal sex education (as experienced with teachers) and then informal sex education (as experienced with friends.) Reflecting on the former, they described it as a “50-

year-old gym teacher talking about sex—kinda weird,” learning “about the bad side of [sex],” “the facts about sex, not really the positives” and “[to be] pretty much... abstinent,” and focusing on “warnings” and “the science part.” In Class A, a participant specifically contrasted formal and informal sex education: it is “kinda textbook exposure, [whereas] between friends its kinda more relaxed—they cover more interesting and inappropriate things.” I asked this participant to elaborate upon what these ‘things’ included. Without uttering a word, he pointed to the whiteboard, suggesting that sex education with friends involved talking about the topics from the word association activity. Similarly, in Class B, a participant differentiated between sex education with teachers and that with friends: “[teachers] focus on like the anatomy, and like learning about the STDs and about how to have sex on the safe side, but not on the stuff we talk about with friends.” Two students elaborated upon this distinction by describing the way youth talk about sexuality with friends:

Yeah, usually from the older kids.

Like in the playground [students laugh]... It’s like they [friends] are Grade 8s and they tell you about having sex. Like the porno stuff, it’s like: Oh God, it’s scary, but good.

Hence, as the student participants addressed the question—“what does sex education at Bellman mean to you?”—they distinguished sex education with teachers from that with friends.

When defining formal sex education at Bellman, participants underscored points reminiscent of a restrictive sexual ideology and a protective discourse of sexuality. Their description conveyed the belief that teachers limit information and control discussion, two practices associated with a restrictive ideology (see McKay, 1997, 1999). The participants’ evolving definition also suggested that teachers structure the teaching and learning of sexual health to protect students because they are a vulnerable and immature group whose sexuality is problematic (see Allen, 2007a; Lesko, 1996, 2001). Hence, according to the participants’ understanding of formal sex education, the teachers at Bellman believed it their

responsibility to limit the curricular content in order to safeguard students from the ‘negative’ and/or ‘bad’ outcomes of sexual activity.

By contrasting formal sex education with informal sex education, participants called attention to a permissive sexual ideology and a discourse of desire; specifically, they described informal sex education with friends in terms of age, space, and content. First, the students proposed that talking about sexual health was more ‘weird’ with a much older teacher than with an older ‘kid’ or friend. Second, they intimated that teachers speak to students in tense environments (that is, the classroom), whereas friends talk in relaxed settings. Last, concerning content, the students suggested that teachers address ‘appropriate’ and ‘uninteresting’ negative facts from textbooks, while friends talk about ‘inappropriate’ and ‘interesting’ topics, like those found in pornography. Collectively, these three characteristics shed light on youth’s “thick desire” for relevant sexual health education (Fine & McClelland, 2006, p. 300). When such desire goes unsatisfied—because the teachers are too old, the space for discussion too tense, and/or the content too boring—youth meet older friends in comfortable spaces to co-construct meaning about sexuality, specifically as it relates to topics falling beyond the curricular limits. One of these very topics, as participants noted, is pornography, with its multitude of subtopics including pleasure. Given that such a topic is likely absent from a formal sex education program undergirded by a restrictive ideology, youth turn to friends with a more permissive ideological bent (see McKay, 1997, 1999). These friends, the participants suggested, prioritize youth’s voices and address their expressed sexual health needs.

Activity 3: Guided discussion. I could have facilitated Activity Three by asking a litany of predetermined questions about Bellman’s sex education; but, had I done so, I would have been encouraging only assertive and/or academic students to voice their perspectives (see Shor, 1992). Consequently, with the aim of promoting broader participation, I invited the participants to write responses to the following three questions, which I conceptualized from a review of the literature:

- (1) What does effective sex education mean to you?
- (2) What are your needs when it comes to sex education? and
- (3) What changes would you make to sex education offered here at Bellman to satisfy your needs?

The work of Allen (2005), who encouraged youth to reflect on their experiences and project into the future to determine what effective sex education meant to them, helped me to formulate the first question. Kirby (2007) was also relevant; he suggested that decision-makers conceptualize ‘effective’ sex education programming as provoking youth to behave in ways that satisfy normative needs or, alternatively, avoid socially-constructed ‘negative/unwanted’ outcomes such as teen pregnancy and STI transmission. The second question was inspired by McKay and Holowaty (1997) and Forrest et al. (2004). McKay and Holowaty argued that decision-makers who plan programs must take into account students’ self-perceived or expressed sexual health needs; Forrest et al. proposed that sex education could increase in relevancy, accessibility, and appeal if programming went beyond normative needs to expressed needs. The works of Eisenberg et al. (1997), DiCenso et al. (2001), and Selwyn and Powell (2007) gave rise to the third and final question. Based on their engagements with youth, each of these researchers concluded that youth want to critique their experiences of sex education in order to report ways sex education ought to be taught. On this basis, I invited the participants to propose reforms decision-makers could adopt to improve sex education at their school.

I offered the participants guidance on writing their responses to the three questions by promoting a form of free-writing in which they could forgo concerns of spelling, grammar, and formatting. Moreover, I reminded them that they were under no obligation to submit their responses to me. For the participants who decided to do so, however, I asked them to identify only their gender and age (see Table 2). I also explained that I would share their responses with the research team, which I would soon be mobilizing.

Table 2
Written Responses from First Class Discussion

Class	Gender	Participants	Age
Class A <i>n</i> =23	Male	6	17
		6	18
	Female	6	17
		4	18
		1	19
Class B <i>n</i> =17	Male	5	17
		1	18
	Female	11	17

I learned from Shor (1992) that group interaction enables people to gain a better understanding of their respective standpoints and assists them in re-conceptualizing their positions by considering others' feedback. With this in mind, I invited the students to form groups of three and share their responses with their peers. Each group then synthesized their members' views by identifying similarities and differences. In this way, even the introverted, submissive, and alienated students who were likely to refrain from spontaneously voicing their responses in a whole-class discussion were able to participate and voice their positions by reading their responses within the context of a small group.

Each small group designated a spokesperson who shared the group's synthesis with the entire class. During the ensuing discussion, I restrained my authoritative voice by curtailing my commentary; my goal was to hear as much student expression as possible. I remained attentive to points of agreement, elaboration, and difference, and then probed the participants to clarify and/or elaborate on points and positions. By doing so, I intended to communicate that the participants' perspectives—not mine—were the foundation for our discussion. Moreover, I encouraged the participants to empower themselves by problematizing 'what is' and proposing 'what could be' when it came to their sex education. At the end of each class, I asked a volunteer to summarize the discussions. Had I given myself the last word, I would have been conforming to a

traditional teacher practice—the end-of-class ceremonial teacher wrap-up—and reinforcing the preeminent educational structure and practices that the students were critiquing (see Shor, 1992).

Problems with sex education at Bellman. I audio-recorded all three activities in both classes, and transcribed these recordings verbatim. During Activity Three, the participants identified what was problematic with their sex education experiences and what practices and/or policies needed changing. I did not quantify the times participants mentioned a particular problem/change. Had I conducted the analysis in this way, I would have failed to acknowledge the possibility that participants were uncomfortable agreeing or disagreeing with their peers' comments. Instead, the analysis presented in Appendix B was grounded in my belief that every participant and, by extension, every expressed problem/change merited attention and consideration. If participants identified a problem/change more than once, I quote the most descriptively-rich comment or, in some cases, present two or more examples. Six topic categories emerged within the two class discussions: Curriculum Planning of Health and Physical Education, Curriculum Content, Teacher, Visual Instructional Resources, Teaching and Learning Environment, and Ideological Beliefs. Finally, I shared the transcripts of the two discussions and my analysis with the youth research partners.

Loop 3: Selecting Youth Research Partners

In my efforts to assemble the research team from those participants who took part in the two class discussions, I was guided by Krueger (1994) and Morgan (1997). Their work on focus group discussions was relevant because, much like the members of a focus group, the members of the research team would express their individual perspectives, question their partners' positions, and reconsider their individual views (Krueger, 1994). Given Krueger's point that focus groups must be "small enough for everyone to share their views, yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions" (p. 17), I paid particular attention to the number of team members. While I wanted the team small so we would feel

comfortable sharing our perspectives, I also wanted it large enough so we would have a diverse pool of ideas from which to draw while planning aspects of our study. Following Morgan's rule of thumb that focus groups ought to range in size from six to ten participants, I had planned to initiate YPAR at Bellman by randomly selecting six youth to join me in forming a research team. However, because more students than expected—26 of the 41 in the two classes—expressed interest in assuming the role of research partner, I decided to increase the team from six to eight members, which still fell within Morgan's suggested range. I generated a list of research partners by randomly selecting the names of eight students. When I showed this list to the HPE Teacher, she recommended that I increase the size of the team to at least 15. I explained that a team of that size would work against the research aims; consequently, I adhered to my plan of randomly selecting eight research partners. Given that the Teacher offered to notify the eight students who would join me for an all-day workshop, I provided her with the list of names.

Although I intended that the research partners be randomly selected, this, as it turned out, did not transpire. Of the nine students who attended the workshop, only five had been on my randomly-generated list. The HPE Teacher had modified the size of the research team from eight to ten, substituting three of my initial choices and adding two new members (one who was unable to attend). This was a critical development because the method of selection had now shifted from random to purposive. I contemplated cancelling the workshop to review with the Teacher my reason for randomly selecting participants, but decided that this would have been counterproductive. Equally important, I did not want to disappoint the nine students who had come to the workshop. Hence, I welcomed the following students to take on the role of research partner: Allison, Bert, Carrie, Harvey, James, Larry, Patricia, Ryan, and Sandra.

In assembling a research team, I aimed to honour youth's participatory rights rather than legitimize the HPE Teacher's expertise. By drawing on Torre and Fine (2011), who asserted that "expertise is widely distributed, but legitimacy is not" (p. 116), I concluded that while everyone within an educational hierarchy

has expertise, only those occupying upper-ranking positions garner legitimacy. On this basis, I suspected that the Teacher's position led people to consider her a legitimate sex education expert at Bellman. As a result of having others validate her perspective, the Teacher likely expected me to continue honouring her expertise. However, because I aimed to disassociate expertise with ranking, I was prepared to listen to students' voices, privilege their perspectives, and, more significantly, legitimize their expertise. To do so, I planned to honour participatory rights as enshrined in the UN *Convention* (1989) by recognizing youth as change agents who can participate in research on problems that affect their lives (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Torre & Fine, 2006). Notably, because it was impossible to have all consenting students participate as research partners, I justified a random selection to avoid identifying a criterion (like academic achievement) that would inevitably function to deny some youth of their participatory rights. Given that I decided to randomly select students without asking for input from any particular decision-maker, I assumed I unwittingly insulted the Teacher, prompting her to exercise power over me—as she was probably accustomed to doing over students—and purposively select students to act as research partners. In this way, rather than acknowledge all students as having the right to participate in the research team, she must have believed that only a select few who satisfied some criteria were worthy of this opportunity. On this basis, the Teacher likely reasoned that she was helping me assemble a high caliber team; however, by failing to consult with me about her selection of students, she never learned that it was far more important that I offer all youth the chance to exercise their participatory rights.

Loop 4: Coming Together as a Research Team

As I facilitated the day-long workshop, the nine youth and I formed a research team. We made decisions about the study while reviewing key concepts and honing particular skills. As an advocate of the discovery-based model of learning (Cook-Sather, 2006; Thiessen, 2007), I respected the partners' rights to express their perspectives and to have them seriously considered (UN *Convention*,

1989). In order to create a space where the partners could freely exercise such rights, I stressed that signing the confidentiality agreement (Appendix E) was critical. I explained that by doing so the team members would be agreeing to keep one another's comments confidential. Moreover, I facilitated the workshop with the aim of deepening the team members' understanding of research and honing their research-related skills. On this basis, I divided the day-long workshop into two sessions: *Envisioning our Ethical Research* (Appendix T) and *Conducting Research Interviews* (Appendix U). Throughout the day, I posed questions, facilitated dialogue, and offered guidance; by the end of workshop, the youth and I came together as a research team as we concretely and systematically planned how to proceed in ultimately listening to youth voice their views and visions related to sex education at Bellman.

Given that I was an outsider to Bellman, I assumed that the partners might be shy and reluctant to engage with me in dialogue; however, this was not the case. Sandra, for example, was curious about what had motivated me to study sex education; James was interested in knowing who functioned as 'my boss' at the school. I could have evaded their questions; but, had I done so, I would have stood at a distance and listened to the students speak without speaking in return. Comporting myself in this deliberate attempt at Othering the partners (see Fine, 1994b) was out of the question. Given my respect for Kincheloe's (2005, 1997, 1993) understanding of critical constructivism and Fine's (1994b) advice of "working the hyphen" (p. 72), concealing my self from the youth was not an option if I wanted to forge partnerships with them. I acknowledged that only by recognizing and respecting the youth as subjects would I succeed in engaging them as partners. Hence, from the outset of the workshop, I dialogued with the youth: in doing so, I honoured their curiosities by sharing my self.

After responding to the partners' questions and introducing relevant information about my self, I asked the youth why they were joining me as research partners. As part of his response, Ryan explained that other students "couldn't care less about sex education... because it is only one unit in any one gym course—it is just something that you have to do." This statement was

interesting for two reasons. First, Ryan believed that other students accept the role of passive objects and consider sex education something they have to do because educational powers stipulate it must be done (see Shaul, 1986). Second, he appeared to compare those students with the research partners, who through their participation in the team acknowledged the inherent importance of this curricular subject. Similarly, James proposed that the research partners were different from other students, but for a different reason. He focused on the others' discomfort with talking about sexual health, inferring that if those students cannot even talk about it, they surely are not going to care about changing sex education. Thus, James argued that such students conform to current policies and practices of sex education because it is comfortable to do so, whereas the research partners endeavour to change said policies and practices, even if this is uncomfortable because they care about improving students' experiences.

The team members cited their own problematic experiences at Bellman as the reason why they cared about, and were interested in, sex education. Harvey liked the idea of changing sex education because "it is messed up...half the time, it is Grade 9s watching a movie from the 1950s, with the lights off so they just fall asleep, [so] half the class gets nap time." James wanted to stress to students who dismissed the value of sex education that it does bear importance. By saying "their perspectives are warped because of the way it [sex education] was presented in the first place—we have to learn about STIs and that's it—" he argued that he wanted to change what and how students were taught. Seemingly, Harvey and James were suggesting that their sex education was irrelevant in satisfying their sexual health needs. This is a common view, with literature showing that students describe their sex education experiences as unrealistic, repetitive and, indeed, irrelevant (e.g. Allan, 2005; Eisenberg et al., 1997; Noon & Arcus, 2002; McKay & Holowaty, 1997). The partners wanted to rectify this problem. Bert, in particular, noted "how many times are you gonna get...to help out and get a chance to change the curriculum." His comment implied that students have few, if any, chances to affect change (see Cook-Sather, 2002; Thiessen, 2007). Allison agreed with Bert and described partnering with me as an

empowering prospect. She suggested that this was a way to improve the quality of sex education at Bellman by hearing students' perspectives in order to teach the teachers ways in which sex education could change. Thus, the partners appeared prepared to embark upon an empowering social-action research process (Wallerstein, 1992; Hagquist & Starrin, 1997) to address problems such as irrelevant content and practices by constructing a disruptive pedagogy (Weis & Fine, 2001). To carry out this process, our team had to make five key decisions.

Decision 1: What are our research questions?

Our discussion on specifying research questions germane to Bellman Secondary began with me explaining that youth's perspectives of sex education often go unacknowledged by teachers and other decision-makers. I noted that these decision-makers are likely to make changes 'for' students without listening to the students themselves. While this might have been the case at Bellman, the circumstances were about to change: the HPE Teacher would be dialoguing with the students, including the research partners, in both classes to hear their perspectives of sexual health education (Loop 10). To inform this dialogue and incite change, the team would learn what students believe is problematic with their sex education and how they would remedy the problems. Given that I was dedicated to working 'with' the partners, I believed it critical to identify what motivated me to initiate the study in the first place. Thus, I shared with the team my two research curiosities (outlined in Chapter One) so they could determine questions of interest to them and of significance to Bellman. My first curiosity—What are youth's perspectives of their sexual health education experiences?—prompted the partners to contextualize the question, taking into account the students' sex education experiences at Bellman. My second curiosity—How do students and decision-makers respond to an action plan that showcases youth's perspectives of sexual health education for a particular school?—prompted dialogue about the action plan itself. Some of the partners maintained that the plan needed to present the problems with sex education, while others insisted that it needed to outline students' desired curricular changes. Larry, in particular,

concentrated on the intended audience, the teachers, arguing that if the action plan were to present a litany of problems, it would insult them and risk compromising our ultimate goal: to incite change to the teaching and learning of sexual health at Bellman. Agreeing with Larry, partners noted that the team would be alluding to the problems by concentrating on the student-proposed changes to sex education. In the end, the team agreed that the action plan would address the following research questions:

- (1) What are students' perspectives of sex education at Bellman
Secondary?
- (2) How would the students change the sex education offered at Bellman if they could?

Decision 2: Who will be invited to participate in an interview?

Since the team was calling attention to the “fresh view” of youth’s perspectives of sex education, it made sense that we conduct interviews (see Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 48) to obtain that view. As an introduction, I pointed to the preponderance of talk shows on television as evidence that we live in an “interview society” (Fontana & Frey as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 340). I was concerned, however, that the team members would liken television interviews to research interviews, prompting them to conclude that the latter are just as simple and so relatively straightforward to conduct. To debunk this misconception, I endeavoured to teach the partners how a researcher conducts a face-to-face interview. I stressed that research interviews are complex because the two participants come together in an asymmetrical power relation to talk about a subject of particular interest to the interviewer (Kvale, 1996). Although the interviewers and the interviewees in this project would be ‘peers,’ they would not be equal. I noted that the interviewers would be responsible for presenting sex education as the focus, controlling the interview’s exploratory nature, and attending to their peers’ views of, and visions for, sex education at Bellman.

I explained that the interview guide approach (Patton, 2002), despite its disadvantages, would provide flexibility. I clarified that this method requires, as

the name implies, the use of a guide constructed for the study's purposes. Specifically, I detailed that while our guide would outline topics and questions, it would also grant the partners the freedom to pose probes so the interviewees could elucidate and illuminate their views of, and visions for, sexual health education.

Next, I facilitated a discussion about who we would recruit to participate as interviewees. I cited Rubin and Rubin (2005) who insisted that interviewees must be, first, experienced and, second, knowledgeable about the topic. As for the first criterion, the team agreed that the students needed to have first-hand experience of sexual health education from either classroom instruction or the annual health fair. For the second criterion, I noted that although the team required knowledgeable students, we could not ascertain in advance how much knowledge any one student would be willing to share. The team, I explained, could only determine if we had interviewed knowledgeable students and addressed our research questions when we convened for a debriefing session (Loop 5). Given the sensitivity associated with the subject matter, I suggested that a student interviewee might be more comfortable and willing to elaborate upon his/her perspective, if he/she were to engage with an interviewer of the same gender. In the end, the team concluded that a prospective interviewee had to be in Grade 12, enrolled in any course excluding Exercise Science, and be the same gender as the research partner conducting the interview.

After clarifying who we would invite to participate in a research interview, the team concentrated on how the partners would comply with ethical standards during the interview itself. I showed the team the information sheets (Appendices L and N) and consent forms (Appendices M and O) they would be giving to prospective interviewees. Given that the partners would be interviewing students in Grade 12, there was a possibility that some would be 18 years of age and as such could consent to participate in the study without the permission of their parent(s). Although I initiated the study intent upon honouring participatory rights for youth younger than 18, I did not want to mobilize a team that would exclude, on account of age, prospective participants from voicing their views of, and

visions for, sex education at Bellman. Thus, I explained that the partners could interview 18 year old students; however, for those who were younger, I stressed that the partners had to obtain parental consent prior to proceeding with the interview. I also introduced the concepts of informed consent, privacy/confidentiality, and trust (Kvale, 1996) by presenting possible scenarios the partners might encounter while preparing, conducting, and/or concluding their interviews. Allison recapped the importance of conducting ethical research by pointing to the ethics forms and noting that the partners, before turning on the recorder and proceeding with the interview, needed to inform prospective participants, address their questions, and obtain parental consent from students younger than 18 years of age.

By focusing on this age requirement, the team members expressed feelings of frustration and annoyance that age serves as sufficient grounds for parents to control students' possible participation in the study and for teachers to limit students' sex education. Their feelings were evident in the following comments:

Sandra: I think that it's kind of frustrating... We already have responsibility to like have a car and drive [at the age of 16]; but, we don't have the responsibility to know our education, we have no control over that... First, it is 16 and, then, it is 18 [years of age].

James: It is kind of annoying. They're [teachers] slowly giving us the power to do things on our own. Slowly giving us the power to be independent... Education involves you: your choices, your life, your future, it should be your decision, technically. But, like that 18-year-old-rule... An adult, a legal adult, has more power than kids under age. They [students] can't even participate in this interview without their parents. Like how low is that? It's their views; but, they can't participate because their parents don't agree with what the student does. They're not 18—they can't have their own say.

Allison: As students go from elementary to high school, you should have more of a say in what you take. Because in elementary school it's like: you have no choice in what you're taking... As soon as you get into high school, you get to start picking your electives. You have more of a say, so you should have a say in what you're actually learning too.

While I acknowledged the partners' views about students younger than 18 years-of-age requiring parental consent to participate in the study, I also clarified that

these youth, upon obtaining parental consent, could participate without fear that their parent(s) would have access to the interview transcript. Moreover, in response to the claim that age restricts youth from exercising power to shape their education, I cited the UN *Convention* (1989) and the WHO (PHAC, 2008) to confirm that youth, in spite of their age, have the fundamental human right to seek information about sexual health, engage in sexual health education, and participate in constructing such education (see also Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Collins & Coleman, 2008; Kennedy & Covell, 2009; van Vliet & Raby, 2008). On this basis, I stressed encouraging peers to exercise these rights by expressing their perspectives and seeking change to their sex education experiences. I noted that we would use the data collected to construct an action plan that would communicate to decision-makers that youth—regardless of their age—have voices that warrant attention.

Decision 3: What questions will the interview guide include?

To develop our interview guide, the team reviewed various types of interview questions (including, for instance, introductory, probing, and direct questions), taking into account the characteristics of a ‘good question’ (open-ended, singular, clear, and neutral) (Patton, 2002). Then, after honing interviewing skills through role-playing activities, the team turned its attention to constructing a guide for our study.

I introduced three sources to consider as we discussed, deliberated and, ultimately, decided on a set of interview questions. First, I reviewed the research of Noon and Arcus (2002), who structured their interview guide in accordance with the following central components of sex education: content, teaching methods, teacher, message, relevance, and influence. I underscored that sexual activity was not among these components. Since I had assured the Willowdale Board that the team would avoid learning about youth’s sexual activity, I explained to the partners that our guide needed to focus on students’ experiences of sex education. Second, I distributed the transcripts of the class discussions (Loop 2) and proposed that the partners look for topics they could further explore

in the interviews. Last, I called the partners' attention to issues students in both classes identified as problematic with their sex education (Appendix B). With these three sources in hand, the team separated into pairs to construct questions; subsequently, we reconvened to review all possible questions and, whenever necessary, re-word them by taking into account the four characteristics of good questioning (Patton, 2002). In the end, the team decided that the interview guide would contain the following questions:

- (1) What does effective sex education mean to you?
- (2) What do you think students need when it comes to sex education?
- (3) In what classes have you learned about sexual health?
- (4) In what ways has sex education influenced you? What was the main message?
- (5) Who do you feel most comfortable talking to when it comes to sexual health and why? (e.g. parents, teachers, friends)
- (6) Who should teach you about sexual health? What characteristics make for a good sex education teacher?
- (7) What were the teaching methods used to teach you about sexual health? What do you think of these methods?
- (8) If you were a teacher, how would you teach sex education?
- (9) Can you describe your ideal sex education classroom at Bellman?
- (10) Every year Bellman has a health fair, what are your thoughts about this fair? How would you improve the health fair?
- (11) How would you plan sex education at Bellman? Who do you think needs to have a voice or a say in planning sex education at Bellman?
- (12) A research team is creating an action plan for sex education to present to teachers. What would you say to the teachers when it comes to improving sex education?
- (13) What is the most important change you would make to sex education at Bellman?

With these questions constituting our interview guide, the team members familiarized ourselves with its use by reviewing interview guidelines (Patton,

2002) and, then, engaging in a role-playing exercise. As the team conducted mock interviews, we offered each other advice on our interviewing techniques. As the final part of our interview planning, we estimated that scheduling and conducting two interviews per interviewer would take approximately two weeks.

Decision 4: What format will the action plan take?

The team needed to identify early on the format of the action plan so that we could envision the research product and work towards its construction. While the team identified the possibility of constructing a written-report, a structural diagram (e.g. mind-map), a short film, a PowerPoint presentation, or a brochure, we had to select one to design and develop. After negotiating the pros and cons of the proposed formats, the team decided that a PowerPoint presentation would be best to showcase the findings and to initiate a dialogue between students and teachers.

Decision 5: Whom, among all possible decision-makers, did I need to recruit to participate in an interview, and thereby respond to the action plan?

I asked the partners to help identify educational decision-makers who I would invite to participate in an interview, and thereby respond to the action plan. They listed, in no order of importance:

- The Department Head of Health and Physical Education;
- The Teachers within this department;
- The School Nurse;
- The Vice-principal; and
- A Curriculum Coordinator for Health and Physical Education at the Willowdale School Board office.

It struck me as odd that Bellman's principal was missing from the list. Given her position, I assumed the partners would have wanted her to learn about students' perspectives of sex education. When I called their attention to this perceived

oversight, James said they had deliberately excluded the principal's name. The principal was at the school, he said, "to impress everyone else but the students; she wants to impress the board." I was taken aback by his statement, and shared my assumption that while the principal might not have wanted to 'impress' the students, she probably wanted to hear their perspectives. If this was not the case, I noted, the team then had to question why she would have consented to the study in the first place. James acknowledged that the principal was, in part, responsible for allowing the study to take place at Bellman, but remained adamant that she would do nothing to change students' sex education: "I don't think she'll support it, I don't think she cares." He reasoned that the principal's apparent disinterest in students' perspectives meant there was no reason for me to even attempt to show her the action plan. Dale and Allison agreed, citing the principal's lack of care for students' sport teams as evidence that the principal would do nothing to make changes to sex education. Sandra disagreed with James, Dale and Allison, saying that they needed to stop "ragging on the principal" and that the team "should still show her what we have been doing because we are getting out of school..." Sandra added, "it would be disrespectful not to show her [the action plan]." Sandra's reasoning made sense to the team, and as such we added the principal's name to the list of possible decision-makers who I would recruit to participate in the study and so respond to the action plan. Even James agreed with this modification of the list, although he remained skeptical of the principal's interest in changing sex education.

Loop 5: Debriefing the Partners' Interviews

Two weeks after the workshop, seven of the nine partners joined me for an hour-long debriefing session, which I treated as a focus group discussion; during this meeting, I elicited insights into what Merton and Kendall called the "particular concrete situation" (cited in Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook 2007, p. 9) that is to say, the partners' interviews. I learned that Carrie and Ryan, having underestimated the amount of time required for obtaining consent and conducting

two interviews, each only did one. Hence, the 12 interviews conducted by the 7 team members served as the focus of the debriefing session.

In listening to the partners elaborate upon their interviews, I noticed that while the male partners reported ease eliciting critiques of sex education, the female partners noted difficulty in doing so. Bert and Ryan pointed out that conducting the interviews was like conversing with friends, with Bert saying that “there were like no problems at all because the [male] interviewees were really open about it, sex education.” He went on to report that each of his interviewees underscored the teacher’s lack of interest in teaching sex education, and proposed that “having a neutral party come in and teach would be really good.” Ryan added that his interviewee shared the same complaint, mentioning that his interviewees said that “the teachers are not really into it [sex education]...they just want to get it done with [because] they’d rather teach us how to play basketball or something.” Hence, based on what Bert and Ryan shared, it seemed as though male student interviewees identified problems, crossed the curricular limits, and proposed transformations that could satisfy their sexual health needs.

Conversely, Sandra and Allison noted that their female interviewees experienced difficulty critiquing their sex education experiences at Bellman.

Sandra: When they [the interviewees] were done [answering the interview questions], there was like a finality. There was like a lot of awkward smiles. And the looks they [the interviewees] were giving me—because [they thought] that they couldn’t laugh—were... awkward looks.

Allison: They [the interviews] were awkward. [...] They [the interviewees] wouldn’t say the dirty kind of stuff. They wouldn’t come out and say: ‘yeah, like, people want to talk about blow jobs in class...’ They’d sit there [during the interview] and go ‘there are certain things that they [students] don’t like to discuss.’ They [interviewees] don’t want to say the bad things. [...] I think they’re sitting there and kind of going: ‘I have to be professional about this. I shouldn’t ...talk like I normally would with my friends.’ [...] I think they [interviewees] thought that it [the interview] was automatically this professional thing.

Specifically, Allison suspected that the female interviewees conceived of the research interview as a professional activity and assumed a professional persona by perpetuating what is approved within the curricular limits of sexual health

education and ignoring what lies beyond. Rather than suggest that female students always act professionally and so self-censor their speech in accordance with the authorized discourse, Allison suggested that they have learned under what conditions they can relinquish the pretense of professionalism and with whom they can talk freely about sexuality (see Foucault, 1984e). She explained that even though the interviewees were her ‘friends,’ they still acted ‘professionally’ because, as far as they were concerned, the interview conditions required them to do so. Allison’s understanding prompted me to wonder whether the female interviewees would have comported themselves in the same way if the focus of the interview had not been sex education. As well, I questioned what they had to lose if they acted unprofessionally like their male counterparts who (based on Bert and Ryan’s interviews) critiqued the authorized discourse, crossed the curricular limits, and spoke silences with the aim of identifying transformative possibilities that would change the teaching and learning of sexual health in ways that would satisfy their sexual health needs (see Foucault, 1984e).

Next, I invited the partners to identify commonalities and differences that emerged during the interviews. Allison focused on what her two peers believed effective about their sex education, reporting that “STDs seem to be a common thing that they were happy with; the fact that... we [youth] know about prevention, condoms, and birth control—that kind of stuff... it prepares us for later.” What I deemed interesting was not necessarily what curricular content the students appreciated learning, but when such content bears relevance to their lives. Allison stressed that the students learned about ‘stuff’ that helps them ‘later’ in life. This reference to when sex education is useful contrasts with the argument mounted by Fine and McClelland (2006), who asserted that teachers treat sex education as if it exclusively serves youth’s present reality. Thus, while teachers are preoccupied with what students need to know for now, Allison’s two student interviewees are focused on what they need to know for later. By taking into account the relational structure of need-claims and the educational power structure, this discrepancy in the applicability of sex education influences not only what needs are satisfied (those normative needs that decision-makers deem

important for youth as opposed to expressed needs that youth regard important for themselves), but also how needs are satisfied (with an emphasis on today as opposed to tomorrow) (see Bradshaw 1972, 1994; Fraser, 1989).

As the partners identified what they learned from their interviewees or ‘friends,’ Allison noted that she was concerned about what her friend had said during the interview. Given that she attended the same sex education class as her interviewee and considered it boring, Allison expected the interviewee to describe it in similar terms. This, however, was not the case. The interviewee voiced no complaints about her sex education experience at Bellman. To make sense of the divergent views, Allison suspected that the interviewee intentionally lied to satisfy what she assumed were the expectations of the study. Listening to this explanation, Patricia and Sandra inquired into the relationship Allison had with the interviewee, both believing that their interviewees spoke truthfully because of their friendship. Allison confirmed that she did consider her interviewee a friend; however, she believed this was insufficient grounds to discount the possibility that the interviewee had lied. To address this concern about truthfulness, I relied upon my understanding of reality to explain that no two people perceive an experience in the same way (Kincheloe, 1993). On this basis, I noted that Allison and her friend constructed unique perspectives of their shared experience, neither more truthful than the other. Additionally, I addressed Allison’s claim that her interviewee deliberately lied by underscoring that since the team was not forcing students to participate in the interview they had no reason to lie (see Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Hence, while discussing Allison’s concern about deception, the team revisited the importance of amassing informed, varied and, at times, conflicting student perspectives of sex education at Bellman.

Since the partners recruited friends to participate in the research interview, I assumed that they experienced little difficulty eliciting clarification and/or elaboration from the interviewees. This, however, was not the case.

Ryan: It was hard to probe.

Carrie: Yeah, the probing: I didn’t want to feel like I was overlapping on the other questions so I held back on the probing sometimes.

Patricia: After all that we discussed, I just didn't know what to say.

Allison, however, said that her second interview was less challenging than the first when it came to probing for clarification. In support of Allison's claim, I suggested that conducting interviews, whether with friends or not, gets easier with practice. Given that all the partners reported some degree of difficulty with the interviews, Sandra proposed that they each draw upon their interviewing experience to conduct one more interview. The team agreed with her proposition, but also recognized that conducting another interview depended upon revising the interview guide. As we systematically examined the guide to determine which questions were causing trouble, it became evident that the partners' difficulty was not related to any specific question but to the number of questions included in the guide itself. To alleviate the need for the partners to improvise probes, we ended up adding five additional questions to the guide:

- (1) Can you describe both the positive and negative sex education experiences you've had, here, at Bellman?
- (2) What are your needs when it comes to sex education? What do you think you need to learn now and, later, as a sexual adult? What changes should teachers make to satisfy these needs?
- (3) In addition to gym class, what other classes need to include a sex education component?
- (4) What topics do you believe students need to learn in sex education?
- (5) What should the action plan for Bellman look like?

Once the team revised the interview guide, Carrie proposed that we reconsider the criteria for qualifying prospective interviewees. She said she could have conducted two interviews in the two-week period if she could have interviewed male students. Sandra agreed, saying more male than female students were interested in participating. I was surprised by the suggestion that males wanted to be interviewed by a female partner; indeed, I shared that if I was interviewing a male peer, I would surely feel uncomfortable learning about his views of, and visions for, sex education. Allison thought I was failing to recognize

that the partners' comfort level in conducting an interview was affected less by the interviewee's gender than by their friendship. The partners agreed that gender was an insignificant factor as long as they were friends with the interviewee, and decided that they could, during the next two weeks recruit, as many as three interviewees of any gender.

Loop 6: Analyzing Qualitative Data

To prepare for data analysis, I transcribed verbatim 21 interviews and requested that the interviewer correct possible transcription errors and/or discern inaudible sections. In Table 3 I identify the pseudonyms that the partners assigned to their interviewees. (Notably, Harvey informed me he could no longer fulfill his research responsibilities due to extenuating circumstances; consequently, he withdrew from the study without having conducted any interviews.)

Table 3

Who the Research Partners Interviewed.

Research Partner	Interviewees and Ages
Allison	Sarah, 17; Michelle, 17; Bob, 18
Bert	Rusty, 18; Justin, 18
Carrie	Rebecca, 17; Helga, 17
James	Luigi, 18; Brittney, 17; Amy, 17; Carly, 17
Larry	George, 18; David, 17
Patricia	Steph, 18; Pearl, 18; Allie, 17
Ryan	Frank, 17; Chad, 17
Sandra	Sam (Samantha), 17; Wanda, 18; Mike, 18

I invited the team members to join me in analyzing the data, which consisted of 21 interviews and 40 written responses from the two class

discussions. With the interview data, the partners selected phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs they judged interesting or compelling based on their own experiences. They then assigned labels or codes, either descriptive or inferential in meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to this material. Subsequently, the partners exchanged transcripts and compared each others' work to determine whether codes described the data, to negotiate more precise codes for particular sections, and to agree on codes for data in question. Carrie and Sandra analyzed the written responses from the class discussions, coding each response separately. The team then reviewed the coded data, identifying patterns and themes to showcase in the action plan we were planning to construct.

Loop 7: Constructing the Action Plan

At this point, we began to review our analysis with the shared aim of conceptualizing the components of the action plan; during this endeavour, it proved impossible for me to assume either an 'equal' or a 'neutral' role (Bragg & Fielding, 2005; Jones, 2004; Kincheloe, 2005). Given the vast amount of data collected and categorized, it was not surprising that the partners seemed overwhelmed by the task before us: showcasing our findings in an action plan. In particular, James expressed concern about the volume of information and suggested that the team was facing an impossible challenge. This made me think of Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) assertion that facilitating a PAR study necessitates that one draw upon one's knowledge to address emergent problems. Now, I had to rely upon my knowledge to help James and the other team members understand that designing and developing an action plan was indeed possible. Thus, I tried to allay James' anxieties by sharing Seidman's (2006) notion of "dialectical process" (p. 126), explaining how researchers employ intuition and intellect to construct a synthesis of what participants have said, always choosing the most compelling quotations. Despite my reassurance that every quotation did not have to appear in the action plan, the partners remained unconvinced: some even suggested that the action plan was bound to be boring. It seemed they were frustrated because they had no idea how to go about converting the pages of

analysis into a PowerPoint presentation. With the aim of reigniting team enthusiasm and moving the research process along, I suggested that we strategically place questions throughout the action plan as a way of engaging our audience. I reasoned that such a design tactic might invite decision-makers to consider the degree to which their perspectives of sex education differ from those of students (see Cairns, Collins, & Hiebert, 1994). Even though some partners remained skeptical, they nevertheless reviewed the data with the aim of composing questions. Some reiterated questions from the interview guide, while others proposed questions from the categorized data. After some negotiation, the team developed thirteen questions. Hence, as the team began conceptualizing the action plan, I had no alternative but to assist the partners in compiling questions that would ultimately serve as organizational headings throughout the action plan.

Next, I suggested that the team order the questions/headings and arrange them into an outline so we could envision the sections of the action plan. After much discussion, we settled on four discrete sections. To assist in developing the contents of each section, I provided the team with Shor's (1996) five-part heuristic, which contains the following components: description, diagnosis, solution of problem, implementation, and evaluation of solution(s). We took the heuristic into consideration, but decided that it offered no guidance for the first section of the action plan. The team decided that this section would contain the two research questions, an explanation of the methodology, and a sampling of questions from our interview guide.

To determine the contents of the second section of the action plan, we returned to Shor's (1996) heuristic. Sandra asserted that its components were context-specific and as such inappropriate for the team's action plan. She clarified that interviewees, at times, spoke about sex education at Bellman and, at other times, talked about it in generalities. Others agreed with Sandra's observation and noted that the second section ought to present youth's general views. Specifically, the team concluded that it would focus on what factors influence students' sexuality, why sex education is important to youth, who youth want to talk to about sexual health, and what sex education means to youth.

In outlining section three, the team shifted attention from the general to the specific findings, and so returned to Shor's (1996) heuristic. Larry noted that although the heuristic was context-specific, it was overly problem-focused, and thus inappropriate. He claimed that if the team adopted the heuristic, we would neglect to report what students deemed effective with sex education. Larry also suspected that if the team concentrated on problems, we would risk insulting the teachers to the extent that they would not only dismiss the action plan, but also fail to enact change. Larry's arguments prompted the team again to abandon Shor's heuristic, with members agreeing that the third section needed to focus on the findings related to what was effective with sex education, specifically the health fair.

In the fourth and final section, the team decided to present the findings pertaining to students' visions for changing sex education at Bellman. We agreed that this section would concentrate on what sexual health content students want to discuss in class and what practices teachers could adopt to make sex education a more engaging and relevant experience for students. When the team considered how best to draw the section to a close, we concurred with Larry's proposition: the action plan must end with comments from the partners because the study was conducted by the students, for the students.

Loop 8: Responding to a Call from Educational Powers

While the team was developing the action plan, I received notice from Ryan and Bert that a School Administrator and the HPE Teacher wanted to meet me after school in the departmental office. I wondered what might have motivated these teachers to call a meeting. Eventually, I identified a possible reason after reflecting on two isolated occurrences. The first was an incident involving Ryan. He had informed the team that a teacher had asked him about the nature of the action plan. Rather than offer her any information, Ryan explained that he had signed a confidentiality agreement preventing him from divulging details about the study. The second event was when I momentarily left the workroom as the members of the team were developing the action plan, and unexpectedly met a

teacher in the corridor. During this encounter, I learned that staff members were curious about the research findings. These isolated incidents suggested growing staff interest in the study. Thus, I surmised that the Administrator and the Teacher would ask me to present them with the action plan during the meeting. I consulted with the partners to determine whether, if my suspicion was correct, I would comply with the teachers' request for a preview. In order to arrive at a decision, I explained that there was no need for the team to deviate from our original plan. Moreover, I called the partners' attention to the state of the action plan: even though the team had been working on it for two days, we had yet to finalize its four sections. During the ensuing discussion, the partners identified no reason to deny the teachers a preview. Consequently, I went to the meeting, prepared to present the incomplete action plan if asked.

As I had expected, the School Administrator and the HPE Teacher asked to see the action plan before the team presented it to the two classes. Since I had intended to invite each of these teachers to participate in an interview later (Loop 12), I did not ask them during this meeting to sign consent forms. Consequently, I can only report my general impressions as opposed to their verbatim reactions. On the basis of their gestures and comments, I concluded that the teachers conceived of the action plan as an insult, an assault on their professional practice when it came to sex education.

This surprisingly harsh reaction to the incomplete action plan left me with more questions than answers. Who was it that had initiated this meeting and why? Before launching the study, I had reviewed its various phases with the HPE Teacher, and at that time, she expressed no interest in previewing the action plan. I therefore deduced that it was not the Teacher who had become skittish, but the School Administrator, making me wonder about the power relation between them. Did the Administrator condemn the Teacher for allowing me to conduct the study at Bellman and for calling attention to the Department? Did she believe that the research team would bring the Department into disrepute? If this was the case, the Administrator was likely seeking to maintain the status quo by exercising power over the Teacher. Presumably, the Administrator wanted to preview the action

plan in order to plan how best to curtail any potential disruption that the action plan might cause. If this was the case, the Administrator's reaction to the plan gives credence to Foucault's (2003c) claim that a problematizing process, like the one undertaken by the research team, provokes opposition and creates a turbulent atmosphere. Indeed, the Administrator seemed to have reacted so dramatically to the research findings that I wondered if, or how, she would exercise power over the team. I feared she would prevent us from proceeding with the study and finalizing the action plan.

Loop 9: Finalizing the Action Plan

The team later met after school to complete the fourth and final section of the action plan. As we were getting settled, the partners inquired about my meeting with the HPE Teacher and the School Administrator, and I explained that they had, indeed, requested a preview. Given that I did not want to misinterpret their reactions, I refrained from offering evaluative comments. I reminded the partners that they would also have the opportunity to dialogue with the Teacher and hear for themselves her response to students' perspectives of sex education.

Upon completing the final section of the action plan, I suggested that we review all 77 PowerPoint slides to address any concerns and finalize it for the upcoming class discussions. As we reviewed the slides, I realized that the action plan had no title, and as such invited the partners to brainstorm one that was relevant and compelling. Immediately, James suggested 'Sex-E-cation,' saying that it underscored the subject matter of the action plan. Without much discussion, the team accepted James' suggestion and, then, focused on the upcoming class discussions. Larry asked if all partners needed to partake in both presentations. Given that the team was comprised of partners from both Class A and Class B, I proposed that members present the plan to their respective classes; Allison, James, Larry, and Sandra would take on this responsibility for Class A while Bert, Carrie, Patricia, and Ryan would do the same for Class B.

I reminded the partners that we would be soliciting feedback from the student participants so we could later modify the action plan to better represent

students' perspectives of sex education at Bellman. I proposed that the team develop a feedback form to give to each student participant. The resulting document had the following three questions:

- (1) How does the action plan reflect your perspective (views and visions) of sex education here at Bellman Secondary? Please explain.
- (2) In order to present our teachers with the best action plan possible, what additional changes would you include to improve Bellman's sex education, and why?
- (3) How do you think teachers will respond to our action plan, and why?

The team was now ready to present our research findings and initiate discussion about improving sex education at Bellman. (Please see enclosed compact disc to view the action plan, *Sex-E-cation*.)

Loop 10: Presenting the Action Plan and Initiating Class Discussion

Before the Class A discussion was scheduled to begin, I went early to the classroom to meet Allison, James, Larry, and Sandra, who were rehearsing their presentation of the action plan. As the class started, the School Administrator entered the classroom and took a seat. Without calling attention to the Administrator's unexpected presence, I offered the class a brief introduction of the study and then sat at a desk amid the student participants so the partners could carry on with the presentation. Each took turns talking about the research findings. Sandra read aloud the following statement:

I think that we both agree that it is a difficult subject to tackle as a teacher and to receive as a student just because you are basically having a middle age person tell you about sex. As a teenager that could be a little uncomfortable (Rusty, *Sex-E-cation*, Slide 33).

After hearing this, the Administrator exited the classroom before viewing the fourth section of the action plan, which she had not seen at the preview. During the class, the presenters posed questions in an attempt to initiate a discussion by inviting student participants to share their impressions of the research findings. The students, however, offered no comment so the presenters directed their attention towards the HPE Teacher. She, too, offered no comment. Receiving no

verbal feedback, the partners reminded the students to complete the anonymous feedback form, which they then collected, signaling that the presentation of the action plan to Class A had come to an end.

The next day, I met Bert, Carrie, Patricia, and Ryan for the presentation of the action plan in Class B. Notably, the School Administrator did not attend this class. Again, the partners co-presented the action plan and, again, received no verbal response from either the student participants or the HPE Teacher. Before concluding the presentation, the team retrieved the feedback forms from the students.

When each presentation ended, the HPE Teacher made her way to the front of the classroom to address the students as a class. Since the Teacher did not sign a consent form, I am unable to report her words verbatim but instead offer only my general impression. It seemed as though she wanted the students to understand that her efforts were restricted by the Ministry's mandated sexual health education curriculum.

In the end, the HPE Teacher emerged as a perplexing figure in this study. During the class presentations of the action plan, she sat attentively, listening to the partners review the research findings; however, when the opportunity for dialogue arose, she effectively shut down discussion. To make sense of her behaviour, I could not help but think that the Teacher was mounting a defense against the anti-authority struggle, during which students expressed needs that differed from those delineated within the homogenizing sex education curriculum (see Foucault, 1994c). Given her training and policing responsibilities in complying with this curriculum by developing an intervention or sex education program (see Foucault, 1984e), she perhaps conceived of the action plan as a threat to her professional practice. Consequently, to neutralize the effects of the "counterpowers" (Foucault, 1984d, p. 209) and prevent them from continuing with their critique, the Teacher exercised disciplinary power by reclaiming her authoritative post at the front of the classroom. Here, she put sexuality into discourse, speaking 'to' rather than 'with' the students (Lodge, 2005). In doing so, she silenced their voices, discredited their views, and disqualified their

knowledges while attempting to restore disciplinary limits and, concomitantly, cover up the secrets about sexual health that the students uncovered. Essentially, the Teacher treated the students as passive recipients of sex education whose understanding of the subject must be controlled and constrained by older generations (see Apple & Bean, 1995).

Her treatment of the students and reaction to the action plan was mystifying especially given her apparent eagerness at the outset of the study to dialogue with the students about ways sex education at Bellman could improve. At that time, she seemed to honour students' expertise. But, had this truly been the case? Had she truly regarded the students as agents with expertise about matters impacting their lives? If yes, why would she ultimately refuse to engage in dialogue with the students and partners? Or did she believe that students' perspectives carry no weight and have no value? But, why then had she welcomed me into Bellman to work with youth research partners, encourage students to voice their perspectives of sex education, and construct an action plan to inform curricular change?

One can gain some insight into the HPE Teacher's behaviour by considering the educational power structure and, in particular, two of its key power relations. First, the power relation between the Teacher and the School Administrator. Had the Teacher refused to engage in dialogue not because of my presence in the classroom, but because of the Administrator's premature exit from it? Was this an instance of the Administrator exercising power over the Teacher? In other words, when the Administrator cut short her viewing of the action plan, had she conveyed to the Teacher that the students' perspectives of sex education were meaningless and must be ignored? If the Teacher thought otherwise, she gave no indication; instead, she bowed to the dominating effects of power and followed in the steps of the Administrator by dismissing the action plan and denying the students an opportunity to dialogue about ways sex education could improve at their school.

Second, the teacher-student relation of power. Even though the HPE Teacher appeared to 'listen' the partners review the research findings, she

abstained from dialoguing with them. This prompted me to wonder whether she had simply heard the partners (see Freire, 1989; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). Had she assumed this pretense to pacify students? It is possible that the students came to realize that her interest was disingenuous. Did this, in part, explain their refusal to force the issue following the research partners' presentation? Sadly, her action gave further credence to the argument that staff and students cannot come together as equals to dialogue about a shared experience, and thereby gain a better understanding of it (Fielding, 2004).

Ultimately, the students' anti-authority struggle caused the HPE Teacher and the School Administrator to reassert the asymmetrical power dynamic between student and teacher. When the partners voiced youth's subjugated knowledges about the teaching and learning of sexual health, they exercised power to resist the effects of educational power. Their efforts, however, served to disrupt the status quo. The Teacher and Administrator responded to this defiance on the part of the students by becoming skittish. Rather than engage in dialogue about the research findings, they retreated to devise a strategic reaction. By forfeiting this opportunity to dialogue with the students and partners during the class presentation, they made it clear that they had little faith in youths' capacity for generating the 'fizz' that stimulates and encourages what Weis and Fine (2001) called "extraordinary conversation" (p. 520). In the end, the research team would never know the degree to which the Bellman students' anti-authority struggle informed curricular change by shifting the disciplinary limits of sexual health education.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Soliciting Students' Feedback to the Action Plan

In the previous chapter, I outlined the spiral's initial 10 loops, each representing a phase of the study; in this chapter, I expand the spiral with the eleventh loop, which takes shape through my analysis and interpretation of the feedback from the student participants in Classes A and B.

Loop 11: Obtaining Feedback from the Bottom

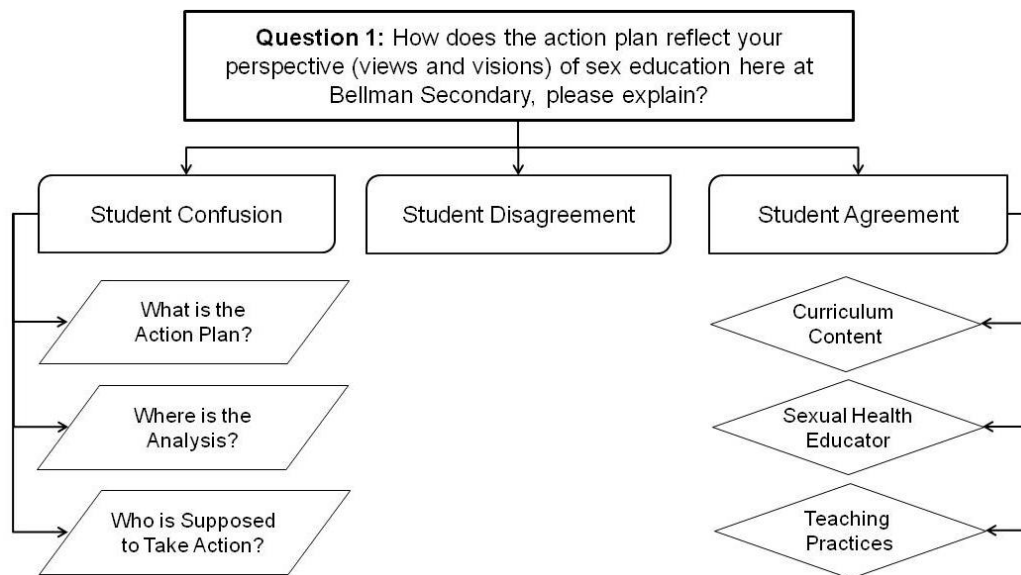
As the team developed the feedback form, I explained that we would analyze the participants' responses in order to revise the action plan so it stands as a better construction of students' perspectives of sex education at Bellman. Recognizing that this would require more of their time, the students pointed out that they had other commitments to honour, including term assignments and extra-curricular activities. Consequently, at that time, all eight youth ended their participation in the study. In light of this unexpected development, I independently conducted an analysis of the students' feedback; however, out of respect for the action plan's collaborative construction, I did not use my findings to revise *Sex-E-cation* and, hence, it remains as the team had finalized it.

From the two classes, 35 participants submitted feedback on the plan. I analyzed the students' responses, with each of the three questions posed in the feedback form functioning as a discrete unit of analysis. Given that each question garnered multiple responses, I assigned a code to each response and sorted these codes into, first, emergent conceptual categories and, then, developing themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During this analysis, I made sense of the students' responses by relying upon the literature that informed my perspective and the YPAR methodology that undergirded the construction of *Sex-E-cation*.

Question 1: Does the Action Plan Represent Students' Perspectives?

Figure 2

Student Feedback Form: Question One



The category, student confusion, emerges from the responses to the first question. Within this category are three themes, which I express as questions (see Figure 2). The first thematic question is ‘what is the action plan?’ This theme emerged from statements such as “I didn’t see what the action plan was... What was the action plan?” (Female, 17) and “I’m not really sure what the action plan is after viewing this presentation” (another Female, 17). Statements such as these prompted me to ask how the team could have more clearly explained its aims for constructing a research product that we were calling an action plan. I identified two alternative strategies that the team could have employed to minimize student confusion.

First, during construction of the plan (Loop 7) the team could have given greater thought to how we wished to define the concept, action plan. In this respect, I could have encouraged the team to reconsider the decision to abandon Shor’s (1996) heuristic. The partners had reasoned that if the team was to adopt this heuristic we would be compelled to report all of the students-identified

problems with sex education. They felt that an action plan constructed around problems might insult and alienate the teachers. This, they surmised, would be counterproductive given that our aim was to encourage teachers to consider students' perspectives and implement curricular changes. Since the team wanted to avoid conflict with the teachers, we decided to create an action plan that would concentrate on what *could be done* differently as opposed to identifying what *was being done* poorly—in other words, a plan that concentrated on students' desired transformations for the teaching and learning of sexual health. The resulting product, however, left the student audience wondering why the team was calling the research product an action plan. It became evident that the student participants conceived of an 'action' plan as a particular course of action that addresses specific problems. The action plan that the team presented did not meet their expectations. Consequently, they were left wondering what implicit problems were being addressed by the proposed changes.

Had I been more vigilant while the team was outlining the sections of the action plan and impressed upon the research partners that we could not concern ourselves with the possibility of upsetting the teachers, perhaps the partners would have felt more comfortable with the process of identifying and delineating problems. In retrospect, I could have explained that critique—the very practice we invited the students to exercise—more often than not creates, as Foucault noted (2003c), “a turbulent atmosphere” (p. 172). I could also have identified and emphasized the benefits of using Shor's heuristic. Had the team employed it, we might have constructed a more coherent action plan that reported the student-identified problems—even if doing so upset the teachers—and the student-proposed changes.

Second, during the class presentations (Loop 10) the team could have explained to the students its working definition of 'action plan.' Since we were operating from an understanding that stressed future transformations rather than current problems we needed to make that clear to our audience. We presented *Sex-E-cation* assuming that our audience shared our understanding of what constitutes an action plan and what purpose such a plan serves. Given that members of the

student audience had a different conception of what an action plan implies and entails, confusion ensued. Had the team explicitly communicated that our goal for *Sex-E-cation* was to disseminate research findings and to “trigger” (Wallerstein, 1993, p. 222) dialogue as opposed to specifying a litany of problems that needed to be rectified, it might have avoided confusing the student audience.

The second thematic question arising within the category of student confusion is ‘where is the analysis?’ Participants did not see much of a plan during the presentations, just a reiteration of the data. A participant questioned, “What are you [the research team] getting at? I kind of already know all that. It is INFO [original emphasis] not likely a course of action” (Female, 18). Others offered the team advice:

...try to condense some of the info—it kind of sounded like you were saying the same thing multiple times (Female, 17).

...sort of bring it all together at the end (another Female, 17).

These participants underscored that the team had ineffectively winnowed down our data and inadequately interpreted our findings. This is a valid point because the team did experience difficulty synthesizing the vast amount of data and making sense of the findings (Loop 6). Admittedly, we could have been more discerning, choosing to report only the most compelling and relevant points. Of course, I could have controlled the number of interviews by insisting that we adhere to my original plan of only two interviews per research partner. However, I felt that if I did this I would be dishonouring my YPAR commitment of working ‘with’ the youth (Fine, 1994b; Torre & Fine, 2006). To stay true to this commitment, I set aside my reservations; consequently, the partners conducted additional interviews. This underscores a concern with YPAR: how does a research facilitator put into play his/her unique, strategic knowledge to help his/her partners with the research process, and thereby construct a provocative research product? As for the criticism that the team fell short on interpreting the findings, I acknowledge that I could have provided the partners with a stronger frame of reference in making sense of our findings. For instance, I could have explained in more detail the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*,

democratic education, and educational power relations. This, however, would have required additional time, time that we did not have. I also assumed the partners would interpret the findings by relying on their own understandings of the student-identified problems and student-proposed changes. When examining the feedback to the action plan, though, I learned that the team needed to more effectively construct meaning of students' views of, and visions for, sex education at Bellman.

'Who is supposed to take action?' is the final question in the category of student confusion. This theme emerged out of comments such as

It [the action plan] informed me of different views students have on stuff, but I didn't get a clear message about what you're going to do (Female, 17).

I think you need to make a clearer conclusion so people know exactly what you plan on doing (another Female, 17).

These comments made me wonder if the students expected the team to go beyond presenting *Sex-E-cation* to decision-makers to actually implementing the proposed transformations. The team assumed that the student participants would understand that we had limited freedom when it came to implementing the action plan and bringing about curricular change. In our minds, there was no question that decision-makers, namely teachers, had to take the next step of considering students' perspectives and changing the teaching and learning of sexual health at Bellman. A review of the students' feedback, however, revealed that the team ought to have explained that we were simply communicating students' perspectives of sex education via the action plan. The team needed also to explain that we were, during the class presentations (Loop 10), taking action: that is, we were presenting *Sex-E-cation* to, and triggering dialogue with, decision-makers—in particular the HPE Teacher and the School Administrator—so they could consider the research findings, listen to students' perspectives, and enact changes to policies and/or practices so that sex education could become relevant to students' expressed needs.

The second category, student disagreement, emerges from what a participant wrote:

[p]ersonally, I don't benefit at all from sex education. I think for me personal [*sic*] it's pointless. I don't plan at all to have sex until I'm married therefore I do not need to learn about risks and benefits because to me sex is more than something you can just throw around. Also some people don't want to be exposed to that, and forcing them to learn kind of sucks. It's almost that wanting to save sex is stupid. [This] mak[es] kids who want to save sex feel awkward. (Female 18)

This participant believed that students who abstain from sexual activity have no need for sexual health education, and that only those who 'throw' sex around—or are sexually promiscuous—require such an education. She was the only one to express the view that, for her, sex education and, by implication, an action plan aimed at improving sex education, was pointless. Her response raises questions. Did she dismiss the reforms identified in the plan solely on the basis of her personal convictions? Did the action plan convey in some way the message that sex is something that can be 'thrown around' and that those who postpone sex are (to use her word) 'stupid'? For this participant, changes to the program were far less important than the nature and purpose of the program itself, to serve the needs of students who are already sexually active. Such a program, regardless of how it might be reformed, would, in her estimation, only continue to promote sexual promiscuity. Considered within the ideological battleground that characterizes sex education (see McKay 1997, 1999), one might say that she saw the action plan as grounded in a permissive ideology which conflicted with her own restrictive ideological standpoint.

Two additional points warrant comment. First, the participant discounted the value of learning about the risks and benefits associated with sexual activity because they were irrelevant to her current life choices. This view gives credence to the argument that sex education solely serves students' present situations. Fine and McClellan (2006) explained that people with such a view are engrossed with youth's present reality—they fail to recognize that sexual health education, much like other subjects taught at school, can apply to, and focus on, students' future choices. Second, the participant stated that 'forcing' sexual health education on

students ‘sucks’ because they do not want to be ‘exposed’ to it in the first place. In contrast, the research team found that students believed sex education must be made mandatory so it reaches all students at the school (*Sex-E-cation*, Slides 34 and 35). Did she feel sex education had been forced on her? And if she did, was it because health teachers had failed to inform her of her right to withdraw from the sex education unit? (Government of Ontario, 1999) If her teachers had done this, she would have known that she could have opted out in order to protect herself from what she believed was premature exposure to sex education.

The third category, student agreement, develops three additional themes. The first is curriculum content. A relevant comment in this category includes the following: “I think that many of the ideas [in the action plan] would be beneficial to the student body, such as... talk about the more ‘taboo’ aspects of sex education.” This statement calls to mind Foucault’s (1981) understanding of the way institutional powers employ exclusionary procedures to restrict what people say and do not say about a subject. The participant referred to two such procedures. First, by suggesting that sex education does not address all possible aspects of the subject, he alluded to the procedure of discipline. Teachers are among those decision-makers who legitimize sexual health as a worthy area of study by assigning it to the discipline of health education; during this process of constructing and constraining curriculum, decision-makers establish disciplinary/curricular limits by imposing rules to regulate authorized knowledge inside the limits and unauthorized knowledge outside them. Second, the participant explicitly identified the procedure of taboo in which teachers treat the object of discussion with apprehension. In this way, teachers control the taboo subject by putting into discourse sexual health content falling within the disciplinary limits and controlling the circumstances under which such content is discussed. Although the participant stated that students would reap the benefit of discussing taboo aspects of sexual health during class, he overlooked identifying why this would be the case.

Another participant referred to the exclusionary procedure of taboo by advising teachers to “[t]ry and make sex seem like it is not such a touch[y] subject

and [instead] something natural and...part of life” (Male, 17). In other words, he suggested that it is difficult to talk about sexual health because it is taboo and, interestingly, believed that the responsibility for making sex education less touchy rests with teachers. While he failed to propose what they could change, another participant recommended

Bellman is way to [*sic*] uptight—it needs to work at it [sex education] a bit and teach what the kids want to know about sex, not what the teachers find in some book written by an 80 year old man. (Male, 18)

Since students can challenge the ‘uptight’ teachers at Bellman by exercising power and bringing up ‘touchy’ unauthorized topics during health class, why then did the participant think that the teachers were the ones who must expand the curricular limits to permit such discussion? I deduced that the participants considered their position as students subordinate to that of teachers, and, therefore, that only teachers can impose, enforce and, ultimately, change the rules which govern what topics, touchy or otherwise, get addressed during sex education. Furthermore, the participant’s proposition that the teachers must refrain from employing what the students felt were irrelevant resources is telling in terms of curriculum content. It suggests that the teachers satisfy normative sexual health needs by legitimizing what authorized experts circulate and publish as truth or fact (see Beane & Apple, 1995). The participant’s plea that teachers pay attention to what students want to know indicates that teachers had overlooked students’ perspectives of sex education by failing to solicit their expressed sexual health needs. Students can, when given the opportunity, identify a number of topics they would like to discuss during sexual health education:

- [c]over every aspect of it [sexual health] not just birth control, STDs, and abstinence (Female, 18);
- cover a broader range of topics of sex education not only abstinence education (Female, 18);
- [address] the emotional side... and more in-depth because that seems to be something a lot of girls, this age, can relate to (Female, 18);

- teach pros and cons about sex, oral and anal sex [and] abortion etc. we need to learn more in-depth [original emphasis] information (Female, 18).

These participants echoed points from the action plan (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide 62 and 71), but it seems that the teachers at Bellman limited sex education to topics found within an abstinence-focused curriculum (McKay 1997, 1999); clearly these matters fall within Rubin's (1999) charmed circle. Hence, some student participants agreed with the message conveyed in the action plan: teachers must re-examine program content so students' sex education experiences become more relevant to their perspectives.

The second theme, a concern about sexual health educators with a focus on positionality, also emerges from the data. Participants said they would prefer “[someone] from outside the school comes in and teaches sex ed” (Female, 17) and that “sex ed here is too textbook [*sic*] and should be taught by outside sources in a more casual atmosphere—not so focused on testing would be greatly beneficial” (Male, 17). The view that teachers are preoccupied with the textbook and testing is consistent with the transmission model of learning (Thiessen, 2007), and reflects Foucault's (1984e) understanding of the way institutional powers enact disciplines to train people, and thereby control what they know and how they behave. The participants suggested that, as teachers construct curriculum, they train students by focusing on published, authorized knowledge while silencing unpublished, unauthorized knowledge. Rather than think that unauthorized knowledge—no less valid than that published in textbooks and put into discourse by authorized experts, namely teachers (see Mills, 2003)—must remain unspoken, they believed such knowledge could be the focus of discussion if only students were to engage with a different educator, one positioned outside the educational power structure and free of its rules and regulations, one unconcerned with textbooks and testing. Hence, by concentrating on positionality, participants underscored the inextricable link between power and knowledge in so far as where there are power relations—whether between an inside teacher and a student, or between an outside educator and a student—there is an associated field

of knowledge, in this case authorized or unauthorized sex education (see Foucault 1980b).

In addition to underscoring the positionality of a sexual health educator, student participants stated that this educator must have professional qualifications. One reported that it “would be beneficial to the student body” if teachers were to invite “highly trained professionals” (Male, 17). Another stated, “[b]ringing in a professional is a good idea” (Female, 17). Like the critiques in the action plan (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide 31 and 32), these comments display a lack of confidence in the health teachers’ qualifications to teach sex education. Since the student participants did not elaborate on why they would benefit from engaging with professionals when it comes to sex education, one is inclined to pose questions while keeping in mind two Foucauldian exclusionary procedures for ordering a discourse of truth (Foucault, 1981). First, Foucault stressed the division between truth and false, calling attention to what is circulated and what is not. Did the students believe that a health teacher speaks false statements about sexual health because he/she does not occupy a position like that of a health professional who can as a consequence utter true statements? Second, Foucault explained the rarefaction of the speaking subject, emphasizing who is privileged to speak and who is not. Did the students think that a health teacher fails to satisfy requirements/standards, and so is unqualified to talk about sexual health, whereas a professional meets requirements/standards, and thus is qualified to speak the truth about sexual health? As noted in Chapter One, the common mechanism of rarefaction is ritual, which prompts another question. Did the students think that a health teacher—unlike a professional who routinely speaks about sexual health and addresses questions about this subject—is an unreliable speaker of the truth? Furthermore, one wonders what type of professional students want to assume the role of sexual health educator. *Sex-E-cation* reports that students prefer, generally speaking, a medical professional and, more specifically, a nurse (Slide 32). In fact, Bellman had its very own medical professional, the School Nurse (Slide, 33), but as one student pointed out, she was not well known among the student body:

I think we should get a full-time nurse cause I don't think that many people even know what she looks like, let alone what her name is hahaha. I don't even know [the name of the nurse], all I know is that she's here for half a day every week chill'in in a creepy little room next to the auditorium. (Female, 17)

This statement reflected findings in the action plan that the nurse's accessibility to students and visibility at Bellman were problems (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide, 33); one can, however, question the participant's solution to these problems by considering the importance placed on the positionality of a sexual health educator. Would students regard a full-time school nurse an insider, much like teachers? Hence, student participants agreed that decision-makers at Bellman must call attention to who teaches sex education, asking for a medically-qualified educator positioned outside the school.

The third theme in the student agreement category is teaching practices. A participant, in offering feedback, advised teachers that “the sex classes should not just be pen and paper work” and they need to “make the classes interesting as well as informative so all the information is absorbed and does not go ‘in one ear and out the other’” (Female, 18). Recognizing the goal of information retention, which aligns with the transmission model of learning and upholds students as passive recipients of education (Thiessen, 2007), this participant argued that teachers could satisfy this goal if they employed more engaging teaching practices. Though she never specified any such practices—aside from stating that they must go beyond just paper and pen activities—other participants proposed concrete examples:

[p]eople are nosey so personal experiences and guest speakers would really appeal to most [students] (Female, 18);

[t]he honesty box is a really great idea that should be embraced by the staff and student body alike (Male, 17).

These comments reiterate teaching practices presented within *Sex-E-cation* (Slides, 67, 69, 73, and 75). Notably, they foster social engagement, implying that teachers need to discontinue practices that treat students as passive objects or

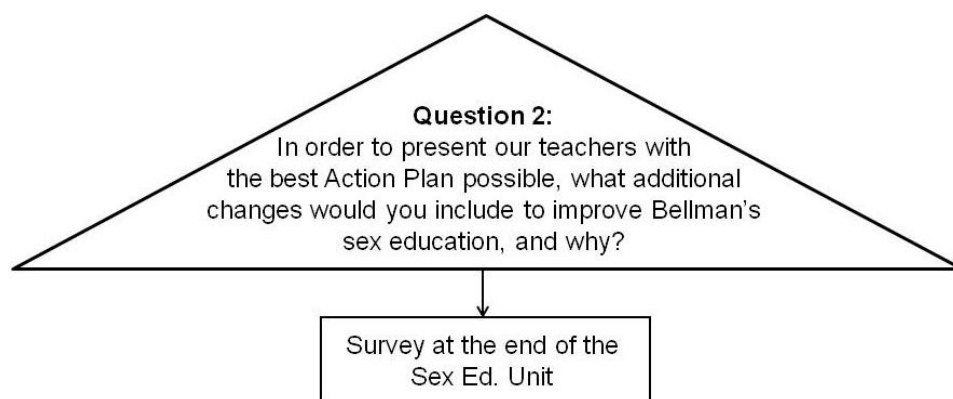
recipients with ones that respect them as capable and active contributors to education (Cook-Sather, 2006; Thiessen, 2007).

In assigning importance to social engagement, students participants were inadvertently recommending a democratic teaching practice of dialoging with students to co-construct curriculum that is responsive to their sexual health needs and, so, relevant to their lives (see Beane & Apple, 1995; Dewey, 1916). A participant wrote, “I think it’s a good idea, teaching and allowing kids to be open about sex and sexuality—only good things will come from this” (Female, 17). While she did not identify these ‘good things,’ another participant did underscore “...*we* [emphasis added] should find a way of making it [sex education] more open so that people can ask real questions they want to know about” (Male, 17). For this participant, teachers who dialogue with students invite them to pose ‘real’ questions pertinent to their self-perceived sexual health needs—surely, a ‘good thing.’ Moreover, in support of dialogue as an effective teaching practice, both participants referred to the power relation between teacher and student. By stating that teachers must ‘allow kids’ to speak openly about sexual health, the first of these two participants puts the onus on teachers to curb disciplinary power so they are concerned less with training students to satisfy the mandated curriculum and more with listening to students speak about their sexual health needs (see Foucault, 1984e). Rather than suggest that teachers must permit dialogue to flourish, the second participant employed the pronoun ‘we’ to convey that students and teachers must find a way to enable dialogue about sexual health. His emphasis on collaboration calls to mind an empowerment approach to sexual health education (see Spencer, Maxwell, & Aggleton, 2008; Wallerstein, 1993), whereby students exercise power with teachers to democratize the way students experience sex education. Hence, participants homed in on the message conveyed in the action plan that decision-makers must focus on making sex education relevant to students by adopting teaching practices that lend themselves to dialogue.

Question 2: How Would Students Improve the Action Plan?

Figure 3

Student Feedback Form: Question Two



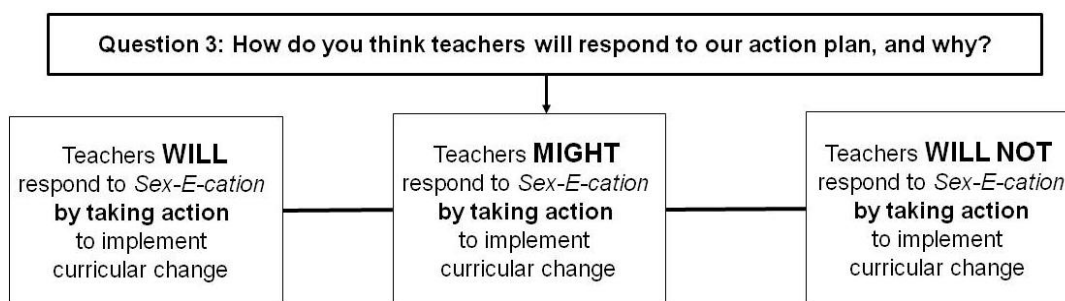
The second question on the feedback form was “In order to present our teachers with the best Action Plan possible, what additional changes would you include to improve Bellman’s sex education, and why?” (see Figure 3) Most participants identified curricular changes that had already been showcased in the action plan; however, one participant proposed an additional change: “[h]ave a survey at the end of the sex education unit to see if it was beneficially [*sic*] and if there are any ways to improve it” (Female, 17). Her proposition reminds me of the *Guidelines* (PHAC, 2008), which recommend that teachers employ evaluation tools so youth can assess the usefulness and relevance of their sex education experience. For this participant, a survey constituted such a tool. Notably, while the *Guidelines* stipulate that an evaluation tool must concentrate on “stated objectives” (p. 32), the participant offered no focus for her evaluative survey. On this basis, one is inclined to wonder if her proposed survey would assess pre-defined outcomes or allow students to address previously unidentified outcomes/needs that went unsatisfied. Furthermore, to make sense of the proposal reminds us of the argument that students must be afforded the opportunity to voice their views and express their needs (see Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Allen

2007a; Fine, 1988). On this basis, one can argue that the participant's suggestion was her way of advising teachers to respect students as agents who are capable of identifying how a sex education unit has been beneficial and how it might improve. Her suggestion was also her way of saying to teachers to be responsive to the resulting counter-discourse. Essentially, she was implying that teachers who do distribute a survey for evaluative purposes must be open-minded to students' perspectives or, in Foucauldian terms, their counter-memories (1984c) and/or disqualified knowledges (1980d) because these can have ruptural effects on present programming.

Question 3: How do Students Suspect Teachers will Respond to Action Plan?

Figure 4

Student Feedback Form: Question Three



The participants' feedback to the third question on the form falls along a continuum that represents the degree to which students felt confident that teachers would respond to *Sex-E-cation* (see Figure 4). At one end of the continuum is the first category: teachers *will* respond to *Sex-E-cation* by taking action to implement curricular change. Within this category are responses stating that teachers will...

listen (because they can't ignore a group of students that have spent time on the issue) and will make a couple of changes (Female, 17).

accept it and will try and change there [*sic*] teaching methods (Male, 17).

like it—good opinions from students are included. ...They will change the course to suit students' concerns (Female, 18).

These participants believed that the teachers' willingness to take heed of the proposed changes would be an indirect admission that students' experiences of sex education function as a basis for knowing (Torre & Fine, 2011). Indeed, a participant stated that teachers will be "receptive [because] they want to know what students think and are *always* [emphasis added] looking for ways to improve" (Female, 17). This comment leads one to believe that the teachers at Bellman have an established record of legitimatizing and listening to students' knowledges, an interpretation in conflict with the argument that teachers are among decision-makers who subjugate youth's knowledges or expertise (see Fine, 2008; Foucault 1980d; Jardine, 2005). Furthermore, while keeping in mind the ideals of democratic education—student expression and participation (Beane & Apple, 1995; Elia, 2000)—one recognizes that participants believed teachers would value students' knowledges in order to democratically re-conceptualize and reform sex education. Essentially, it is evident some participants believed teachers would adopt an empowerment model (Hagquist & Starrin, 1997), which undergirds democratic sexual health education (see Elia, 2000; Spencer, Maxwell, & Aggleton, 2008). These participants anticipated that teachers would appreciate a bottom-up strategy for change as they attend to students' 'good opinions' and make a couple curricular changes.

In the middle of the continuum is the category of possible action that teachers *might* respond to *Sex-E-cation* by implementing curricular change. In this category, one finds the following comment:

I think a lot of what is presented is already known, but has not been put into action. This is good to bring it to their attention again and hopefully they will actually make the suggested changes (Female, 18).

This participant implied that teachers in the past listened to students' perspectives, but for some reason did not take transformative action. Her position calls to mind Fraser's (1989) understanding of the way a power structure discredits certain publics and dismisses their perspectives. Did the participant believe the teachers had failed to implement curricular changes because of the public who proposed the changes in the first place? She never elaborated upon why the teachers did not

take action; nevertheless, it makes sense they were constrained by experts, making up an authoritarian public (see Fraser, 1989), the very experts who construct, and thus limit the curriculum in accordance with a régime of truth (see Foucault, 1980c). Even though students had failed previously to impress upon teachers the need for curricular change, the participant thought the action plan functions as a way for students to insist that sex education must undergo change and that they are competent to inform such change. Such insistence reminds one of the way Foucault (1994c) characterized an anti-authority struggle. The participant was hopeful the teachers, despite previously taking no action to respond to students' perspectives, would this time acknowledge students' struggle to have their marginalized voices heard and their subjugated knowledges considered.

This sense of struggle emerges from another comment:

some [teachers] may think we are attacking them and trying to change something that has been the 'norm' for so long. On the other hand, it [the action plan] may open their eyes to the needs and wants of their students therefore encouraging them to change (Female, 18).

Whether speaking of a struggle or attack, this participant alluded to the tension that exists between teachers and students, the very tension that Foucault (1984a) noted exemplifies all relations of power. She suggested that teachers would respond to students' struggle in one of two conflicting ways. First, teachers might take account of students' anti-authority position; in such a scenario, they would listen to students' perspectives, deviate from the mandated curriculum, and implement changes. If teachers were to respond in this way, they would respect students as subjects (see Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Allen 2007a; Fine, 1988) with knowledges that can inform what transpires at their school (see Cook-Sather, 2006; Thiessen, 2007). Conversely, the participant proposed that the teachers might retreat from students' anti-authority struggle and close their eyes to the action plan; in this case, they would disregard students' perspectives, defend the mandated curriculum, and maintain the status quo. Such a response would convey to students that participating in the study was for nothing because, as unauthorized experts, they were in no position to critique sex education and propose transformations (see Foucault, 2003b). Regardless of which way the teachers

responded to the action plan, the participant believed that they needed to take into account students' perspectives, even if they clash with the 'norm.' Why did she believe the teachers are accustomed to conforming to the curricular norm? One can turn to Foucault's (1984b) notion of disciplinary power, specifically the instrument of normalizing judgment, to argue that the participant suspected that teachers at Bellman would have a difficult time contemplating curricular change because they have long homogenized what students know about sexual health and how they behave sexually in accordance with the mandated curriculum, the norm.

At the other end of the continuum is the opinion that teachers *will not* respond to *Sex-E-cation* by *taking action* to implement curricular change (see Figure 4). Within this category, one finds comments such as "They are not going to listen to a bunch of students unfortunately" (Female, 18) and "They'll probably think about it for 10 minutes and then move onto 'more important' things in their own views. I don't think they will take it with the same seriousness and honesty we did" (Female, 18). These participants believed the teachers would ignore the action plan, thereby continuing to marginalize students' voices and disqualify their knowledges. The suspicion that teachers would only superficially listen to the students' perspectives reminds one of what Shor (1992) argued: teachers often deliver education 'to' students by focusing on what the teachers deem important, rather than co-construct education 'with' students by addressing what they regard as important. Essentially, the participants assumed that the students would fail to incite reform at Bellman because the teachers would continue to disenfranchise students from educational decision-making and treat them as though they were recipients, instead of co-constructors of their sex education experience.

One participant offered a comment suggesting why teachers might refuse to enact change:

I don't think they will care much to be honest—sex education is such a touch [*sic*] subject and for teachers to come up with a plan that meets everyone's needs is very hard. (Female, 18)

This statement underscores two reasons as to why teachers at Bellman would fail to implement curricular changes. First, the participant assumed the teachers did

not care about the ‘touchy’ subject of sex education, and so would be less than interested in changing it. Her descriptor, ‘touchy,’ indirectly points to the conflicting restrictive and permissive ideologies, each of which undergirds abstinence and comprehensive programming respectively (see Elia, 2000; McKay, 1999; Irvine, 2002). Although the participant never explained why the teachers would defend the current program, one can argue that she believed teachers would avoid intensifying and/or reigniting the curricular controversy at the school. Would the teachers be deterred from entering the controversy, and thereby opt against taking transformative action, even if they were to agree with students that change is necessary? Would they be fearful of the backlash from colleagues, administration, and/or parents? Second, by noting that it is challenging for teachers to meet ‘everyone’s needs,’ the participant called attention to the complex relational structure inherent in satisfying need-claims (see Fraser, 1989). Given that the participant suggested that teachers develop lesson plans to satisfy needs, one must ask whose claims about students’ needs are taken into consideration. Surely, parents, community groups, religious organizations and the like have perspectives about what students need to learn about sexual health. If teachers endeavour to acknowledge all of these interest groups, it would be, as the participant stated, ‘very hard.’ *Sex-E-cation* showcases what students themselves believe they need; in view of this fact, the participant suggested that teachers would be unable to satisfy them all, and that they would not even care to try. Such an argument leads me to think that she believed teachers would continue to construct lesson plans with the aim of satisfying normative needs stipulated by authorized experts as opposed to expressed needs voiced by unauthorized experts, the students themselves.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Soliciting Decision-Makers' Responses to the Action Plan

In this chapter, the spiral gains a twelfth and final loop as I outline my efforts at recruiting participants from among those decision-makers positioned inside and outside Bellman. I begin by offering a description and interpretation of the way the insiders responded to the study. Next, I present the responses of two outsiders, a Public Health Nurse and a Learning Coordinator of Health and Physical Education. I provide a synopsis of their roles and responsibilities before detailing what they had to say about the action plan. Thereafter, I outline the three themes that emerged during my analysis of the interview data and draw upon the literature to make sense of the way decision-makers responded to students' views of, and visions for, sex education. I conclude this chapter by explaining how the Nurse and Coordinator planned to take action to address some of the students' concerns with the teaching and learning of sexual health.

Loop 12: Obtaining Responses from the Top

Waiting for a Response from Insider Powers

To determine who I would recruit to view the action plan during a face-to-face interview, I referred to the research team's list of decision-makers best positioned to take transformative action (see Loop 4, Decision 5). While reviewing this list, I noted that these decision-makers were positioned either inside or outside Bellman. I began by recruiting those inside the school, specifically the school administrators and teachers, attempting to establish contact with six of them by emailing them an information sheet (Appendix R) and consent form (Appendix S). Many days passed without a reply. I understood that they were under no obligation to respond, but I had hoped they would wish to do so. I reasoned that the study caused them concern, which held them back from replying to discuss their possible participation. Since the onus was on me to address any questions and allay any concerns, I followed up with a telephone call.

I made my first call to a teacher. During a brief conversation, he revealed that he wanted to consult with the Department Head before consenting to participate in the study. As soon as the call ended, it dawned on me that I needed to explain that his participation was *not* contingent upon gaining permission and/or approval from a person of authority. Having not made this clear on the information sheet, I believed it necessary to address this oversight and immediately called him back. Hearing my voice on the telephone again, he immediately hung up.

Given this teacher's unexpected reaction, I refrained from calling other departmental teachers and school administrators because I did not want them to misinterpret my effort of recruitment as coercion. Since these decision-makers had my contact information, I decided to wait for them to initiate communication. Eventually, I gave up hope that any of them would respond much less schedule a time to see the action plan and discuss it. This was eventually confirmed in an email from a teacher, relaying a school-wide message: no one from Bellman would be participating in the study.

Trying to make sense of this response, I could not help but think the inside decision-makers recognized that their power relation with students was weakening; consequently, to re-exert power over the students, re-instate order at the school, and re-establish the curricular limits of sex education, they defended the disciplinary limits by disregarding the action plan, thereby dismissing students' perspectives. This response meets the three criteria Foucault (1984d) established for disciplinary power. First, he explained that a discipline is associated with lowest possible cost. Given that the action plan functioned as a physical representation of students defying expectations, voicing counter views, and diverging from conventions, the insiders did not want to draw attention to it. To do so could be costly. Had they disagreed with the students' proposed curricular changes, and upheld the policies and practices pertaining to sex education, the insiders were likely to endure the high cost of increased tension with the students. Alternatively, had the insiders taken heed of the proposed changes and implemented some of them at Bellman, they might have faced the

high cost of provoking parents and/or educational decision-makers. Hence, to avoid the high cost associated with participating in the study, responding to the action plan, and making curricular changes, the insiders opted for the course of action with the lowest possible cost: they ignored students' views of, and visions, for sex education.

This dismissal of students' marginalized voices and subjugated knowledges exemplifies the second of Foucault's (1984d) criteria for a disciplinary tactic: it must bear maximum intensity and extend beyond time and space. Arguably, by disregarding the action plan, the teachers and administrators intensified their decision to maintain the status quo. What is more, the insiders' collective response of dismissal went beyond impacting the educational space of the school. It also prevented me from reporting how and why educational decision-makers credit or, in this case, discredit students' perspectives of sex education.

In terms of the reporting phase of the study, I had proposed a third discussion (Loop 1) during which I would visit both classes to explain how the decision-makers would respond to the action plan and how they would execute curricular change; this discussion was rendered inconsequential when the insiders dismissed the action plan. Their action exemplified Foucault's (1984d) third criterion for disciplinary power: an increase in docility and utility. One can argue that the insiders' dismissal of the action plan ensured student docility. By failing to examine the action plan, much less respond to it, the insiders implicitly conveyed to the students that they must conform to the current educational order and accept it as unchangeable. Additionally, the dismissal allowed for a high degree of utility for the decision-makers; rather than attend to what the students had to say about their sex education, they indirectly communicated that it was more useful for them to continue structuring and limiting the sex education program in accordance with authorized curricular policies and practices. Thus, Foucault's three criteria of disciplinary power help to illuminate the insiders' collective decision to dismiss students' perspectives of sex education at Bellman.

Sharing the Action Plan with Outsider Powers

I eventually returned to the research team's list of decision-makers with the aim of focusing on the outsiders—those people who were *not* on staff at Bellman. I singled out a School Nurse and a Learning Coordinator for Health and Physical Education. I subsequently emailed each of them the information letter and consent form. They consented to view and respond to the action plan. Then I constructed a three-phase guide for each interview. I began by posing questions about the individual's role and responsibilities (with the aim of establishing rapport); next, I presented the action plan; and finally, I asked how, if at all, the individual planned to address the particular concerns/problems identified within it. Given that these two outsiders occupied different professional positions, I individualized the questions for each person (Appendices R and S).

Phase 1: Role and responsibilities.

Outsider: School nurse. Nurse Violet Smith explained that she helps youth with their sexual health issues. During her eight-year tenure as school nurse, Smith observed that some students are hesitant to visit her office due, in part, to her “episodic presence” (one day per week at a school). Others, she noted, “have gotten to know and trust me and so have come to me a bit more.” Drawing on her experiences at one academic and two vocational schools, Smith asserted that all students are “worried about birth control, worried that they are pregnant, and worried that they have an STI.” She insisted that although students at academic schools like Bellman are “a bit brighter and a little bit more academically-focused” than students at vocational schools, they all experience the same difficulties when it comes to sexual health. The only difference, she said, is the way they talk about their problems. Those at vocational schools “are more upfront, out there, this-is-what-you-see-is-what-you-get;” consequently, their problems are easy “to see.” In contrast, students at academic schools speak in nebulous terms, making their sexual health worries “hidden...deeper, and sophisticated.” The latter group, Smith explained, are so anxious that the nurse will pass judgment on them that they typically begin by talking about physical

ailments, making the “real issue...less visible.” Once she has identified the sexual health issue, however, she is able to “help them figure out what’s going on...help them problem-solve about it...help them get resources...[so they can] make their own decision the best way they can.”

The different ways in which students from academic and vocational schools communicate their sexual health issues to the school nurse reflect the different sexual health discourses. As Foucault (1984e) argued, institutional powers construct sexuality as something dangerous and, therefore, talk about it in the context of following rules and observing norms. On this basis, one can argue that the educational powers at Bellman endeavour to protect students’ sexuality from ‘negative’ sexual health outcomes or, as Smith called them, “issues” by impressing upon students the need for compliance and conformity. Smith’s statements lead me to conclude that students at both academic and vocational schools ignore the authorized sexual health discourse by breaking the rules and defying the norms. However, Smith’s observation that academic students, such as those at Bellman, are evasive about their sexual health issues suggests that these students are so preoccupied with protecting their reputations that they allow this to get in the way of asking for help. Their desire to comply with, and conform to, the authorized discourse, which is fundamentally an act of self-preservation, and their desire to remain reticent about their “real issues” makes the school nurse’s job of offering them help particularly difficult.

Smith acknowledged that some students trust teachers, not school nurses, with their sexual health issues; she argued that such trust is misplaced because students do not understand the disparate rules regulating teachers’ practices. Teachers, as employees of the School Board, must follow “strict rules” that, as Smith said, trap teachers in a Catch-22 situation: “if they don’t tell the parents something, they are in deep trouble [with them]; and, if they do tell the parents something, then they are in deep trouble with the kid.” According to Smith, even if teachers are “very worried about overstepping the mark of confidentiality,” they are apt to divulge details about a student’s personal issues to his/her parents. This is the case, Smith clarified, because teachers are ultimately accountable to the

parents. Conversely, Smith emphasized, school nurses are employees of the Public Health Unit and abide by *its* rules. These allow them the necessary flexibility, “not [to]...do *to* or do *for* [students], but to help them [the youth] *do for themselves* [emphasis added].” Smith maintained that school nurses are accountable to the youth and not their parents, and that the rules permit her to protect a youth’s confidentiality, which is “supreme...unless some laws override that.” It is unthinkable, she insisted, for nurses to breach a youth’s confidence by disclosing information to his/her parents. To demonstrate how a nurse goes about honouring a youth’s confidence, Smith said she responds to parental inquiries by explaining

I’m not at liberty to tell you exactly what was said in the situation [with your child]...Ultimately, I want them alive and safe. So, I’m sorry if you have an issue with that. But, I, personally, believe that it’s better for somebody to have the knowledge [so he/she] is able to make better decisions.

In Smith’s view, teachers lack the support of the Board when it comes to deflecting parents’ requests for information about their child, while school nurses have the Unit’s “full backing” to refuse such requests, and thereby protect youth’s confidentiality.

One can understand Smith’s discussion of the way institutional rules regulate the practices of school nurses and teachers in terms put forward by Foucault (1981). He argued that power structures establish rules and employ strategies to construct knowledge within approved limits while, at the same time, excluding knowledge beyond such limits. Smith focused on the distinct sets of rules governing teachers and nurses to convey that in their compliance with such rules, they each construct discourses of sexual health while helping students with their sexual health issues. By describing the Board’s rules as “strict” and implying that the Unit’s rules are lenient, Smith called attention to the way these respective sets of rules control and constrain the power relations between teacher and student, and school nurse and youth. To make the case that students are better served by entrusting a nurse than a teacher, she identified two critiques of the teacher-student power relation. First, Smith insinuated that the Board’s rules limit

teachers to do ‘to’ and ‘for’ students when addressing their issues, whereas the Unit’s rules permit nurses to work ‘with’ students so they can go about addressing their issues for themselves. In other words, teachers complying with the Board’s rules treat students as objects while school nurses abiding by the Unit’s rules respect youth as subjects (see Shor, 1992). Second, Smith stressed that students are unaware of the rules regulating their interactions with teachers. The covert nature of these rules is evident in the strategy of silence, which, Foucault (1981, 1984e) argued, permeates discourses of truth. Although Smith did not speak of this specific strategy, she did suggest that teachers employ it by failing to inform students of two facts: first, that the rules require teachers to be accountable to parents; and second, that the rules compel teachers to divulge students’ personal life circumstances to their parents. Hence, the crux of Smith’s argument was that students would be more likely to seek help from a school nurse rather than a teacher if only the youth understood that the educational power structure establishes rules and supports silences to control how teachers exercise power in constructing and circulating sexual health knowledge.

Outsider: Learning coordinator for health and physical

education. As an acting Learning Coordinator, Suzanna Kramer assists secondary school teachers in complying with the mandated Health and Physical Education curriculum (Government of Ontario, 1999; 2000). She “advance[s] curriculum... [that is,] what the Ministry would like to have taught.” Compliance with its stated expectations is, as Kramer stated, “absolutely mandatory,” even those related to sexual health because “sex education is an integral part of their [students’] learning.” To help the teachers with this part of the curriculum, Kramer maintained that she first “makes sure that [new resources] match with what should be taught” and facilitates four meetings throughout the academic year during which she works with colleagues to present these resources to all the Department Heads of Health and Physical Education within the Board. Kramer clarified that as she guides the Heads through the curriculum, she indirectly does the same with the Health and Physical Education teachers,

ensuring they fulfill its expectations in an “interesting way” while focusing on “protect[ing]” students.

Kramer’s view of her role as a Learning Coordinator conforms to the planner model of health education (Hagquist & Starrin, 1997). Unlike the empowerment model with its bottom-up strategy for change, the planner model takes a top-down approach. According to this model, the Learning Coordinator acts as a member of a top-down network of educational decision-makers, each of whom moves the mandated curriculum along a downward trajectory: it originates at the Ontario Ministry of Education, descends to Learning Coordinators positioned at the multiple school board offices in the province, proceeds to Department Heads located at secondary schools, advances to Health and Physical Education Teachers within these schools and, finally, meets students in the health classrooms. The critical role of efficiency within this top-down network becomes evident when one reviews two of Kramer’s professional responsibilities. Kramer explained that she authorizes teaching resources that satisfy the Ministry’s learning expectations and, subsequently, presents these resources to Heads who, in turn, pass them on to Health Teachers for use in the classroom. Hence, by drawing upon the planner model, one can argue that Kramer acts strategically to move the curriculum down the educational hierarchy so it falls in the hands of all decision-makers tasked with designing and delivering a program which complies with the ‘plans’ of top-level experts.

Kramer reported that assisting health teachers with sex education is not solely her responsibility, but one that she shares with others. She explained that although sexual health teachers are often designated as “specialist[s]” owing to their “background in kinesiology,” some are uncomfortable with the subject of sexual health—specifically, with the practice of addressing students’ questions—and must, therefore, seek help in satisfying the curricular expectations. Kramer stated that health teachers are able to obtain help from Learning Coordinators, like herself, by inviting one of them to the classroom for the purpose of teaching a sex education lesson. However, health teachers can also ask the principal for help. Most principals, she speculated, would respond by calling upon the Health Unit

for classroom support and assistance. Kramer, in fact, recommended that health teachers welcome the school nurse into the classroom. According to Kramer, school nurses are “assigned to every school” and are “very aware of...the expectations at each grade level;” consequently, they serve as “a great support” because, as Kramer stated, they can “teach that component [sex education] *with* the teacher [emphasis added].”

Yet, how effectively can school nurses and health teachers work together when the nurse is regulated by lenient rules (as Smith implied) and the teacher is controlled by strict directives (as Smith declared)? Given Foucault’s (1980d) understanding that power structures, like the School Board and Health Unit, have distinct rules governing the production and circulation of truth, Kramer demonstrated a lack of regard for the way in which such rules might make collaboration a challenge. This prompts a critical question: when a school nurse does visit a health classroom (which, as we will soon learn from Smith, is an infrequent occurrence at academic schools like Bellman), does he/she really work ‘with’ the health teacher? And, if a school nurse does not work with the teacher, with whom, if anyone, does he/she work? Conceivably, while listening to students’ voices, honouring their views, and addressing their questions, a school nurse may actually work *with* the students, not the teacher, to co-construct a relevant sex education experience (see Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Allen 2007a; Fine, 1988).

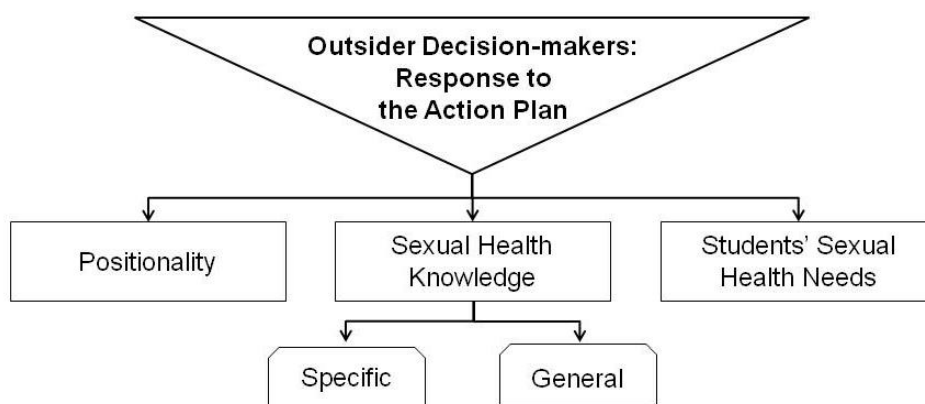
Moreover, while Kramer maintained that school nurses are aware of the ministerial expectations for sexual health education, she, nevertheless, failed to recognize that teachers—even if they are uncomfortable with the subject matter—and not nurses are legally responsible for fulfilling such expectations (Government of Ontario, 2000; 1999). Although Kramer underscored that health teachers who ask for help with sex education are uncomfortable addressing students’ questions, she failed to account for teachers’ feelings or elaborate upon the nature of such questions. One wonders whether teachers are uncomfortable because, in listening to students’ questions, especially those about topics beyond disciplinary limits, they are expected to breach the rules, cross the disciplinary

limits, and dialogue with students about off-limit topics. Why did Kramer believe that school nurses are more comfortable with this scenario? Was she acknowledging, much like Smith, that the Unit grants school nurses a greater margin of freedom than the Board does with teachers?

Phase 2: Response. During the second phase of the interview with the outsider decision-makers, I presented the action plan to elicit their responses to it; subsequently, I transcribed verbatim what Smith and Kramer had to say to analyze the qualitative data and make sense of the emergent themes. Even though they occupy different positions, their responses to the action plan illustrate three common themes (see Figure 5). In what follows, I present those themes in relation to Sex-E-cation.

Figure 5

Outside Decision-Maker Response to the Action Plan



Positionality. The first theme I identified was positionality (see Figure 5). The proposition that the sex education classroom at Bellman needs to resemble a ‘comfort zone’ (*Sex-E-cation*, Slides 52 to 57) prompted Smith to think of the way teachers welcome her to their schools. She began by saying “every school that I walk into has a different feeling about it.” While Smith reported feeling “almost immediately comfortable” at vocational schools, she

senses a “different kind of tone” at academic schools because “the teachers [are] much less likely to say hi,” making it “feel much cooler.” Smith speculated that this inhospitable treatment follows from a particular inner monologue on the part of the teachers: “Who are you *coming in here*? [emphasis added] I know how to teach this better than you do... You know, we are the experts in this.” Here, Smith called attention to her outsider position. Indeed, she suggested that were she a full-time school nurse, she would be greeted more warmly. Yet, she recognized that having a full-time nurse on staff was not feasible because of “money—it is totally money.”

Why would teachers at academic schools, much like Bellman, act coolly towards outsiders, in particular, the school nurse? Health teachers and school nurses occupy positions within two distinct power structures, and each plays an integral part in constructing and circulating unique discourses of sexuality. Whether authorized experts are members of a secondary school or a health unit, they each construct truths about sexual health, truths that comply with, and conform to, a particular régime (see Foucault, 1980c). Smith stated that teachers at academic schools, like those at Bellman, favour the discourse they construct and circulate to the exclusion of all others. Indeed, her perception that teachers are defensive about her coming into an academic school prompts me to conclude that it was possible the health teachers at Bellman disregarded the sexual health discourse constructed and circulated by outsiders such as Smith. Moreover, Smith believed that these teachers consider themselves ‘the’ experts and so feel threatened by other professionals and their particular forms of expertise. Torre and Fine (2011) point out that expertise is widely distributed—among both, in this case, insiders and outsiders—but lacks legitimacy. On this basis, one can argue that Smith believed teachers regard their position within an academic school as a testament to their legitimate expertise in sexual health education. Hence, as far as Smith is concerned, teachers at academic schools such as Bellman do not welcome outsiders, like school nurses, because they view their unique expertise as illegitimate.

Kramer was not surprised by the students' suggestions for improving sex education at Bellman (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide 62): indeed, she stated, "when I read that, I think...well, I expect that, I expect that. Going through all their suggestions is what *I* think *should* be happening *out there* [emphasis added]." Kramer reasoned that she could do little to ensure that the teachers were implementing the recommended practices, and proposed that only a certain type of teacher would be likely to incorporate them. Reflecting on her past experience as a Department Head of Health and Physical Education, Kramer explained that she had encountered "a couple of teachers [who] I wouldn't want teaching this [sex education] because they lack a sense of humour and an approachable nature." A teacher with a sense of humour and approachability, Kramer argued, establishes a "connection" with the students so they feel comfortable posing questions. Kramer clarified that as a Learning Coordinator, she has no control over what type of teacher is ultimately assigned to teach sexual health education. Kramer speculated that the students at Bellman might not have such a health teacher; consequently, she concluded that their sex education is "only going to come one-way."

Rather than accept some degree of responsibility for addressing and amending what she described as one-way sex education at Bellman, Kramer believed that her positionality justified her inaction. She did not explain what, in her view, constitutes one-way sex-education; however, Dewey's (1938) description of traditional education points to a scenario in which the teacher delivers authorized knowledge *to* students (see also Thiessen, 2007). Kramer also failed to explain what might constitute two-way education. Bean and Apple's (1995) and Dewey's democratic models of education are helpful here. Nevertheless, Kramer did imply that as far as education is concerned, a two-way model is superior to a one-way model. And yet, this seems incongruous, with her self-professed responsibility for moving the curriculum from the Ministry down, in a unidirectional fashion, to the schools within the district. Indeed, Kramer stated that she is able to satisfy this responsibility by working "in here"—the Board office. In pointing out her positionality, she implied that she has less power to affect change within the classroom than do other decision-makers, like the

Department Head, at the local schools. This stance conflicts with Foucault's (1980d, 1984b) understanding of power: it is not a possession held by decision-makers in varying degrees based on their positions within an institutional hierarchy. Power, Foucault (1984a) argued, is transmitted by and through individuals to have an overall effect. One can argue that the overall effect of power at Bellman is, as Kramer described, one-way sex education. Kramer concentrated on her outsider positioning to absolve herself of the role she played in contributing to this effect, holding the teachers, and specifically those with certain undesirable character traits, accountable for the educational outcome rather than identifying the ways in which she could work with them to incite change and implement two-way sex education.

Sexual health knowledge. The second theme is sexual health knowledge. The category *specific* sexual health knowledge emerges out of Smith's comments about findings relating to the school nurse at Bellman (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide 33). Smith deduced that the students want to better acquaint themselves with the school nurse. She explained that this only takes place when the school nurse gets "help" from the teachers. Smith indicated that the teachers at the two vocational schools where she works help her, "invit[ing] me into health classes to give another perspective, that of a health professional, who is very much involved with the issues." Smith confirmed that school nurses, like herself, "have like acres of stuff [information and experience] behind them to put into their comments" and "have seen and heard everything." Hence, they are comfortable talking about "nutrition, pregnancy, labour and delivery, sexual health, STIs, [and] communicable disease transmission." During class visits, she tells students, "as you can see, I feel comfortable talking about any of this—so, you can ask me anything, and I'll be fine with it." She makes this statement because she "personally believe[s] that it is better for...them to have *specific* [emphasis added] knowledge and be able to make better decisions." She made it clear that "...ultimately I want them alive and safe."

The second category, general knowledge, develops from Smith's account of her experience at an academic school. Pointing out that "I don't ever—hardly ever—go into a classroom [there]" she queried, "why do I get asked at other [vocational] schools and not here?" Then, Smith speculated, "maybe it's something about me, maybe it's my age, maybe they [the teachers] perceive that they do it [sex education] fine." Smith concluded that while she does "not discount the teachers [because] they...know *generally* [emphasis added] the information," she "doubt[s] if any of them would be up-to-date on herpes, treatment, and all that kind of stuff."

Foucault's (1980d) argument that power is inextricably linked to knowledge helps one to understand Smith's description of the way specific and general sexual health knowledge circulates. On the one hand, what Foucault (1980c) called the productive effects of power are obvious in Smith's report of teachers at vocational schools inviting her to talk with students about sexual health; on the other hand, the repressive effects are evident in Smith's account that teachers at academic schools deny her this opportunity (see Foucault, 1980c). As these teachers exercise power over the school nurse, they concomitantly repress, exclude, and censor specific sexual health knowledge. According to Smith, these teachers at academic schools "do" sex education "fine" insofar as satisfying the mandated curriculum and perpetuating general knowledge. Based on Smith's experience, then, 'better' sex education more likely arises at vocational schools, than at academic schools like Bellman. This prompts one to wonder whether Smith believed that teachers at vocational schools think students need specific sexual health knowledge and exercise power by extending a speaking invitation to the school nurse, while the teachers at academic schools, like Bellman, think students can make do with general knowledge and exercise power by failing to invite the nurse.

Smith's response to comments in the action plan pertaining to Bellman's annual health fair extends this category of specific sexual health knowledge. Smith explained that sexual health fairs occur more often than not at academic, rather than vocational schools. She pointed out that the Department Head of

Health and Physical Education initiates the event because the fair only proceeds when he/she trusts in the senior students' ability to carry it out. Smith noted that she works "with" the Head; indeed, she noted that they have a good working relationship because they both believe "that the students would much prefer to hear it [sex education] from other students who have been educated than from teachers." As for the way students become "educated," Smith clarified that she invites "a whole bunch of public health professionals...to train the Grade 11s and 12s for two days [spanning 2 classes] about the material and the key messages." Smith explained that the educated senior students then sign-up to run the booths, including those on "condom comfort, birth control, relationships, and STIs." During the fair, they engage in discussion with younger students while addressing their questions. The health professionals, Smith maintained, stay in close proximity to the booths in case questions arise to which the senior students do not know the answers.

Smith next responded to Michelle's critique (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide 42) of the training session: students learn *specific* sexual health information "on the fly," only five minutes before they present themselves at the booths. Initially, Smith said, "I don't agree...unless she wasn't listening in class" but then acknowledged Michelle may have a valid concern with the training session, and admitted that "[i]t is hard to know just how to do it...maybe there should be more prep, maybe we should be doing it the week before." Contemplating the prospect of changing the existing training regimen, Smith reported that "there is knowledge drop," meaning that students forget the specific information learned in the training session by the time of the health fair. The critiques of the health fair, she realized, were prompting her to think that "the way we are doing it isn't the best way—I think that we need to pay attention to this [the action plan]." In the end, Smith maintained that while "the good part [of the fair] is that the students teach peers their knowledge...the not so good part is that they don't have all that experience and...don't have all the knowledge."

One can scrutinize Smith's suggestion that health professionals transmit, by way of senior students, specific sexual health knowledge to junior students

during the course of a health fair in light of the relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980b). Smith argued that health fairs are successful events because they capitalize on students' preference to talk with peers, rather than teachers, about sexual health matters. In making this assertion, was Smith suggesting that while educational powers repress what students talk about in the sex education classroom, they have no influence on what students talk about at a health fair? Smith said that a Head coordinates the fair 'with' the school nurse, which leads one to believe that students learn both general and specific sexual health knowledge at this event. But, is this really the case? At Bellman, Smith assumed, the Head has trust in the students' ability to carry out a health fair, and as such allows it to take place. Does this mean that the Head welcomes the school nurse and other health professionals to circulate and construct specific sexual health knowledge with students? Not necessarily. Since the Head has an agenda—to circulate general sexual health knowledge—one can argue that she exercises disciplinary power (see Foucault 1984b, 1984d) to achieve this particular end by permitting the fair to take place. Although Smith did not state that the purpose of a health fair is to complement classroom-based sex education, and thereby ensure that curricular expectations are satisfied, she did explain that health professionals “train” students so they become “educated” on “the material and key messages.” Surely, because the Head plays an integral role in coordinating the fair, including the training session, such material and messages align with what she is expected to satisfy, the mandated curriculum. At the fair, then, even though senior and junior students appear to talk about sexual health free from educational power, the case can be made that their discourse is strategically controlled and limited to, what Smith termed, general sexual health knowledge.

One sees in Kramer's response to the action plan a further development of the two categories, specific and general sexual health knowledge. First, Kramer downplayed the value of specific knowledge when she counters the claim that “to have a medical professional that you know is right, that you know is a very credible source of information—that would help a lot” (Frank, *Sex-E-cation*, Slide 32). Although Kramer agreed with Frank that teachers at a school “don't know

everything” and explained that health teachers at other schools do invite medical professionals to talk with students about sexual health, she had reservations about the practice. Parents have called the Board office to complain about what their children learned from such professionals, she said. Without elaborating on the nature of these complaints, Kramer recounted that the parents prompted her to become “concerned too about the appropriateness” of the sex education lessons conducted by professionals. Second, Kramer underscored the value of teachers’ general knowledge by suggesting that teachers at Bellman forgo inviting medical professionals into the classroom because they want to ensure that the sex education curriculum is addressed “appropriately.” This decision, she felt, in no way compromises students’ sex education because the health teachers have general knowledge gained from their own education in Kinesiology. This general knowledge, Kramer asserted, qualifies them to satisfy the curricular expectations.

By noting that teachers at other schools do call on such professionals, Kramer underscored a risk or cost, reminiscent of Foucault’s (1984d) criterion of lowest possible cost. If dealing with potential parental complaints is the high cost that teachers must endure for having a medical professional speak with students about sexual health matters, it follows that teachers would opt for a teaching practice which bears the lowest possible cost. Though Kramer did not speculate why teachers at other schools employ the high cost practice, she did suggest that teachers at Bellman chose to teach sex education independent of the input of outside professionals, a practice which exemplifies a disciplinary power with the lowest possible cost.

What do teachers have to gain by carrying out such a practice? According to Foucault (1984b), institutional powers employ disciplinary power with a particular end in mind. The teachers at Bellman are, as Kramer pointed out, qualified to teach the mandated curriculum. One can argue that in satisfying this requirement, they exercise disciplinary power so the discourse reflects authorized sexual health knowledge, even if such knowledge is ‘general’ in nature. Thus, by saying that teachers at Bellman do not invite medical professionals into the health classroom, Kramer was suggesting that these teachers understand that allowing

outside professionals to talk to students puts teachers in a precarious position, especially if said professionals are unfamiliar or unconcerned with the curricular limits. Hence, Kramer led one to believe that by excluding medical professionals from the health classroom, the teachers at Bellman adopt disciplinary power to control and constrain sex education discourse so it circulates information that educational powers deem “appropriate” and silences what they regard as “inappropriate.”

Youth’s sexual health needs. The final theme, youth’s sexual health needs, emerges from Smith’s response to one student’s comment: “the first thing that comes to mind, I guess, is a repetitive, watered-down version of what the education system wants us to be taught” (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide 26, Britney). Smith thought the student was referring to the teachers when she used the phrase ‘the education system.’ On that basis, she responded, “that’s a shame...I hate that.” Smith explained that teachers must address not only what they believe students must know, but also what students say they need to know about sexual health. “There is real skill [on the part of teachers],” she stated, “to not give what they think they [students] should know [and] ...to elicit information from them: ...what it is they [students] want to know.” Smith argued that it is difficult for teachers to satisfy all of the students’ needs, especially when teachers face many students. She stressed that teachers must take into account that within a single class at least “one person...really wants much more, but can’t voice that in the classroom [because he/she] is going to see [the teacher] again and again,” implying that students remain silent because they are afraid the teacher will cast judgment on them. To stress this point, Smith referred to Justin’s comment: “there is a lot less of a relationship with that person [a health professional], so you don’t have to feel like you’re exposing yourself to somebody who will judge you” (Slide 19). Recognizing herself as such a professional, Smith explained that students prefer talking with her as opposed to a teacher about their sexual health needs because, as she put it, “they don’t have to ever see me again, if they don’t want to.”

One can apply the Information-Motivation-Behavioural model (IMB) (J. Fisher & W. Fisher, 1992) and theories of democratic education (Beane & Apple, 1995; Dewey, 1938) to make meaning of Smith's view of students' sexual health needs. Smith suggested that teachers at Bellman ought to supplement the curriculum that educational decision-makers stipulate students need with what students say they need when it comes to sex education. In other words, she proposed that teachers must give credence not only to normative needs, but also to expressed needs (see Bradshaw, 1972, 1994). Recalling the elicitation phase of the IMB model, one can argue that Smith supports the theoretically-grounded practice of planning a sex education program by, first, eliciting youth's perceived sexual health needs and, then, considering such insight or expressed needs together with the prescribed objectives or normative needs. Teachers who succeed on this front have, as Smith asserted, "real skill." To better understand the importance of this skill, one can take into account Dewey's (1938) suggestion that teachers must employ the mandated curriculum as a basis upon which to construct with students learning experiences relevant to their lives. Hence, Smith indirectly advised teachers to accept the democratic practice of inviting students to assume an active role in constructing curriculum that satisfies students' sexual health needs (see also Beane & Apple, 1995).

When it comes to meeting such needs, Smith identified a problem: in any health class, while teachers deliver a sex education program compliant with the mandated curriculum, there will be students who have needs beyond the scope of the program and at least one who refuses to express his/her needs for fear of judgment. What are the circumstances inciting such fear and what steps, if any, do students take to alleviate it? To understand Smith's view on this, one can turn to Foucault's (1984d) explanation that as institutional powers order discourse by reinforcing and circulating 'true' or authorized statements, they confront "human multiplicities" (p. 207) and as such employ disciplinary powers (for example, judging non-conformists) to train people so they comply with rules and perpetuate discourse. On this basis, I contend that Smith believed that as teachers face a diverse group of students to deliver a sex education program—which by its very

construction discredits and ignores valid statements of sexual health—they instill fear in students, especially those whose sexual health needs relate to truth lying beyond the curricular limits. These students, consequently, internalize a disciplinary code, believing it critical to ignore individuality in favour of conformity. Thus, if their individual needs defy the rules and challenge the norms, they remain, as Smith explained, silent so as to convey an aura of compliance. For students who must voice, for whatever reason, their sexual health needs, Smith explained that they confide in the school nurse over a teacher, more often than not, in order to avoid judgment. This claim calls to mind Foucault's (1984a) argument that people come to realize the effects of power on their bodies, and as such endeavour to reclaim control by mounting an anti-authority struggle. Smith helps students with such a struggle by being at their disposal as they seek to satisfy their sexual health needs, whatever they might be.

Smith said that some students visit her office in need of condoms; I called her attention to the photo of an empty condom dispenser (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide 28) and shared with her that the research partners all claimed that in the four years they had been students at Bellman, the dispensers had always been empty. This is “a big problem” Smith stated, recalling that when condom dispensers were installed in select schools in the District, the Unit accepted the responsibility of replenishing them. The Unit, she said, subsequently learned that one of its employees was failing to restock the dispensers, leaving them empty for an indeterminate amount of time. Although Smith maintained that this problem had been rectified, it had evidently returned. Smith was uncertain whether the responsibility of restocking the condom dispensers remained with the Unit or had shifted to the School Board. Regardless, she affirmed that empty condom dispensers communicate to students “that nobody is interested,” and that neglecting to refill them was sending a detrimental message. As far as Smith was concerned, this is the farthest thing from the truth because, as she stated, “I give [condoms to] kids when they ask...but, the trouble...is they have to ask.” Although students can visit the AIDS committee or the Unit's clinic (off school-grounds) to “grab a handful [of condoms] out of the bowls, they still have to go

somewhere to get them” and she felt that having dispensers at school is a convenient way for students to access the condoms they need.

In saying that empty dispensers convey the message “no one is interested” was Smith insinuating that the Board and Unit were never genuinely interested in supplying youth with condoms at school? Notwithstanding Smith’s expressed interest in giving condoms to youth upon their request, one cannot help but think that if other decision-makers at the Board and Unit were truly interested in making condoms available, it would not have taken years for them to realize that the dispensers were, in fact, empty. Foucault (1984a) wrote that people strategically put power into practice: hence, one could interpret the act of neglecting to replenish the condom dispensers as an attempt to dominate and repress students’ sexual activity. This use of power may have affected students, prompting them to remain silent about the empty dispensers because they assumed, as Smith argued, that no one was interested in their expressed need for condoms.

The theme of students’ sexual health needs is evident as well in Kramer’s response to the action plan. Kramer disagreed with Luigi’s comment that “students’ don’t have a say in what they learn” (*Sex-E-cation*, Slide 65), arguing that as a former health teacher, she would offer students a say by inviting them to use the honesty box. Kramer promised students “that every question [would be] addressed ... whatever the question might be.” She had assumed that “an anonymous box was used in every grade level and at every school” so teachers could address students’ questions, even if doing so was “tricky” for them. Thus, in learning that the teachers at Bellman do not make an honesty box available to the students (Slide 67), Kramer stated that she was “surprised.” Furthermore, Kramer explained that she would encourage the students to pose questions. According to Kramer, students would sometimes ask questions grounded in their sexual experience, which she described as “perhaps, beyond their years.” These students, Kramer said, “try to control what’s being talked about,” prompting teachers to perform a “juggling act” that is “tricky” because teachers must meet the needs of sexually experienced and inexperienced students.

One can construct a deeper understanding of Kramer's view of youth's sexual health needs by homing in on the two instances in which she develops the metaphor of the 'tricky' juggling act. First, Kramer suggested that the students do not have an honesty box because teachers want to limit the number of tricky juggling acts they must perform. This makes it easier for teachers to proceed with a selective sex education (see Bean & Apple, 1995), an education, in other words, focused on what the dominant culture and older generations believe important for youth, instead of what the students believe important when it comes to protecting and enhancing their sexual health. Second, Kramer explained that the juggling act is tricky when students pose questions that indicate sexual experience. Although Kramer suggested that she wanted to use an honesty box to create an educational space within which students are empowered, her idea that some wanted to exert control over the discussion is at odds with Wallerstein's (1992) concept of empowerment. Wallerstein explained that empowerment is a social-action process that promotes participation between groups—in this case, sexually experienced *and* inexperienced student—so they enter into dialogue with the aim of increasing “individual and community *control*.... for improved quality of life [emphasis added]” (p. 198). Kramer never considered the possibility that by raising questions, whether based in sexual experience or not, students empower themselves, attempting to shape and improve discussion about sexual health so it becomes relevant to their lives. Since the teachers are ultimately responsible for controlling and constraining discussion within the established curricular limits, they arguably find themselves in a precarious position in which they have to address students' questions without crossing the limits. This is the 'tricky' part of the juggling act teachers must master. But, in their efforts to balance these various 'balls,' do they ever really address and satisfy students' sexual health questions/needs?

Phase 3: Intended action for curricular change. Smith asserted that decision-makers, like her, must go beyond simply thinking about the student-proposed changes to actually implementing some of them. She believed that

“everyone is time and money conscious; so, if...this information [presented in the action plan] comes up, it’s good. Would anybody else have had the time to do this? Isn’t it a gift to the school?” She concentrated on the teachers at Bellman, insisting that they must see *Sex-E-cation* and take action. As far as Smith was concerned, teachers occupy a position that enables them to implement some of the student-proposed changes. Smith reasoned that “a lot of people complain about kids not being engaged,” and that the action plan offers teachers guidance on ways to engage students in sex education. Since she believed “this [action plan] is the clue to them being engaged,” she advised teachers to “do it,” that is, to affect change.

In addition to asserting that teachers must “hear from the kids” and implement curricular changes, Smith planned to take action herself and actualize change on three fronts. First, she intended to tackle the problem of increased visibility of the school nurse. She said she would concentrate her efforts on this front, specifically at the academic school where she works. She planned to adopt strategies beyond “going to the first day [of school] assemblies and say[ing] to the kids: ‘This is who I am, this and this is where I am, and I can talk about anything.’” She said that she would attempt to forge relationships with the health teachers by offering them resources, such as her “STI jeopardy game,” with the hope that they would invite her into the classroom. Second, to address the students’ concerns about the health fair, in particular that of the training session, Smith intended to talk with the Department Head, with whom she organizes the fair at the academic school, about how to potentially improve it. Lastly, she stated she would act immediately to rectify the problem with the empty condom dispensers. She said she would find out who was responsible (whether Board or Unit) and ensure that all dispensers at all schools were restocked so that students could have bathroom access to condoms.

Kramer planned to affect change to sex education because the Board’s expectations reflect the students’ perspectives showcased in the action plan. She asserted that a Board “expectation is that, as professionals in health and physical education, we should know about the kids’ experiences.” However, Kramer said

that teachers “have the curriculum...are under time pressures, and...don’t often take a step back or get a chance to listen or talk to the kids about [sex education].” The action plan functions, Kramer felt, as “an excellent reminder” to teachers. Kramer explained that they must acknowledge that listening to students’ perspectives is an invaluable practice. To encourage them to hear and consider students’ views, Kramer intended to present the action plan to the Health and Physical Education Department Heads during an upcoming meeting. If this could not occur for some unforeseen reason, her

next plan of attack would be to present [the action plan] to the Coordinator coming into my role and make a strong suggestion that it goes to a Heads’ meeting and, then, gets sent to our schools so that our Heads can deliver it in department meetings.... This will be a part of my role for preparing her to come in to take over for me.

Kramer believed the action plan warranted a larger audience, and was optimistic that it would serve as an impetus for teachers to dialogue with students about changing sex education at the respective schools, including Bellman Secondary.

CHAPTER NINE

Beginning Again

In this final chapter, I begin by describing the ‘incomplete loop;’ that is to say, the phase of the study that I proposed, but which never transpired. I then describe the curricular change that the research team ultimately did incite and inform. Next, I revisit the two research curiosities that I outlined prior to entering Bellman. I understand that those who pick up this dissertation will assess whether the Bellman study presented herein can be deemed ‘good’ research; therefore, I address this concern by reviewing five criteria of authenticity. Moreover, I explain who found the action plan useful and in what ways. I end the chapter by identifying some of the challenges that I faced having initiated and facilitated YPAR as a way of guiding those inclined to enter an educational power structure with the aim of setting into motion additional research spirals.

Incomplete Loop 13: Sharing the Responses from the Top

At the outset of the study (Loop 1), I outlined my intent to facilitate a third discussion in Classes A and B. I had two aims. First, I wanted to communicate that *Sex-E-cation* had been shared with decision-makers; and, second, I wanted to share how they had responded to the action plan and planned to enact changes. After the presentation of the action plan (Loop 10), though, communication between myself and the health teachers and school administrators ceased. Consequently, the third discussion never took place. I do not know how or, even, if the teachers and/or administrators ever explained to the students why I did not return.

Why forestall the third discussion? What did the health teachers and school administrators gain or lose if the students learned about the decision-makers’ responses to the action plan? To make sense of what transpired (or failed to transpire), I returned to Foucault’s (1980a, 1994c) observation that in the face of anti-authority struggles, power relations do weaken and waver until such time when institutional powers retreat to re-organize their efforts for the purpose of re-

establishing order. Arguably, by preventing the third discussion from occurring, the insider decision-makers were attempting to restore the disciplinary limits of sexual health education. Had they allowed the discussion, the insider decision-makers would have suggested to students that their views and visions would inform and incite curricular change. As well, they would have communicated to students that youth are free to exercise power, resist the effects of institutional power, and shift the disciplinary limits.

Curricular Change

Given that the insider decision-makers resisted the students' attempt to have their voices heard and their views honoured, am I to think that the teachers and administrators re-established the 'normal' disciplinary limits? Am I to report that no curricular change actually took place? Of course not! I knew that it was going to be challenging to create a research context within which the subjugated perspectives of students would be considered invaluable to curricular reform; but to say that the research team incited no change in terms of shifting the disciplinary limits of sexual health education would be inaccurate. Our efforts to voice students' subjugated knowledges were not in vain. As Foucault (1984d) explained, counterpowers, much like the research team, can shift, if only infinitesimally, the limits of discourse. How did the team succeed in doing so with the discourse of sexual health education? We managed to shift the limits in two ways. First, even though the School Nurse and the Learning Coordinator were outsiders to Bellman, they still occupied positions with responsibilities linked to the school. Thus, because they did listen to the students' perspectives and did report an intention to act, I trust they were true to their word and so actualized curricular change. Second, the HPE Teacher and Administrator did see the action plan—on two separate occasions (Loop 8 and 10). Granted, they resisted engaging in dialogue with the students (Loop 10), especially in my presence. However, this is not to say that dialogue never occurred, during which the disciplinary limits would shift. Dewey (1938) noted that resistance between two parties, like teachers and students, forces discussion that prompts each to expand their understanding of

the social situation. On this basis, there is promise that once I left the classroom, whether that day or later on, the Teacher and/or Administrator, and students did dialogue about what *Sex-E-cation* describes as their ‘clashing’ perspectives (Slide 24). Hopefully, this discussion ensued with the aim of improving sex education so it ultimately satisfied and addressed students’ sexual health needs.

Revisiting the Research Curiosities

While the research team identified research questions and addressed them in *Sex-E-cation*, I had curiosities that motivated me to embark upon doctoral studies and, subsequently, enter Bellman to mobilize a research collective. My first curiosity was, ‘What are youth’s perspectives of their sexual health education experiences? That is, what are youth’s views of, and visions for, the teaching and learning of sexual health?’ The second curiosity was, ‘How do students and decision-makers respond to an action plan that showcases youth’s perspectives of sexual health education for a particular school. In what follows, I address each of these curiosities.

Research Curiosity 1: Youth’s Views and Visions

Only now, after having engaged with students at Bellman Secondary, can I address my first curiosity, which focused on understanding what youth think about their sex education experiences. During the first class discussion (Loop 2) students identified the following six areas as problematic: curriculum planning, curriculum content, teacher, visual instructional resources, teaching and learning environment, and ideologies (Appendix B). (These informed and guided subsequent phases of the YPAR study). As the study unfolded (specifically during the interviews) students reported additional problems. For instance, they believed it problematic that some students fail to participate in sex education during high school, do not know the school nurse, and deem the teaching resources out-dated.

As for the problems students diagnosed during the first class discussion (Loop 2), these are similar to those that students in earlier studies had identified. Students at Bellman reported wanting a say in curriculum planning, and believed

it could be made relevant if they were permitted to identify sexual health topics for discussion. This problem had been identified by students in other studies. For instance, Allen (2005), Eisenberg et al. (1997), Noon and Arcus (2002), and Selwyn and Powell (2007) reported that students described their sex education as boring, irrelevant, and repetitive. They advised teachers to rectify this by taking into account students' needs while planning a program (see also Cairn et al. 1994; McKay & Holowaty, 1997). Students at Bellman noted that they want to understand positive aspects/outcomes of sexual health. In other studies, students also identified wanting to learn about such aspects of sexual activity, including pleasure (see Byers et al. 2003; Measor et al. 2000; Hirst, 2004), desire (see Hirst, 2004; Measor et al. 2000), and emotions (see DiCenso et al. 2001; Eisenberg et al. 1997; Measor et al. 2000). With regard to curriculum content, students at Bellman noted that teachers address some topics (pregnancy and STIs) without giving the same degree of importance to others (homosexuality), conveying to students that some topics are 'appropriate' while others are 'inappropriate.' Similarly, Allen (2005) and Eisenberg et al. (1997) noted that in each of their studies youth expressed interest in learning about sensitive/controversial matters, namely homosexuality. Next, students at Bellman suggested that teachers were unqualified to teach sex education and recommended that guest speakers present sexual health information. Students in a number of studies (e.g. Allen, 2005; Eisenberg et al., 1997; Noon & Arcus, 2001) identified the same problem and offered the same solution. Moreover, students in the Bellman study concentrated on what the videos and/or pictures depicted. First, they suggested that teachers who address sexual health matters independent of outside support should reconsider the use of visuals depicting negative sexual health outcomes (e.g. genital warts). Second, students reported that there would be educational value if videos showed people engaged in sexual activity. Although a participant acknowledged that this was a 'weird' proposition, he believed that teachers must give it due consideration. Interestingly, students in other studies deemed the use of videos/visual aids as helpful (e.g. Byers et al., 2003) or offered positive comments about their use (Noon & Arcus, 2001). In terms of the teaching and

learning environment, students at Bellman noted that there were no ‘open’ discussions because the teachers adopt a lecture method in which they speak ‘to’ rather than ‘with’ students. Byers et al. (2003) and Eisenberg et al. (1997) reported that students in their respective studies wanted more in-class discussion and fewer lectures as well. Lastly, the students at Bellman identified a concern with ideological beliefs. Some stated that addressing what students believe problematic about their sex education is contingent upon a larger problem: ‘fanatical’ people with strong beliefs who prevent curricular change because they believe it necessary to protect students from hearing or learning about certain sexual health topics or issues, even if students say they want to learn about them. Although Eisenberg et al. (1997) did not report that students recognized the debate about sexuality and schooling is grounded on two conflicting ideological positions (McKay, 1997, 1999), he did report that teachers used sex education to perpetuate their beliefs and, in doing so, offended students.

At this point, some might expect me to provide ‘solutions’ to the problems discussed above; yet, I am wary of doing so. This might strike one as odd: if I want to inform and incite change, as I claim I do, would it not make sense to identify how decision-makers must go about actualizing it? To some this would seem a sensible, even responsible, course of action. For me, however, it makes no sense at all. If I were to adopt such thinking and comport myself accordingly, I would be assuming the role of ‘the’ expert who knows how to solve the student-identified problems. I occupy no such role. Rather, I understood my role and responsibilities in terms put forward by Foucault. Rather than tell people what to do and how to do it, Foucault (2007) wanted his analyses of intolerable discourses to inform and incite consequences. To conduct his analyses, he (2003b) spoke with people who occupied institutional positions of power, but refrained from “t[ying] them down or immobiliz[ing] them” (p. 256). In his view, if they “are going to assume their full amplitude, the most important thing is not to bury them under the weight of prescriptive, prophetic discourse” (p. 256). If I were to identify solutions, then, I would invariably be burying decision-makers under such a discourse.

One might argue that in my understanding of the role of facilitator, I misinterpreted Foucault's works because he was not a true proponent for change. Even though Foucault refused to recommend solutions, I contend that this does not discount his efforts in provoking reform. Instead, by failing to offer institutional powers solutions, Foucault shifted attention away from himself and onto those who have the knowledge to offer the solutions. In the Bellman study, this was clearly the students. Hence, even though I would like to honour Foucault's advice and refrain from making recommendations, I believe I would be remiss if I did not make one: decision-makers, from all ranks of the educational hierarchy, need to listen to, and honour students' voices, and contemplate their problems and consider their solutions. Taking heed of this recommendation would entail viewing *Sex-E-cation* and attending to the following research questions that the team generated: (1) What are students' perspectives of sex education at Bellman Secondary? (2) How would students change the sex education offered here at Bellman, if they could? By reviewing the findings, decision-makers could then dialogue with students to discuss *what is* and *what can be*. When given the opportunity, as was evidenced during the course of this study, they will realize that students can demonstrate their expertise about sexual health education by speaking for themselves; they do not need another person, much less me to speak for them. I urge decision-makers to listen to youth's compelling voices.

Research Curiosity 2: Students' Feedback and Decision-Makers' Responses?

The second research curiosity that I posed was, 'How do students and decision-makers respond to an action plan that showcases youth's perspectives of sexual health education for a particular school? Some of the student participants (Loop 10) indicated that they were confused by *Sex-E-cation*. This prompted me to ask whether the research team succeeded in constructing a research product that represented students' perspectives of sex education. Given that *Sex-E-cation* did generate confusion, one must, in addition to casting a critical eye on the action plan itself, also examine the way in which it was constructed. In retrospect, I believe we could have minimized student confusion by consulting a heuristic.

Although I offered Shor's (1996) five-part heuristic to the partners (Loop 7), they deemed it too problem-oriented, suspecting that its use would alienate teachers. When the team abandoned Shor's heuristic, we proceeded in constructing the action plan without one.

I now contend that the questions/categories that emerged from the students' feedback to *Sex-E-cation* can function as a viable framework for research collectives who undertake studies similar to the one conducted at Bellman. Students' feedback falling under the first question/category—What is the action plan?—can function as the basis for two components in this framework: (1) identify and describe the problems; and (2) propose solutions. Feedback sorted under the question/category—Where is the analysis?—grounds the next component: (3) justify the need for implementing the proposed solutions. Feedback grouped under the final question/category—Who is supposed to take action?—suggests the final component of the proposed framework: (4) identify the people/groups who must take action. This framework, I propose, offers an option for research collectives whose members have a limited margin of freedom in executing what Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) term 'exploratory action,' and yet, believe it necessary to call attention to problems, even though doing so may challenge authority figures.

Although the students' feedback to *Sex-E-cation* demonstrated that not all students supported the purpose of informing and inciting curricular change, most agreed that decision-makers need to reform three key pedagogical elements. These are the same elements that emerged in Allen's (2005) study. First, students concurred with the finding that decision-makers must re-examine the curricular content so it goes beyond an emphasis on abstinence to a broader range of topics, including those considered 'touchy' or taboo. Similarly, in Allen's study, students reported that teachers must modify the curricular content when it comes to sex education. Second, in the Bellman study, the feedback indicated that students supported the finding that attention must be directed at changing the sexual health educator. Students agreed that teachers must consider inviting a guest speaker who has medical qualifications into the classroom to address matters related to

sexual health. Likewise, in Allen's study, students revealed that teachers' competency with sex education is another pedagogical element warranting transformation. Lastly, the Bellman students agreed with the finding that teachers must reconsider their teaching practices so they are more socially engaging. The same is reported by the students in Allen's study: they suggested that teachers restructure classroom activities. Hence, based on the feedback, students agreed that *Sex-E-cation* stands as a representation of students' perspectives insofar as it advises decision-makers to take into account what students have to say about curriculum content, the sexual health educator, and teaching practices. These elements are clearly similar to those that Allen identified in her study of what students believe constitutes effective sex education.

Additionally, the research team welcomed the expression of students' suspicions regarding if and how teachers, and decision-makers in general, would respond to the action plan (Loop 10); it is interesting to consider the emergent three predictions while taking into account who among the decision-makers did respond to *Sex-E-cation* and what they intended to do. First, some students believed that decision-makers would *not* respond to the action plan. This is exactly what transpired with regard to the school administrators, and health and physical education teachers. I could not help but wonder whether they believed that responding to it was a waste of their time because they regarded students' knowledges as illegitimate. By ignoring the action plan, the inside decision-makers defended the disciplinary limits in order to maintain the status quo as far as it related to sex education. Second, some students suspected that decision-makers *might* respond by taking action. Given that the HPE Teacher and the School Administrator failed to share their respective perspectives, it is conceivable that the students' prediction of a possible response to the action plan applied to these inside decision-makers: they might have or, might have not, responded to students' knowledges by changing policies and practices. Lastly, students suspected that decision-makers *will* take action. Two outside decision-makers, a School Nurse and Learning Coordinator, did as the students suspected: they stated that they would take transformative action. While responding to *Sex-*

E-cation, they concentrated on their positionality, sexual health knowledge (specific and general), and youth's sexual health needs. Their intent to take action demonstrated that these outside decision-makers recognized the importance of shifting the disciplinary limits so sex education would be more responsive to youth's sexual health needs and, ultimately, relevant to their lives.

Validity or Authenticity?

Is the Bellman study rigorous or, dare I say, *valid* research? Wolcott (1990) proposed that validity “serves most often as a gloss for *scientific accuracy* among those who identify closely with science and for *correctness* or *credibility* [original emphasis] among those who do not” (p. 126). He explained that “validity neither guides nor informs” his work (p. 136). Indeed, Wolcott asserted that it distracts from his efforts in identifying “critical elements” and presenting “plausible interpretations for them” (p. 146). Rather than obsess with reporting an “exact set of circumstances... [a] single or ‘correct’ interpretation” (p. 144), he endeavoured to describe, examine, and interpret what he saw and heard for the sake of gaining *understanding*. I took a similar stand. Rather than permitting concerns with validity to guide or inform my interactions with the youth partners as we took on the contextualized, flexible, and responsive YPAR process at Bellman, I focused on the importance of understanding students' views of, and visions for, sexual health education.

Although I believed that we could inform and incite curricular change by constructing an action plan, I was not so naïve to think that decision-makers would take action without scrutinizing the quality of the study. I knew that many would evaluate the study on the grounds of its persuasiveness and, on this basis, judge it as ‘good’ or ‘poor’ research. However, I wanted decision-makers to consider the degree to which the study was provocative rather than persuasive. In this respect, I call attention to Fine's (2006, 2008) notion of provocative generalizability. According to Fine, implicit in this concept is an invitation to use the study's findings as a launching pad to go beyond understanding *what is* to imagining *what might be*. If, in reading about the Bellman study, you are

provoked to conceive of new applications and take action, then I can confidently claim to have met Fine's criterion for social research. There are those who will argue that provocative generalizability is an insufficient criterion for 'good' research. I wish to remind these people that I subscribe to constructivist thinking and as such I refuse to apply conventional criteria (internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity) or parallel criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Instead, I turn to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) five criteria to mount the argument that the Bellman study was 'authentic' (see also Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

The first criterion of authenticity is fairness. To be deemed fair, an inquiry must acknowledge all potential stakeholders and solicit within-group constructions. In this respect, did the team conduct a 'fair' inquiry of sexual health education at Bellman? There were two main stakeholder groups. One stakeholder group was the decision-makers (within which there are sub-groups, such as health and physical education teachers, school administrators, school nurses, and learning coordinators). In an early phase of the study (Loop 4, Decision 5), the research team constructed a list of decision-makers who we believed could take action to implement curricular change. I subdivided those positioned inside (including teachers and administrators) and outside (including school nurses and learning coordinators) Bellman. Initially, I planned to solicit multiple perspectives of, or responses to, the action plan from the various sub-groups inside Bellman. However, given that no insider participated, I shifted my attention to the outsider decision-makers. Since I showed *Sex-e-cation* to two outsiders, a School Nurse and Learning Coordinator, each of whom obviously have different roles and responsibilities, I did not collect multiple or within-group perspectives of, or responses to the action plan. Instead, I learned what transformative actions each outsider planned to do to change sexual health education, whether at Bellman or elsewhere within the Willowdale School Board.

Students constituted the second stakeholder group. During the first class discussion (Loop 2), students expressed their needs, offered critiques, and

proposed transformations all in the name of inciting and informing reform to their sexual health education. The partners added to this dataset by conducting interviews with peers (Loop 5). Therefore, students' multifarious perspectives were solicited.

Thus, I deem the Bellman study fair in that it acknowledged stakeholders and solicited within-group constructions. An effort was made to solicit multiple perspectives from members of the two main stakeholder groups, decision-makers (insiders and outsiders) and students. The fact that insider decision-maker chose not to participate does not nullify the team's efforts. Moreover, although most of the data ultimately came from students, the team did conduct a fair study in that we solicited multiple constructions from those within this stakeholder group.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) also stressed that researchers who conduct 'fair' inquires clarify and check people's diverse constructions. Given that the participants came from two stakeholder groups, students and decision-makers, one might have expected the research team to confirm the constructions and interpretations. To avoid logistical difficulties, the team did not conduct member checking with the 21 student interviewees; however, we did member check with the 35 students in Classes A and B (Loop 10). The team both invited students to verify that their perspectives of sex education were presented and encouraged them to add information that had been overlooked. As for the outside decision-maker, I did not conduct member-checks. This was strategic on my part to retain the decision-makers' immediate responses to the action plan. Clearly, then, although the team did not verify constructions with *all* participants, the study was fair in that it presented students' varied perspectives of sex education and invited decision-makers, both inside and outside the school, to respond to the action plan.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), a fair inquiry also discusses recommendations and explains how the intended actions are to be negotiated. Recognizing the importance of sharing our findings with the stakeholders, the research team brought the students and HPE Teacher (and the School Administrator who unexpectedly attended Class A) together for the action plan presentation (Loop 10). Unfortunately, we were unable to initiate dialogue and

spur discussion concerning how improvements in sex education could be negotiated. Guba and Lincoln noted that discussion and negotiation are carried out by parties who have access to, and understanding of, the relevant information. While the research team presented the action plan as a dialogical “launching pad” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 6), we did not consider how the discussion or, lack thereof, would be influenced by the disparate skills of the students and Teacher (and Administrator in Class A). Although the research partners seemed ideal candidates to initiate and sustain a dialogue because they were knowledgeable about the student-identified problems and student-proposed solutions, their discussion and negotiation skills were not comparable to those of the Teacher (and Administrator). Further, some may argue that as the facilitator of this study, it was, if not my responsibility, at least my role, to negotiate the students’ recommendations, and promote dialogue. I chose not to assume this role, however, when it became evident that the Teacher and Administrator were resistant. Given these circumstances, silence prevailed.

How might one explain such silence? Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) description of successful negotiation points to two possible explanations. First, Guba and Lincoln stated, “the negotiation itself must focus on matters that are known to be relevant” (p. 247). It is possible that while the action plan focused on matters relevant to the students, it failed to have the same relevance for the HPE Teacher and School Administrator. If the students and decision-makers had nothing mutually relevant to discuss, the logical outcome would have been silence. Second, Guba and Lincoln proposed “the negotiation must be carried out from approximately equal positions of power, not just in principle but also in practice” (p. 247). Given that teachers exercise power over students, one might say it was unrealistic to expect these two groups to discuss curricular problems and negotiate solutions (see Fielding 2004). Determined to challenge the traditional communication practice in which teachers speak ‘to’ rather than ‘with’ students (Lodge, 2005), the team disturbed the status quo by inviting teachers to engage in dialogue. Even though they never accepted this invitation, this does not discount our efforts. Hence, even though the team did not initiate a discussion and

negotiation of the findings showcased in *Sex-E-cation*, we did convey the message that engaging in dialogue is critical to inform curricular change that takes into account the perspectives of both authorized and unauthorized experts.

Another of Guba and Lincoln's (1989) criteria for authenticity is greater understanding of one's perspective. Ontological authenticity is achieved when researchers make it possible for participants to expand and elaborate upon their perspectives so as to gain a heightened awareness of the world within which they live. In the context of this study, did the research partners and student participants come to better construct their emic perspectives of sex education? And, did they come to improve their conscious experience of their respective realities at Bellman? The research team succeeded in attaining ontological authenticity during three particular phases of the study. First, during the initial class discussion (Loop 2, Activity 3), the student participants shared their perspectives and heard those of their peers; in doing so, they developed a more sophisticated understanding of their experiences and, in particular, distinguished between needs that had been satisfied and those that had not. Second, when the research team convened for the debriefing session (Loop 5), the partners assessed their sex education as the same and/or different from that of their interviewees; in doing so, the partners came to expand their own understanding of sex education at Bellman. Lastly, after seeing *Sex-E-cation* Loop 10), the student participants identified claims and concerns that had not been included and, in doing so, had the opportunity to reflect upon, and broaden their respective perspectives of sex education. Hence, I contend that during the course of the study the research partners and student participants expanded their individual constructions of sex education, enabling them to comprehend their current reality in more informed ways.

Also listed among Guba and Lincoln's (1989) criteria for authenticity is educative potential. Educative authenticity is achieved when participants come to appreciate—not necessarily like or agree with—the perspectives of others who belong to different stakeholder groups. The relevant question here is 'did the student participants gain an understanding of decision-makers' responses to the

action plan?’ As well, ‘did the insider and outsider decision-makers gain an understanding of students’ views of, and visions for, sex education?’ By reviewing the Bellman spiral, specifically four of its loops, I recognized that the research team fostered cross-group understanding of sexual health education. During loop 8, when the HPE Teacher and School Administrator previewed the action plan, they learned about students’ perspectives of sex education and how students would make current programming more relevant. Next, as loop 10 developed, although the students and Teacher (and Administrator in Class A) never did engage in dialogue, the students did see the physical reactions from these decision-makers. Thus, one can argue that the students did deduce what the Teacher (and Administrator) thought of the action plan. Moreover, during loop 12, the two outside decision-makers (School Nurse and Learning Coordinator) demonstrated their understanding of the *other* by explaining how students’ perspectives differed from their own. Lastly, even though loop 13 never transpired, it bears mentioning that I did plan to return to the students and partners in Classes A and B to provide a synthesis of decision-makers’ responses to the action plan. Clearly, while the study failed to directly offer students an opportunity to learn about decision-makers’ responses to the action plan, it did offer select decision-makers an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of students’ perspectives of sex education.

Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) fourth criterion for authenticity is transformative action. Catalytic authenticity is achieved when the participants are motivated by what they have learned to take action. Unlike other studies, which simply examined and, then, reported students’ perspectives of sex education (see Chapter 2), this study not only informed decision-makers of students’ perspectives, but also invited them to take action. As for two insider decision-makers who viewed the action plan, I can only hope they implemented changes, even if they did not reflect the student-proposed solutions. Thus, whether the team achieved catalytic authenticity with the insider decision-makers remains unclear; what is clear is how outside decision-makers planned to effect change. After viewing *Sex-E-cation* (Loop 12), the outsider decision-makers explained what

they intended to do; because I trusted them, I did not follow-up to confirm what reforms were made. However, it is worth noting that Smith, the School Nurse, did contact me, after having seen *Sex-E-cation*, to report that it was now a priority for the Health Unit to restock the condom dispensers in all secondary schools within the district, including Bellman. Hence, with the aim of stimulating change to policies and/or practices, I argue that the research team succeeded because both outside decision-makers intended to take transformative action.

Guba and Lincoln's (1989) final criterion for authenticity is substantive contribution. Researchers achieve tactical authenticity when participants contribute substantively to the way the study unfolds, from determining the focus and strategies to participating in the discussion and negotiation of the findings. Did the stakeholders, students and decision-makers alike, have the opportunity to act in a meaningful and empowered way during the study? According to Guba and Lincoln, if the researcher can answer the following questions in the affirmative tactical authenticity has been achieved: "[1] Was it participatory? [2] Have all stakeholders felt that they or their representatives have had a significant role in the process? [3] Are all participants more skilled than previously in understanding and utilizing power and negotiation techniques?" (p. 250) In response to the first question, the study *was* participatory in nature. I am also inclined to respond yes to the second question because the students assumed a significant role in conducting the study. However, I realize that 'all' stakeholders would include inside and outside decision-makers and I cannot argue that they participated in the way the study unfolded. I understood the interactive and improvisational elements of inviting a diverse group of decision-makers to a space, which Fine and Torre (2004) described as a "contact zone" (p.19). Had I constructed such a zone, the youth research partners might have engaged with the decision-makers to explore and go beyond the simplified binaries of insider/outsider, oppressor/oppressed, and authorized/unauthorized. Indeed, the team might have examined, what Fine and Torre called, the activity of the space between. Despite such benefits, my decision to exclude decision-makers from the research team was intentional. I took the position that only those affected by injustice ought to be included in the

research collective (see Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Even though decision-makers' participation could have made for an interesting team dynamic and led the study in interesting directions, I recognized, as well, that they might have exercised power to promote their own agendas, and dissuaded the youth research partners from investigating what they believed exemplified students' perspectives of sex education. As for the third question posed by Guba and Lincoln, I must pause and acknowledge that the study did not enable the participants, in particular the students, to hone their negotiating skills. However, it did invite them to exercise power by voicing subjugated knowledges about sexual health education. Hence, I acknowledge that the Bellman study did not entirely meet the criterion of tactical authenticity; but, I argue that the student participants were encouraged to become empowered throughout the study by resisting silence to voice their views of, and visions for, sex education.

The Usefulness of the Action Plan

Given that the Bellman study lacked tactical authenticity, some might raise the question, for whom was the study useful? They might indicate that my exclusive partnership with students made for an action plan that was of limited use to teachers in terms of helping them satisfy youth's sexual health needs (both normative and expressed). Indeed, they might claim that *Sex-E-cation* would have been of greater use if teachers had participated in the research process and, by extension, the construction of the action plan. I previously acknowledged the complex relationship between students having sexual health needs and teachers satisfying such needs (see Fraser, 1989); however, I did not set out to facilitate a study that would investigate this relational dynamic. Instead, I joined the research partners in constructing *Sex-E-cation* as a representation, in part, of students' expressed sexual health needs. The research team was optimistic that decision-makers, like teachers, would regard it as useful. Whether this was the case, though, is uncertain. If the action plan was of no use to teachers, the same cannot be said for students. From my perspective, they 'used' the action plan as a way of resisting silence and as a means for amplifying their voices to decision-makers.

Decision-makers must recognize that students, when given the opportunity to voice their views, have expertise to inform those who occupy towering positions above them. When the goal is to identify transformative possibilities for sex education, decision-makers must understand that their current high elevation garners them a seemingly serene and scenic perspective. Firmly positioned on the observation deck, mesmerized by their sweeping perspectives, decision-makers may come to believe that there is no need to descend to the ground below. Yet, if they did, they would recognize that previously small inanimate objects would now stand before them as thinking-knowing subjects. At Bellman, inside decision-makers did make an effort to gain such clarity by permitting me to initiate and facilitate a YPAR process. Our research product, *Sex-E-cation*, showed these decision-makers students sharply in focus, their perspectives clearly in view. Rather than stay to dialogue with students about ‘what is’ and ‘what could be,’ the inside decision-makers ostensibly retreated to the observation deck. But, upon their return, could they really avoid or forget what they saw? Was it useful to them that they descended in the first place? While the decision-makers might have found no immediate use in seeing the action plan, they likely did later on. For instance, in considering how to engage students in sex education, the HPE teacher may likely think of *Sex-E-cation*. Thus, given that the inside decision-makers were, at one point, open-minded to its construction, surely they will come to see usefulness in what the students have said. What is more, perhaps the insiders will be inclined to return once again to ground level to see and, importantly, listen to what students have to say about the teaching and learning of sexual health.

Challenges Inform the Emergence of New Spirals

At the outset of this study, I knew that initiating and facilitating YPAR within an educational context would entail unexpected challenges; with the benefit of hindsight, I identify three such challenges as a way of offering guidance to others who envision entering a secondary school to engage with youth in a participatory and problematizing process.

First, the partners' use of the general interview guide method (Patton, 2002) granted them the freedom to explore sexual health topics and probe interviewees for clarification and elaboration in ways that would have been impossible for me because of generational differences and issues of power (Jones, 2004; Kellett, 2005a; Mayall, 2008). Although I reviewed the pros and cons of employing a general interview guide (Patton, 2002) and facilitated role-playing activities so the partners would gain familiarity and comfort with our guide, I was surprised by the variability in the data collected. As I transcribed the 21 student interviews, I made two observations. On the one hand, some research partners deviated freely from the guide to pursue, in a conversational manner, topics of interest to the interviewees. Even though these partners returned to the guide, they sometimes inadvertently missed asking the interviewees questions or presenting them with topics for discussion. On the other hand, other partners adhered rigidly to the guide without probing the interviewees to elaborate on ambiguous points. Given these varied applications of the guide, the data were difficult to analyze and then present in an action plan. Researchers who intend to work with youth in much the same way that I did may want to consider inviting them to employ the standardized open-ended interview method, which affords a researcher or, in this case a research team, more comparable data (Patton, 2002). The research team at Bellman did not employ this method, yet still achieved its aims. However, had we used a standardized open-ended interview method, our efforts in analyzing the data and, then, constructing the action plan would have been more systematic.

Second, the research team began the study with the understanding that we would report student-identified *problems* and student-proposed *solutions*; however, upon reviewing *Sex-E-cation*, one is inclined to ask, what are the problems the student-proposed solutions address? This question gets at the crux of another challenge. Although initially captivated by the idea of problematizing their sex education experiences, once the partners had collected the data they became concerned that teachers would interpret students' critiques as a personal affront. The partners reasoned that we did not have to inundate the teachers with complaints. Even though I explained that teachers were not the only ones who

make decisions that shape students' sex education experiences, the partners concentrated on the way the action plan would affect their most immediate power relation, the teacher-student relation. Thus, the team created the action plan with a focus on student-proposed changes. In taking this approach, the partners were confident that in viewing the action plan, decision-makers would deduce where the problems lie. How might one explain the partners' reluctance to explicitly report the problems? Given that the partners were in Grade 12 when we mobilized as a team, I believe it necessary to concentrate on what they were taught advancing from grade to grade: to respect, accept and, ultimately, acquiesce to educational powers. The partners were enculturated into a network of educational power relations. They had been taught to comply and conform to the rules, even if doing so silenced their voices. Thus, when presented with an opportunity to resist silence by voicing students' views and visions, the partners were excited, but cautious. Even though they did join me in a participatory and problematizing effort, the vestiges of their education made it difficult for them to report problems with the structure, the very power structure within which they have long been ensconced. Others who plan to work with youth to listen to their perspectives of their education must recognize this challenge. Confronting and overcoming it requires that the facilitator and youth partners remember the purpose for having assembled as a team in the first place: to make education relevant by honouring students' views and visions.

Lastly, Lewin (cited in Marrow, 1969), Cammarota and Fine (2008), and McTaggart (1991) explained that those who make up a PAR collective work together though *all* phases of the study; it would be accurate to say that the research partners and I embarked upon *most* phases as a team. As the study unfolded, the partners and I meshed as a team, making decisions throughout the process. Our participatory effort culminated in the class presentation (Loop 10) of *Sex-E-cation*. For the partners, this marked the end of their participation in the study. Although they understood that we still had to analyze the feedback and revise the action plan, the partners informed me that other commitments were more pressing. The dissolution of the team at this point does not suggest that

youth are ultimately unreliable research partners. I was already asking the partners to dedicate a great amount of their time (both away from regular classes and after school); the next phase of presenting it to decision-makers entailed more time than they were able to commit. How could the study have been designed differently so the partners would have assigned continued participation priority? Perhaps, the team could have extended an invitation to select decision-makers to a showing of *Sex-E-cation*. In this way, the partners would have participated in the dissemination of the findings and so might have extended their participation to this point. A researcher planning to embark upon a similar study must take note that, regardless of the extended time commitment, youth are more likely to see the study to its end if their participation is integral to *all* phases.

Despite the challenges associated with conducting YPAR within a school, I remain committed to working with youth in this manner. However, the next time I mobilize a research collective within a secondary school, I will keep Foucault's (1994c) advice in the forefront of my mind. Foucault argued that there is no appropriate time for critique or transformation—only time for “continuous criticism” (p. 172). In other words, no critique, regardless of its historical moment or circumstances, can lay claim to producing complete and definitive knowledge. Although the research team did gain a deeper understanding of youth's perspectives, the knowledge we constructed remains limited. This is as it must be. The process of constructing more sophisticated understanding is itself limited and, as such, one always comes to a position of beginning again (Foucault, 1994d). And yet, this in no way diminishes the importance of the task. It is a task I believe in, a task I will resume. Soon, I, will ‘begin again,’ listening to youth's marginalized voices and legitimizing their subjugated knowledges, working with them to shift the disciplinary limits and make their sex education experiences relevant to their lives. This, I know, is what will be.

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APPENDIX A

Courses in Health and Physical Education, Grade 9 to 12

Table A

Courses in Health and Physical Education, Grade 9 to 12

Specific Expectations: Healthy Growth and Sexuality; Personal Safety and Injury Prevention

Grade 9: Healthy Active Living Education	
Healthy Growth and Sexuality	Personal Safety and Injury Prevention
<p>By the end of the course, students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify the developmental stages of sexuality throughout life; ▪ describe the factors that lead to responsible sexual relationships; ▪ describe the relative effectiveness of methods of preventing pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (e.g., abstinence, condoms, oral contraceptives); ▪ demonstrate understanding of how to use decision-making and assertiveness skills effectively to promote healthy sexuality (e.g., healthy human relationships, avoiding unwanted pregnancies and STDs such as HIV/AIDS); ▪ demonstrate understanding of the pressures on teens to be sexually active; ▪ identify community support services related to sexual health concerns. 	<p>By the end of the course, students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ describe specific types of physical and nonphysical abuse (e.g., manipulation, intimidation, sexual harassment, verbal abuse); ▪ assess the impact of non-physical abuse on victims; ▪ identify the causes of abuse and violence; ▪ describe solutions and strategies to address violence in the lives of young people; ▪ explain how the school, the local community, and other community agencies are involved in developing strategies (e.g., a school's code of conduct) to prevent or end the violence in young people's lives; ▪ demonstrate effective personal strategies to minimize injury in adolescence.
Grade 10: Healthy Active Living Education	
Healthy Growth and Sexuality	Personal Safety and Injury Prevention
<p>By the end of the course, students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ describe environmental influences on sexuality (e.g., cultural, social, and media influences); ▪ explain the effects (e.g., STDs, HIV/AIDS) of choices related to sexual intimacy (e.g., abstinence, 	<p>By the end of the course, students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are no learning outcomes for this specific expectation.

using birth control); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify available information and support services related to sexual health concerns; ▪ demonstrate understanding of how to use decision-making skills effectively to support choices related to responsible sexuality. 	
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Grade 11: Healthy Active Living Education

Healthy Growth and Sexuality	Personal Safety and Injury Prevention
By the end of the course, students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ describe factors (e.g., environmental, hormonal, nutritional) affecting reproductive health in males and females; ▪ demonstrate an understanding of causes and issues related to infertility; ▪ demonstrate the skills needed to sustain honest, respectful, and responsible relationships; ▪ describe sources of information on and services related to sexual and reproductive health; ▪ assess reproductive and sexual health care information and services. 	By the end of the course, students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ describe different types of violence (e.g., relationship violence – physical, verbal, sexual, emotional); ▪ demonstrate an understanding of the causes of relationship violence; ▪ identify and analyse the indicators of violence in interpersonal relationships, as well as appropriate intervention strategies; ▪ assess solutions and strategies for preventing and eliminating relationship violence.

Grade 12: Healthy Active Living Education

Healthy Growth and Sexuality	Personal Safety and Injury Prevention
By the end of the course, students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ analyse the factors (e.g., culture, media) that affect gender roles and sexuality; ▪ demonstrate an understanding of the factors (e.g., attitudes, values, and beliefs about gender roles and sexuality) that affect the prevention of behaviour related to STDs, AIDS, and pregnancy; ▪ describe the factors (e.g., healthful eating, abstinence from smoking and alcohol) that contribute to 	By the end of the course, students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ analyse the causes of certain types of interpersonal violence (e.g., stalking, date rape, family violence, extortion); ▪ describe the possible effects of violence on individuals who are exposed to it in their personal lives (e.g., becoming violent themselves, thereby continuing the cycle of violence and abuse); ▪ identify sources of support for individuals exposed to violence (e.g.,

<p>healthy pregnancy and birth;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ describe the characteristics of healthy, respectful, and long-lasting relationships;▪ assess the skills needed to maintain healthy, respectful, and long-lasting relationships;▪ describe the communication skills needed to discuss sexual intimacy and sexuality in a relationship.	<p>within the family, the school, or the community);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ demonstrate an ability to use skills and strategies (e.g., refusal, self-defence) to deal with threats to personal safety and the safety of others;▪ explains why adolescents and young adults are overrepresented in traffic fatalities;▪ assess strategies for reducing risks to their own safety and that of others in various situations (e.g., while participating in outdoor winter sports activities or driving cars, boats, and snowmobiles).
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APPENDIX B
Sex Education Problems at Bellman Secondary

(1) Curriculum Planning of Health and Physical Education

Continuity

- At this school, in guy's gym, it's been the same thing; it's the same course from Grade 9 up to Grade 12. It's like the same curriculum.
- By Grade 12, you don't want to be saying the same old stuff that you've been saying for the past three years. That's where the problem is in my opinion because you want to let them [students] know early what can happen; but you don't also want to like continually give them the same boring information because that's when kids start to fall asleep and not to care.
- When you're in Grade 9, you don't really have that many concerns. Most people aren't really concerned about a lot of it; whereas, the concerns and questions that Grade 12s have are completely different than when you were in Grade 9.

Contribution

- ...they're the people that have the kids; they're the people that basically have the say in what the younger people learn. We don't have a say in what we learn.
- Yes, we [students] have voices; but, we don't have control because most of us are not of age yet to be an adult. You know we don't have a say yet. Most people can't even vote here.

(2) Curriculum Content

Curriculum Focus/Absence

- ...[teachers] leave out things in the long run because they don't want to delve into things that are inappropriate in their eyes.
- ...they focus on the aftermath of what happens. They don't really talk about what happens before.

Pleasure

- Teach the positive and the negative sides to it [sexual activity]. Because they only show the negatives, like STDs or you'll get pregnant and all that stuff... They never talk about it [pleasure]. It's always the bad stuff.
- ...the reasons why people have sex. The reasons, the desires. Teenagers don't have sex because they want a baby; they do because it feels good.

- STDs are good to learn about. But like we have all said: the positives, [include] what should feel good and what shouldn't feel good and stuff like that
- ... [talk about] what should feel good [like]... orgasms, the act itself... the tips and tricks... If they were teaching us that kind of stuff, we would be keener to learn.
- ...sometimes parents don't want their kids learning about that kind of stuff [the positive side of sexual health]. There are some parents out there that are totally against it.

Homosexuality

- [What about] sexuality too. They don't talk about homosexuality as much. They talk about the 'normal' Sex Ed and they don't talk about other stuff.... They are more closed about it [homosexuality] and uptight about it. They are not as open about it than other stuff.

Feelings/Emotions

- I think that they need to teach the emotional side of it too. What they really teach is abstinence and it's the only way for you to never get pregnant. People... all they know is like it's a physical activity, really.
- The guys didn't learn about feelings or anything. It was like straight talk.

Oral Sex

- What you learn in class is just like anatomy the whole STD thing, but then outside that I remember the first time I heard 'blowjob,' I was sitting there [thinking] like 'what's that?' Is someone like blow drying? What was that? I didn't know any better. That's the type of stuff that people need to know.

Contact Information for Help

- They also don't teach us what to do if you end up getting an STI right. They teach us how to prevent it and use protection and all that. And like sure they say some sort of stuff; but, they don't ever say like what to do or where to go if it happens to you.
- ...teen pregnancy is like a big deal now. Shouldn't they [teachers] have some sort of way of telling us where to go when it happens? ...some girls are nervous. They don't want tell their moms, they're not going to tell them right away. They are going to think about it. Where are they supposed to go in between when they find out and the time when they build the confidence to actually tell their parents? They [teachers]

should really tell them what its like. Isn't there like some sort of help centre?

(3) Teacher

Positionality

- I think that they should have someone who isn't our teacher come in and do the sex ed. unit for the whole year.

Age

- [I'd rather have] someone who is a little younger than 50 years of age and someone who I'll probably never see again. Ever.

Understanding of Sexual Health

- I couldn't talk to [male teacher] about it [sexual activity]. He just knows all about sports and stuff.
- Some of the people who teach sex ed. didn't go to school for it. They just know of it from what they learned in high school, basically.

(4) Visual Instructional Resources

- Seeing sex... But, if you actually saw it that might give you some knowledge and answer some questions that you had previously to not having seen it, not really knowing what the heck it really was...Yeah, I know that sounds weird.
- The actual picture, you know they are kinda making it PG instead of what it really is. It's true, they don't, really, actually, show you it [sexual activity]... It's just kinda like: Sex, don't do it; that's it. You know, wear a condom. This is a banana, put it on this.
- ...it is fairly G-rated... And they show you disgusting pictures of genital warts and stuff like at the health fair; whereas, if they showed pictures of it [sexual activity], it would be more interesting.

(5) The Teaching and Learning Environment

Class Discussions

- It's not like we have open conversation like this, it's like usually what you learn in class everyone is scared to talk and nobody really says anything. So, it's good to get comfortable with the people around you and trust them.

Student Sustained Interest

- They do a good job, the information is there; [but,] it's just the interest. If they had some more class participation and interaction it would go a lot smoother, people just lose interest when the person stands up front and keeps talking.

- It's boring and I sleep through most of the classes but we have an opportunity to pay attention. ...if you were actually interested in it and you paid attention to the teachers, you could learn most of the stuff that you wanted to learn. And, they are fairly open to questions, but you are too embarrassed to actually ask them... It is boring. They are giving you good information, [but] it really loses interest.

(6) Ideological Beliefs

- I think fanatical people, people that think everyone should be sheltered... is a big issue. I think the reason that Sex Ed hasn't really advanced in like what we teach and stuff is because people have beliefs. ...they like believe so strongly that they have to get involved to prevent things from happening because our ears are too precious.

APPENDIX C
Class Discussions: Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Student Participant,

I have been invited by Rosemarie Mangiardi to participate in three class discussion about Sex Education. By taking part of this study, I will hear the views, opinions, and concerns expressed by my classmates.

In order to contribute to creating a safe space in which everyone in the class can talk freely about Sex Education, I agree to...

1. keep the identity and any identifying characteristics of my classmates confidential, meaning that I will not tell anyone the names of those who are taking part in these discussions.
2. keep all the information shared during these group discussions confidential by not discussing or sharing this information with anyone outside the classroom
3. consult with Rosemarie Mangiardi, and only after, erase and destroy all information in any form or format (e.g. notes) that may be a part of the study

 Print Name

 Signature of Student Participant

 Date

 Rosemarie Mangiardi

 Signature of Co-Researcher

 Date

APPENDIX D
Research Partner: Confidentiality Agreement for Interviews

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc.
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Co-researcher:

I will be conducting research with Rosemarie Mangiardi. As a co-researcher, I will be responsible for conducting two semi-structured interviews. These interviewees will be in Grade 12 students, attend Bellman Secondary, and be of the same sex as myself.

I agree to...

1. keep the identity and any identifying characteristics of the student interviewee confidential, meaning that I will not discuss such information with anyone, including other student co-researchers except Rosemarie Mangiardi
2. keep all the research information shared with me during the student interview confidential by not discussing or sharing the audio recordings with anyone, including other student co-researchers for this study, except Rosemarie Mangiardi
3. keep the transcripts and audio recordings of the student interviews secure while they are in my possession
4. return the transcripts and audio recordings of the student interviews to Rosemarie Mangiardi on a date we have predetermined
5. after consulting with Rosemarie Mangiardi, I will erase or destroy all research information in any form or format (e.g. notes) regarding this research project that is not given to Rosemarie Mangiardi

 Print Name

 Signature of Student Co-researcher

 Date

 Rosemarie Mangiardi

 Signature of Co-Researcher

 Date

APPENDIX E
Team Discussions: Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Co-researcher,

I will be conducting research with Rosemarie Mangiardi. As part of this study, I will participate in focus group discussions with fellow student co-researchers in which I will hear their views, opinions, and concerns about Sex Education.

I agree to...

4. keep the identity and any identifying characteristics of my fellow co-researchers confidential, meaning that I will not tell anyone the names of who are members of the research team
5. keep all the information shared during these group discussions confidential by not discussing or sharing this information with anyone outside the research team
6. consult with Rosemarie Mangiardi, and only after, erase and destroy all research information in any form or format (e.g. notes) that may be a part of developing the sexual health education action plan

 Print Name

 Signature of Student Co-researcher

 Date

 Rosemarie Mangiardi

 Signature of Co-Researcher

 Date

APPENDIX F

Principal Information Sheet

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

Dear Principal,

I am proposing to conduct research with Grade 12 students who attend Bellman Secondary. I am inviting all Grade 12 students to voluntarily participate in this study and offering them the opportunity to express their views about sexual health education. The purpose of this study is to plan and design an action plan about Sexual Health Education for your school that concentrates on students' views. Once this action plan is created by students, I will present it to teachers, administrators, and/or curriculum consultants.

There are two ways in which students can volunteer to participate in this study. First, they can take part in class discussions. And, second, if they would like to examine Sex Education at Bellman Secondary even further, they can assume the role of a co-researcher, as well.

1) Class Discussions: On _____, during my initial visit to the participating class, I will talk with students about Sex Education at Bellman. All students will have an opportunity to participate and so talk about this subject area. They will be asked to express their views by writing down responses to questions, talking to their peers, and taking part in a whole class discussion about what is relevant and comprehensive sex education. This will be a chance for them to tell their teachers and administrators what really matters to students about sexuality and how they believe this subject should be taught in school. We will not be discussing individual sexual behaviors.

By the end of April, the Sex Education Action Plan will be designed and developed by six student co-researchers who will be randomly selected from those who volunteer from you the participating class. Once these six co-researchers have created the Action Plan, the class will have an opportunity to see it and give constructive feedback before it is shown to educators and administrators. At this point, their comments, suggestions, and opinions will be considered if the class agrees that the Action Plan should be modified.

Once the Action Plan has been finalized, I will interview teachers, administrators, and curriculum consultants in order to obtain their responses to the Sex Education Action Plan. I will, then, share with the class by the end of April, in a class presentation, their anonymized responses.

2) Co-researcher: Students will have the opportunity to become a member of a research team whose ultimate goal will be to create a Sex Education Action Plan for Bellman. Together, we will collect and analyze information in order to design and develop an Action Plan, reflecting the views of a number of Grade 12 students. In order to collect this information, co-researchers will conduct a 45 minute interview with each of two student participants. To help them with this research process, they will be asked to participate in three workshops in which they will learn how to plan ethical research, how to conduct interviews, and how to analyze data. Two of these workshops will span the entire day, while the other will be held during the health class. The exact dates for these workshops have not yet been determined. There may also be occasional brief meetings during the three month research process which will span from February to April.

By consenting to have your school participate in this study, students will benefit by sharing their views and opinions of sexual health education offered as Bellman Secondary. Additionally, the school's staff will also benefit by identifying students' sexual health perspective in order to enhance the curriculum.

I do not expect that allowing Bellman Secondary to participate in this study will cause any disruption for staff or students. Ms. Trudeau has mentioned that she will/has arranged to exempt students from classes during the two long day workshops. Moreover, I will need a private space within the school where these workshops can take place.

Although you as principal may have provided consent to participate in this study, you may decide to withdraw your school's participation by contacting me at the information provide below. If this is the case, I ask that you exercise this right within one month; consequently, the information that I will have obtained until that point from students at Bellman Secondary will not be used in any form or format.

The data collected at Bellman Secondary will be used to construct the sexual health education action plan which I will present to students, teachers, administrators, and health curriculum consultants. I will present the action plan as well as my own interpretations of this in a dissertation so I may satisfy the requirements for a doctoral degree. Moreover, the findings of this research will be submitted for publication in academic and professional journals, and presented at conferences.

Contact information:

Rosemarie Mangiardi, Doctoral Student, Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Dr. Maryanne Doherty, Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, (780) 492-0243, mdoherty@ualberta.ca

If you wish to speak with someone who is not involved with this study, you may contact Dr. William Dunn, Department of Secondary Education in The Faculty of Education by telephone at (780) 492-4280 or by email at wdunn@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX G
Principal Consent Form

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

If you, as principal, consent to have your school participate in the study, please check the appropriate box:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. I understand that I have been asked to volunteer Bellman Secondary School in a research study | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |
| 2. I understand the benefits and risks of participating in this study | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |
| 3. I understand that the school's participation in this study is voluntary | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |

I consent to have Bellman Secondary participate in this study and give permission for the collected information to be used for the purposes described in the information sheet.

 Print Name

 Signature of Principal
 Bellman Secondary

 Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned to the researcher, and the other copy should be kept for your own records.

APPENDIX H

Student Information Sheet

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Prospective Student Participant:

I am inviting you as a Grade 12 student at Bellman Secondary to volunteer in a study about Sex Education. As part of this research, you will have the opportunity to express your views in order to contribute to the development of a Sex Education Action Plan. Not only will this Action Plan reflect student views, it will also be created by students who decide to voluntarily participate as co-researchers. When this Action Plan is finalized, it will be presented to teachers, administrators, and health curriculum consultants so they will become aware of students' comments, opinions, and suggestions as they pertain to Sex Education.

There are two ways in which you can volunteer to participate in this study. First, you can take part in class discussions. And, second, if you would like to examine Sex Education at Bellman Secondary even further, you could assume the role of a co-researcher, as well.

1) Class Discussions: On _____, during my visit to your class for the entire period I will talk with you about Sex Education at Bellman. All students who provide consent forms will have an opportunity to participate and so talk about this subject area. You will be asked to express your views by writing down responses to questions, talking to your peers, and taking part in a whole class discussion about what is relevant and comprehensive sex education. This will be a chance for you to tell your teachers what really matters to students about sexuality and how you believe this subject should be taught in school. We will not be discussing individual sexual behaviors.

By the end of April, the Sex Education Action Plan will be designed and developed by six student co-researchers who will be randomly selected from those who volunteer from your class. Once these six co-researchers have created the Action Plan, you will have an opportunity to see it and give constructive feedback before it is shown to educators. At this point, the comments, suggestions, and opinions you share will be considered if your class agrees that the Action Plan should be modified.

Once the Action Plan has been finalized, I will interview teachers, administrators, and curriculum consultants in order to obtain their responses to the Sex Education Action Plan. I will, then, share with you by the end of April, in a class presentation, their responses.

2) Co-researcher: You will have the opportunity to become a member of a research team whose ultimate goal will be to create a Sex Education Action Plan for Bellman. Together, we will collect and analyze information in order to design and develop an Action Plan, reflecting the views of a number of Grade 12 students. In order to collect this information, co-researchers will conduct a 45 minute interview with each of two student participants. To help you with this research process, you will be asked to participate in three workshops in which you will learn how to plan ethical research, how to conduct interviews, and how to analyze data. Two of these workshops will span the entire day, while the other will be held during your health class. I have obtained permission for you to be exempt from classes during the two long day workshops. The exact dates for these workshops have not yet been determined. There may also be occasional brief meetings during the three month research process which will span from February to April.

Confidentiality: I will protect your identity by not releasing or using your name. The three class discussions will be audio-recorded in order to ensure that your comments, suggestions, and opinions are not lost. As well, during the workshops there will be conversations that will also be audio-recorded. A transcriptionist, who will have signed a confidentiality agreement, will type these discussions. Although your name and identifying information may be discerned from the audio cassettes, all of such information will be removed when it is transcribed onto paper. The transcripts and all information will be stored in a locked cabinet. Moreover, computer files will be saved on my password-protected laptop to which no one else has access. The research team and my doctoral supervisor will review the transcripts.

During our team discussions, co-researchers will hear each others' views, opinions, and concerns; however, they will have signed a confidentiality agreement, meaning that they will not share your identity or any identifying information with anyone outside of our research team. Participants in the class discussion will also be informed of the importance of protecting confidentiality and will be asked not to share other participants' identity or information outside of the class. If you share information with the team, or me, that is against the law (child abuse, sexual abuse, etc.), I am legally responsible to contact the proper authorities.

Benefits: If you decide to participate in the class discussions, you will benefit by voicing your opinions and suggestions about Sex Education. As well, you will be contributing to the creation of an Action Plan that will be presented to teachers, administrators, and curriculum consultants. If you are randomly selected to become a co-researcher, you will receive a personalized letter of reference that can be kept for your career portfolio. It will detail how you participated in this study as a co-researcher as well as the skills you will have acquired and demonstrated throughout the study. Moreover, if you are selected to become a co-researcher, you will be provided with lunch on those two days we will assemble for the entire day workshops.

Risks: I do not expect that participating in the three class discussions or as a co-researcher will cause you any harm. However, you may experience feelings related to the manner in

which the education system provides you with Sex Education. At the conclusion of the class discussion, if you wish to consult with a professional about the way in which you are feeling, I can provide you with a list of services in the London area. As a co-researcher, you will have an opportunity to discuss these feelings with the team, if you wish. Alternatively, you too can contact a counselor from a list of services I will provide.

Withdrawal from the study: Should you decide to voluntarily consent to participate in the three class discussions, you are under no obligation to answer any questions or participate in any activity for whatever personal reason you may have. If you wish to withdraw your participation from the class discussions, you may do so at anytime, including during the discussions. Given the collaborative nature of these discussions, it will not be necessary to withdraw your contributions afterwards. Similarly, although you may have provided consent to participate as a co-researcher in this study, you may decide that you do not want to continue your participation or to participate in a particular research phase. As well, you have the right to request that any information you shared with me and the research team be removed by contacting me within one month following the data collection. Consequently, the information you may have provided will neither be used in the study nor in the Sex Education Action Plan.

Use of the information: The information you provide will be used to construct a Sex Education Action Plan which will be presented to educators who hold various positions within the education system. As well, I will be using the information obtained from this study to complete a doctoral degree. The findings of this research will be presented in a dissertation, submitted for publication in academic and professional journals, and presented at conferences.

If you wish to speak with someone who is not involved with this study, you may contact Dr. William Dunn, Department of Secondary Education in The Faculty of Education by telephone at (780) 492-4280 or by email at wdunn@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX I
Student Assent Form

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Student:

As outlined in the letter of information for this study, you can participate in three class discussions or as a co-researcher. Given that only six students will be randomly selected, there is no guarantee that you will be among this team of co-researchers. If you are randomly selected to assume the role of co-researcher, you will be notified on the day of the first class discussion, _____.

If you consent to participate in the class discussions, please check the appropriate boxes:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I understand that I have been asked to participate in three class discussions for research purposes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |
| 2. I understand the benefits and risks of consenting to participate in these three discussions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |
| 3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw within one month following data collection | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |

I consent to participate in the three class discussions and give permission for the collected information to be used for the purposes described in the information sheet.

Print Name

Signature of Student

Date

If you consent to participate in this study as a co-researcher, please check the appropriate boxes:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research study as a co-researcher | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |
| 2. I understand the benefits and risks of consenting to participate as a co-researcher in this study | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |
| 3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw within one month following data collection | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |

I consent to participate as a co-researcher and give permission for the collected information to be used for the purposes described in the information sheet.

Print Name

Signature of Co-researcher

Date

Co-researcher's email address

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned to the researcher, and the other copy should be kept for your own records.

APPENDIX J
Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am conducting research with Grade 12 students who attend Bellman Secondary. I am inviting all Grade 12 students in your child's health class to participate in this study. He/she will have the opportunity to express his/her views about Sex Education. The purpose for obtaining student participation is to ultimately design and develop an Action Plan about Sex Education. Not only will this Action Plan reflect students' perspectives about Sex Education, it will also be created by student co-researchers. When this Action Plan is finalized, it will be presented to teachers, administrators, and curriculum consultants in order to inform curriculum development as it pertains to this subject area.

There are two ways in which your child can participate in this research. First, he/she could take part in three class discussions. And, second, if your child would like to examine Sex Education even further, he/she could assume the role of a co-researcher, as well.

1) Class Discussions: On _____, during my visit to your child's class for the entire period I will talk about Sex Education. All students who provide consent forms will have an opportunity to voluntarily participate and talk about this subject area. Your child will be asked to express his/her views by writing down responses to questions, talking to peers, and taking part in a whole class discussion about what is relevant and comprehensive sex education for students in their high school. Your child's comments, opinions, and suggestions will inform the development of a Sex Education Action Plan. This will be a chance for your child to express, by way of this Action Plan, his/her views to teachers and administrators about what really matters to him/her about sexuality and how he/she believes this subject should be taught in the classroom. We will not be discussing individual sexual behaviors.

By the end of April, the Sex Education Action Plan will be designed and developed by six student co-researchers who will be randomly selected from your child's health class. Once these six co-researchers create the Action Plan, your child will have the opportunity to view it and provide constructive feedback before it is presented to teachers, principals,

and health curriculum consultants. The comments, suggestions, and opinions your child may share will be considered if the class agrees that the Action Plan should be modified.

Once the Action Plan has been finalized, I will interview teachers, administrators, and curriculum consultants in order to obtain their responses to the Sex Education Action Plan. I will, then, share their responses with your child's health class by the end of April.

2) Co-researcher: Your child will have the opportunity to become a member of a research team whose ultimate goal will be to create a Sex Education Action Plan for Bellman Secondary. Together, we will collect and analyze information in order to design and develop an Action Plan that reflects the views of a number of Grade 12 students. In order to collect this information, co-researchers will conduct a 45 minute interview with each of two student participants. To help your child with this research process, he/she will be asked to participate in three workshops in which he/she will learn how to plan ethical research, how to conduct interviews, and how to analyze research data. Two of these workshops will span for the entire day, while the other will be held during the regularly scheduled health class. I have obtained permission for your child to be exempt from classes during the two day long workshops. The exact dates for these workshops have not yet been determined. Moreover, there may also be occasional brief meetings during the three month research process which will span from February to April.

Confidentiality: I will protect your child's identity by not releasing his/her name. Whether your child participates in the three class discussions or as a co-researcher, there will be conversations that will be audio-recorded. All participants will be informed of the importance of protecting confidentiality and will be asked not to share other participants' identity or information outside of the class. A transcriptionist, who will have signed a confidentiality agreement, will type these discussions. Although your child's name and identifying information may be discerned from the audio cassettes, all such information will be removed when it is transcribed onto paper. The transcripts and all identifying information will be stored in a locked cabinet. Moreover, computer files will be saved on my password-protected laptop to which no one else has access. The research team and my doctoral supervisory committee will review the transcripts. During team discussions, should your child assume the role of co-researchers, he/she may share views, opinions, and concerns; however, all team members will have signed a confidentiality agreement, meaning that they will not disclose your child's identity or any identifying information with anyone outside of our research team. If your child shares information with the team or me that is against the law (child abuse, sexual abuse, etc.), I am legally responsible to contact the proper authorities.

Benefits: If you consent that your child can participate in the three class discussions, your child will benefit by voicing his/her opinions and suggestions about Sex Education. As well, your child will be contributing to the creation of an Action Plan that will be presented to teachers, administrators, and curriculum consultants for future curriculum development in this area. If your child is randomly selected to become one of six co-researchers, he/she will receive a personalized letter of reference that can be kept for his/her career portfolio. It will detail how your child participated in this study as a co-researcher as well as the skills he/she will have demonstrated and acquired throughout the study. Moreover, if your child is selected to become a co-researcher, he/she will be provided with lunch on those two days we will assemble for the entire day workshops.

Risks: I do not expect that participating in the three class discussions or as a co-researcher will cause your child any harm. However, he/she may experience feelings related to the manner in which the education system provides him/her with Sex Education. At the conclusion of the class discussions, if your child wishes to consult with a professional about the way in which he/she is feeling, I can provide him/her with a list of services in the London area. As a co-researcher, your child will have an opportunity to discuss these feelings with the team, if he/she wishes. Alternatively, your child too can contact a counselor from a list of services.

Withdrawal from the study: Although you may have provided consent that your child can participate in the class discussions or as a co-researcher, you can withdraw your child's participation at anytime. In order to withdraw your child from this study, please contact me by email at mangiarodi.rose@ualberta.ca. In the event you do decide to withdraw your child from the study, you have the right to request that his/her information be removed by contacting me within one month following the data collection. Consequently, the information your child may have shared will neither be used in the study nor in the Sex Education Action Plan. Given the collaborate nature of group discussions, information contributed in these contexts cannot be withdrawn.

Use of the information: The information your child provides will be used to construct the Sex Education Action Plan which I will present to educators who hold various positions within the education system. As well, this study is being conducted in partial completion of a doctoral degree. The findings of this research will be presented in a dissertation, submitted for publication in academic and professional journals, and presented at conferences.

If you wish to speak with someone who is not involved with this study, you may contact Dr. William Dunn, Department of Secondary Education in The Faculty of Education by telephone at (780) 492-4280 or by email at wdunn@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX K
Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As outlined in the letter of information for this study, your child can volunteer to participate in three class discussions.

If you consent to have your child, _____ participate in these class discussions for this study, please check the appropriate boxes:

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I understand that my child has been asked to participate in three class discussions for research purpose | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |
| 2. I understand the benefits and risks of consenting to have my child participate in class discussions about Sex Education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |
| 3. I understand that my child's participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw my child's participation within one month following data collection | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |

I consent that my child can participate in three class discussions and give permission for the collected information to be used for the purposes described in the information sheet.

 Print Name

 Signature of Parent/Guardian

 Date

If you consent to have your child, _____ participate in this study as a co-researcher, please check the appropriate boxes:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. I understand that my child has been asked to participate in a research study as a co-researcher | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |
| 2. I understand the benefits and risks of consenting to have my child participate as a co-researcher | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |
| 3. I understand that my child's participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw my child's participation within one month following data collection | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |

I consent that my child can participate as a co-researcher in this study and give permission for the collected information to be used for the purposes described in the information sheet.

Print Name

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned to the researcher, and the other copy should be kept for your own records.

APPENDIX L

Student Interviewee Information Sheet

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Prospective Student Participant:

I, _____ am inviting you as a Grade 12 student at Bellman Secondary to voluntarily participate as an interviewee in a study about Sex Education. If you would like to take part, both you and your parents must complete consent forms. My parents and I have consented to participate in this study, and now I am assuming the role of co-researcher. As a co-researcher, I am a member of a student team who will be designing and developing a Sex Education Action Plan that will reflect students' perspectives. On behalf of Rosemarie Mangiardi from the University of Alberta, I am inviting you to contribute to this Action Plan by taking part in an interview that I will conduct. When this Action Plan is finalized, it will be presented to teachers, administrators, and health curriculum consultants so they will become aware of students' comments, opinions, and suggestions as they pertain to Sex Education.

As an interviewee in this study, you will have the opportunity to voluntarily share your views, opinions, and concerns about Sex Education offered at Bellman Secondary. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes in length and will be conducted at school. I will audio-record the interview and Rosemarie Mangiardi will be responsible for ensuring that it is transcribed onto paper. As a member of a research team for this study, I will be taking part in analyzing the information you provide to me during the interview. Therefore, your comments, opinion, and suggestions shared with me during the interview will contribute to the Sex Education Action Plan for our school, Bellman Secondary.

Confidentiality: What you say during the interview with me, _____ will be audio-recorded so it can be transcribed. A transcriptionist who will sign a confidentiality agreement will type the interview. Although your name and identifying information may be discerned from the audio cassette, all identifying information will be removed when transcribed. The transcript and all information will be stored in a locked cabinet. Moreover, computer files will be saved on Rosemarie Mangiardi's password-protected laptop to which no one else has access. Only Rosemarie and her doctoral supervisor will review the transcript. As well, I have signed a confidentiality agreement, meaning that I

will not share your identity or any identifying information with anyone, including those students who are members of the research team. In fact, during the interview, I will ask you to identify a pseudonym, in other words, a fictitious name that will be associated with the information you offer during the interview. If you share information with me that is against the law (child abuse, sexual abuse, etc.), I am legally responsible to share this information with Rosemarie Mangiardi and she will, in turn, contact the proper authorities.

Benefits: As an interviewee, you will benefit by expressing your views and opinions about Sex Education, and thereby contribute to the Action Plan that student co-researchers will design and develop for Bellman Secondary.

Risks: Rosemarie Mangiardi and I do not expect that participating in this study as an interviewee will cause you any harm. However, you may experience feelings regarding the manner in which the education system provides you with Sex Education. You will have an opportunity, if you wish, to discuss these feeling with me during the interview. Alternatively, at the conclusion of the interview, I will provide you with a list of counselors in the London area with whom you can contact to discuss your feelings.

Withdrawal from this study: Although you may have provided consent to participate in this study as an interviewee, you can decide that you no longer wish to continue with the interview at any time during the interview itself. As well, once the interview is completed, you have the right to withdraw from the study within one month from the interview date by contacting Rosemarie Mangiardi at the above email address. Consequently, the information you shared with me will not be used in the study or the Action Plan.

Use of the information: The information you provide will be used to construct the Sex Education Action Plan which will be presented to educators who hold various positions in the education system. Rosemarie Mangiardi will also use the information so she can complete a doctoral degree. Moreover, the findings of this research will be presented in a dissertation, submitted for publication in academic and professional journals, and presented at conferences.

APPENDIX M
Student Interviewee Assent Form

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Student:

As outlined in the letter of information for this study, you have been asked by me, _____ to participate in an interview that I will be conducting. We have agreed that the date of this interview will be: _____.

If you consent to participate as an interviewee, please check the appropriate boxes:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I understand that I have been asked to participate in an interview for research purposes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |
| 2. I understand the benefits and risks of consenting to participate as an interviewee | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |
| 3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw within one month from the day of the interview by contacting Rosemarie Mangiardi at mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |

I consent to participate as an interviewee and give permission for the collected information to be used for the purposes described in the information sheet.

 Print Name

 Signature of Student Interviewee

 Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned to the researcher, and the other copy should be kept for your own records.

APPENDIX N
Student Interviewee Information Sheet for Parent/Guardian

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I, _____ am inviting your child, a Grade 12 student at Bellman Secondary, to voluntarily participate as an interviewee in a study about Sex Education. As a student myself, I have voluntarily consented to participate in this study to become a co-researcher. As a co-researcher, I am a member of a student research team who will be designing and developing a Sex Education Action Plan that will reflect students' perspectives. On behalf of Rosemarie Mangiardi from the University of Alberta, I am inviting your child to contribute to this Action Plan by taking part in an interview that I will conduct. When this Action Plan is finalized, it will be presented to teachers, administrators, and health curriculum consultants so they will become aware of students' comments, opinions, and suggestions as they pertain to Sex Education. I require both your child and your consent completed prior to your child being interviewed.

As an interviewee in this study, your child will have the opportunity to voluntarily share his/her views, opinions, and concerns about Sex Education offered at Bellman Secondary. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes in length and will be conducted at school. Your child and I have identified the following convenient date for this interview: _____. I will audio-record the interview and Rosemarie Mangiardi will be responsible for ensuring that it is transcribed onto paper. As a member of a research team for this study, I will be taking part in analyzing the information your child provides to me during the interview. Therefore, his/her comments, opinion, and suggestions will contribute to the Sex Education Action Plan for our school, Bellman Secondary.

Confidentiality: What your child says during the interview with me, _____ will be audio-recorded so it can be transcribed. A transcriptionist who will sign a confidentiality agreement will type the interview. Although your child's name and identifying information may be discerned from the audio cassette, all identifying information will be removed when transcribed. The transcript and all information will be stored in a locked cabinet. Moreover, computer files will be saved on Rosemarie Mangiardi's password-protected laptop to which no one else has access. Only Rosemarie

and her doctoral supervisor will review the transcript. As well, I have signed a confidentiality agreement, meaning that I will not share your child's identity or any identifying information with anyone, including those students who are members of the research team. In fact, during the interview, I will ask your child to identify a pseudonym, in other words, a fictitious name that will be associated with the information he/she will offer during the interview. If your child shares information with me that is against the law (child abuse, sexual abuse, etc.), I am legally responsible to share this information with Rosemarie Mangiardi and she will, in turn, contact the proper authorities.

Benefits: As an interviewee, your child will benefit by expressing his/her views and opinions about Sex Education, and thereby contribute to the Action Plan that student co-researchers will design and develop for Bellman Secondary.

Risks: Rosemarie Mangiardi and I do not expect that participating in this study as an interviewee will cause your child any harm. However, your child may experience feelings regarding the manner in which the education system provides you with Sex Education. Your child will have an opportunity, if he/she wishes, to discuss these feelings with me during the interview. Alternatively, at the conclusion of the interview, I will provide him/her with a list of counselors in the London area with whom he/she can contact to discuss his/her feelings.

Withdrawal from the study: Although you may provide consent that your child can participate as an interviewee, you may decide that your child can no longer participate within one month from the date of the interview. In order to withdraw your child from this study, please contact Rosemarie Mangiardi at the above email address. In the event you do decide to withdraw your child from the study, you have the right to request that his/her information be removed. Consequently, the information your child may have shared will neither be used in the study nor in the Sex Education Action Plan.

Use of the information: The information your child provides will be used to construct the Sex Education Action Plan which will be presented to educators who hold various positions in the education system. Rosemarie Mangiardi will also use the information so she can complete a doctoral degree. Moreover, the findings of this research will be presented in a dissertation, submitted for publication in academic and professional journals, and presented at conferences.

If you wish to speak with someone who is not involved with this study, you may contact Dr. William Dunn, Department of Secondary Education in The Faculty of Education by telephone at (780) 492-4280 or by email at wdunn@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX O
Student Interviewee Consent Form for Parent/Guardian

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As outlined in the letter of information for this study, your child has been asked by me, _____ to participate in an interview that I will be conducting. We have agreed that the date of this interview will be: _____.

If you consent that your child can participate as an interviewee, please check the appropriate boxes:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I understand that my child has been asked to participate in an interview for research purposes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |
| 2. I understand the benefits and risks of consenting to have my child participate as an interviewee | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |
| 3. I understand that my child's participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw him/her within one month from the day of the interview by contacting Rosemarie Mangiardi at mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |

I consent to have my child participate as an interviewee and give permission for the collected information to be used for the purposes described in the information sheet.

 Print Name

 Signature of Parent

 Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned to the researcher, and the other copy should be kept for your own records.

APPENDIX P
Decision-Maker Information Sheet

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

February, 2008.

Dear Potential Participant:

I am conducting research with Grade 12 students who attend your school/school board. The information collected and analyzed will serve to inform the development of a Sexual Health Education Action Plan for Bellman Secondary. I am inviting you to participate in this study by responding to the Action Plan and addressing its viability for Bellman Secondary.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is threefold: first, to identify and describe students' Sexual Health Education perspectives and afford them the opportunity to express possible ways in which Sexual Health Education offered by your school/school board can be enhanced; second, to describe how Sexual Health Education is provided for students; and third, to examine the viability of the Action Plan presented to educators, administrators, and health curriculum consultants.

Methods: Given your professional capacity within the education system, I invite you to voluntarily participate in an interview that will last between 45 minutes to 1 hour. I will also be interviewing other educators. During the interview we will discuss how Sexual Health Education is currently offered for students. I will present to you an Action Plan created by students who have acted as co-researchers by collecting and analyzing data from peers to inform its development. In order to assemble this research team of Grade 12 co-researchers, six students were randomly selected among those who consented to voluntarily participate in this study. Both the students and their parents have consented. You will have an opportunity, during the interview, to take note of students' perspectives about Sexual Health Education and to provide your response to the Action Plan for Bellman Secondary.

Confidentiality: The interview will be recorded on tape. A transcriptionist who will sign a confidentiality agreement will type the interview. Although your name and identifying information may be discerned from the audio cassette, all of such information will be removed when it is transcribed onto paper. I will be the only person who will know your

identifying information which will be stored separately from the transcript. The transcript and all information will be stored in a locked cabinet. Moreover, computer files will be saved on my password-protected laptop to which no one else has access. Only my doctoral supervisory committee and I will review the transcript.

Benefits: The direct benefit you may experience from participating in this study is in sharing your views about Sexual Health Education. As well, you will have an opportunity to identify students' perspectives as they pertain to this subject area. By participating in an interview and, in doing so, offering your response to the Action Plan, you will be contributing to a conversation about enhancing Sexual Health Education. At the conclusion of the interview, you will be given a copy of the Sexual Health Education Action Plan.

Risks: I do not expect that participating in this study will cause you any harm. However, you may experience feelings regarding the manner in which the education system provides adolescents with Sexual Health Education. During the interview we may discuss these feelings. Alternatively, you can contact a counselor from a list of services I will provide to you at the conclusion of our interview.

Withdrawal from this study: Although you may have provided consent to participate in this study as an interviewee, you can decide that you no longer wish to continue with the interview at any time. As well, once the interview is completed, you have the right to withdraw from the study within one month from the date of the interview, and as such the information you shared with me will not be presented to students during a class presentation or used in the dissertation.

Use of the information: I will analyze the information you provide during the interview. Your responses to the Sexual Health Education Action Plan will be presented to a class of Grade 12 students after your name and other identifying information has been removed. As well, this study is being conducted in partial completion of a doctoral degree. The findings of this research will be presented in a dissertation, submitted for publication in academic and professional journals, and presented at conferences.

If you wish to speak with someone who is not involved with this study, you may contact Dr. William Dunn, Department of Secondary Education in The Faculty of Education by telephone at (780) 492-4280 or by email at wdunn@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX Q

Decision-maker Consent Form

Title of Research: Youth Taking Action to Improve their Sex Education at Bellman Secondary

Researcher: Rosemarie Mangiardi, MEd, BEd, BSc
 Doctoral Student in the Department of Secondary Education
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca

Advisor: Dr. Maryanne Doherty
 Professor and Associate Dean of Alternate Programs
 Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
 Email: mdoherty@ualberta.ca Telephone: (780) 492-0243

If you consent to volunteer to participate in the study as an interviewee, please check the appropriate box:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. I understand that I have been asked to volunteer to participate in a research study | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |
| 2. I understand the benefits and risks of participating in this study | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |
| 3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may choose to withdraw within a month from the date of the interview by contacting Rosemarie Mangiardi by email at mangiardi.rose@ualberta.ca | <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>
No |

I consent to participate in this study as an interviewee and give permission for the collected information to be used for the purposes described in the information sheet for this study.

 Print Name

 Signature of Research Participant

 Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned to the researcher, and the other copy should be kept for your own records.

APPENDIX R
Interview Guide: School Nurse

Phase 1

- (1) How long have you been the school nurse at Bellman Secondary?
- (2) Who do you work for, School Board etc.?
- (3) Can you describe your role and responsibilities at Bellman?
- (4) What health issues do students come to you with?
- (5) How would you describe your relationship with the students?
- (6) In what ways are you involved in with sex education?

Phase 2

Presentation of the Action Plan

Phase 3

- (7) Given your professional capacity, what do you plan to do to address students' concerns/problems?
- (8) When do you plan on taking action to address their concerns?
- (9) Can you talk about the viability of the students' proposed-changes?
- (10) How important is it to consider students' perspectives in sex education? To what degree do you believe students' perspectives are respected and acknowledged by decision-makers like yourself?

APPENDIX S

Interview Guide: Learning Coordinator

Phase 1

- (1) Can you describe your role and responsibilities as the Learning Coordinator?
- (2) Can you describe what the curriculum development process entails?
- (3) To what degree do students have a say in this process?
- (4) As part of the physical health education, you find sex education, what is the school board's position on such education?
- (5) What leeway do the health teachers have to shape sex education around what students want when it comes to sex education?

Phase 2

Presentation of Action Plan

Phase 3

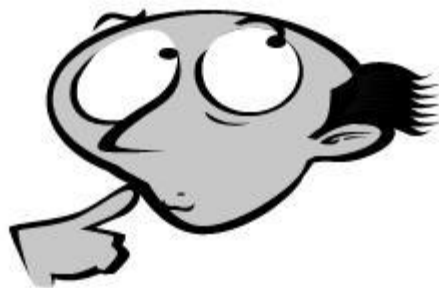
- (6) Given your professional capacity, how can you respond to the students and the action plan?
- (7) Given your professional capacity, what do you plan to do to address students' concerns/problems?
- (8) When do you plan on taking action to address their concerns?
- (9) Can you talk about the viability of the students' proposed-changes?
- (10) How important is it to consider students' perspectives in sex education? To what degree do you believe students' perspectives are respected and acknowledged by decision-makers like yourself?

APPENDIX T

Envisioning our Ethical Research

Sexual Health Education:
Envisioning our Ethical Research

We will be conducting research.



But, what is research?

"Research is..."

a process of steps used to collect and analyze information in order to increase our understanding of a topic or issue

- This process involves three steps
 1. Pose question(s)
 2. Collect data to answer the question
 3. Present an answer to the question

Terms...

Data: Information analyzed and used as the basis for making decisions in research

Skeptical: Question the nature of and the process used to collect the data

Systematic: Consider the plan—question how and why the study will be done in a purposeful and step-by-step way

Researcher Perspective

Positivistic

- Knowledge about the world is generated by understanding causal links
- Concerned with objectivity and the control of variables

Naturalistic

- Focuses on understanding and interpreting the people in that world
- Conducted from the inside so it cannot be 'external' or 'objective' as understanding is coloured by individual experience

Types of Research

Quantitative

- Researcher decides what to study
- Specific & narrow questions
- Collect numeric data from respondents
- Use statistics
- Assumes an unbiased and objective manner

Qualitative

- Researcher relies on the views of participants
- Broad & general questions
- Data consists largely of text
- Analyze text for themes
- Assumes a subjective and biased manner

Why is Research Important



- Addresses gaps in knowledge
- Replicates knowledge
- Expands knowledge
- Broadens our perspectives
- Informs practice

Steps of a Study

- Determining research questions
- Designing a methodological design
- Collecting raw data
- Analyzing the data
- Generating new knowledge



Our Research Questions:

- 1) What are students' perspectives of sex education at Bellman? and
- 2) How would the students change the sex education offered, here at Bellman Secondary if they could?

Participatory Action Research

- Knowledge-making is a participatory activity
- Conducted **with** rather than **on** individuals who have voices that are not typically heard or acknowledged
- Invites those who are affected by a problem to participate in the process of arriving at possible solutions

**How MUST this study
be conducted?**



Ethically

Research Ethics

- Weigh the possible benefits of conducting the study against the 'costs'
 - ✓ Emotional (e.g. anxiety, embarrassment, depression)
 - ✓ Financial (e.g. individual's time, travel costs)
 - ✓ Physical (e.g. pain or physical effects)
- Ethics operate at a macro and micro level
 - ✓ Macro Level – U of A Ethics Board
 - ✓ Micro Level – You will make judgments about ethical sensitivities relating to the participant (e.g. the possible distress caused by asking a question)

Ethical Issues

**Privacy &
Confidentiality**

**Informed & Ongoing
Consent**

Trust

Privacy & Confidentiality

- **Privacy:** Protecting participants' names & roles
- **Anonymity:** Concealing participants' identities in all documents resulting from the research;
 - Participants will be invited to select a pseudonym
- **Confidentiality:** Concerning who has the right to access the data participants provided

Situation



You have just finished interviewing Carlos after school. As you are walking to your locker, you run into Mary, a co-researcher in this study. She sees that you are carrying your recorder and assumes that you just finished interviewing a participant. Mary is really nervous about conducting her interview scheduled for the next day and asks to hear your interview. You think that your interview was great and really want this study to be successful. As well, you really want to put Mary at ease so she, too, has an awesome interview.

Are you breaching Carlo's confidentiality by sharing the tape with Mary, your co-researcher?

Informed & Ongoing Consent

- Participants must be told the aims and objectives of the research, how data will be collected and used, and who will have access to it
- Participants give consent willingly and understand what they are agreeing to
- Ongoing consent, participants understand that they can withdraw their consent at any time and for any reason
- Informed consent is required for 'minors' who are under the age of 18 by a parent or guardian

Situation:



You just finished a 45min interview with Robert and turned the recorder off. You think that Robert just shared some very interesting points about Sex Ed. Even though you brought the interview to a close and told Robert that the interview is finished, he continues to talk about Sex Ed. What do you do to ensure Robert's ongoing consent? Should you capture this additional data?

Trust

- You will be building and sustaining relationships with participants who will share certain information
- You have been entrusted with this information shared during the interview
- Betraying such trust would mean that you divulge the participant's identity as well as the information he/she has shared

Situation:



As you develop a rapport with Nancy, a participant with whom you have been asked to interview, you learn more than expected about her father and how he 'teaches' her about sexual health education. Given the questionable behavior by Nancy's father, you consider your researcher role. Should you tell someone about the questionable innuendos? Who? Will you be betraying Nancy's privacy and confidentiality?

How do these
ethical issues apply
to our team
discussions?



Situation:



During our team discussions, we will be debriefing your interviews. A co-researcher shares a time when the science classroom teacher was talking about egg fertilization in a very personal fashion. You are shocked by the story. On your way home while riding the bus, this story is still lingering in your mind. You are sitting next to a good friend who notices that you are distracted. You want to share what it is on your mind with this friend; but you are unsure whether you would be betraying your co-researcher's trust.

What do you do?

APPENDIX U**Conducting Research Interviews**

Conducting Research Interviews

We live in an



"Interview Society"



*“Research using interviews
involves a deceptive simplicity.
It is easy to start interviewing
without any advance
preparation or reflection.”*

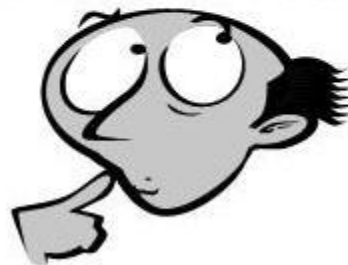
Patton, 2002

The Research Interview

1. The questions asked, or topics raised are 'open' with the participants determining their own responses
2. The relationship between interviewer and interviewee is responsive and allows for clarification and exploration
3. There is structure and purpose on the part of the interviewer

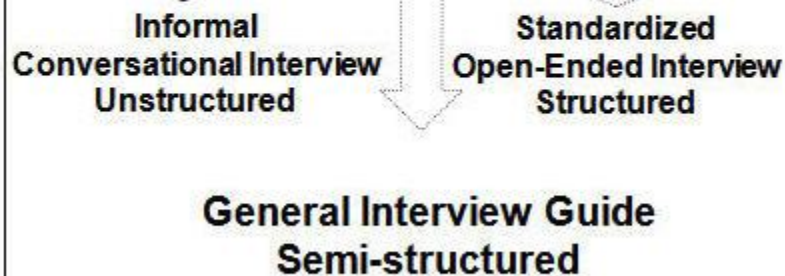
Gillham, 2005

Why are we
planning to conduct
interviews?



Types of Interviews

STRUCTURE



Informal Conversational Interview

- Questions emerge from the context
- Go-with-the-flow style
- No prescribed topics or questions

PROS	CONS
✓ emerges from observations	X no consistency
✓ questions are relevant	X certain questions may not arise
✓ match participant with circumstances	X data organization and analysis is difficult

Standardized Open-Ended Interview

- Exact wording and sequence is predetermined
- All participants are asked the same questions
- Questions are all phrased in an open-ended format

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All participants answer the same questions ✓ Data can be complete and comparable ✓ Can revisit the instrument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Little flexibility X Standardized questions and sequencing may not be natural

General Interview Guide

- Topics and issues are specified prior to meeting
- You decide sequence and wording of questions spontaneously during the interview
- You are free to explore, probe, and ask questions for clarification and elaboration

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased comprehensiveness ✓ Data collection somewhat systematic ✓ Conversational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Inadvertently miss topics X Flexibility in sequencing can affect participants' answers, reducing comparability of data

Before Beginning

"I'd like to tape record what you say so I don't miss anything. I don't want to take the chance of relying on my notes and maybe missing something that you say. So, if you don't mind, I'd like to use this recorder. If at any time during the interview you would like to turn the tape recorder off, all you have to do is press this button on and the recorder will stop."

Types of Questions

- Introductory Questions
- Follow-Up Questions
- Probing Question
- Specifying Questions
- Direct Questions
- Indirect Questions
- Structuring Questions
- Interpreting Questions
- Silence

Patton, 2002

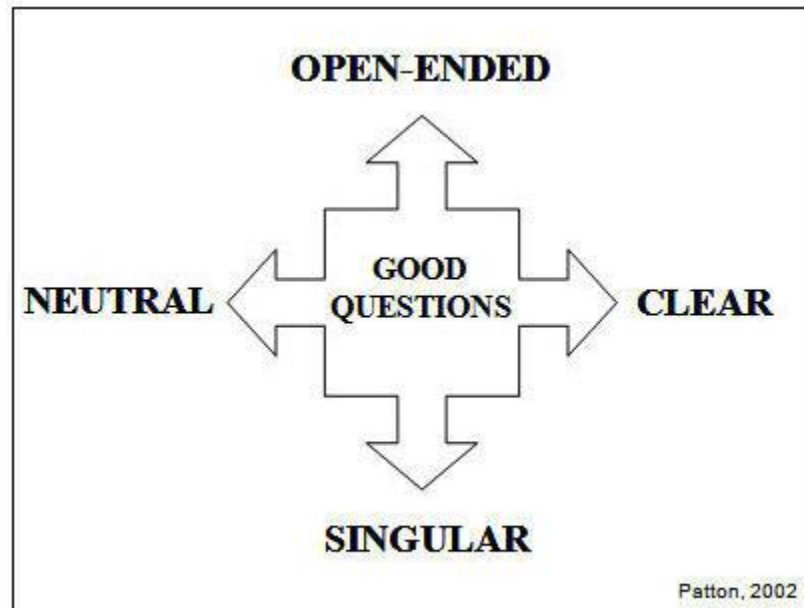
Direct Questions...

- Experience and Behavior
- Opinions and Values
- Feelings
- Knowledge
- Sensory Questions
- Background and Demographics

Patton, 2002

“The wording used in asking questions can make a significant difference in the quality of responses elicited.”

Patton, 2002



#1: Open-Ended

Example: "How satisfied are you with the Sex Ed offered here at Bellman?"

- Closed and limited; degree of satisfaction is communicated
- Open-ended questions allow the participant to describe for him/herself the experience

Better Choice: How do you feel about...
 What is your opinion of ...
 What do you think of...

...Open-Ended

Examples: "Are you satisfied with the Sex Ed offered here at Bellman Secondary?"

"Was your Sex Ed here a positive experience?"

- These are dichotomous questions, meaning that they provoke a 'yes' or 'no' response and limit participants' expression
- Such questions turn an interview into an interrogation

#2: Singular

Example: To help our teachers improve Sex Ed, I'd like to ask for your opinions. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the program? What do you like? What don't you like? What do you think could be improved or should stay the same? Those kinds of things, and any other comments you may have.

- Multiple questions create tension and confusion because the participant doesn't really know what you are asking
- No more than one idea should be contained in any question

#3: Clarity

Example: When contemplating the quality of the sexual health education program offered here at Bellman, can you describe in detail its pros and cons?

- Phrase questions using the language used by those you are interviewing
- You bear the responsibility of posing questions that are clear so the participant understands what you are asking

...Clarity: "Why?"

Example: "What do you think of the Sex Ed. offered here at Bellman?"

"It sucks!"

"*Why* does it suck?"

"Because it just sucks."

- "Why" questions have an endless regression quality and can lead to circular and/or accusatory conversation
- What are you really asking about...?

Better Choice: Can you be more specific. How did the teacher describe the content?

#4: Neutrality

Example: "Don't you agree that it was the best when the public health nurse came to talk to our class about sex?"

- Communicates approval and could influence the participant's response
- What the participant tells you cannot shock, anger, embarrass, or sadden you
- Demonstrate respect so he/she understands that what he/she is saying is important and valuable
- Cannot cast judgment

...Neutrality

Example: "I have already heard that sex ed here at Bellman is poor, so please feel free to tell me about the weaknesses you have experienced."

- Leading questions are the opposite of neutral questions
- The Interviewer hints about a desirable or appropriate kind of answer
- Leading questions "lead" the participant in a certain direction

Varying the Interview

- **Role Playing:** "Suppose I was the teacher preparing a Sex Ed lesson, what advice would you give me to ensure that I would be successful?"
- **Simulations:** "Suppose you were teaching the class, how would you teach the Sex Ed Lesson?"
- **Announcements:** "As you know the research team will be developing an action plan for Sex Ed. What would you like to see included in this plan?"
- **Summarizing transitions:** "So, if I understand you correctly, you think that teachers at Bellman should...."

...Varying the Interview

- **Attention-Getting Preface:** *"This next question is really important: Can you identify the strengths of the Sex Ed that you have received at Bellman?"*
- **Follow-Up (Digging Deeper):** "When did that happen?" "Who was there?" "Where were you?" "What happened?" "How did that happen?"
- **Elaboration & Clarification:** "uh-huh" while nodding. "Would you elaborate on that?" "I don't quite understand..."
- **Comparing/Contrasting:** "How does x different to y?"

The Closing Question

- It is critical to give the participant the final say

Example: "That covers the questions that I wanted to ask. Is there anything that you want to add?"

"What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?"

*"**You**, as the interviewer, must maintain awareness of how the interview is flowing, how the interviewee is reacting to questions, and what kinds of feedback are appropriate and helpful to maintain the flow of communication."*

Patton, 2002

Control the Interview

1. Know what you want to find out
2. Ask focused questions to get relevant responses
3. Listen attentively to assess the quality and relevance of responses
4. Give appropriate verbal and nonverbal feedback to the participant

Quality Interviews

- Spontaneous, specific, and relevant responses from the participant
- The shorter your questions and the longer the participant's responses, the better
- You follow up and clarify the meanings of the relevant responses
- You interpret responses throughout the interview and then
- You attempt to verify your interpretations during the interview

Guidelines

- Confirm informed consent
- Ensure a quiet environment
- Put participants at ease and gain trust
- Record the discussion
- Be aware of the time
- Read body language
- Employ active listening
- Avoid interrupting the participant
- Thank the participant

Kellelt, 2002b

Creating our interview guide...