‘RIGHTING’ SEX-ED IN ONTARIO: ADULT ANXIETY OVER CHILD AND ADOLESCENT SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE GOVERNMENT’S UNDEMOCRATIC MISMANAGEMENT OF IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM

by

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Abstract

There is no doubt that relevant and up-to-date elementary school curriculum is vital for the adequate education and socialization of youth, however, when a society is characterized by ideological pluralism and multiple visions of morality the debates over curriculum can be acrimonious and tempestuous. These debates are particularly heated when sex education is concerned since adults in Western society have a longstanding cultural discomfort with child and adolescent sexual knowledge and, more specifically, there is a strong belief that sexual knowledge compromises the “natural” innocence and ignorance of young people. This research focuses on a debate that occurred in Ontario in April and May of 2010 after the Government attempted to revise Health and Physical Education curriculum for grades 1-8, the subject that contains sex education. Following considerable backlash, the Ontario Premier shelved the proposed revisions a mere 54 hours after the curriculum was publicized.

What led to this curriculum being received so poorly by the public and what were the contributing factors that led to this abrupt reconsideration? My research examines the debate that the new sex education curriculum produced and draws attention to the ways in which the deep seated anxieties of adults regarding adolescent and child sexual knowledge were able to overpower the voices of researchers and educational experts who were promoting the revisions. Some adults were concerned about the way that the curriculum presented a particularly liberal vision of sexual morality and argued that the new content would corrupt, mislead, and confuse youth. Though there were some individuals and groups who supported the revisions, arguing that they were relevant, necessary and overdue, their voices were not as organized or influential as the religious and social conservatives who dominated the debate. I argue that the proposed revisions to the Ontario sex education curriculum failed to gain public support because of the Government’s inability to adequately prepare for and mediate the Province’s competing liberal and conservative sexual ideologies. In my defense of the abandoned revisions, I explore how they failed to gain support not only because of the vociferous opposition of conservative religious groups who did not want to see a more liberal vision of sexual morality in the curriculum, but also due to a longstanding cultural discomfort with child and adolescent sexual knowledge and an unwillingness to fully affirm non-heterosexual identities and practices within the education system.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The adequate socialization of children can be considered among the most important tasks and worthy investments in contemporary Canadian society. It is through the education of children that ideas can grow and flourish, and if these ideas are properly nurtured and collectively supported they can produce meaningful social change. Investing in the education system is considered a veritable way of creating a better society in the future and children have been managed according to these utopian visions for decades. However, there is not always consensus on what types of socialization are desirable.

In Canada, the content of elementary school curriculum is standardized by provincial governments with changes made over time at the discretion of education experts. Changes can correspond with world events such as scientific paradigm shifts, for example, when the International Astronomical Union changed the definition of what constituted a planet in 2006 resulting in the removal of Pluto from this newly defined category. Curriculum changes can also correspond with shifts in geography, such as when borders alter to form new territories. A recent example is the creation of the Canadian province Nunavut in 1999. Changes to curriculum can also reflect socio-cultural and historical shifts in a society though these are sometimes more controversial. An example of a contentious socio-cultural and legislative shift occurred in 2005 when Canada became the fourth country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. However, the present curriculum in the province of Ontario does not include this social-political landmark.

In the months leading up to January of 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education revised its Health and Physical Education (H&PE) curriculum so that it would reflect contemporary
Canadian society more accurately. Some of the new additions in the curriculum included educating students about online safety, a response to the fact that many Canadian children and adolescents have open access to the Internet and are exposed to social media vastly more than in previous generations. Another updated component was a unit on healthy eating practices and the promotion of active living that introduced daily physical activity to all grades. Levels of child and adolescent obesity have been rising steadily and alarmingly since the 1980s and obesity is said to be the most common nutritional problem in North America (Kurukulasuriya and Sowers 2007). Other changes made to the curriculum included updating the sexual education component in order to make it more comprehensive than the previous edition dating back to 1998. This included references to same-sex couples, homophobia, gender identity, and referred to previously omitted sexual practices with the intention of emphasizing the importance of abstaining from these activities.

The response that the curriculum revisions evoked in the province was boisterous and divisive on the part of some groups. Some lauded the new comprehensive curriculum defending its ‘explicit’ sexual content as something that was necessary for children and adolescents in our time while others condemned the document and those who created it, censuring its debut and calling for its removal. The strong reaction seemed to indicate the fierce opposition of the public, and this led Premier Dalton McGuinty to remove the sex education component of this new curriculum and replace it with the 1998 version. McGuinty’s turnabout occurred a mere 54 hours after the initial backlash from the public.

What caused the apparently powerful public reaction to this curriculum that resulted in a sudden policy change? What was it about sex education that ignited so much controversy and debate between minority groups, parents, religious figures, political groups and among
politicians? How could a province in one of the most liberal nations in the world become consumed and crippled by a document that aimed to adequately and appropriately educate students in order to foster a brighter future for all Ontario citizens?

My research will look at the debate that this curriculum generated and will argue that the proposed revisions to the Ontario sex education curriculum failed to gain public support because of the government’s inability to adequately prepare for and mediate the Province’s ideological pluralism. In my defense of the abandoned revisions, I will explore how they failed to gain support not only because of the vociferous opposition of conservative religious groups and rising Christian nationalism\(^1\), but also due to a longstanding cultural discomfort with child and adolescent sexual knowledge and an unwillingness to fully affirm non-heterosexual identities and practices within the education system.

My interest in this topic is rooted in a deep-seated personal concern for equality and fairness that was fostered in my youth. When I came to study sociology in my undergraduate programme, I found the discipline particularly appealing for the way it allowed me to investigate social inequality in a multidimensional way. I have since come to recognize the enduring civil rights struggles of many groups, focusing my energy on the Government’s current\(^2\) complicity in the societal and political devaluation of LGBT individuals. Homophobia has been referred to as

\(^{1}\) Christian nationalism is defined by McDonald as the belief that there is or should be an important relationship between God and the nation or politics, specifically referring to those who wish to see a “government run by conservative Christians according to the time-tested verities of the Bible” (2010: 5).

\(^{2}\) I mean to refer to Canada specifically but also refer to the United States, as its history is somewhat similar. This statement can also be extended to the world—a rare opportunity to generalize—since the number of countries in the world that prohibit, outlaw, or refuse to legitimate LGBT groups exceeds those that affirm them.
the last acceptable prejudice³ and I am interested in the ways in which this prejudice perseveres and is sanctioned by the Canadian government.

Though Canada is among the few countries in the world that legally recognize same-sex marriage, it has yet to fully eradicate institutional and attitudinal forms of discrimination. Schools are particularly volatile environments for LGBT students; Barbara Smith referred to schools as “virtual cauldrons of homophobic sentiment” (1993: 101). This is why I felt that it was important to assess the ways that homophobia was being addressed in this environment. Simultaneously, I view schools and education as important sites for the instilment of values and tolerance in youth. Since I believe that hate is a learned behaviour I also believe in the capacity to teach and learn acceptance. Once my research into homophobia in education began, the cacophony over Ontario’s proposed sex education revisions presented a similar but richer opportunity for study.

There has been a great deal of research published on sex education debates in the US, but less so regarding Canadian debates. Most debates in the United States are concerned with whether abstinence-only sex education or comprehensive sex education⁴ should be adopted in schools, and this differs from the terms of the Canadian debates. Here, disputes over sex education typically refer to what content should be included in comprehensive sex education. Canadian debates, by comparison, are more progressive however this assessment often ignores the ways in which the culture wars are also present in Canada. As a result, less research has been done looking into the ways that Canadian sex education debates appear and play out. The influence of religious conservativism is thought to be quite meek in Canada when compared to the US, but this

³ This is phrase commonly referring to homophobia (Clinard and Meier 2008: 408) but ironically, this phrase has been most recently used to describe prejudice toward Catholics, such as Phillip Jenkins 2003 book titled The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice.
⁴ Comprehensive sex education usually refers to programs that emphasize abstinence but provide some information about contraception.
judgment should not be made so quickly. This research fills a gap in the literature by examining
the role of religious conservatives in Canada, the way they have recently come to influence sex
education debates and the ways in which moderate and liberal Canadians do not recognize the
rise in influence that the New Right is enjoying.

My investigation of the failure of the Province’s revised sex education curriculum will
begin with an overview of the debate surrounding the curriculum and some of the responses to it.
Chapter Two will reveal the ways that religious conservatives controlled the dialogue of the
debate in the press and, through the use of emotional rhetoric and by invoking the narrative of
child and adolescent asexuality, were able to garner support for the opposition to this curriculum
that did not align with Christian sexual morality. The chapter will also set up some of the history
of LGBT struggles and victories vis-à-vis schools and Canadian provincial laws drawing attention
to the ways that Ontario has recognized the need for formalized interventions regarding the real
danger that homophobia poses to students. Some theories of homophobia, the social construction
of sexuality and identities, and sexual morality will also be discussed. This chapter will introduce
the work of Kristin Luker (2006) and Janice Irvine (2002) who conducted studies on the
tumultuous debates over sex education that have plagued the United States over the past several
decades. My research leans heavily on their contributions to this field. The way that they connect
debates over sex education to broader social concerns and values, identifying the deeply rooted
ideological differences that undergird these conflicts was highly appropriate and applicable to
Canadian society. Chapter Two will also review my methodology: a discursive analysis of the
debates over the revisions, as well as an assessment and evaluation of the contents of the new
curriculum. I felt that this was the best way to capture the dynamics of the debate and how and
why this curriculum was rejected.
Chapter Three contains an historical exploration of the longstanding cultural anxiety surrounding child and adolescent sexual knowledge and the efforts that have been exerted in order to manage and protect childhood and adolescent innocence and ignorance. This history is an important component that contributed to the way that Ontarians received the revised curriculum and the ways in which this anxiety was accessed and harnessed by religious conservatives who opposed the new curriculum.

Currently in North American society, there is no shared cultural understanding of adolescent and child sexuality, thus a curriculum that would do justice to the sexual subjectivity of youth will be out of reach until this knowledge base is constructed. This chapter reviews and addresses the fact that child and adolescent sexuality is largely inconceivable in our society and thus the work of Gail Hawkes and Danielle Egan (2010) and Jen Gilbert (2007) is utilized in order to help construct a working theory of adolescent and child sexual subjectivity. I have attempted to collect and present social research and theories that will assist in formulating this cultural understanding and further defend the abandoned curriculum.

I will explore the ways in which the sexual experiences and sexual knowledge of today’s youth is similar to and differs from previous generations. Furthermore, I will discuss the ways in which the widespread adult reluctance to acknowledge sexual agency in children and adolescents is preventing youth from accessing valuable information that can benefit them from both a protectionist perspective and in the name of fostering holistic sexual health. I will present childhood and adolescence as socially constructed developmental categories and will define the popular conceptions of them as innocent and ignorant as socially constructed as well. Moreover, I will draw attention to the ways in which children and adolescents are seen as vessels for cultural
values and morals and how this parleys into the contentious debates over how they should be socialized.

I will make the case that children and adolescents should be thought of as sexual subjects with sexual agency, and the refusal of adults and educators to acknowledge youth as such is detrimental to their holistic sexual health. I argue that this failure to acknowledge sexual subjectivity and various sexual identities also serves to marginalize LGBT families and individuals who do not have the privilege of having their identities and experiences reflected in school curriculum.

Chapter Four will provide a detailed account of the history and short-lived existence of the revised curriculum, providing excerpts from the curriculum and cataloguing the responses to the revisions in the media and in the provincial Legislature.

In Chapter Five, I will apply the theoretical concepts outlined in Chapter Three, show the ways that the Originally Revised Curriculum (ORC) was misrepresented and sensationalized by religious conservatives and how this functioned to influence and contaminate public opinions regarding the document. This analysis will draw heavily from Irvine (2002) and will reveal that the tactics employed by the religious conservatives in order to generate consternation are by no means new and have characterized sex education debates in the United States for many years.

It is in this chapter that the work of Alexander McKay (1998), drawing from John Rawls’ influential work, *Political Liberalism* (1993), will be utilized in order to investigate the ways in which ideological pluralism can paralyze discussions and decisions about sex education and, at times, betray fundamental democratic principles. He illustrates one way that these disputes can be mediated by following the principles of political liberalism. McKay constructs a democratic philosophy of education that I will outline and endorse, with certain modifications.
Finally, I will present my conclusions, suggest topics for future research, and consider the implications of this debate for Ontario and Canadian politics and education policy.
Chapter 2

Theory and Methodology

Curriculum and Controversy

In January of 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education revised the Health and Physical Education (H&PE) curriculum for grades one through eight. This Originally Revised Curriculum (ORC) was made available online and was to be implemented in September 2010. The new curriculum addressed previously absent topics and lowered the age at which certain topics would be introduced. Among the controversial topics were sexual orientation, masturbation, gender identity, and oral and anal intercourse. Months passed without any notice or objections to the revisions until April, when Charles McVety, President of the Canada Family Action Coalition and President of Canada Christian College, discovered the contents of the new curriculum and immediately took the story to his colleagues and to the media. For several weeks, media reported on the contents of the curriculum, the back-and-forth finger pointing among politicians, the outrage and support of some parents and the damage that these new allegedly inappropriate topics would ‘inflict’ on ‘our’ youth.

Perhaps not too surprisingly, these topics became headline news and social and religious conservative groups began to strategically invoke emotional rhetoric, twisting the context of the curriculum and creating petitions in order to generate support for the effort to have the sex education component abandoned. Many parents were stirred by these sensationalized claims and Premier McGuinty and Education Minister Leona Dombrowsky found themselves constantly defending the curriculum that the Liberals had launched. They were being accused of sneakiness, government paternalism, deceit and conspiring to corrupt children. One of the most contentious
issues that arose was regarding the autonomy of Catholic schools in Ontario and whether, under freedom of belief, they would be permitted to exclude items in the curriculum that presented ideas contrary to Christian values. Catholic schools, under section 93 of the Constitution Act of 1867, have the right to pen and exercise discretion over the curriculum taught in their schools. In fact, this was demanded as a condition of Ontario and Quebec signing on to confederation. As for the ORC, it was initially stated by McGuinty that Catholic schools would not be permitted to censor the new curriculum if it were to be implemented, but later, McGuinty contradicted that initial assertion.

It was evident from their inconsistent responses that McGuinty and Dombrowsky did not coordinate a planned response to the attacks they encountered, nor did they demonstrate a united Liberal front—it became frustrating for Members of Parliament and Ontarians to hear about and read contradictory reports from the Premier and the Minister. They did not anticipate what was essentially an ideological war and thus were tremendously unprepared.

Ultimately, the agitation and outrage felt by some Ontarians, made starkly apparent by social and religious conservatives, resulted in the Premier and Liberals retreating and shelving the ORC. The more controversial elements of the revisions were stripped, and the Liberals announced that they would need to conduct more research and consult parents to a greater extent before attempting a similar initiative in the future. This was met with disappointment by academics and institutes such as the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN) and some parents. McGuinty and the Liberals were criticized for their willingness to cave to the opinions of a vocal minority of social and religious conservatives—a group that many believed did not reflect the attitudes and opinions of most Ontarians. The organization, mobilization and agitation coordinated by the Right were surprising and impressive, but by no
means new. The New Right in Canada has actively opposed various pieces of liberal legislation in
the past several decades, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage and the legalization of
abortion (Warner 2010; McDonald 2010). Nevertheless, the success of this movement produces
many questions about the future of education in the province and Canadian politics more
generally.

The debate that ensued over the ORC in April and May of 2010 reveals a great deal about
the moral, social, and cultural politics in Ontario and Canada. One could identify and analyze the
costs of miscommunication in politics, the role of the media and sensationalism in
communicating certain opinions to the public, the apparent mistrust of the provincial government
in producing curriculum, or activism more generally. Though these are all important and I will
touch on some of these observations, what is most important for my research is that the debate
centered on values and moral views about sexuality, and more importantly, about child and
adolescent sexual knowledge. Specifically, the moral outrage of religious social conservatives
succeeded in stopping what I would call essential, overdue, and relevant changes from being
made to portions of Ontario’s H&PE curriculum.

The school environment is one of the most important and influential sites in the
socialization of children. The role of the government in shaping what children learn and the ideas
to which they will be exposed is not always unproblematic for parents whose views may not align
with morals and values outlined by the state. The diverse opinions regarding the morality of
homosexuality is one of these contentious topics. What would it mean for Ontario if the
curriculum included discussions of sexual orientation in sex education? The government has

5 I use ‘sex education’ to refer to the parts of Ontario Health & Physical Education Curriculum
that deal with matters relating to sexuality such as sexual behaviours, reproduction, healthy
sexuality, intimate partner relationships and so on.
already acknowledged sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination in the Ontario Human Rights Code and lesbian and gay individuals have the right to marry in Canada. So why is the acknowledgement of sexual orientation within education garnering so much attention and opposition in Ontario? I intend to explore this in my research and provide some insight on how this resistance can be understood. It is my intention to gather research in order to produce a focused discursive analysis—a history of the present in a (Sedgwickian and) Foucauldian sense.

**Schools and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning Students**

Over the past 30 years, school boards across Canada gradually realized that homophobia in schools was reaching levels that could no longer be ignored by school administrators. For example, librarian Kenneth Zeller, a gay man, was murdered by a group of high school males who had been drinking in Toronto’s High Park in the summer of 1985. The group chased down and beat up Zeller, shouting ‘fucking faggot,’ ‘let’s beat up a fag’ and ‘let’s steal money from a queer’ (Lesk, Popert, and Taylor 1986: 13). What was most troubling about this incident was that the courts and the media did not acknowledge the homophobia that fueled this murder, but instead considered it to be a case about peer pressure and ‘male bonding over a case of beer’ (Lesk, Popert, and Taylor 1986: 13). However, the incident did inspire some change in Toronto. One initiative that developed as a result of Zeller’s death was the creation of Toronto’s Triangle Program: a separate, alternative high school for LGBTTIQ2S youth created by the (then) Toronto School Board. The launching of the Triangle Program was an important step in recognizing the violent potential of homophobic attitudes and that LGBT students were potentially at risk of physical and emotional abuse in their schools. However, the creation of this

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6 This is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transexual, Intersex, Questioning, 2-Spirited. I will abbreviate this to LGBT throughout this thesis or occasionally LGB since not all research or curricula include the latter identities at this time.
program did not do much beyond acknowledging that LGBT students were suffering as a result of widespread intolerance. Walton acutely sums this up, stating that “[a]s beneficial as it might be to the students, the separation of LGBT students from the Toronto student population does not challenge educators about homophobia in their schools, nor does it require respect for sexual diversity among other students” (2004: 7). The Triangle Program still exists as Canada’s only separate institution for the education of LGBT people.

Since the launch of the Triangle Program, other gains have been made for LGBT students in Canadian schools. More recently, there have been landmark judicial cases in Canada that have made it explicitly clear that schools are legally responsible for ensuring a safe school environment for all students and that they are accountable to victims of persistent bullying if adequate preventative measures are not taken. To cite one example, former high school student Azmi Jubran of North Vancouver won his case against the Surrey District School Board for failing to, protect him from repeated harassment, homophobic name calling, and threats of being dipped in acid. Jubran also experienced overt physical assault by other students that included being spit upon, kicked, punched, having his shirt lit on fire, his tent urinated on during a school field trip, and nails and grapes thrown at him (Schrader & Wells 2004: 3 in Goldstein, Collins, and Halder 2008: 50).

In their 2002 verdict, the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal concluded that the School Board had failed to fulfill its duty to provide the student with his constitutionally protected right to participate in an environment free from discrimination and harassment, and to address the underlying homophobia and heterosexism present in the school and in the actions of its students (School District No. 44 North Vancouver v. Jubran, 2005 BCCA 201).

This decision is particularly monumental for several reasons. Not only is there a precedent now for schools that must ensure a safe environment for LGBT students, free from homophobic harassment and abuse, but it is also an important case because Jubran identified as
heterosexual. The school board attempted to use Jubran’s heterosexuality in its defense, stating that the abuse Jubran withstood could not be homophobic since he was not in fact gay. But this did not change the ruling, effectively sending a powerful message to school boards across Canada that would now be required to acknowledge and protect LGBT students’ safety and rights as well as tackling school cultures that are characterized by harassment and bullying that is rooted in homophobia.

In the late 1990s and 2000s, Canadian schools began including equity and anti-bullying policies that explicitly ensured the protection of LGBT students, however there is very little, if any, mention of LGBT lives in the core curriculum. This fact points to residual inequalities that have yet to be acknowledged. Schools may be attempting to ensure that LGBT students will survive their duration in schools, but are not necessarily helping them to thrive (Wells 2009).

Theories of Gender and Sexuality

I will begin by describing how I define and perceive the main issues I am researching. It is important to be clear in conceptualizing homophobia. The term comes from psychology and refers to a type of individual anxiety rooted in the fear and hatred of homosexuals. The term was originally coined by Weinberg (1973) but many social theorists and researchers, myself included⁷, have departed from the original definition since it is overly individualistic and ignores social and structural inequalities that condition and perpetuate intolerance (Adam 1998). Homophobia is a product of certain social attitudes that devalue non-heterosexual expressions of desire and attraction, and results in discrimination, including verbal and physical abuse. Homophobia flourishes in society through the discursive manifestation of homosexuals as deviant

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⁷ In order to distance myself from traditional definitions of homophobia rooted in psychology I had planned to use the term ‘homonegativity’ since it does not have a clinical association. Since this is not a widely used term, I decided against it.
and polluted, a category that serves to promote heterosexuality as clean and natural (Seidman 2001). This discourse of non-heterosexuality as deviant is the basis of my project, as one of the main points of contention in the proposed revisions to sex education curriculum in Ontario was the inclusion of discussions of sexual orientation.

The Triangle Model provides a framework for understanding the nature of homophobia in education and it is useful in the way that it can provide guidance on how to combat and deconstruct homophobia. Created by Tim McCaskell, it divides the experiences of homophobia into three categories: institutional/systemic experiences; individual experiences; and common ideas (2005: 245). Any successful anti-homophobia initiatives should address all three components of the triangle. I will argue that, by reneging on the ORC, which would have introduced sexual orientation into the mainstream curriculum effectively targeting systemic and institutional homophobia, the Province is not taking sufficient measures to disarm homophobia in Ontario schools.

Though anti-homophobia initiatives in Ontario are important, there is more to understanding homophobia than speaking about or encouraging tolerance of others. Homophobia is about sexuality, but also includes ideas about gender roles and misogyny. Heterosexism, the ubiquitously reinforced ideology that holds that heterosexuality is the preferred and only sexual orientation, must be discussed alongside homophobia since the former is predicated on the latter (Khayatt 2006).

Sexuality when understood sociologically does not have an essential nature. The definitions, interpretations and constructions of deviant forms of sexuality are all dependent on a particular historical moment and our culture at this moment in time is limited by the view that

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8 This is not referring to the Toronto Triangle School, but rather a separate theory of homophobia.
there are appropriate and correct embodiments and forms of gender and sexual expression. Foucault and other social theorists have demonstrated this repeatedly (Foucault 1990; Halperin 1993; Butler 1990). David Halperin sheds light on sexuality in Ancient Greece as an example of the ways in which the meanings associated with various forms of sexual expression are dependent on time and place. In stating that “the social body precedes the sexual body”, he reveals that the ways that we interpret and define our sexuality will always be defined by our historical situatedness (Halperin 1993: 420).

Halperin understands gender and sexuality as social and historical constructions. His research is quite convincing and eye-opening, but I depart from him theoretically after a certain point. He is a social constructionist or historicist, and believes that the sexual identities we come to create and embody through interacting with society are ‘real’ and have an essence, though they are socially constructed. He believes that sexual identities reflect something profound within individuals, but that identities vary based on historical and cultural contexts. Moreover, there are other theorists working from a postmodern approach to gender as performative like Judith Butler and Jeffrey Weeks, who take the social construction of sexuality to a new level. Unlike Halperin, they believe that the identities that are constructed through contextually and historically specific moments are illusory categories themselves and only obtain and garner coherence and ‘realness’ through endless cultural mimicry and repetition. Butler argues that there is no biological determination of gender; it is a copy for which there is no ‘natural’ original. Instead, our ideas about acceptable representations of gender and sexuality are culturally and socially defined by dominant discourses.

Dominant society recognizes and validates only certain forms of gender presentation or identities. These forms are reinforced in university, schools, workplaces, the media and so on.
Gender nonconformity is policed or disciplined by society in the form of threatened or inflicted physical abuse, verbal abuse, discrimination, or exclusionary social behaviours and is often interpreted as a sign of homosexuality. This is important to understand in school contexts since homophobic bullying, though damaging to LGBT students, need not involve people who identify as LGBT. As previously mentioned, the abuse targeting Azmi Jubran was based on his peers’ perceiving him as gay or accusing him of being gay.

The policing of gender and appropriate sexuality affects non-gay and lesbian students who are harassed for nonconforming gender presentations. This is most explicit among male groups (though also present among women and girls), where traditionally unmasculine behaviour may be met with accusations and insults implying homosexuality or femininity—both of which are considered undesirable. This is seen in the popular use of the word ‘fag’ in male circles that functions to police masculinity. Pascoe conducted research on young boys’ interactions and the fag discourse that permeated those relationships, noting:

Fag talk and fag imitations serve as a discourse with which boys discipline themselves and each other through joking relationships. Any boy can temporarily become a fag in a given social space or interaction [...] becoming a fag has as much to do with failing at the masculine tasks of competence, heterosexual prowess and strength or an [sic] anyway revealing weakness or femininity, as it does with a sexual identity. (2005: 330)

Individuals are policed in order to ensure they align appropriately with heteronormative cultural assumptions. This has implications for how anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism should be taught and addressed in schools.

One way that the social construction of sexuality is made apparent is through the investigation of religious positions on sex roles for men and women. The idea that gender and sexual identities are not fixed opposes a conservative religious perspective on appropriate roles for men and women. In Christianity, for example, the Bible lays out specific rules for men and
women, and religious conservatives want to see these teachings and ideals reflected in education and policy (McDonald 2010; Warner 2010; Irvine 2002; Luker 2006). Some of these ideas include the belief that women are to be domestic caregivers in families that they were specifically designed to support men. The book of Genesis 2 writes that woman was created in order to be a helper of man (2 Genesis 19-23: New International Version). In Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve have disobeyed God by eating the fruit from the “tree of knowledge”, He explains to them that woman will experience suffering through childbirth as a punishment for her indiscretions and that her husband will rule over her (3 Genesis: 12-16). Runkel (1998) notes that the hierarchy of God-Christ-Man-Woman is made clear in the New Testament of the Bible, which he quotes and analyzes:

“But what I want you to understand is that Christ is Supreme over every man, the husband is supreme over his wife, and God is supreme over Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:3). If a woman wants to learn anything she is supposed to ask her husband […] Even today this subordination of women to men is maintained; within Catholicism, for example, the man is allegedly the head of the woman who is subject to him (1998: 113).

Though these restrictions on gender roles have relaxed to an extent, the religious right is still concerned with maintaining traditional gender and sexual boundaries, and feminist and queer identities are not congruent with these traditional values. Even though the interpretation of these fixed gender codes have varied over the past few centuries, many Christians still defend the prescriptions in the Bible as universal and timeless.

The argument that gender and sexuality are socially and historically constructed is important for this study because it destabilizes the claims that posit morality and norms as steady across time and space. This weakens the claims of those who argue that homosexuality and LGBT individuals are not to be considered equal to heterosexuals.
Irvine’s research has led her to the conclusion that gender norms need to be and are policed by the Right because this is an attempt to control sexuality—it is believed that altered gender norms can lead to homosexuality (2002: 174), which, according to some interpretations of the Bible, is an undesirable and sinful identity or behaviour. Butler’s matrix of intelligibility highlights this belief in society, which insists on the need for coherence among sex, gender, sexual practice and desire and that these categories should align and produce heterosexual subjects (1990). The concern over maintaining appropriate gender roles has been a recurring theme in Western history over the past 100 years. For example, when women fought for and won the right to vote and eventually began working outside the home there were widespread concerns about how these events would disrupt traditional gender roles and jeopardize the conventional middleclass family. This is worth noting, since one of the chief grievances among outspoken members of the religious Right was the inclusion of gender identity in the curriculum.

The use of Butler in defining gender and heteronormativity can help frame these issues theoretically and to understand how oppression and privilege operate in tandem, but it is important to note that these ‘illusory’ categories of gender presentation and socially constructed sexuality have real material consequences for individuals that, for the sake of rights and social justice, cannot be ignored.

Though I argue that these attitudes, such as homophobia and sexual orientation, sexual expression, and gender are socially and discursively constructed, the material consequences of

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9 Some Christian denominations look to the books of Genesis 18 and 19 in the Bible, among other passages, when the Lord destroys the towns Sodom and Gomorrah for their sinful lifestyle to indicate that God sees homosexual acts as immoral. The interpretations of these passages vary (www.religioustolerance.org/hom.bibl.htm).
10 This is referring to a specific class of women who were educated as opposed to working class women who needed to work outside of the home in order to support their families.
11 This is usually thought to be a heterosexual, white, upper middle-class family with children that are biologically related to the parents.
these attitudes are real in their effects and consequences. The experiences of LGBT students who are bullied with sometimes tragic consequences such as suicide, are material experiences that are very serious and potentially life threatening. The power of these attitudes is most disturbingly reflected in the research conducted with LGBT youth that reveals their heightened vulnerability. A recent study by Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig (2009) of 7,376 grade seven and eight students in the American Midwest revealed that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning students, when compared to their heterosexual peers, were more likely to report higher levels of bullying, homophobic victimization, and increased negative health outcomes. Questioning students were also more likely to report higher levels of truancy, suicide ideation, drug use, and bullying when compared to lesbian, gay, and heterosexual youth. Research from British Columbia suggests that lesbian and bisexual teen girls are nearly five times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual girls (Saewyc et al.: 2007). Other researchers at The Suicide Prevention Resource Centre (2008) in the United States reported that sexual minority youth are 1.5 to 7 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (Wells 2009). Moreover, negative or unsupportive environments were found to be associated with significantly higher rates of attempted suicide among lesbian, gay and bisexual youth (Hatzenbuehler 2011). The material impacts of discursive constructs such as gender and sexuality present an important reason to change the ways certain identities in society are devalued and marginalized.

Though the postmodern perspective of sexuality and gender that I adopt here asserts the performative character of various identities, my research would be severely limited if I were to abandon efforts at changing curriculum to include gender and sexual diversity in its pages. Without the unification and political mobilization of groups centered on sexual, gender, or ethnic identities, very little progress would have been achieved in the way of civil rights and women’s
rights in North America. Thus, the work of Jeffrey Weeks is of great importance to my research and ultimate recommendations for better sex education in Ontario. Weeks, like Butler, believes that sexual identities are not biologically determined, however he calls them ‘necessary fictions’. Though fictional, they are nevertheless important because they cause trouble on a social and structural level and are pivotal in political mobilization (Weeks 2007). He writes that non-conforming sexual identities “multiply points of resistance and challenge, and expand the potentialities for change. Identities, particularly those identities which challenge the imposing edifice of Nature, History, Truth, are resources for realizing human diversity” (ibid: 51). I believe that recognizing sexual identities as necessary fictions is the only way that I can make recommendations for a new H&PE curriculum in Ontario. If educators and adults recognized this theory then it would assist in destabilizing those oppressive beliefs that claim that certain sexual bodies and behaviours are illegitimate. There would be greater levels of acceptance of different sexual and gender identities in schools.

**Beyond Curriculum: Power, Knowledge, and Sexuality**

In her research on the debates over sex education in the US, Kristin Luker demonstrates that “fights about sex are also fights about gender, about power and trust and hierarchy, about human nature and, not surprisingly, about what sex really is and what it means in human life” (Luker 2006: 7). Irvine makes a similar contention, stating that “[t]he discursive politics of sex education are contests over the meanings and emotional culture of sexuality” (2002: 142). These debates are about defending and preserving ideas about big-picture issues like the social formation of gender and the perpetual struggle between social and individual rights in a democratic society. These struggles play out prominently in education because it is an arena in which parents and the state are both recognized as legitimate authorities; the push-pull between
them can be tumultuous. Sex education debates reveal the negotiations of politicians who balance their ideological commitments with the laws of the nation as well as their desires to be reelected by their constituents. The debates are also about parental authority over children and adolescents, and the ways that knowledge transmission can undermine this hierarchical relationship. One of the most reiterated concerns among opponents to the ORC was regarding the corrupting effects of adolescent and child sexual knowledge.

In the debate over the ORC, what was voiced was a profound concern over allowing children and adolescents to receive information that was argued by some to only be suitable for adults. Sexual knowledge has long been associated with moral corruption and this is largely due to the Judeo-Christian tradition that associates sexuality with sin and guilt. Sexual intercourse was limited at one point because it was thought to interfere with a person’s ability to celebrate sacred services, and resulted in a demand for celibacy and the reduction of sexuality to reproduction (Runkel 1998). From this decree, homosexuality and masturbation, both being non-procreative sexual expressions were condemned. Thus the inclusion of topics and discussions of sexual orientation, anal and oral sex and masturbation in the ORC in a manner that did not condemn these practices contradicted some Christian teachings. This can account for some of the uproar on the part of religious conservative groups.

What is vital to understand is that the success of the religious conservative opposition to the ORC was partially rooted in their ability to secularize moral and religiously based claims that denounced the content of the ORC. The religious grounding of the expressed convictions against the ORC were rarely showcased or invoked among the opponents from the religious right. Instead, they presented their distaste in a manner that touted more general grievances to do with moral corruption and gross irresponsibility on the part of the government for producing these
curriculum revisions. More to the point, these groups did not want children and adolescents learning about things that the Church vehemently opposed. I will argue that many if not most adolescents already have general ideas about the topics that were removed from the curriculum, some of which are incorrect and laced with homophobia and sexism. This will be discussed in the chapters ahead.

Post-structuralist theorists, such as Eve Sedgwick, are concerned with problematizing fixed conceptual binaries and dichotomies that tend to structure the way we perceive relationships, identities, and other phenomena (1990). I have taken this view and applied it in the ways I wish to problematize ideas about sexuality, gender, and education. I take a post-structuralist approach in analyzing these societal tendencies and argue against the traditional portrayal of adults as complete, knowing subjects and instead, I wish to reveal the false binary that positions adults as knowledgeable and children as ignorant and innocent. Taking a cue from Sedgwick, I believe that this false binary elevates the knowledge and expertise of adults above that of children and adolescents and perpetuates the myth that they are ignorant and incapable of understanding topics concerning sexuality.

Some research has shown the extent to which children and adolescents are knowledgeable about sexuality, and draws attention to the fact that they are not as ignorant about sexual topics as adults often like to think. Emma Renold (2005) demonstrated this in her ethnographic research on nine to ten year old British children who revealed surprising details about their personal lives and the courting culture in which they lived. This was accomplished through numerous in-depth group interviews conducted over a one-year time span. Her findings, which will be discussed in the following chapter, revealed the ways that children actively subverted adult supervision in order to conceal their sexual knowledge and deliberately hid their
dating relationships from adults. This evidence supports the assertion based on my post-structuralist approach to sexual knowledge that the binary oppositions between adults as ‘knowers’ or keepers of sexual knowledge and children as innocents and ignorant of sexual knowledge is a false one and serves chiefly adults. It also shows the ways that children exercise agency in their lives as sexual beings—a phenomenon that is ignored or actively and perpetually discouraged by adults. The concept of the Agentic Child developed by Gail Hawkes and Danielle Egan (2010) is important to consider in conjunction with the work of Renold and these concepts will be elaborated upon in Chapter Three.

Parents and adults wish to keep certain knowledge from children in the name of certain morals and to retain unchallenged authority. The policing of this boundary can be found throughout the politics of sex education. It is found in the media-documented reactions of parents, in the cautious approach of the Ontario Ministry of Education in scripting the sex education curriculum, in documents produced by the Toronto District School Board which contain ‘frequently asked questions’ pages for parents who are concerned, for example, about whether their children will be exposed to certain sex education intended for older grades if their children are in a split class, and in the ability of parents to withdraw their children from units containing discussions of sexuality.

This approach to knowledge guarding does not account for all parent-child relationships or family practices. Luker summarizes this well when she outlined liberal and conservative sexual ideologies. Her research, which is based on interviews with parents across the United States, led her to the conclusion that, generally, those she identified as sexual liberals wanted their children exposed to as much information as possible in order to make the right decisions. Conversely, those she labeled sexual conservatives believed that the more that children are exposed to
information the more confused they become. They are tainted, not informed (2006: 194-195). She expands on this idea, stating that,

[i]nformation plays such very different roles in the lives of people on two sides of this conflict because they look at the world through very different lenses […] For sexual conservatives, morality is a clear code of rules that they think is true across time and across distance; what they claim was moral 2 millennia ago is still moral today. For liberals, in contrast, morality is based on a set of principles that must be adapted to the changing contours in modern life (Luker 2006: 136).

The different beliefs regarding what knowledge children should be exposed to are foundational elements of the Ontario debate. It was such a powerful point of disagreement that it contributed to the shelving of the sex education component of the ORC.

The initiative to adapt notions of ‘morality’ or sexuality to reflect changing attitudes in modern life is precisely what the curriculum revisions aimed to accomplish. In defending the curriculum, McGuinty stated that one of the reasons for revising the curriculum was because the world had changed quite a bit since it was last revised in 1998 and that the curriculum should be more in line with the times. In the introduction to the curriculum, one heading reads “Elementary Schools for the 21st Century” and makes reference to the importance of including information that is “relevant” as well as “age-appropriate” (Ontario Curriculum grades 1-8: Health & Physical Education [Revised] 2010: 3). However, there has proven to be little consensus on what constitutes relevant and age-appropriate material and these sentiments situate McGuinty and his advisors with having a distinctly liberal sexual ideology. Based on what has been revealed about the philosophical orientations of liberals and conservatives regarding sexuality and sexual knowledge, it would appear then, that the Government’s efforts to revise sex education curriculum were rooted in liberal values. It is no wonder that social-sexual conservatives found these morally ‘relativistic’ evaluations to be problematic.
Sexual Ideologies and Hopes for Mediation

Ideas about sexuality and the cultural acceptability of sexual practices are always changing in time and space. There are prominent opposing ideologies that merit labeling, and I have chosen to follow Alexander McKay’s terms Restrictive Sexual Ideology (RSI) and Permissive Sexual Ideology (PSI) in order to help make sense of the groups of citizens who supported and opposed the sex education revisions (1998).

The RSI is rooted in early Christianity with its biblically oriented restrictive and moralistic perception of human sexuality (McKay 1998: 39). Sexual intercourse was seen to be solely for procreation, but the invention and proliferation of birth control resulted in lost support for the RSI. The RSI is supported by the New Right, which is defined as “a loose coalition of political, religious, and single-issue, pro-life and pro-family groups which combine grassroots mobilization with professional lobbying” (Seidman 1992: 40 in McKay 1998: 45). Generally speaking, the New Right has sought to “strengthen ‘family values’ by advocating sexual ethics aimed at restoring the supremacy of the patriarchal nuclear family. This involved strenuous opposition to abortion, pornography, the feminist movement, homosexual rights, and premarital sex” (McKay 1998: 45). In her discursive analysis of US sex education debates over the past 40 years, Irvine found that the rise of the right and right-interest groups was vital to attaining their many victories, since a host of religious denominations agree on traditional values such as marriage, monogamy, and the primacy of procreative (hetero)sexual intercourse, creating strong cohesion on this front (Irvine 2002: 65). This is one of the reasons that the opposition to the new curriculum was so vociferous on the part of certain groups, and thus influential. According to McKay, proponents within the RSI believe that morality is clear-cut across time and vices can be controlled through rules and discipline and by investing in important institutions such as the so-called traditional

The PSI holds that the Absolutist tradition of the RSI needs to be replaced by “act-centered evaluations of sexual conduct with methods of moral evaluation that emphasize individual differences in desire and person-centered relational concerns such as mutual consent, pleasure, and respect” (ibid 1998: 52). It is characterized by individual moral deliberation instead of a rigid set of unchanging rules.

Sex education is an attempt to socialize children with the mores and norms of a culture (McKay 1998; Apple 2004), but hostility and conflict emerge over divergent mores and norms. Debates rooted in ideologies have little to no chance of being resolved and McKay argues that these battles are essentially moot. He states,

Because ideologies are social constructions with highly variable conceptions of reality, a contest between sexual ideologies—a testing of their respective validity—is a fight between combatants who are often competing on different conceptual playing fields […] When we present arguments that are outside his or her ideological belief system, we are unlikely to change his or her mind. It is tantamount to asking them to transform their perception of reality (1998: 36-37).

Ideologies define reality, not vice versa (ibid), and this undermines efforts of compromise and mutual understanding on issues such as sex education. Rawls’ theory of political liberalism is one attempt at mediating these irresolvable ideological battles (1993). I will address these theories in Chapter Five.

I am aware of the fact that it is an oversimplification to group competing ideologies into two categories, particularly considering the post-structuralist view of sexuality and knowledge that I adopt here that seeks to disrupt and challenge binaries. The most common generalization and falsehood that I would like to acknowledge is the notion that all religious individuals
subscribe to an RSI. Luker drew attention to this assumption in her research and described her findings:

Categorizing the opposition to comprehensive sex education as merely “religious” in nature suggests that the religion is encouraging individuals to oppose sex education and what modern sex education has come to stand for. But for many people I spoke with, the relationship ran the other way. It was opposition to sex education (and, more broadly, support of family values) that led them either to become active in the conservative church in which they were raised or to seek out a new conservative church whose support of family values reinforced their commitment to these values (2006: 148).

Not all religious people can be considered to be members of the New Right. However, there appears to be a conservative culture regarding sexuality that resonates with some who may seek it out since it reinforces religious conservativism and fundamentalism. Increasingly, these groups are agitating for social change and the more passionate one is about their identities or group memberships, both political and religious, the more inclined they will be to defend the values of these groups. When several treasured identities overlap in their core values, the activism generated from these affiliations can provoke impressive political mobilization and, potentially, social change.

One of the criticisms that emerged in the debate over the ORC was that the government did not consult properly or widely enough with the public prior to the creation of the curriculum. If controversy is to be avoided and if any policies or curricula that address sexuality are to be put forth, the various ideological positions of groups of Canadians must be understood by the Government. A society characterized by ideological pluralism must be particularly sensitive to these issues and one theory that can provide insight regarding how to navigate this terrain is the theory of political liberalism as it is outlined by John Rawls (1993). I will be engaging with liberalism as it relates to education policy relying on the work of Alexander McKay (1998), who developed a democratic theory of education based on Rawls’ conceptualization of political
liberalism. These texts are indispensable in negotiating the seemingly incompatible constitutional principles of equality and freedom of belief as they relate to the current debate between religious freedom and the rights of sexual minorities. I rely on Rawls with reservations because of the many compelling critiques of political liberalism that I will outline in Chapter Five. I am aware of the limitations of this theory but given the nature of debates over sex education, which appears to be composed of incommensurable ideologies, the theory is useful in the way that it provides one preliminary path to mediation. Briefly, political liberalism, as it is understood by McKay after Rawls (1993), is characterized by the effort to adequately make decisions in a democratic society that, when considering reasonable ideological pluralism in Western Culture, are fair in the least obtrusive or offensive manifestation possible for all parties considered. The law is not concerned with what is defined as moral or immoral in society, but rather it is expected to ensure that no ideology enforces its values on others through the law or unduly restricts other reasonably held ideologies. Not all parties need to be satisfied with decisions made by the law. I will be applying this theory of political liberalism, in a similar fashion to McKay, to assess the debate over the ORC in Ontario, highlighting the strengths of this framework that is designed to mediate ideological pluralism and will also discuss its weaknesses.

Though the principles of political liberalism as employed by McKay are at times incompatible with feminist and queer theoretical perspectives, I will attempt to bring these camps together, with some modifications, in forming recommendations for Ontario’s H&PE curriculum, elucidating why the ORC failed, and the ways in which the principles of democracy were flouted by the Government of Ontario. These theories are important in an age characterized by unprecedented ideological pluralism as well as a time marked by the dire need to protect and represent sexual minorities.
Methodology

My methodological approach entails a discursive analysis of the debate over the ORC that occurred in Ontario between April and May of 2010. I will be using this debate as a vehicle for investigating a longstanding cultural anxiety regarding child and adolescent sexuality and the ways in which members of the religious right in Ontario were able to utilize this longstanding cultural anxiety, through various techniques and means, in order to mobilize oppositional support and influence education policy.

I will conduct secondary analysis of research on sex education and the debates that this subject elicits, both within Canada and from abroad. I will also look at Canadian law and the Ontario Human Rights Code in order to understand the position of the provincial and federal governments regarding the negotiation of denominational freedom and respecting diversity in Canada. I will be referring to these in order to emphasize the rights of LGBT individuals in Ontario and Canada and the way these rights have been compromised by the shelving of the ORC.

My examination of the political and cultural climate in Ontario is a discursive analysis according to the principles of social construction\textsuperscript{12} of sexuality, particularly adolescent and child sexuality as well as the policing and guarding of sexual knowledge. This was the best way to capture the nature of the debate and the vast web of personalities, organizations, ideologies and values that influenced the public controversy in the spring of 2010. Among my sources for this component of my research are newspaper articles, editorials, websites, TV news broadcasts, documents from the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council, and special interest TV programming.

\textsuperscript{12} I mean social construction within the theoretical perspective of post-structuralism as I previously outlined.
My discursive analysis includes reviewing transcripts from debates of the ORC, retrieved from Hansard, in the Ontario Legislature between April and May of 2010. The questions and concerns that were repeatedly voiced by members of parliament revealed recurring themes, such as the mistrust and rejection of expert knowledge in place of parental and familial education, as well as reactions of disbelief and protectionism when adults were prompted to consider children as sexual beings. The tension and unrest that was a backdrop during the debates and during oral questions can be grasped from reading these transcripts.

I will also be drawing examples from Canadian history in order to illustrate past instances of sex education implementation, the policing of sexual knowledge and the patterns of activism and liberal/conservative struggles over human rights legislation. The legal recognition of several minority rights will also be highlighted. The organization of various activist organizations in Canada (and the U.S.) is imperative for understanding the political causes that these groups take on today and the issues they choose to address. These groups, such as the Institute for Canadian Values, become particularly important when considering the social and religious affiliations of politicians. The excavation of the relationships and social networks of politicians and activist group leaders is another important component of my research that will shed light on the dynamics of the debate over the ORC and its fate.

I have chosen to study curriculum because it can be analyzed as a reflection of contemporary Canadian societal values. Curriculum and schools do not exist in and of themselves but rather humans, influenced by personal and collective value commitments, have created them with certain intentions. Furthermore, the general population does not inform curriculum, but rather a certain social strata does; a strata that has certain educational and class backgrounds shapes the education system (Apple 2004). Curriculum is a ‘social fact’ or can be viewed as an
historical artifact in an anthropological sense; it is created by people, changed, and expanded over time and tied to historical-cultural contexts. It can be looked at as a reflection of a collective conscience and it can provide insight into the things dominant members of society value and do not value. What is taught and what is not taught in schools has meaning; what is not included in curriculum serves to educate students in certain ways since information that is omitted from classrooms is perceived to be unimportant, irrelevant, or devalued. In other words, students are learning about what is valued and important in society based on the discretion of policy makers, educators, and dominant groups in society.

Curriculum is changed and expanded over time in order to reflect changing times, politics, and values. This is one of the reasons that H&PE curriculum was being revised in the first place; Canadian society has changed since the last revision in 1998. Since 1998, same-sex marriage has been legalized, the Internet is ubiquitous and is accessible to many Canadians and the Ontario Human Rights Code contains sexual orientation as prohibited grounds for discrimination. The ORC would have accounted for some of these changes but instead students in Ontario are receiving education that is inconsistent with some of these cultural and societal changes. I will delineate why the current curriculum is deficient considering this lapse, and how it can be brought in line with contemporary laws and culture, and improve the holistic sexual health of all Ontario youth.

Battles over curriculum provide a rich resource for understanding opposing cultural values and passions. There are constant battles in education over what knowledge and whose knowledge should be considered worthwhile (Apple 2004). More specifically, there are disagreements about the existence of sex education in schools, but it is more precisely about what sex education should include and exclude, and what the role and goals of sex education should be.
These disagreements highlight ideological divisions in society. Different groups (social and religious conservatives and liberals) want social policy to reflect and affirm their values (Luker 2006; McKay 1998; Irvine 2002; Apple 2004; Apple 2006). Now more than ever before, Canada’s population is composed of many different cultural and religious groups that hold different views about gender and sexuality and are striving for these views to be reflected in government and policy. McKay observes that,

the mere existence of one meaning system in the public sphere is perceived as a threat to the way of life based on another meaning system. The clash between the traditional Christian and contemporary secular moral perspectives on sexuality as they pertain to sex and gender roles and homosexuality illustrates why these seemingly mutually exclusive meaning systems have been unable to peacefully co-exist (1998: 22).

These are certainly trying times and debates over sex education are only one manifestation of the ideological diversity that has come to define this nation.

Curriculum can be seen as having multiple purposes and sources, only one of which is to educate students. It can be thought of as a government sanctioned interpretation of important knowledge that is worthy of imparting on youth and as an archive of cultural values. In analyzing the dynamics of this debate, values and opinions of different groups of Canadians were made apparent. The deliberate exclusion of information about sexuality, ranging from masturbation, sexual orientation, sex, and gender identity communicates that these topics are considered taboo. The way that students are addressed in curriculum also influences what messages children and adolescents receive. Whether students are addressed directly or indirectly, if they are addressed in the present tense or as future sexual subjects will also impact the way they conceptualize issues and topics.

The way knowledge is presented in education conveys meaning. For example, Macgillivray and Jennings found that the ways LGB information was presented in education
textbooks had the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes, for example discussing LGB people alongside topics like AIDS, ‘at-risk’ youth, and youth issues (2008). Only discussing sexual orientation in the context of anti-bullying and ignoring the topic when discussing sex and different family formations accomplishes a similar disservice to LGBT youth and families.

Curriculum is constructed very carefully and deliberately in order to communicate societal values and knowledge that has been deemed appropriate and/or mandatory for youth. However, school environments and classrooms also contain what has been referred to as “hidden curriculum” (Walton 2004; Apple 2004). Hidden curriculum is a term used in the field of education to describe the extra-curricular cultural and social codes or lessons that are communicated to students by teachers, administration, curriculum, the school environment, and peer interactions and these codes function to prescribe acceptable and unacceptable social behaviours and identities. Research reveals that ideas and messages transmitted through hidden curriculum can counteract actual curriculum goals. More specifically, what ends up being communicated through the hidden curriculum can work against maintaining and creating a safe, inclusive environment for LGBT students. This is another important phenomenon that I will be discussing while painting a picture of Ontario schools and why the ORC was desperately needed.

One of the most invisible and ubiquitous lessons communicated through the hidden curriculum is heteronormativity. It has been said that sexuality is ‘everywhere and nowhere’ in school (Redman 1994 in Forrest 2006: 129). The presence of a hidden curriculum is important to address because the experience of exclusion, alienation and ostracism generated by heteronormative school environments creates a strong argument for the explicit inclusion of various topics in school curriculum. Children learn during lessons but also when teachers are not
explicitly aiming to teach, and this needs to be understood if teachers are to acknowledge and dismantle prejudices, heteronormativity and homophobia.

An example of hidden curriculum can be seen in a study conducted in Nova Scotia, where researchers interviewed students about their perceptions of sex education classes. Langille et al. found that some teachers would treat sex education classes very lightly making jokes throughout the class, avoiding questions and approaching the subject with the attitude that the students were too young for the information being discussed (Langille et al. 2001). This attitude was transmitted to students, who did not take the material or lessons seriously. The efficacy of any sex education curriculum is heavily dependent on the approach of teachers and the climate they choose to foster in the classroom.

As much as school-based sex education attempts to curtail adolescent sexual behaviour, it is “also invested in producing a specific kind of sexual teen” with a distinct heterosexist bias (Bay-Cheng 2003: 66). Sex education curriculum can be analyzed for the ways in which it constructs normative sexuality and thus defines abnormal and deviant sexualities. The ability to define acceptable identities through scripting knowledge (curriculum) affords enormous power to policymakers and educators (Apple 2004). This is another reason why the ORC was so controversial, since some viewed it as an attempt to socialize children in a new way that was not acceptable. The perceived malleability and vulnerability of children will be addressed in the following chapter.

The goals of sex education are said to be to promote the holistic sexual health of youth. In the words of the ORC, the

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13 This argument reflects the belief that one role of education is to instill moral values in youth and not everyone agrees with this view. McKay (1998) is among those who question this function. This will be expanded upon in Chapter Five.
[...] knowledge and skills acquired in health education and physical education form an integrated whole that relates to the everyday experiences of students and provides them with the physical literacy and health literacy they need to lead health, active lives (Ontario Curriculum grades 1-8: Health & Physical Education [Revised] 2010: 4).

I believe that this is the goal of liberals, conservatives, politicians and citizens of Ontario; that students and youth should be equipped to lead healthy lives in the fullest way possible. Though what is encompassed under this definition and what it takes to achieve this end is what causes such acrimonious debate.

In the coming chapter, I will be discussing theories of adolescent and child sexuality and highlighting the historical tradition that posits children and adolescents as fundamentally asexual, innocent, and ignorant of sexual knowledge. This will culminate in an argument that presents reasons why children should be viewed as sexual beings, and will begin to demonstrate the need for a curriculum such as the ORC in this province.
Chapter 3

Teaching Adolescent Sexuality

“It is the construction of childhood as a time of innocence, and specifically sexual innocence as the ultimate signifier of childhood...because much of the neglect surrounding children’s sexualities stems from a historical (and current) preoccupation with the conceptualization of children and childhood as innocent and innocence” (Renold 2005: 19).

In this chapter, I will outline historical and contemporary theories and discourses of child and adolescent a/sexuality that are important for understanding the context of the debate over the Originally Revised Curriculum (ORC) and its outcome. I will review the contemporary societal assumptions regarding child and adolescent asexuality and discuss the ways these assumptions were connected to the generation and mobilization of support for groups opposing the implementation of the ORC. I will demonstrate how these understandings of children informed the debate over the ORC, culminating with the Ontario government withdrawing the proposed changes. Citing research on youth cultures and data about youth media consumption I will argue that children and adolescents are sexual beings and should be regarded as such by our society’s citizens and institutions, and most importantly, within education. It became evident in the debate over the ORC that Ontarians lack a way of articulating a theory of adolescent and child sexuality. For this reason I have combined the theories of Butler (2004), Hawkes and Egan (2010), and Gilbert (2007) in order to begin to move toward a public understanding of adolescent and child sexual subjectivity, with a particular focus on the theory of the Agentic Child.

Towards a Curriculum of Adolescent Sexuality

It is vital for us as individuals who are responsible for socializing youth to uncouple fear, anxiety and stigma from meaningful discussions of child and adolescent sexuality. Adults, parents, and educators condone and encourage the teaching of history and war, subjects that can
be violent, disturbing and gruesome; even religious narratives can be horrific and violent (such as the crucifixion of the Judeo-Christian figure, Jesus Christ). However, it has been decided through powerful and dynamic discursive forces that children and adolescents are too immature for the reception of sexual knowledge.

When theorizing about sexuality and child and adolescent sexuality, it is instructive to turn to the theoretical contributions of Michel Foucault. Foucault began the discussion and critique that brought the cultural management of child sexuality into the academic forum (Foucault 1990). Foucault wrote about the discursive emergence of sexuality, the management of the sexual body in modernity and the ways in which the sexual body and certain sexual bodies in particular (such as children’s) were and are discursively constructed as deviant. Children’s bodies were among those that were subjected to intense surveillance, discipline and management. This marked the emergence of an age characterized by power exerted in, over, and through the (sexual) body, or what he called biopower (Foucault 1990). He argues that various fields of knowledge interact and compete to produce what gets perceived as static, robust cultural conceptualizations of sexuality and these maps define, validate, discredit, and discipline certain sexualities.

Jen Gilbert (2007) argues that our culture lacks a theory of adolescent sexuality, and that this is sorely needed in order to contemplate sexual education for younger generations. She criticizes the notion that adolescents are deficient, dangerous, and in need of protection and asks important questions that prompt us to recognize that youth sexual education is largely about what adults want and are comfortable with and not generally about what might be best for
adolescents\textsuperscript{14}. Her critique of the predominant view of adolescents in society poses the radical question: “What would it mean for adults to see adolescents as sexual subjects, and as having a right to experience the risks of sexuality, while also recognizing their responsibility to create the conditions for thoughtfulness, care and curiosity both in and out of schools?” (Gilbert 2007: 48). The ORC was a small step toward realizing this larger goal, but unfortunately many Ontarians were not ready for this ideological shift.

In order to develop a theory of adolescent sexuality or to imagine adolescents as sexual subjects, Gilbert argues that we need to consider how adolescent sexuality differs from and is similar to adult sexuality and develop ways in which sex education can accommodate a theory of adolescent sexuality that does not assume that adolescents are risk-taking, incomplete (not-yet-adult) subjects\textsuperscript{15}. Hawkes and Egan (2010) also call for the abandonment of the notion that child or adolescent sexuality mirrors adult sexuality. Gilbert advises against constructing children as occupying a lower stratum in a hierarchy of cognition or in a process of becoming an adult. Both, according to Gilbert, reinforce a definition of children and adolescents as illegitimate subjects. Instead, they must be viewed as being entitled to their own sexual agency.

The notion of the ‘Agentic Child,’ as it is described by Hawkes and Egan (2010), is useful in formulating a theory of adolescent and child sexuality that will inform my critique of the province’s sex education curriculum and will help in defining the discursive elements of the debate. This theory is important because people do not believe that children, who are regarded as asexual, need sex education. By demonstrating the notion of childhood asexuality and innocence

\textsuperscript{14} The presence of these attitudes in the media coverage of the debate over the ORC will be addressed in Chapters Four and Five.
\textsuperscript{15} I wish to also destabilize the notion that adulthood necessarily confers ‘full’ or complete subjectivity in a static, comprehensive manner.
is a historical construct and by using research to reveal how much knowledge children have about sexuality, I strengthen my defense of the abandoned sex education revisions.

Hawkes and Egan (2010) use Butler’s work from *Undoing Gender* (2004) to underpin their theory. According to Butler, agency is not an individual quality but rather it is contingent on relationships and intercollective validation. Agency is constructed and reconstructed through numerous discourses, and recognition is constituted by and through various dominant discourses (Hawkes & Egan 2010: 152). Recognizing the co-construction of agency, Hawkes and Egan argue that discussions of sexuality should not be limited to adults, parents, policymakers, and politicians, but rather that they should include children and adolescents. This would promote ideals of adult and child subjectivity that would contribute to a collaboratively produced discourse of child and adolescent sexuality, thereby recognizing the sexual agency of children (Hawkes and Egan 2010: 153).

Hawkes and Egan state that agency needs to be established through viewing the task as a shared cultural endeavor and not limited to parents or limited by parental consent. Though this can seem problematic at first, it is important to discuss matters of sexuality and sexual subjectivity outside of the home because children need an understanding of their sexual bodies in order to understand appropriate and inappropriate sexual conduct. Since child abuse is most often perpetrated within the home, knowledge about sexuality and appropriate expressions of it need to be fostered by trustworthy, external sources such as schools and educators. Though protecting children from sexual abuse is an important ambition, this should not be the only motivation for educating youth about sexuality. The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization 2008). Limiting sex education to discussions about risk
and harm does not honour this definition of holistic health and currently there is little in sex education that fosters or encourages a positive sense of sexuality. Sex education should not merely be about denial of sex and sexual experiences, but it should also be about knowing when to engage and having the confidence, maturity and knowledge to recognize readiness.

Hawkes and Egan call for the acknowledgement of a multiplicity of sexualities and expressions. And finally, they insist that the effort to acknowledge child and adolescent sexual agency should refrain from invoking protectionism as a means of legitimating surveillance and social control.

Considering the aforementioned theories along with the shelving of the ORC, it seems that there is much to be done in order to understand the full effect of the discourse of child asexuality in our society. Some elements of these theories were included in the ORC, but they were met with hostility and anger. In order to understand what obstacles exist in this acknowledgement of the Agentic Child within education, we must investigate the history and potency of the narrative of child and adolescent asexuality.

**Alleged Youth Hypersexuality and the Cultural Entrenchment of Asexuality**

Typically, the management of youth sexuality today is directed at extending asexuality for as long as possible. Part of this is due to the perception and fear that today’s teens are hypersexual. One reason for this view is the perception that puberty makes youth hormonally-driven which is subsequently linked to the perception of an ‘early’ onset of sexual maturity. One fact that may contribute to this is that the average age of pubertal onset has declined in the past few decades, which makes today’s youth reach physical sexual maturity earlier than previous generations (Russell 2005: 5). For girls, it can begin as early as seven or eight years of age, but on average it starts at age 10 (Duncan, Dixon and Carlson 2003). The teen pregnancy rate in the
US also contributes to the image of the hypersexual teen in North America\textsuperscript{16}. But this statistic is not directly comparable to the rate of teen pregnancy in Canada. The ‘sudden’ explosion of this epidemic of ‘kids having kids’ has influenced the collective conscience and has played some part in the overall fear of the consequences of child and adolescent sexual knowledge acquisition. The view that teens are hypersexual results in efforts to curb this ‘biological drive’ (Elliot 2010) and this construction makes adult surveillance and intervention an inevitable endeavor (Bay-Cheng 2003). As Lesko (2006) puts it, our construction of adolescent sexuality justifies our efforts to control it (Bay-Cheng 2003: 63).

Teen sex has always been around however due to technological and social advancements and changing social norms, there has been an increase in this behaviour or the visibility of this behaviour in the past 60 years (Moore and Rosenthal 2006). Most changes in what teens ‘do’ sexually actually occurred between the 1950s and 1960s. In her research, Maticka-Tyndale found that the age at first intercourse has remained relatively stable (16-18 years of age) since the 1970s; she concludes that Canadian teens are maintaining patterns of sexual behaviour that were established in the late nineteen sixties and early seventies (2002: 86). She also notes that Canadian adolescents are taking responsibility for their own sexual health through things such as contraception more than any previous Canadian generation (ibid: 87). Contrary to the view that children and adolescents need to be shielded from sexual knowledge, research shows that children and adolescents who receive comprehensive sex education have better track records with STI’s, condom use, and unwanted pregnancies (McKay 2001). These facts do not translate to more relaxed attitudes towards youth sexual activity today.

\textsuperscript{16} The widely accessible image of the teen mother and hypersexual teen is stereotypically and problematically rooted in racist and classist assumptions and policies, which contribute to the desires of some to quell this trend, emphasizing that reproduction among certain groups should be deterred.
The idea that today’s youth are vastly different from earlier generations with regard to sexual behaviour is a misconception, but social relationships such as marriage, which define acceptable and unacceptable sexual expressions, have changed in the past few decades. One of the reasons for the perceived change in youth sexual behaviour in the second half of the 20th century is that the age at first marriage has been rising but marriage rates in general are declining. According to recent data, one in three Canadian women are expected to marry compared to 90% in the 1960s (Le Bourdais and Lapierre Adamcyk 2004: 930). Cohabitation and common law marriages are more prevalent than ever; in Quebec, for example, cohabiting unions are said to be the new normative arrangement (Le Bourdais and Lapierre Adamcyk 2004). The gap between sexual maturation (puberty) and social independence (marriage, financial independence) has never been greater and youth are expected to refrain from sexual activity for longer than any previous generations (Maticka-Tyndale 2008). The sexual revolution of the seventies and the availability of the birth control pill have also influenced trends in modern sexual behaviour. Gay and lesbian individuals, though they still face issues like discrimination and homophobia, are now protected by law in Canada and live in one of the most progressive societies. But these sociocultural factors influencing the sexual experiences of youth have not been acknowledged by adults, parents, educators and politicians. As the quote from Renold at the start of this chapter indicated, the need to preserve the image of child innocence and sexual ignorance still holds strong.

The discourse of adolescent asexuality coupled with the fear of impending hypersexuality can function as a powerful and at times irrational lens through which individuals process phenomena. Sinikka Elliot’s work (2010) sheds light on the paradoxical and somewhat comical views of parents regarding their child’s sexual experience and attitudes. Through in-depth
interviews with parents, Elliot found that they often positioned other children and adolescents as highly sexual or sexualized while their own children were constructed as asexual (2010: 198). This allowed the parents to be concerned about teen sexuality without facing the implications that would stem from their own teen being sexually active. This discourse allowed parents to hold contradictory opinions in order to keep an uncompromised view of their children as asexual while still supporting a discourse of sexual risk surrounding youth behaviour. These cognitions make a theory of child and adolescent sexuality more elusive and point to the irrationality that sexual ideologies can exhibit.

The fear that children and adolescents will become hypersexual is reflected in sex education curriculum. Sex education in our time strives to keep children and adolescents abstinent for as long as possible and maintains a focus on the risks, dangers, and consequences of being sexually active (Fine 1988; Gilbert 2007; Connell 2005). It is not intended to foster holistic sexual health, but to make clear to youth that asexuality or abstinence is the only safe choice that will spare them illness and untold suffering. This logic has considerable political purchase, and understanding its origins assists us in seeing how the opponents of the ORC successfully convinced the Government to shelve the new curriculum that recognized adolescent and childhood sexuality.

The Social Construction of Childhood, Adolescence, and Innocence

Contemporary views of childhood and adolescence as romanticized periods of innocence followed by teen years of hyper-sexual potentiality are modern social constructs. This age marks the creation of adolescence as we know it (Renold 2005; Gilbert 2007; Kipnis 2006). This is vital to understand since it reveals the ways our society has changed over time and the ways that the definition of adolescence can change in the future. For example, in the past children were not so
deeply cherished when infant mortality rates were high and when they were valuable as economic assets; the industrial revolution made children less economically valuable which resulted in them becoming more precious to men and women (Kipnis 2006: 72). Efforts to ‘preserve’ the innocence of children were introduced at this time as well, which will be discussed later. Another indication of the constructedness of adolescence is the fact that a couple of hundred years ago, it was commonplace for women in their early teens to be married. The idea that adolescents today are not ready for certain discussions of sexuality when in previous epochs they could have borne children by the age of 14 makes a strong case for the social construction of this so-called tumultuous and risky time of sexual and social development.

Christine Piper notes that in the 19th century, concern about the depraving effects of adult space on children led to a variety of reforming efforts such as criminalizing the use of child performers in theatres or streets (2000: 33). Similarly, compulsory schooling was introduced in Britain alongside the mass removal of children from adult spaces. These social efforts relied heavily upon notions of the dependence, vulnerability, powerlessness and innocence of children (Renold 2005: 18). Piper (2000) argues that our society cannot accept the equation that Child + Sex = OK, and that the only acceptable equation is that Child + Sex = Abuse. Engagement of children in sexual activity or, as I would argue, obtaining sexual knowledge, results in a lost childhood (Piper 2000). The power of this theory extends to the point where the sexual child is seen as unworthy of protection since their innocence, the essence of childhood, is no longer intact. Since adults hold sexual knowledge, the perceived duty and responsibility to preserve child ‘innocence’ and worthiness is of paramount importance.

One of the ways this safeguarding was accomplished in Canada was through the Criminal Code. Up until 1890 the legal age of consent to sexual acts was 12 years of age. It was raised to
14 in 1890, and most recently, in 2008 it was raised to 16 and renamed the ‘age of protection’ (Dauda 2010). The wording of age of consent and protection laws reveal the socio-historical conditionality and malleability of notions of child and adolescent sexuality as well as the constructedness of accompanying desires to protect and manage these bodies.

It is important to understand that notions of children and adolescents are socially constructed because the contemporary concern over managing and monitoring the socialization or development of their (hetero)sexuality is a social concern, not a biological one. The constructions of children and adolescents serve certain ends and are cited to justify the management of them in a way that would establish social change that is in line with a particular ideology. Castaneda draws attention to this appeal, stating that “[w]hat is distinctive about the child is the identification between child and mutability itself. It is not simply that the child is a sign, category, or representation that can be read in multiple ways. What is distinctive about the child is that it has the capacity for transformation” (2002: 2). This capacity for transformation is at the centre of debates about the sexual information and ideas to which children and adolescents should be exposed.

**View of Children in 20th Century North America**

A discussion of the history and development of sex education and turning points in the progression of attitudes about sexuality in the last century will now be addressed. The emergence of sex education in the 20th century and the reasons behind it are not so different from contemporary convictions. This history is useful in understanding why education and access to young, impressionable minds is particularly appealing and has been for centuries.

The social hygiene movement that dates back to the turn of the 20th century has influenced contemporary convictions regarding the necessity, content, and distribution of sex
education. In this period known as the time of the first sexual revolution, or the Progressive Era (1880-1920), a prestigious and affluent group of individuals in New York City created the first organization devoted to teaching sex education, the American Social Hygiene Association (Luker 2006: 37-38). Social hygiene was a euphemism for sex and these individuals believed that teaching people about sex was a sure way to improve American society (ibid: 39). This was a multifaceted endeavor; among the goals of these organizations were to curb the rate of STDs, particularly among the poor and disadvantaged (Morris 1994; Luker 2006). But the social hygienist movement also led to a conflation of sexuality with a more general moral and physical deterioration (Piper 2000: 34-35).

Children emerged as a specific locus of intervention and control, and the view of them as both malleable and subject to sexual vice influenced the fervor of these efforts to control and or sublimate sexual urges (Irvine 2002; Hawkes & Egan 2008; Foucault 1990). The child’s experience and learning were viewed as vital for future social stability; the social and moral prescriptions of the social hygiene movement were profoundly concerned with the ‘proper’ education of children via mothers. The child, through the mother, was “the vehicle for planned and rational social change, and it was this framing that allowed for the normalization of …[the child’s] sexuality” (Hawkes & Egan 2008: 446).

The emergence of the field of medicine and science and their discursive influence can be credited with the initial framing of theories of child and adolescent sexuality and helped to normalize the idea of child sexuality to an extent (Hawkes & Egan 2008). By the 1930s, Freud was gaining influence and his theories of sexuality positioned children as fundamentally sexual.

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17 The social and moral agenda of the social hygiene movement, when analyzed today, can easily be found guilty of racist, sexist, elitist, classist, heterosexist, and eugenicist foundations and, though progress has been made, one can still locate elements of these ideologies within modern sex education.
creatures. He identified the sexual drive in children and pronounced that it was normal, but cautioned that the sexual drive needed to be directed and suppressed appropriately. It was the role of society and primary caregivers to adequately sublimate the sex drive in order to ensure normal development (Hawkes & Egan 2010). But the theories of Freud did not totally dispel ideas about child innocence. Gittens summarizes Freud’s limited influence, stating that,

> [i]n spite of Freud’s insistence that children are sexual beings, they are still not regarded as such and there are now, more than ever a plethora of rules and regulations that define sex as the exclusive realm of adults. Transgression of such rules […] jeopardizes a child’s chance to even be considered a child (Gittens 1998: 174 in Renold 2005: 19).

Although Freud made important contributions to a discourse of child sexuality, the discourse of innocence or asexuality has prevailed.

Hawkes and Egan state that the Agentic Child was missing from the discourse of child sexuality in the 19th century, and common representations portrayed an image of the child as “an automaton with the capability of being driven either by its nature or by proper (or improper) adult direction” (2008: 447). What is considered to be proper or ‘normal’ is culturally and historically defined and typically refers to asexuality in youth, eventual heterosexuality, and normatively gendered bodies. Since the child is seen as having little to no sexual subjectivity and is only an impressionable, biologically driven, quasi-subject, proper direction through carefully guarded sex education is vital for the production of a ‘successful’ adult subject. Exposure to sexual knowledge was and continues to be seen as dangerous to this vision of normal sexual development.

Representations of the child in the late 19th and 20th centuries do not stray far from current ideas about the vulnerability and impressionability of children and this historic concern over confusing, misdirecting, and perverting children through their acquisition of sexual knowledge was revealed in the debate over the ORC. I argue that the debate over the ORC,
particularly with regard to the opposition of specific topics like sexual orientation and gender identity, reflects a contradictory belief in the sexual tabula rasa and a proper sexual nature. Adults believe that children have natural sexual destinies of heterosexuality and traditional gender conformity, but they simultaneously believe that the provision of information related to alternative sexualities or gender presentations or identities will confuse children, leading them away from their ‘naturally occurring’ identities. This, again, points to the fact that sexual ideologies can be irrational, and effectively compromises the validity of claims rooted in ideological beliefs about sexuality. The importance of governments in mediating ideological pluralism will be discussed in Chapter Five.

The demonstrated beliefs in both a (supposed sexual) nature and the notion that children’s sexual identities are malleable seem incompatible, but they both support the same underlying values of heterosexuality and fear of child sexual ‘abnormality.’ Either argument can be invoked by moral claims-makers to suit their particular cause. To summarize, this view holds that children have a sexual nature, a latent and essential sexual identity that is expected to emerge later in development. Children also embody a sexual tabula rasa that must be steered and shaped appropriately to prevent abnormal sexual desires. Another contradiction is that children and adolescents are considered asexual, but they are expected to be latent heterosexuals. The fear over children adopting non-normative sexual orientations speaks to the level of cultural disapproval or ambivalence regarding homosexuality or non-normative gender identities. This marginalization and cultural devaluation of gay and lesbian sexual identities further disparages children and adolescents who are LGBT or questioning. The way this marginalization is accomplished in sex education curriculum will be discussed later.
In order to refrain from disturbing heterosexual ‘nature’ and normal sexual health (whatever it may look like), children are to be protected and managed. Children can be ‘protected’ and managed through socialization and through formal education. The debates over the ORC are debates about what type of sexual knowledge children should be exposed to, since it is believe that this will influence their eventual sexual subjectivity, for better or for worse.

**Proliferation of the Discourse of Risk**

Within Gilbert’s arguments as well as the implicit and explicit arguments of other academics (Lesko 2001; Castaneda 2002) adults are viewed as fully developed subjects, or “knowers” and keepers of sexual knowledge and, conversely, children and adolescents are portrayed as not fully adults or, more dramatically, not fully human. Adults are seen as potential corruptors, and it is the sexuality or sexual knowledge and freedom of the adult that poses a risk to childhood innocence (Gilbert 2007; Walkerdine 2001). This contributes to the efforts to maintain childhood ignorance and innocence—two qualities that seem to be synonymous in this discourse.

This belief that positions adults as knowers and children as innocent and ignorant is challenged by Epstein and Johnson who state that,

> it is ridiculous to assume that children don’t draw conclusions from the visible, invisible and imagined sexual behaviour of the adults and children around them...[sexual innocence] is something that adults wish upon children, not a natural feature of childhood itself (1998: 97).

Considering that the average American youth is exposed to nearly 14,000 sexual references, innuendos and behaviours on TV annually (Strasburger 2004 in Fisher et al 2002), it would be foolish to believe children are not forming ideas about sexuality and even more foolish to believe that this exposure is preventable.
There is a fierce reluctance to talk to young people about sexuality, but one of the ways that this ambivalence is circumvented is through protectionist intentions—teaching about sexuality in order to warn children of the danger associated with unprotected, premarital, non-monogamous sex. This goal allowed those in the social hygiene movement to overcome some prudery. More recently, the AIDS crisis in the 1980s catalyzed the acceptability of conversations about sex, since protection from disease was considered a societal priority. Talking about sex with adolescents and children became viewed as allowable in the context of risk awareness, protection from STIs or unwanted pregnancy, or by supporting and encouraging future relationships of heterosexual, marital monogamy. Even Charles McVety, President of the Canada Family Action Coalition and President of Canada Christian College, acknowledged that there was value in educating youth about the dangers of unprotected sex and premarital sex when, on May 6th, 2010, he was a guest on a public TV program called The Agenda. Discussions of sexuality were also granted permission in schools due to inflated figures of the prevalence of child sexual abuse and expanded definitions of what constituted victimization. Child abuse or the potential for it seemed ubiquitous and thus anxiety over balancing child innocence and ignorance with defensive knowledge has been a feature of sex education debates since (Irvine 2002; Elliot 2010). In the effort to protect children, the definition of harm was expanded to include the idea that knowledge could be harmful for children and adolescents and in the mid eighties, some were equating the act of talking to children about sexuality with sexual abuse (Irvine 2002).

Though talking about sex and sexuality within a discourse of risk has been one of the safest ways to introduce the topic in schools it has not been without controversy. Currently, these

18 This is one of the many indicators that the Canadian debates over sex education are in essence more liberal than the debates in the US, where abstinence-only education is the model being promoted by members of the religious right.
are the only acceptable conditions under which conversations about sexuality may commence. The opportunity for dialogue about sexuality is a valuable advancement, however the protectionist, risk-based precondition for discussions around adolescent and child sexuality has suffocated and limited the space for dialogue that would address matters of sexual desire or positive sexual experiences. I now turn to the effects of this limitation on discourse as it has manifested in sex education.

In the late 1980s, Michelle Fine conducted a groundbreaking study of sex education curriculum in US public high schools and found some trends that have had an enormous influence on the literature and research on sex education to date. In the curriculum, Fine found that adolescent females were repeatedly and consistently portrayed as victims or potential sexual victims, that there was an absence of a discourse of female sexual desire, and that there was explicit privileging of married heterosexuality over other practices of sexuality (1988: 30) indicating that sex education is situated within a restrictive sexual ideology (RSI). The absence of a discourse of female sexual desire, the prominence of the discourse of victimization and the privileging of heterosexual monogamy are all relevant to and still present in current forms of sex education. In 2005, Erin Connell published her research findings on Ontario sex education curriculum and concluded that the same discourses that Fine had identified in the mid-eighties were being perpetuated in the Province’s curriculum. In my research, I have found similar results.

Children and adolescents are not considered to be sexual beings, or are denied the assumption that they might be sexual beings in various ways. One of the most obvious indications of this is the fact that there is rarely a clitoris on the human sexual anatomy diagrams (McKay 1998). Even though the clitoris is the analogous body part to the male penis, it is usually missing.
Since it is the belief of the current day that the only function of the clitoris is sexual pleasure, the erasure of the clitoris can be seen as a denial of female sexual desire and subjectivity. In fact, the inclusion of proper terminology for body parts starting in Grade One was one of the recurring grievances among opponents to the ORC. Educators and adults specifically withhold anatomical correctness in order to bypass a discussion of sexual pleasure.

There are few efforts in sex education aimed at recognizing or fostering sexuality more holistically or presenting sexuality or sexual agency in a positive light. Fine identifies a hidden agenda in sex education that attempts to restrict discussions of sexuality to risk and victimization. She astutely questions the intent of sex education in its orientation to limiting or excluding acknowledgment of sexual agency or any discussion of desire and points to the disingenuous claim that sex education is concerned with the overall sexual health of youth. She states,

> if sex education were designed primarily to prevent victimization but not to prevent exploration of desire, wouldn’t there be more discussions of both the pleasures and relatively fewer risks of disease or pregnancy associated with lesbian relationships and protected sexual intercourse, or the risk-free pleasures of masturbation and fantasy (1988: 42)?

Fine’s point identifies the paradox of sex education in our time—that sex education is about socializing youth in a particular way for specific outcomes, most of which are to prolong and maintain abstinence and asexuality along with validating and encouraging heterosexuality. Sex education claims to be about the promotion of sexual health when it is actually putting for a particular ideological conception of sexuality and sexual morality. In describing the prevailing approach to comprehensive sex education and the at times comical contradictions within it, Irvine quips: “sex is dirty: save it for someone you love” (2002: 105). Contemporary sex education

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19 This refers to the fact that the clitoris is the only sexual organ with no known reproductive function (Hyde, DeLamater and Byers 2006: 81-82).
simultaneously discourages sex yet it also defines specific and appropriate types of sex, times for sex, and places or relationships for sex and encourages a certain type of sexuality.

Like Fine, Gilbert (2007) laments the at-risk focus of current models of sex education. In the dominant paradigm of sex education, risk is interpreted as a condition of being; it is everywhere and nowhere for adolescents and it is socially and historically defined. In the past, social hygienists considered miscegenation and class exogamy as among the risks to be managed. Today, risks are the focus of sex education and since they are overemphasized, they hinder the instilment and nourishment of positive sexual health in youth.

Gilbert’s work reveals important contradictions in sex education. Curriculum and educators tell adolescents that they are sexually mature and that they need to make responsible choices and think critically about drugs and sex and other tough decisions, yet the only decision that is considered viable, informed, and safe is to say ‘no’ to sex until marriage. She criticizes the fact that schools attempt to encourage youth to speak for themselves, think critically, and defend their sexual virtue, but only through a refusal to engage in sexual acts. Essentially, students are given a choice with one answer, which is no choice at all.

**Modern Media Exposure and Youth**

The widespread assumptions regarding child and adolescent asexuality not only ignore that children and adolescents are sexual subjects, but also the ways that youth process sexual(ized) media on a daily basis. Today, the media plays a prominent role in our lives. It is virtually impossible to go an entire day without being targeted by advertisements, news, even overhearing conversations about television and movies. Children and adolescents in many industrialized countries report 2.5 to 3.0 hours of television viewing daily, and one third of adolescents watch more than 4 hours daily (Gorely, Marshall and Biddle 2004: 152-153). A study
of Canadian youth found that only 41% of girls and 34% of boys in grades six to ten watched less than two hours of TV per day and fewer than 20% of Canadian youth meet the screen time guidelines set by the Canadian Paediatric Society (Mark et al 2006).

Children and adolescents are not immune to this bombardment, and the level of sexually explicit content that infiltrates various media is perhaps at its highest levels ever.

There has been a great deal of research conducted on the amount of sex content in modern media. With regard to the sexual content on TV, Kunkel et al (2001) found that only about one out of ten programs on TV that include sexual content mention the possible consequences of sex or the need to use contraception or protection against STIs (Brown 2002: 42). Although more than half of the couples who are depicted having sex on TV are in an established relationship, one in ten are couples who have met only recently and one quarter do not maintain a relationship after sex (Kunkel et al 2001 in Brown 2002: 42). A content analysis of programs from networks appealing to youth audiences found that 82.1% of program episodes contained sexual content. Only 2.9% of episodes with sex contained messages about patience, and 5.2% included messages about taking sexual precautions (Fisher et al 2004 in Fisher et al 2009). Considering these statistics, it is no surprise that children and adolescents absorb or process sexual information in their daily lives.

Research has been conducted to assess how these programs impact youth and the findings are sobering. A US national study on 13-15 year olds found that more than half of the high school boys and girls stated that TV was their knowledge source for information about birth control, contraception, or preventing pregnancy; 63% of girls and 40% of boys revealed that they had learned about these topics from magazines (Sutton, Brown, Wilson & Klein: 2002). Most concerning were the results from a recent US study that found that adolescent exposure to
sexually suggestive cable TV programming was related to an increased likelihood of having had oral sex and vaginal intercourse, increased intentions to engage in these behaviours in the next year, and lower perceived likelihood that sexual intercourse would result in negative consequences and health problems, combined with increased expectations that intercourse would lead to pleasure and positive consequences20 (Fisher et al 2009: 139).

The vast amount of information relating to sexuality that is available to children and adolescents in contemporary society should serve as a wake-up call to adults who continue to view children and adolescents as lacking knowledge and refuse to acknowledge that they have access to sexual information. A simple Google search provides millions of sites for anything to do with sexuality: a search of the word ‘boob’ resulted in 26, 500, 000 pages and 3, 770, 000 images; a search of the word ‘sex’ produced 1, 200, 000, 000 web pages and 290, 000, 000 images—all in under one second. According to a US national survey of ten to seventeen year olds who regularly used the Internet, about one quarter revealed that they had encountered unwanted pornographic sites or ads in the previous year (Finkelhor, Mitchell and Wolak 2000 in Brown 2002: 42). Though these issues, such as online safety and online literacy, are being brought up in curriculum the discussions are still too limited.

Currently, there are numerous gay and lesbian celebrities who garner regular entertainment news coverage. Among the most noteworthy are Neil Patrick Harris, Elton John, Ricky Martin, and Ellen Degeneres and Portia de Rossi. In the past decade or so, television shows have included gay-positive characters and messages, such as The Simpsons 1997 episode

20 Again, I do not intend to use this data to alarm individuals by supporting a discourse of risk. This research points to the need for balance in sex education; schools cannot merely lecture about the dangers of sexual activity and pretend that it is an honest and unbiased portrayal of the subject, particularly when youth are exposed to media that consistently presents the opposite view of sexual behaviour.
“Homer’s Phobia” (Season 8, Episode 15), where Homer befriends a gay man after overcoming strong homophobic feelings, More recent shows have regular gay characters, such as Emmy Award-Winning programs like Will & Grace (1998-2006), Modern Family (2009-present) and Glee (2009-present). All three of these shows, the latter two more thoroughly and dramatically, have explicitly addressed homophobia and issues stemming from it and these are not late-night programs. In fact, the topic of an episode from the second season of Glee was premised on the failure of sex education in US schools, particularly the ways in which the curriculum (or lack of it) failed a central character who is gay. To use a print media example, in the past year Archie Comics introduced its first-ever gay character.

As the statistics showed, many teens and youth get their knowledge about sexuality from TV programs. Though the aforementioned examples of media representations of LGB individuals are generally positive, there are hundreds of negative, stereotypical, and problematic portrayals of these groups (Chasnoff and Cohen 1996). Research shows that public LGB figures can be inspirational for youth, giving them comfort and some confidence or validation (Gomilllin and Giuliano 2011) but media representations can also reinforce homophobic or transphobic attitudes (Riggs and Patterson 2009). By removing sexual orientation and other valuable information about sexuality from the Provincial curriculum, the Government is allowing the media, for better or for worse, to be the primary youth educator on sex and sexuality.

The fact that schools and curriculum have erased discussions about gay and lesbian individuals until Grade Eight means that youth will be receiving sex education about LGBT people from their TV sets and this will not necessarily build tolerance and acceptance in society. It is an action with immeasurable consequences for LGBT youth and perceptions of these students and families.
Without advocating too strongly for a theory of technological determinism, the fact that television, cell phones, computers and the Internet are ever more present in the lives of adults and children does change society in some ways. Opponents of the ORC, or those who belong to the Restrictive Sexual Ideological camp, sought to ‘protect’ children and adolescents from being exposed to sexual information, but this initiative ignores the fact that children are already exposed to vast amounts of sexual (mis)information with very little context for understanding it. To ignore this fact would be irresponsible and counterproductive to the efforts that aim to understand youth experiences in the 21st century.

Ironically, the opponents of the ORC used the media to mobilize and publicize their outrage over the curriculum and the specific elements that were causing concern. In this effort, they assisted in disseminating the material contained in the document, thereby spreading an awareness of ‘controversial’ components—an act that was actually counterproductive to their chief complaint though it amounted to the desired result. The publication of the controversial elements of the curriculum reached the TV sets, radios, and newspapers of millions of Ontarians and likely reached the ears and eyes of Ontario youth. The efforts of the right to remove the ‘controversial’ elements of the ORC served to disseminate this information to a degree that may not have been reached had it only remained in the curriculum, effectively proving the need for its inclusion in the curriculum. Children and adolescents in Ontario heard about this information and learned about it anyway and were not provided with a context or thorough explanations of the topics.

Youth will interpret media in different ways based on gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity etc. but they are being targeted and influenced. Late night programs are not screened or inaccessible based on the age of the person holding a remote control, and as I mentioned, sexual
innuendos and LGB personalities are not represented exclusively within late night programs. The fact is that children and adolescents are hearing, seeing, talking about, and learning about sex and sexuality from sources that have no responsibility in ensuring that safer sex practices are being showcased or contributing to the holistic sexual health of youth. This is why it is imperative for more thorough and comprehensive sex education, like the ORC, to be taught in Ontario schools.

Recognizing Sexual Agency in Youth

The concerns over children learning about sex and the idea that children are corrupted by this knowledge through sex education are largely misplaced considering the plethora of information available to children on television and on the Internet in this society, but also considering the information that is transmitted within the schoolyard and in peer groups. The research of Emma Renold (2005) demonstrates the breadth of sexual knowledge that children possess and shows that children are exposed to sexuality outside of the classroom, perhaps more so than in the classroom.

Renold conducted a year long ethnographic study providing a glimpse into the world of nine and ten year old students in Britain, and the ways they create, adapt to, resist, and perpetuate various (hetero)sexual and gendered behaviours. Renold detailed the layout of the children’s schoolyard and explained the way that dating couples would venture to a visually obstructed end of the yard in order to kiss and wrestle one another, deliberately evading adult supervision and engaging in activities that they knew were prohibited (2005: 110). She catalogued the perpetual courting and break-ups that characterized the student’s romantic social lives. One account described the experience of two girls, early bloomers whose physical appearances betrayed their true ages, who went to a nearby park after school. These girls were approached by older boys and questioned about their sexual experience and knowledge, and complimented on their physical
desirability. The way that the girls felt both sexually empowered through traditional sexual and gender scripts (in being considered desirable) and also threatened (the girls were younger and less sexually experienced than they looked and revealed) points to the fact that youth negotiate various sexual experiences in their daily lives. Considering these experiences and what is taught to children in sex education at these ages, it is clear that youth are not being fully supported by curriculum that may provide them with valuable information and a vital platform for discussions about their actual lived experiences. Furthermore, the effects of a lack of support regarding sexual issues are amplified for LGBT youth whose stories and experiences are even less likely to be considered or addressed in schools.

Renold’s field notes about the ways in which adults interacted differently with boys and girls also revealed the ways that traditional gender and heterosexual scripts were reinforced in schools, positioning and targeting the girls as sexual gatekeepers and potential victims of male desire. Also, what was evident throughout her research were the ways in which some of the children continuously invoked and reinforced traditional gender and sexual scripts, as the earlier example of the two female students in a park demonstrated. Her research is a powerful case supporting the idea that children would benefit from sexual education at younger ages, considering the knowledge they do possess, how it influences their interactions, and that sexual misinformation (provided by peers) may be their most trusted source but potentially the most inaccurate.

What is most fascinating and potentially alarming about children’s agentic sexual identities and knowledge is the fact that children and adolescents realize that issues around sexuality are taboo among adults (Langille et al. 2001; Renold 2005; Best 1983). This influences the way they will behave around teachers and parents and, in turn, influences adult
(mis)perceptions of youth sexual knowledge. For example, Renold found that because children understood that youth sexual experiences were inconceivable for and proscribed by teachers and adults, sexual harassment between students went unreported (2005: 116-117). The evasiveness of children was also demonstrated in the discretion they employed while being intimate with their romantic partners in the schoolyard. Best describes this kind of agency in her 1983 research on youth sexual subcultures:

So, while the adults hemmed and hawed, the children went about learning and experimenting on their own, careful to protect the frightened adult world’s need for ignorance, all the while garnering what they could from whatever source they could to expand on their personal observations. They found ways to circumvent adult scrutiny and allay suspicion. [...] they found ways to hide them (sexual activities) from surveillance (Best 1983: 109).

Teachers’ assumptions about adolescent and child sexual knowledge can program student willingness and responsiveness to sexual education and thus impact the ways youth sexual subjectivity is constructed and negotiated. The fact that children evade adult surveillance when they perform and discuss sexual things provides credence to the Agentic Child metaphor employed in this research. It also and provides further support for the argument that sex education should be introduced at younger ages.

The Forgotten and Ignored: LGBT Youth and Families

In the discourse of child asexuality, children and adolescents are to be asexual but if not asexual they should be en route to heterosexuality. Though asexuality and abstinence are promoted and encouraged in modern sex education, schools are profoundly concerned with producing a certain type of sexual youth (Bay-Cheng 2003). Schools are fundamentally heteronormative and they are responsible for perpetuating various ideologies about sexuality; Barbara Smith referred to schools as “virtual cauldrons of homophobic sentiment” (1993: 101). The school environment is filled with slurs and derogatory remarks that often invoke sexuality,
for example, the ubiquitous use of the word ‘fag’ (Meyer 2008; Pascoe 2005) or homophobic remarks more generally (Redman 2000). Robert Roth, an eighth grade social studies teacher, comments on the dire need to educate students about different sexual identities in order to foster tolerance and acceptance in schools:

You walk out in the halls of this school and the word of choice is faggot. […] It shouldn’t be tolerated in the school environment but you can’t just say ‘stop’. You have to educate about it and if you don’t educate about it it won’t stop (Chasnoff and Cohen 1996).

A frustrating aspect of homophobic abuse and bullying is that administrators and teachers in schools are ill equipped to deal with heterosexism and homophobia, since many have not been educated properly on how to effectively address these systemic issues (Goldstein, Collins & Halder 2009). Research shows that teachers feel overwhelmed by this problem and are often not supported by their administration in efforts to punish students who use homophobic slurs (Ferfolja 1998; Meyer 2008; Smith 1993; Ireland 2005). This is partly due to the fact that many teachers and principals fear community reprisal (Maher & Sever 2007) or are themselves homophobic (Niesche 2003). Conversely, educators in teacher education programmes who attempt to address these issues have reported resistance from their students (Robinson & Ferfolja 2001; Robinson & Ferfolja 2002). The topic of homosexuality is especially charged in the context of Catholic schools, since the Catholic Church holds a contemptuous position regarding lesbians and gays (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: 1986).

The tenacity of homophobia and heteronormativity in schools can result in targeted bullying and violence for queer families. Queer students or children from lesbian- and gay-headed families are particularly vulnerable in this space where those in positions of power and authority are not addressing homophobia. Furthermore, the fact that homophobic bullying occurs in schools indicates the presence of a youth understanding of a sexual hierarchy in society. The
complacency of schools in allowing heteronormativity and homophobia to reign in these environments marks an unwillingness to socialize youth out of this behaviour. The effects of this marginalization on queer youth are well documented (Brubaker, Garrett & Dew 2009). Again, the contradictions within sex education are made apparent. By allowing homophobia to persist in schools, the education system sends a message to youth that they should be primarily asexual, but, if not, they should be budding heterosexuals.

Abandoning the Illusion

The current dominant discourse of child and adolescent sexuality is that they are not, in fact, sexual beings. The research presented in this chapter urges adults to revise this evaluation and to recognize the ways that society has changed, making the perpetuation of this myth increasingly destructive to holistic sexual health in youth. This research all points to the need for more thorough sex education for youth and a stern critique of the dominant discourse of child and adolescent asexuality. Child and adolescent sexuality is being impacted by our changing world and curriculum, policy, and adults need to adjust their biases and preconceptions about youth to avoid failing them immensely.

The debate over the ORC revolved around the idea that children were too young to learn about certain sexual information and that it would indubitably embarrass and confuse them. This response from opponents of the ORC and the predicted reactions of children is tied to time and space—these topics might cause embarrassment to children (and more certainly to adults) but this is not the case everywhere in the world. In Sweden, explicit or comprehensive sex education is considered the gold standard, and it includes discourses of pleasure and desire (Luker 2006). Children are given open and honest answers to their questions about homosexuality and sexual practices and none of the expected giggles or discomfort emanate from the children in the
classroom (Luker 2006: 210-211). Sweden provides a robust example that, again, speaks to the contextual construction of ideas about and behaviours of adolescents and children regarding sexuality.

The ambivalence and back-pedaling of the provincial government in response to the backlash over the ORC indicates that there is much work to be done in the way of convincing adults that children and adolescents are sexual subjects with agency. We should interrogate and destabilize the powerful and contradictory desires among adults who believe that children and adolescents are asexual whilst also fearing that they are hypersexual, or may worry about homosexuality. Once the illusion of child and adolescent innocence is revealed and the false binary of asexuality and sexuality is problematized, adults will no longer feel that they are corrupting the essence of youth and damaging future generations when they allow for open discussions about sex.

In the next chapter, I turn to the Ontario debate over the ORC. Theories of child and adolescent asexuality were repeatedly invoked by opponents of the revisions, who insisted that the contents of the ORC were too explicit for youth and that they would confuse and corrupt children. Though the ORC was rooted in a discourse of risk focused on protectionism, it also included elements that acknowledged the Agentic Child and a minor discussion of pleasure. The ways in which the religious conservatives were able to utilize these longstanding cultural notions of child and adolescent asexuality and innocence in order to have the sex education element of the ORC repealed will be revealed and discussed.
Chapter Four

The Content and Reception of the Originally Revised Curriculum
and the Public and Political Debate

“We allowed someone else to tell our story.” (Amanat 2010)

- Minister of Education Leona Dombrowsky in an interview one month after the Liberal government decided to shelve the sex education component of the new curriculum due to the resistance it produced.

“If the parameters of sex education are even partially determined by the fear of controversy, then educators are probably ignoring what should be a major determinant of sexual curricula—the reality of their students’ lives.” (Whatley 1992: 80)

This chapter will outline the Originally Revised Curriculum (ORC), the response to this document that spanned the months of January to May of 2010, and the ways that the research provided in the previous chapters can be used to analyze the response in the media and in the Government. I will review the reasons why the ORC was created and considered necessary and how it was informed by the recommendations of the Public Health Agency of Canada. By providing details and excerpts from the controversial components of the ORC, as well as excerpts from the news media coverage of the provincial debate, the chapter will begin to show the ways in which the ORC was misrepresented to the public and how this occurred. I will analyze some responses in the media and I will also analyze the reactions within Government by reviewing selected transcripts of debates in the Ontario Legislature. The transcripts, retrieved through Hansard, reveal the way that the Liberal party was being held accountable for the controversy and for the media storm that followed the publication of the ORC. This pressure would eventually lead to the decision to shelve the curriculum. This chapter will set the stage for Chapter Five, which contains my full analysis of the ORC and the response it provoked in Ontario.
The Origins of the ORC

On January 18\textsuperscript{th} of 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education posted its newly revised Health and Physical Education (H&PE) curriculum, the ORC, on its website. The previous curriculum dated back to 1998, meaning that the research that informed that document was likely from 1995-1997. The ministry states that Ontario’s curricula are updated regularly and it was decided that 12 years was long enough for the H&PE to be considered outdated. The ORC was developed between 2008 and 2010 in order to meet the needs of a changed and changing Canadian society.

The ORC was the most progressive and comprehensive sex education program that had ever been introduced in Ontario. Similar to sex education programs in Sweden, the ORC was characterized by a more comprehensive and open flow of information that recognized students’ awareness of sexual matters. It followed the \textit{Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education} that was published by the Public Health Agency of Canada in 2003 and updated in 2008. One of the explicit goals of the \textit{Guidelines} is to “guide the efforts of professionals working in the area of sexual health education and promotion” and it places particular emphasis on “assisting curriculum and program planners, educators in and out of school settings, policy-makers, and health care professionals” (Public Health Agency of Canada 2008: 2). The \textit{Guidelines} are not designed to provide specific criteria for teaching or curricula, but rather a “framework that outlines principles for the development and evaluation of comprehensive evidence-based sexual health education” (ibid: 2). When reading the ORC, it is evident that the \textit{Guidelines} were consulted by the Ontario government, which demonstrates the way that government organizations can work together in creating better policy based on extensive research.
The Liberals, under Premier Dalton McGuinty, stated that they had done a great deal of research in putting together the ORC, talking to 700 students, 70 organizations over two years, and that 2,400 people gave advice via the website and through letters. Liberal MPP Sandra Pupatello, former Minister of Education and current Minister of Economic Development and Trade, stated that the Liberals had consulted experts, parents, teachers, principals and community leaders in the process of devising this curriculum (Official Reports of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly: 22 April 2010: 880).

The previous Ontario H&PE curriculum was written over ten years ago, and Government officials who supported the revisions repeatedly noted the ways in which society had changed so drastically in the past decade. Some major changes that have occurred in Canada since 1998 are: the inclusion of sexual orientation as a prohibited grounds for discrimination in the Ontario Human Rights Code, the ability for same-sex couples to marry in Canada and the proliferation of the Internet and social media. Though there is a digital divide and rural populations do not have the same level of access that urban areas do, according to Stats Canada, Internet access has increased from 67.9% in 2005 to 80.3% in 2009 (Statistics Canada CANSIM table: 2010). The impact of new technologies and, more broadly, a changing political and legal climate have all impacted Canadian society in a way that was not being reflected in the previous curriculum. The desire to bring the curriculum in line with these changes was an explicit goal of the ORC, and this was noted in a section titled “Elementary Schools for the Twenty-First Century”, which stated:

The Ontario curriculum is designed to help every student reach his or her full potential through a program of learning that is coherent, relevant, and age-appropriate. It recognizes that, today and in the future, students need to be critically literate in order to synthesize information, make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and thrive in an ever-changing global community. It is important that students be connected to the curriculum; that they see themselves in what is taught, how it is taught, and how it applies to the world at large.
One can infer that ‘relevant’ information refers to the fact that children have more access to information about sexuality than they did previously, though what is defined as relevant information can be and was contested in the backlash to the ORC. Age-appropriate information is also relatively defined. Stating that children require critical thinking skills in an ever-changing global community drew attention to the impact of cultural and legal changes that marked the past decades.

Although rooted in a discourse of sexuality as risk (Fine 1988), the ORC covered a great deal of information that had never been taught in Ontario schools. Child and adolescent sexuality were acknowledged to an extent that was not present in the 1998 curriculum and, though minute and sparse, the ORC did include a discourse of desire as outlined by Fine (1988). Discussing topics such as masturbation and referring to sexual orientation named the (potential) sexual desires of some youth and explicitly acknowledged the sexual subjectivity of children and adolescents. These inclusions acknowledged the Agentic Child in the curriculum, contradicting the longstanding popular image of children as asexual beings. Not surprisingly, this was among the reasons why the ORC became seen as controversial.

The updates and revisions in the ORC spanned numerous topics such as substance use and addictions, healthy lifestyle choices, active living and physical fitness as well as human development and sexual health, but the focus of the controversy, and thus the focus of my analysis, is on the components of the ORC that concerned sex education. The curriculum for each grade was divided into four components: General Living Skills, Active Living, Movement Competence, and Healthy Living. The Healthy Living section included four topics: Healthy Eating, Personal Safety and Injury Prevention, Substance Use, Addictions, and Related
Behaviours and finally Human Development and Sexual Health. It was this final section in the new curriculum that was being questioned and condemned by opponents outrage that eventually led to its erasure.

**The Contents of the ORC**

In the Human Development and Sexual Health section for Grade One, students were expected to identify the proper names of body parts, such as penis, testicles, vulva, and vagina. Genitalia are generally, though not exclusively, tied to sexuality and it was the thought of introducing sexually-charged words to children which caused concern among opponents to the ORC.

The guidelines for the Human Development and Sexual Health component of the Grade Three curriculum stated that children should be able to:

- Describe how visible differences (e.g. skin, hair, and eye colour, facial features, body size and shape, physical aids or different physical abilities, clothing, possessions) and invisible differences (e.g. learning abilities, skills and talents, personal or cultural values and beliefs, gender identity, sexual orientation, family background, personal preferences, allergies and sensitivities) make each person unique, and identify ways of showing respect for differences in others (Ontario Curriculum grades 1-8: Health & Physical Education [Revised] 2010:112).

The curriculum in this section went on further to discuss different family formations, such as those with one parent, caregivers or guardians, children who are cared for primarily by grandparents, and families with two mothers or two fathers. This information was presented with an emphasis on educating students about being accepting of different types of families, and students were encouraged to be role models by learning about and respecting others’ backgrounds (ibid: 112).

The new Grade Four curriculum introduced interpersonal issues like bullying and conflict resolution and diffusion. This section addressed some reasons why kids are bullied such as weight or size, and clothing. It also included examples of bullying behaviour such as making
sexist, racist, or homophobic comments to other students in person or online (ibid: 128). Grade Four students were expected to receive a fairly clinical overview of puberty but also information about ‘liking’ other students and changing emotions associated with this period of development (ibid: 129).

Grade Five students would undergo a more thorough investigation of puberty and were expected to know about the specific changes that boys’ and girls’ bodies would undergo during puberty (ibid: 144-145) as well as the emotional stress that may accompany this time (ibid: 146). Sexual intercourse was discussed in a very clinical fashion though it was described more explicitly in the ORC than in the previous curriculum. Where the ORC parted from the 1998 H&PE Grade Five curriculum was in its references to sexual orientation. References to sexual orientation were included in a section that addressed the experiences of students who could be or are bullied in schools based on their sex, race, sexual orientation, body shape, or ability (ibid: 147). Students were also taught how to identify features about themselves and others that they could and could not change, with specific references to gender identity and sexual orientation (ibid: 146).

Grade Six students would get more specific information about changes that their bodies go through during puberty in an effort to normalize these events for youth and foster positive sexual health (ibid: 162). They were encouraged to identify factors that can influence a person’s positive self-concept (ibid: 157). Throughout the curriculum are scripted ‘teacher prompts’ and imagined student responses. The authors of the ORC included these prompts in order to guide teachers and to indicate the appropriate depth of discussion that teachers were intended to match. The ORC noted that the teacher prompts were only suggestions and not requirements (ibid: 17).
scripted teacher prompt in the Grade Six Human Development and Sexual Health component

states:

Having erections, wet dreams, and vaginal lubrication are normal things that happen as a result of physical changes with puberty. Exploring your body by touching or masturbating is something that many people will do and find pleasurable. It is common and is not harmful and is one way of learning about your body (ibid: 162).

The inclusion of information about erections and masturbation in order to explore one’s sexual subjectivity is one of the only areas of the ORC that explicitly acknowledges the Agentic Child or sexual subjectivity in youth.

Sixth graders would also learn about healthy and abusive relationships, coping strategies as well as effective methods of communication (ibid: 162). Another controversial component was a section on stereotypes and the importance of dispelling commonly held beliefs about groups of people in society. An excerpt from an appropriate or ideal student response to an optional teacher prompt is provided below:

Stereotypes are usually formed when we do not have enough information. We can get rid of a lot of stereotypes just by finding out more about people who seem different. […] We can understand people’s sexual orientations better, for example, by reading books that describe various types of families and relationships. Not everyone has a mother and a father—someone might have two mothers or two fathers (or just one parent or a grandparent, a caregiver, or guardian). We need to make sure that we don’t assume that all couples are of the opposite sex, and show this by the words we use. For example, we could use a word like ‘partner’ instead of ‘husband’ or ‘wife’. […] If we hear things that are sexist, homophobic, or racist, we can show our support for those who are being disrespected (ibid: 165).
The foreword to the material for Grade Seven and Eight curriculum included an acknowledgement of burgeoning sexuality and emphasized\(^{21}\) the need for youth to develop more critical thinking skills. It noted that,

Students may already be involved in or contemplating sexual activity, or dealing with relationship issues that affect their self-concept and sense of well-being […] Key topics include delaying sexual activity, preventing pregnancy and disease, understanding how gender identity and sexual orientation affect overall identity and self-concept, and making decisions about sexual health and intimacy (ibid: 170).

The focus for sex education in Grade Seven was disproportionately about the negative consequences of being sexually active (e.g. demonstrating knowledge of the various sexually transmitted infections and being able to identify their symptoms; unwanted pregnancy; complex emotional hardship that can be associated with relationships etc.) and emphasizing that students should choose to abstain from sexual behaviour (ibid: 183). The types of sexual behaviour from which students are expected to choose to abstain included any genital contact, having vaginal or anal intercourse, and partaking in oral-genital contact (ibid: 183). It also emphasized reasons why abstinence was the best choice for youth.

Grade Eight curriculum introduced guidelines for healthy eating, and would go into more detail about the changing nature of relationships for some youth during and after puberty (ibid: 190). Specifically, the curriculum would cover refusal skills, safe sex practices, making decisions about sexual activity and the importance of seeking resources for support or information as needed (ibid: 204). Within a teacher prompt, gender identity and sexual orientation were reviewed in detail. The scripted student response mentioned the valuable role that community

\(^{21}\) It cannot be known whether or how this acknowledgement of potential child and adolescent sexuality would have been received and processed by teachers and transmitted to students since it was only a reference in the foreword of the curriculum.
support networks can play for LGBT individuals, such as gay-straight alliances (ibid: 202). It would also cover gender identity, sexual orientation and self-concept as well as sexual decision-making and contraception. The specific reference to sexual orientation and gender identity was in the form of a suggested teacher prompt that is provided below:

Gender identity refers to a person’s internal sense or feeling of being male or female, which may or may not be the same thing as one’s biological sex. It is different from and does not determine a person’s sexual orientation. Sexual orientation refers to a person’s sense of affection and sexual attraction for people of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both sexes. Gender identity and sexual orientation are connected to the way we see ourselves and to our interactions with others.

Understanding and accepting our gender identity and our sexual orientation can have a strong impact – positive or negative – on the development of our self-concept. A person’s self-concept can develop positively if the person understands and accepts his or her gender identity and sexual orientation and is accepted by family and community. It is harder to develop a positive self-concept, however, if the way a person feels or identifies does not meet perceived or real societal norms and expectations or is not what they want, or if they do not feel supported by their family, friends, school, or community. A person’s self-concept can be harmed if a person is questioning his or her gender identity or sexual orientation and does not have support in dealing with his or her uncertainties. What kind of support do people need to help them understand and accept their gender identity and sexual orientation (ibid: 202)?

The references to sexual orientation and gender identity marked an important step that would have allowed some of Ontario’s most marginalized students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Just as the earlier excerpt from the ORC indicated, the ability to have students see themselves reflected in curriculum was an explicit goal of the ORC.

Grade Eights would also learn to think critically about engaging in sexual behaviour. Listed among the factors to consider before engaging in sexual acts were personal readiness, curiosity, previous decision to wait, peer pressure, consideration of risks such as STIs, blood-borne infections, pregnancy, personal or family values, religious beliefs, cultural teachings, acceptance of gender identity and sexual orientation. The importance of seeking information about sexuality
from a credible source is also included in the ORC (ibid: 205).

The ORC and the Media: ‘Too Much, Too Soon—and Too Gay-friendly’

The ORC was brought to the attention of the public on April 19th of 2010. It was then that Charles McVety, President of the Canada Family Action Coalition and President of Canada Christian College, issued a press release expressing his outrage over the contents of the revised curriculum (see Appendix B). The press release was titled “Mr. McGuinty, Withdraw Sex-Ed for 8 Year Olds” and it was posted on a specially created website found at www.stopcorruptingchildren.ca. With this press release, McVety, along with two other religious conservatives, Rev. Ekron Malcolm, Director of the Institute for Canadian Values and Brian Rushfeldt, executive Director of Canada Family Action, effectively ignited the provincial debate and controversy.

Their complaints about the curriculum and the subsequent complaints of other opponents followed four general themes. These could and did overlap and the combination of these concerns proved to be quite persuasive in the Ontario Legislature. The first identifiable grievance was the claim that the content of the curriculum was too explicit. Secondly, people complained that the age at which students would be introduced to this explicit material was inappropriate and that children and adolescents were too young for this information. Those who argued that children and adolescents were too young for some of this information usually included an argument relating to the fact that children would be unduly confused by the content and that it would be irresponsible to subject them to such material. This was most often in reference to the fear that discussions of sexual orientation would allow students to believe that this was an acceptable and viable identity. The third identifiable theme among the grievances over the ORC was the objection to the seeming lack of consultation with parents
regarding what the new sex education would contain. Finally, there were numerous accusations that the Government was overstepping its limits in educating youth about sex and sexuality and that this should be the exclusive role of parents. Parents and government were being constructed as dichotomous entities. These concerns all fit within the long-standing cultural anxieties about children and sexuality (Irvine 2002; Luker 2006; Hawkes and Egan 2010; McKay 1998). All of these grievances were present in complaints from opponents, but they were first referred to in McVety’s press release from April 19th, 2010.

A petition was eventually created and it was located on the ‘Stop Corrupting Children’ website, provided in Appendix A. The logo for the website and the petition, located at the top of the petition, contained the image of a teddy bear with bandages on its head and its arm in a sling. This image, found at the header of the petition, effectively conflated physical harm with emotional and moral ‘harm.’ The petition encouraged parents to protect their children from the explicit and damaging information in the new curriculum that amounted to mind control and corruption of child innocence.

It was this initiative that brought the ORC to the attention of Premier McGuinty who until that point was not aware of the revisions that the Ministry of Education had produced. By April 20th, numerous Canadian and local Ontario newspapers were reporting on the reactions of McVety, Malcolm, and Rushfeldt, the ORC and its supposedly controversial content.

McVety, Rushfeldt, and Malcolm were the first individuals to comment publicly upon the new curriculum that had never been formally announced by the Liberal Government. Their religious conservative interpretation of the ORC set the tone of the debates that followed the press release. Thus, the document was introduced to the public as a source of anger for certain groups and the continuous media coverage presented the ORC as controversial.
The responses to the ORC were heavily influenced by McVety’s press release. Many newspapers were citing the sound bites of Malcolm, Rushfeldt and McVety and even those who wished to offer their support for the ORC were repeatedly required to address the outrage and concerns of these men. This statement by McVety from the initial press release was the most widely and frequently cited:

It is unconscionable to teach eight-year-old children same-sex marriage, sexual orientation and gender identity. It is even more absurd to subject sixth graders to instruction on the pleasures of masturbation, vaginal lubrication and 12-year-olds to lessons on oral and anal intercourse. Mr. McGuinty plans to teach our children sexually explicit material that he did not give to his own. The Premier is not acting in trust. He must stop this form of corruption.

The above quote can be utilized as a specific example of how and why the ORC ended up being misconstrued. The wording McVety chose was deliberately intended to suggest that the ORC was going to teach children how to be sexual and how to perform sexual acts. He misrepresented the ORC in this statement and others that were, unfortunately, consumed by the concerned masses. A similar tone was found in the quote provided by Rushfeldt, who stated:

Ontario’s new sex education curriculum for 3rd – 7th graders is bordering on criminal. Canada prosecutes persons for corrupting minors with explicit sex. To cause confusion in a young child’s mind about being male or female is evil and teachers should refuse to present this onerous material.

Both Rushfeldt and McVety deployed language that was deliberately intended to incite a sense of outrage and alarm. It was this technique that allowed McVety to gain support from his religious conservative constituents who proceeded to pressure government officials as prompted. Other

22 In the past year, McVety was been reprimanded by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council of Canada for his volatile commentaries and misrepresentations of facts that have been both racist and homophobic, resulting in the cancellation of his TV program, *Word.ca* or *Word TV*. (Canadian Broadcast Standards Council: Ontario Regional Panel Decision 08/09-2124 & 09/10-0383+: 2010)
religious allies who opposed the ORC, such as Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, urged parents to contact government officials to voice their discontent and insisted that families should be the ones to teach children about moral issues like sexuality (Greenberg 2010). Muslim and South Asian groups were also protesting the new curriculum, such as the Somali Parents for Education. This practice highlights the conflation of political and religious identities in ideologically pluralistic societies.

In his contribution to the press release, Malcolm accused the government of pushing a hidden agenda in the curriculum, stating,

I believe this is a form of controlling the minds and desires of our young children who should not have to think about sex at such a delicate age. This is just another form of exploitation through so-called ‘inclusive education.’

His concern also reflects the fears that children, as quasi-subjects, are not equipped to make the correct decisions about their desires, also implying their lack of sexual subjectivity. He simultaneously refers to their ‘delicate age,’ suggesting that children are not sexual beings and that they do not have access to sexual information. His final complaint addressed the belief that the ORC was constructed with special interest groups in mind. He and McVety would later bemoan the positive portrayal of homosexuality in the ORC, arguing that the curriculum was designed with the specific intent of creating an accepting environment for LGBT individuals. This cause was perceived to be immoral and deplorable from their Christian perspective.

McVety’s outrage was specifically related to the new elements such as the introduction of sexual orientation to younger students, the inclusion of gender identity, masturbation, and the references to anal and oral sex. The media was vital in spreading McVety’s displeasure, and he used it to advise parents to protest the Government’s new curriculum by removing their children from school on May 10th, 2010. He also spread word of a protest that he would arrange at
Queen’s Park in Toronto if the changes to the curriculum were not withdrawn. Though there were proponents of the ORC, they did not mobilize as quickly or as militantly as McVety and his followers. Most support for the ORC came after April 22nd as a reaction to McGuinty’s decision to give the ORC a ‘re-think.’

Realizing the ways in which the contents of the ORC had been misrepresented, some government representatives attempted to clarify the intentions and focus of certain topics in the curriculum that were being exaggerated. Michelle Despault, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Education, stated:

This is not a how-to […] This is not teaching kids a way of being. This is teaching kids information they need to know for their health and well-being. So the expectation is to understand differences and what makes different people unique (Lewis 2010).

But the efficaciousness of emotional and risk-based language regarding youth sexuality that is culturally accessible far out-weighed the calm voices that repeatedly attempted to reel in the debate. Unfortunately, an impression had already been generated that tainted the image and reception of the ORC.

The concern over the content functioning to ‘confuse’ children was also quite prevalent among opponents. In an interview with the Globe & Mail on April 21st, Reverend Ekron Malcolm demonstrated the way that the various concerns over the ORC would frequently overlap when he stated,

I think it’s a sort of infringement on parents, because you’re talking about a very personal and sensitive area and dealing with kids so young I believe that it will end up infringing on their thought processes and their desires and ability to make correct choices. (Hammer and Howlett 2010: p. A1)

In another statement to the National Post, Malcolm objected to the inclusion of topics such as oral and anal intercourse until children were older, or not children anymore:
Schools don’t need to be teaching my children about sexual orientation or sex education. Those decisions should be left to the family, to the parents, to guide children. These topics can be taught at the high school level, at the university level, when children can make up their minds. (National Post 20 April: 2010)

The anxiety that surrounded the prospect of sex education for children can, perhaps, be more accurately labeled as anxiety among adults. This adult-centred fear was captured in one interview on CBC Television during an evening news program called The National, when mother Felicity Morgan and her 10 year old daughter were interviewed by Ioanna Roumeliotis about the ORC. Roumeliotis states, “Annabel is 10 years old, too young, Morgan says, to learn much about sex.” Morgan states, “Oral sex, vaginal lubrication? And I’m like, okay, wait a minute, whoa! I really don’t want that sort of thing introduced to my child before I’m ready […] These are adolescent and grown-up discussions. Why should children be saddled with more information?” (Roumeliotis 2010). Morgan’s choice of words illustrates the real issue perfectly—the uproar over the ORC was less about children’s preparedness and more about the anxieties of adults who wish to maintain a view of children that is characterized by innocence and ignorance of sexual knowledge.

Not all of the opinions heard in the debate were opposed to the ORC. One of the most recognizable supporters of the revisions was Alexander McKay, research coordinator of the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN). Citing research and trends in sexual behaviour among Canadian youth, McKay defended the revisions. On April 20th, McKay was quoted in the National Post:

It is developmentally appropriate for students in Grade 3 to have an awareness that not all people are heterosexual. Before any type of education takes place in the schools, many kids are going to be walking through the doors with that awareness anyway. The curriculum is appropriate and knowledge is preferable to ignorance.
The issue is that we live in a culture that is saturated with sexual imagery and that it is more important than ever that young people have a solid foundation of basic knowledge about human development and sexuality, and that this curriculum helps to deliver that. It would be compromising the health and well-being of our youth if we shy away from providing this important information and skill set (Nguyen 2010).

Continuing his effort to represent an alternative perspective, on April 21st McKay was interviewed by CBC Television Toronto stating that, “kids who have received high-quality sexual health education are more likely to protect themselves when they do become sexually active” (Roumeliotis 2010). McKay attempted to counter the effort among opponents of the ORC who were trying to protect the idea of childhood ignorance. He called attention to the fallacy of that claim by arguing that children were not ignorant of sexual information but McKay was speaking against the popular and resilient historical understanding of children as ignorant and innocent.

Other articles contained interviews with McKay and Lyba Spring, a public health practitioner, who argued that the curriculum was not as explicit as what is heard in the playgrounds of most schools in Ontario (Agrell and Picard 2010). This article also consulted Sanderijn van der Doef, a Dutch sex education expert and child, who insisted that no age was too young for sex education and that sex education begins at the age of five in the Netherlands.

Some teachers were speaking out to support the ORC, recognizing that youth today do not get desperately needed information about sexual health. Gord Butler, chairman of the Ottawa Catholic School Board, and Cathy Curry, chairwoman of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, both supported the ORC when they were interviewed by The Ottawa Citizen (Greenberg 2010).

The efforts of proponents of the ORC could not match the response that emotionally charged rhetoric about child endangerment and corruption could elicit from citizens. Janice
Irvine’s research is, once more, invaluable in understanding the way the religious social conservatives were able to control the flow of information and the tone of the debate. She notes the way that national advocacy organizations can function to script “the public conversation on sex education through rhetorical frames which organize ambivalence, confusion, and anxieties into tidy sound bites designed for mass mobilization. Nuanced arguments drop out of this process” (Irvine 2002: 8). Argumentation in the form of calm and evidence-based research was no match for the mobilizing effects of emotionally-charged and alarmist language that was able to persuade or coerce the Premier.

By the afternoon of April 22nd, in the face of what seemed to be mass opposition to the ORC, McGuinty decided to give the ORC a ‘serious rethink.’ This did not resolve the debate over the ORC since conservatives feared that this meant that the Liberals would attempt to ignore the issue and ultimately leave the ORC unchanged. Organizations that supported the ORC began to react to the decision by McGuinty, though the sex education portion of the ORC would ultimately not be salvaged.

**Legislative Debates, Accusations and Discord**

It was not long after the media began covering the response to the ORC that the issue was raised within the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. In fact, Premier McGuinty was not aware of the ORC until McVety and his supporters went public with their complaints (Howlett and Hammer 2010). The members of the New Democratic Party (NDP) supported the curriculum, but members from the Progressive Conservative (PC) party insisted that the curriculum was too controversial and explicit for young children. They began to question the Liberals about the
revisions, pressing McGuinty and his peers about the way the ORC was devised and what it included.

The objections began on April 21st, when PC MPP Elizabeth Whitmer questioned McGuinty:

The McGuinty Liberals have been caught making changes to the elementary school curriculum that will see a new sex education curriculum introduced beginning in grade 1 […] Why were parents not included in consultations and decision-making about these changes to the sexual education curriculum (Official Reports of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly: 21 April 2010: 840)?

Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Education, fielded the question, stating:

It’s very important that I’m able to state in this Legislature for the people of Ontario that in fact we have been consulting extensively since September 2007 in our process to review the curriculum. We have consulted with dozens of groups, including parent groups, faculties of education, universities and colleges. We have consulted with the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, with the Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition—made up of parents, I might add—and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Official Reports of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly: 21 April 2010: 840).

After being pressed once more about the silence surrounding the ORC, Dombrowsky stated that parents had been consulted, but if any parent were to take issue with the contents of the ORC they would be free to remove their children from a particular strand. In the press, McGuinty initially defended to ORC stating that he had confidence in the team who had put it together. He was quoted in The Ottawa Citizen stating, “I speak not just in my capacity as the Premier, but (also) as a father and I think I speak also with an understanding of the information that is available to children today” (Greenberg 2010).
The accusations that the government did not adequately consult with parents about the material in the curriculum were also frequent. On April 22nd, it was Christine Elliot, PC MPP, who had the opportunity to question the Liberals about their agenda. She inquired:

Premier McGuinty was also caught trying to slip through changes to the school curriculum so that, beginning in September, sex education will be taught to six-year-olds in grade 1. Parents are already coming forward and telling us that they weren’t consulted, Catholic school boards are saying they won’t implement the new curriculum, and the only ones who knew you were doing were so-called experts and Toronto advisers. What made you think you could get away with cutting parents out of a decision about their own kids (Official Reports of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly: 22 April 2010: 880)?

At that point, interjections from other MPPs overwhelmed the legislature, which would continue to happen throughout the debates over curriculum in the coming days. Once order was restored, Sandra Pupatello, Former Minister of Education and Current Minister of Economic Development and Trade, again insisted that parents were among those consulted in the creation of the curriculum. In a supplementary, Elliot referred to the Government attempting to teach sex education to grade one kids, and later referred to the ORC as sex education for six-year-olds. As my summary of the ORC showed, students in grade one or six-year-olds were only intended to learn the proper names of body parts. Referring to the naming of body parts under the umbrella term ‘sex education’ and not acknowledging the gradients of sexual knowledge that constituted the ORC allowed the controversy to escalate. Pupatello attempted to set the record straight:

Let’s go back to our grade 1 students. Does this party honestly think it’s inappropriate for young children to learn about what their body parts are, that they are in fact private, to know what we’re supposed to be showing and not showing, when you’re in grade 1? Are you honestly opposed to the language as is written for the grade 1 curriculum to know the right names of your body parts? Tell me that you are not in the Dark Ages about what a grade 1 student is coming home with through the Internet or through the schoolyard. We want those children taught properly (Official Reports of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly: 22 April 2010: 881).
What is clear in the excerpts from the oral question period in the first days of the debate is the sensationalization of the contents of the ORC. The repetition of ‘sex education for six-year-olds’ and variations on this suggested that the portions of the ORC being taught to students in Grade One were the same as what would be taught in Grade Seven and Eight, misleading and angering some Ontarians.

By April 26th, pressure was mounting from proponents of the ORC who insisted that the ORC be implemented in schools but opponents did not retreat. Conservative MPP Tim Hudak was referring the dropped changes as ‘controversial’. He was also falsely and perhaps strategically aligning sex-ed classes and grade one students. He interrogated the Liberals about their methods in formulating the ORC and accused the Premier of lying when Dombrowksy had stated that parents were consulted in the process. Hudak reiterated the concern of the conservatives in stating that the Government was attempting to bypass the authority of parents in Ontario and he simultaneously challenged the knowledge of those who had been consulted in the process of creating the ORC:

Sadly, when the minister talks about consulting, she is talking about so-called experts and elite insiders. We stand with moms and dads across the province of Ontario [...] It is hard to imagine who they consulted with, because they came out with a policy that was so out of the mainstream public opinion that it was soundly rejected by moms and dads across the province of Ontario. We stand with moms and dads in the province as making the best decisions for their kids.

We know we have a Premier who obsesses about micromanaging our homes [...] and now he actually wanted to begin sex education classes with six-year-olds who are just learning to tie their shoes. We rejected that approach. Ontario families rejected that approach (Official Reports of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly: 26 April 2010: 926).

Hudak referred here to the response of the vocal opponents as the mainstream opinion among Ontarians. Many news reports referred to the opponents of the ORC as a vocal minority, however
the pressure from this minority was perceived to be the popular opinion. These statements also situate the government in an oppositional role to parents when theorizing about appropriate sex education, when this was not the intention of the ORC and the literature typically defends the idea that parents are the primary educators of their children. Education is a shared endeavor, though the ORC was seen as an attempt to usurp the educational authority and autonomy of parents.

Again, Hudak made reference to this on May 3rd asking:

Who did they consult with? Apparently not your average person, not the real parents who have real children going to real schools […] What is wrong with consulting the public? Is there something wrong with consulting the people and getting their views? Parents have a pretty good idea of how to raise their children, what they think is right for their children and what they think is best for their children. Unless you want to adopt all the children - is that McGuinty’s plan? He’s going to adopt everybody? It’s going to be Daddy Dalton for everybody in the province? I don’t know (Official Reports of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly: 3 May 2010: 1165).

Hudak would continue to bring up the sex education scandal in his questions, creating new phrases that aligned children with innocence and ignorance each time and in order to argue that McGuinty and the Liberals were incompetent:

Last week, the McGuinty Liberals had six or seven or eight different positions on the new sex education curriculum that would start classes as early as with six-year-olds trying to tie their shoes […]

I think the minister knows full well that the parents knew nothing about your changes to the sex-ed curriculum that would begin sex-ed classes with six-year-olds, who are barely able to spell (Official Reports of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly: 26 April 2010: 926).

Another complaint made by Conservative MPs was the apparent secrecy with which the Liberals carried out the curriculum revisions, believing that they had deliberately attempted to put the ORC in schools under the radar so as not to stir up controversy. They accused the Liberals of anticipating this response and that they wished to avoid a public scandal.
Another inconsistency that compounded the concern of parents was regarding whether or not parents would be able to remove their children from classrooms for the portion of the ORC that dealt with sex education. At different times, Liberal party members stated that this would be an option but McGuinty stated that it would not be the case. This lack of coherence also contributed to the anxiety over the ORC.

The Conservatives were particularly critical and would not listen to the Liberal party’s response about the research, consultations, and procedures that had gone into the ORC. They were arguably riding the wave of dissatisfaction that Ontarians allegedly felt. The fact that the 2011 election was imminent also played a role in the way the situation was handled by all parties.

The way the Liberals responded to the backlash was problematic. McGuinty sometimes contradicted himself leaving an already skeptical public with many questions. The lack of cohesion, organization, and unity among the Liberals was clear. Another inconsistency in the Liberal party was regarding whether Catholic schools would have the authority to alter the curriculum in order to be in line with religious views. This will be elaborated upon later.

After several documented gaffes and inconsistencies as the Liberals responded to questions from various parties, McGuinty decided it would be best to withdraw the controversial elements of the ORC and attempt to include Ontario parents more in future efforts to revise the curriculum. On April 27th, McGuinty announced that the ORC would be implemented in Ontario schools in September of 2010 without the Human Development and Sexual Health component that had elicited such a strong response. This portion would be substituted with the 1998 H&PE curriculum, and this is what is currently being taught in Ontario schools.

The debate over sex education in Ontario is not yet finished, and the reverberations from the backlash to the ORC are still being felt within the Legislature. Most recently, NDP MP
Rosario Marchese questioned the Liberals on March 3rd, 2011 about their progress with reassessing the sex education component of the ORC. After some stalling, it became clear that the Liberals had not yet come up with an alternative to the portions of the 1998 H&PE curriculum that had been reinstated.

The response to the ORC was heated and divisive, but largely predictable considering the social research available that explores how and why sex education debates become so tumultuous. In the following chapter, I will apply the findings from this body of research on sex education, drawing attention to the strategies being utilized on the part of religious conservatives in order to gain public support and evaluating the response of the Ontario government.
Chapter Five

Assessing the Responses to the Originally Revised Curriculum

In this section I will analyze the debates over the Originally Revised Curriculum (ORC) using the theories of adolescent and child a/sexuality and Irvine’s (2002) research on sex education debates. I will also use the work of McKay (1998) after Rawls (1993) to explore the ways that the ORC and responses to it were all in violation of fundamental principles of democracy outlined by political liberalism and will provide a measured response to the critiques of this theory and its limitations.

The controversy generated by the ORC revealed that Canada is a society characterized by ideological pluralism, a state that can lead to turbulent politics and a fiercely divided population. Proponents of different sexual ideologies all strive to achieve the support of the Government and this is accomplished through various means. These battles become tremendously difficult to mediate, but such is the role of government in liberal democratic states; it must adequately and fairly handle the diverse opinions and ideologies in society and accomplish this without exhibiting bias. In the case of the ORC, the Ontario Government did not appease all citizens holding opposing ideologies and even betrayed the rights of some minorities in the process.

Most opponents of the ORC were striving to have what McKay (1998) would call a Restrictive Sexual Ideology (RSI) reflected in the curriculum, and proponents who defended the ORC desired a Permissive Sexual Ideology (PSI). McKay argues that sex education battles that are fought on ideological grounds are essentially moot because they are largely based on uncompromising and divergent world views and that a system for mediating these conflicts must
resort to the foundational principles of a liberal democracy in deciding whether some ideologies may be unreasonable. In order to ensure political stability, governing bodies are to follow the tenets of political liberalism and not validate or enshrine any one ideology, but must ensure that no ideology infringes on or limits another within a democratic society. The debate over the ORC demonstrates that the government of Ontario was willing to enshrine RSI in sex education, after a backlash to the attempt to introduce PSI in the ORC. Thus, the Government of Ontario did not adequately handle the province’s ideological pluralism according to the principles of political liberalism set out by Rawls (1993). In order to support this assertion I will develop Rawls’ political liberalism and subsequently delve into the ways that the RSI permeated the debate over the ORC.

Rawls’ Political Liberalism

John Rawls developed his theory of political liberalism in an effort to create a political process or framework that could foster political stability in societies characterized by ideological pluralism. He contended that ideological pluralism was the “normal result of the exercise of human reason within the framework of free institutions of a constitutional democratic regime” (1993: xvi). Political liberalism attempts to mediate conflicts between and among these groups through the privileging of human reason in its purest form. If it is to accomplish this, political liberalism “must contain its own intrinsic normative and moral ideal” (1993: xli-xlii) that is not derived from other comprehensive doctrines23 in society, but rather follows its own freestanding

23 Rawls posits this political conception of justice as a freestanding view, not derived from other comprehensive doctrines. It differs from other moral doctrines because it is said to be general, meaning that it “applies to a wide range of subjects, and in the limit to all subjects universally” (Rawls 1993: 13). A doctrine is considered comprehensive “when it includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship and of
moral order. It is predicated on a few basic and fundamental agreements about justice, equality, and fairness in society that are outlined by reasonable people seeking to preserve democracy. For political liberalism to work properly citizens must be reasonable and they are viewed as reasonable,

when, viewing one another as free and equal in a system of social cooperation over generations, they are prepared to offer one another fair terms of social cooperation (defined by principles and ideals) and they agree to act on those terms even at the cost of their own interests in particular situations, provided that others also accept those terms (ibid: xlii).

This is known as the criterion of reciprocity. Essential for my analysis later on is this condition of political liberalism that requires the recognition that all citizens are free and equal in a modern democracy and are entitled to the obligations and benefits of citizenship.

Political liberalism acknowledges that there are different and at times, opposing ideologies in a society and the differences between these ideologies does not preclude their status as reasonable. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the role of political liberalism is not to establish what is moral in a society or make a claim to truth, but rather to ensure that reasonably held ideologies do not interfere with or attempt to restrict one another. If an ideology seeks to censor or restrict the rights of proponents of another ideology it would be considered an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine. But “categorizing a doctrine as unreasonable does not imply that the doctrine’s stance on a particular moral issue is invalid, but rather it is the attempt to impose that moral stance that may render the doctrine unreasonable” (McKay 1998: 156).

24 The idea that political liberalism is a comprehensive doctrine or ideology of its own is a popular critique of the theory.
Canada, a society characterized by ideological pluralism, stands to benefit from such a framework. The debate over the ORC and McGuinty’s handling of the backlash demonstrates that the mediating role of the Ontario Government needs reconfiguration. Being mindful of the principles of political liberalism and the contributions of McKay to mediating ideological conflicts in sex education, I will now look to the debate over the ORC and discuss contributing factors that led to its demise. After some of the major issues in the debate are discussed, I will reintroduce McKay’s work in order to assess the debate through his and Rawls’ conceptualization of political liberalism.

Analyzing the Debate Over the ORC

Discourse of Risk and Discourse of Pleasure

The debate over the ORC invoked the deeply embedded cultural fears over child and adolescent sexual knowledge and highlighted the desire among Ontario adults to sustain child and adolescent innocence and ignorance. The ORC itself also reflected this tradition in some ways by supporting the discourse of risk (Fine 1988). As was noted previously, the ORC instructed teachers to educate students on the importance of choosing to abstain from any and all kinds of sexual activity. The discussions about sex and sexuality were almost exclusively within the context of teaching children how to protect themselves from the dangers associated with sexual behaviour. Students were to be taught that abstinence was the best decision, and were taught to choose to abstain from an assortment of sexual behaviours. They were given a dictate that was falsely presented as an option.

Such a discourse of risk can be associated with an RSI but only partially. It reflects an RSI
stance in the way that there is an emphasis on sexual intercourse solely for procreation and the
desire to limit the range of acceptable forms of and conditions of engaging in sexual behaviour. A
firm RSI would be an abstinence-only style of sex education and since sex education in Ontario
already goes beyond abstinence-only it cannot fall exclusively into this ideological camp.
However, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, none of these models and categories are absolute and
should be recognized as gradients. Considering the attempts to ensure that children and
adolescents refrain from engaging in any sexual behaviour and the limited presence of a discourse
of desire, I would place the advocates of a protectionist or risk-based discourse within the RSI
and not its progressive counterpart.

The ORC included more comprehensive sex education than the Health and Physical
Education Curriculum from 1998. Though it was most often characterized by a discourse of risk,
there were some elements of a discourse of desire (Fine 1988) and there was a minor but clear
acknowledgement of the Agentic Child. This was seen in the foreword to the Grade Seven and
Eight curriculum which addressed the fact that children and adolescents could be involved in or
contemplating sexual activity. It was also seen in the way that masturbation was included in the
curriculum in a manner that attempted to destigmatize the behaviour. Furthermore, the
acknowledgement of sexual orientation and gender identity as well as references to different
types of sexual behaviour, such as practices outside of heterosexual vaginal penetration, was an
important acknowledgement of youth sexual subjectivity. The recognition by educators that
children and adolescents have access to an abundance of sexual (mis)information was also a step
in recognizing the ways that children and adolescents need to be informed about sexuality.
However, this was one of the reasons why the ORC was met with hostility. It can be concluded
that the ORC was more liberal and reflected a PSI.
Paradoxically, those who were promulgating the value of the ORC were also situated in a discourse of risk. As was mentioned previously, discussions around sexuality are more permissible and acceptable by adults in our culture if they are focused on protectionism. Recall the 1980s when the AIDS crisis became a catalyst for explicit discussions of sexuality in schools in the name of protection. Similarly, most of the supporters of the ORC relied on a discourse of risk and protectionism in order to defend the revisions, citing the risks associated with a lack of knowledge about sexuality such as STIs and unwanted pregnancy, and that the ORC would function to reduce these harms. There was rarely any discussion in the debates about fostering positive sexual identities in youth or any attention drawn to a discourse of pleasure as it was defined by Fine (1988). This speaks to the limited space afforded to notions of child and adolescent sexual subjectivity in our society.

The Inclusion of LGBT Identities and Homophobia in the ORC

The inclusion of LGBT individuals and issues like homophobia in the ORC was a progressive and necessary step toward fostering more accepting attitudes towards different sexual orientations and sexual identities and could have functioned to curb the prevalence of homophobic violence and hate in schools. Curriculum is a site of value production and reproduction; what is and what is not included in curriculum has meaning and this exclusion of LGBT individuals and topics has further marginalized these groups.

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, there are human rights-based anti-bullying presentations and workshops that travel to certain schools in the Province that attempt to foster tolerance, but

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25 When I advocate for the understanding or acknowledgement of child and adolescent sexual subjectivity I do not mean to rebuff all of the protectionist material or approaches that serve to educate youth about dangers and risks associated with sexual behaviour or sexual activities. Rather, I disagree with the propensity to exclusively focus on the dangers of sexuality ad nauseam. This myopic presentation is not conducive to the fostering of holistic sexual health.
there are limits to the benefits of a peripheral, isolated acknowledgement of these identities and issues. An isolated anti-homophobic initiative will not be as successful as teaching students about LGBT groups in classes, thus such workshops reassign LGBT individuals a marginalized status. By lecturing students about the importance of equality and human rights in a democratic society while simultaneously presenting heterosexuality as the sole orientation reflected in sex education as well as other subjects, schools are continuing to send the message that serves to delegitimize and derogate non-heterosexual identities.

Addressing systemic and institutional factors that contribute to homophobia was one of the three components of McCaskell’s Triangle Model for dismantling homophobia in society (2005). Since the components of the ORC that would have discussed LGBT identities and issues were removed from the curriculum, according to the Triangle Model the issue of homophobia in schools will persist. Therefore the discussions that would have provided students with an understanding of various sexual identities will not occur and this oversight reveals the ways in which the behaviour of the Government of Ontario was discriminatory and remains complicit in the dissemination of homophobia in school environments.

Though the ORC was progressive in the way that it included sexual orientation and gender identity in its Human Development and Sexual Health unit, this inclusion was not without some subtle drawbacks. In their research on LGBT representations in foundations of education textbooks, Macgillivray and Jennings (2008) found that when LGBT issues are presented in textbooks it is often embedded in discussions about at-risk groups or in association with drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, depression, and suicide. This can function to reinforce biases and negative perceptions of these groups. Considering their findings, the ORC was progressive in some areas but it still presented LGBT students as victims.
It is also worth noting that the way the selected teacher prompt about sexual orientation and gender identity was scripted differed from other prompts that addressed students directly. Instead of using the pronoun ‘you’ in referring to people who could be gay, lesbian, or questioning, the prompt at times reverted to a more distant way of addressing students by using terms like ‘the person,’ ‘persons,’ or ‘his or her’ sexual orientation and gender identity. Though not readily conspicuous, this wording could influence the way that students feel about themselves or others in their classroom.

Aside from the homophobic fears of some groups, the fear of child and adolescent sexuality and sexual knowledge was also embedded in the response to the new curriculum for Grade Three. Many people believe that talking about sexual orientation requires discussions about sexual activity when this is not necessarily true. Grade Four teacher Cora Sangree draws attention to this common association and states,

kids hear this information all the time and what they’re getting mostly is a lot of misinformation and a lot of stereotypes that are just being reinforced over and over and over again. And I think that there’s a sort of fear that when you’re talking about gays and lesbians you’re talking about sex and […] I don’t think that’s true I mean I think you’re talking about a community […] and people relating to each other and not specifically about sex (Chasnoff and Cohen 1996).

Heterosexuality is ubiquitous and assumed and thus it enjoys privilege because it is not noticed. Homosexuality, however, is too often linked to sexual behaviour rather than ways of relating to other people and different forms of families. Thus homosexuality was introduced on an already shaky conceptual foundation that perceives the pairing of sexuality and children or adolescents as morally objectionable and reprehensible.
**Emotional Rhetoric: The Media, the Debate, and the (Mis)Education of the Public**

The way the ORC was introduced to the media, the way it became represented in the media, and the ways that these filtered perspectives were subsequently consumed by Ontarians all contributed to the fate of the ORC. The fact that the media were alerted to the ORC through a right-wing religious representative and through organizations that were fiercely opposed to the ORC contents influenced the way the story was presented to the Ontarians and ultimately the response of certain groups as well. It was introduced to the public as a controversial document that was allegedly angering parents and Ontarians, and this set the tone for the way the news was consumed.

Some of the reasons why the ORC failed to gain public support are linked to the way in which opponents were presenting its contents. The strategic representation of the curriculum was instrumental in creating the political and social climate that would lead to the shelving of the ORC. The central element that created this climate was the emotional rhetoric being deployed by prominent members of the religious right. For example, McVety eventually accused policy makers of using the ORC to advance a hidden “militant gay agenda” (Lewis 2010). Janice Irvine (2002) wrote at length about this strategy that is employed by the Right who wish to prevent sex education from being implemented and wish to convince others, through alarmist language, that it should be opposed. She summarized this technique, stating that

Speech about sexuality is used in a way to scare parents with threats to their children and to mobilize these parents, through emotional overt displays, to oppose comprehensive sex education. Language and images are strategically intended to frighten, outrage, and disgust26 (2002: 148).

26 All of these tactics can be seen in the petition and press release created by McVety (Appendices A and B) that were quoted from at length in Chapter Four.
Irvine paid specific attention to the way that the narrative of child innocence and potential for endangerment was successful in mobilizing people to join sex education opposition groups — even mobilizing individuals who initially held neutral or indifferent stances. The success of the emotional rhetoric being used by religious conservative groups relied upon a shared cultural anxiety about child sexuality, and Irvine’s findings, I argue, are reflected in the debate that occurred in Ontario.

In addition to the fear mongering employed by the Right, the conceptualization of adults as knowers and potential corruptors was prevalent among opponents to the ORC. In a quote from an article in the Globe & Mail from April 24th, McVety touted: “There’s no doubt that children are exposed to hostile sexual material more than we ever dreamt in our youth, but that doesn’t mean our teachers should be the exposer” (Agrell and Picard, 2010). McVety’s choice of words was deliberate. He intended to conjure up negative emotions in people so that they would be critical and afraid of the ORC. The connotations surrounding the words ‘expose’ and particularly ‘exposer’ are negative and were certainly meant to alarm those who heard them. This also positions adults in a role that McVety wished to denigrate when he implicated adults and parents as the potential corruptors of youth. Furthermore, exposing children to sexual materials that influence their perceptions about sexuality are not invariably ‘hostile’, as McVety called them. The word ‘hostile’ was deliberately used to arouse alarm and fear among parents. Furthermore, this assertion underestimates the power of messages communicated on television and in movies that are not necessarily hostile, but that can be subtle and ubiquitous. Children are educated about sexuality pervasively in our culture through modeling adult behaviour, through the media, through talking with each other and family, through laws and through religious and other values (Moore & Rosenthal 2006: 3). By referring to the ORC as ‘hostile sexual material,’ McVety
further sensationalized the contents of the debate drawing attention away from rationally based arguments about children’s sexual knowledge.

Once again, this strategy resembles the findings of Irvine (2002) when she studied sex education debates across the US. She found that opponents to comprehensive sex education would often dramatize the contents of it, labeling it the ‘pornography curriculum,’ ‘sodomy curriculum,’ or passing around copies of it that were marked ‘XXX- EXPLICIT’ in order to dramatically communicate that the material was to be considered grossly inappropriate. McVety’s language that labeled the ORC in such aggressive, emotional and value-laden rhetoric and his public fury over the contents served a similar purpose in Ontario.

Another occurrence in the media and in the Legislature that functioned to inform responses to the ORC was the abundant conflation of the content within the ORC under the term ‘sex education’. The widespread and repeatedly used phrase ‘sex education for six-year-olds’ allowed people to believe that all of the topics being objected to or being considered controversial were being introduced in Grade One. In addition, the inclusion of proper terminology for body parts in Grade One and terms for physiological sexual response in humans in Grade Six also angered opponents of the ORC. The sole act of referring to sexual anatomy was enough for some to be offended. These hostile reactions to and the conflation of sex education content in representations of the ORC echoed Piper’s claims (2000) that when children and sex are considered together this can only indicate ‘abuse’. The outrage expressed also reflects Irvine’s findings from her research in the US when she found that talking about sex or sexuality with children was being perceived as comparable to sexual abuse. The idea of equating the names of body parts with abuse and considering this to be unnecessary sexual information as well as the conclusion that verbally mentioning certain sexual practices to children would result in their corruption represent a few of
the ways that the deep-seated fear of acknowledging childhood sexuality appeared in the debate over the ORC. When sexuality and children are brought up in the same sentence, particularly when facts are misconstrued, the longstanding history of anxiety surrounding child and adolescent sexuality can become a powerful political force.

Michael Apple (2006) has written extensively about the ways in which the religious right and right activists have been able to gain support in debates over education through their ability to construct notions of common sense that effectively counter elite knowledge or the authority of those educated, middle-upper class individuals who are in positions of power. By reverting to very simplistic arguments, typically invoking binaries of good and bad or evil, they are able to convince people that seemingly complex debates and arguments about knowledge and education are not as convoluted as experts make them seem. This was a theme in the Ontario debate over the ORC; the ways in which notions of corruption and malice were reiterated by McVety and other opponents appealed to a deeply rooted understanding that Child + Sex = Abuse (Piper 2000) and that there were no other logical ways of understanding child and adolescent sexuality. This was particularly salient in the way that these ideas about corruption were juxtaposed with child and adolescent innocence. The appeal to simplistic arguments and depicting morality in black and white terms gave the religious right a functional and tactical advantage. Apple insists that we need to refrain from underestimating the power of common sense claims in public debates (2006). Apple notes that this ability to construct or define common sense “actually may make [evangelical or religious right activists] even more powerful since their interest is not only in transforming a few laws but in transforming the structures of feeling of an entire culture” (2006: 183). The fact that the opponents were able to appeal to common sensical understandings of child and adolescent sexual knowledge and absolutist definitions of morality resonated with adults,
allowing these conservative voices to accumulate support in the Province. This was also a victory for the religious right in a broader sense since they were able to condition adults in Ontario to respond to and understand an issue, in this case sex education, through their particular ideological lens.

Newspapers did communicate the views of opponents and proponents of the ORC. However, as Irvine (2002) demonstrated in her research, the power of emotional rhetoric on the Right can overpower attempts to consider other reasonable facts. The rational rebuttals of Alexander McKay, research coordinator of Sex Information Council of Canada (SIECCAN) and Liberal MPP Sandra Pupatello, former Minister of Education and current Minister of Economic Development and Trade, could not succeed against the emotionally-charged arguments of the opponents.

Considering the summative style of news, particularly in the modern world where sound bites and clips are sometimes all the news that people receive, the ORC was not represented in a just manner. Newspaper articles and news broadcasts are inherently limited in the scope of what they can summarize. Stories may only be allotted four minutes for a video news presentation, or 300-1000 words for a column. In the efforts to summarize what was being introduced in the ORC, a document that is over 200 pages long, the contexts of certain topics were, at times, lost or ignored. The fact that McVety’s press release dictated the terms and issues within the debate also influenced the way news was being constructed and consumed. The juxtaposition of the word ‘child’ with terms like ‘vaginal lubrication’ and ‘anal intercourse’ sparked some of the deeply entrenched anxieties about childhood sexuality that were described in Chapter Three and allowed a response guided by shock to inform opinions of Ontarians. The limitations of journalism
facilitated the consumption of particular ideas and angles related to the ORC that were able to stand out.

Irvine’s research drew attention to the ways in which emotional rhetoric in discourse can inform how people actually feel about issues. Specifically, people can be emotionally moved or swayed when culturally sensitive topics are being discussed within a public forum. She notes that there are normative scripts of behaviour that are expected and reinforced in society—what Arlie Hochschild calls “feeling rules”—and these are embedded in discourse (Irvine 2002: 144). Feelings are incredibly responsive to emotional appeals and social conventions and are easily susceptible to social control, thus the heated debates over sex education can function to “coach citizens in the emotional expectations” of gatherings (Irvine 2002: 145). In other words, people are keenly aware of normative emotional responses to certain subject matter and may be inclined to adjust their reactions to and opinions of certain phenomena so that they appear to be in line with what they perceive to be a socially appropriate response. This was seen in the debate over the ORC when the outrage expressed by certain groups over the contents of the curriculum succeeded in influencing the public perception of the ORC and guided the reactions of others who came to believe that child asexuality and innocence needed to be ‘defended’. The discourse of child asexuality and the need to protect children from carnal knowledge was constructed as the culturally appropriate response to such a curriculum. The prescribed image of children and adolescents as asexual gained widespread acceptance in Ontario and people were reluctant or unable to counter this powerful, historically grounded discourse.

By fusing emotional rhetoric and alarmist language with a culturally privileged RSI, the religious conservatives were able to stimulate ambivalent feelings towards the ORC and convince politicians of their cause. A PSI could not have functioned and succeeded in the same manner.
because our culture has a rich and developed vocabulary for the discussion of sex and sexuality in damaging and harmful terms. A comparable vocabulary for the discussion of sexuality and sex in a positive light is not yet available. The combination of these elements seemed to make a strong and convincing case for the abandonment of the revisions, regardless of the fact that the protesters were a vocal minority.

**Parental Accusations of Government Infringement**

The concern over parental authority vis-à-vis the state was called into question and opponents challenged the right of the government in educating or indoctrinating their children with values and information with which some parents were not comfortable. This was also due to the fact that some parents felt as though they were not informed about the changes and argued that they should have been. Other concerns raised were that the Government was undermining the authority of parents in educating children and adolescents about matters as sensitive and value-laden as sex and sexuality.

These concerns, again, reflect the values of an RSI that views parents as the primary educators of children and adolescents, and the belief that morals and values need to be unilaterally instilled by parents. The attempt by the Government to contradict the ideological convictions of a certain group in society was neither just nor democratic according to political liberalism.

**Confusing Children and Adolescents: Convenient and Contradictory Invocations of Sexual Tabula Rasa**

Modern sex education has always been seen for its potential to transform and improve populations (Luker 2006; Morris 1994; Irvine 2002; McKay 1998). This was true in the social hygiene movement and it remains true today. One of the biggest concerns voiced among
opponents to the ORC was the age at which children were to be taught about sexuality and certain sexual topics. This was closely followed by the fear that children would be ‘confused’ by ideas they were not ready to conceptualize and this relates to the view that children are malleable and impressionable. As previously mentioned, this concern was rooted in the unproblematic presentation of non-procreative sexual acts such as oral and anal intercourse and masturbation, but most clearly the inclusion of homosexuality in the ORC.

The inclusion of sexual orientation in Grade Three was a major area of contention in the backlash to the ORC. Introducing sexual orientation to young children was perceived as a ‘risk’ or ‘threat’ that would allow children to believe that there was parity between homosexuality and heterosexuality, which many opponents argue that there is not. The belief that children have an appropriate sexual destiny or nature (heterosexuality) but that they can be swayed if otherwise encouraged results in the cultural management of this potentiality. Management, in this example, occurred in the form of restricting child and adolescent access to the ORC in order to prevent certain ideas from being accepted or formed.

Both liberal and conservative sexual ideologies seem to believe in a sexual tabula rasa, and the concern over the management of this is at the heart of sex education. Attempting to circumscribe the sexual knowledge of children and adolescents starts early and research shows that they form ideas about what constitutes appropriate gender and sexuality at young ages (Renold 2005; Sauto-Manning and Hermann-Wilmarth 2008; Chasnoff and Cohen 1996). Liberals argue that the earlier children gain exposure to ideas of homosexuality, the greater the likelihood that accepting attitudes will flourish and serve to reduce homophobic bullying by fostering tolerant school environments (Sauto-Manning and Hermann-Wilmarth 2008: 266). Numerous researchers, academics, and teachers have produced work that highlights the need for
the inclusion of topics such as sexual orientation at younger ages because exclusion, abuse, and bullying starts early (ibid: 2008). Sexual conservatives also recognize that attitudes are formed at a young age and this compels them to limit and restrict access to knowledge they deem to be inappropriate (Luker 2006; McKay 1998). Those fiercely opposed to the ORC, particularly those arguing on behalf of the Catholic School Board, wished to prevent the early instilment of tolerant attitudes toward LGBT populations or the normalization of homosexuality. So, both proponents of the RSI and PSI are striving to maintain or gain the capacity to ‘impress’ or influence young minds and aim to own this site of primary impression through sex education.

Judith Butler (1990) would point out that the concern over properly managing child (hetero)sexual socialization demonstrates the constructedness of all sexualities, since a genuinely natural sexual and/or gender identity would never require the cultural upkeep and management that our society exerts in striving to maintain a heteronormative regime. The effort put forth by those who opposed the ORC and who were concerned about things such as confusing children with sexual information about alternative sexualities fail to see that this management of child and adolescent sexuality undermines the supposed naturalness of a heteronormative order.

Children and Adolescents as Quasi-Subjects and Adult Hubris

The outrage over the new curriculum rested on the modernist perspective that children lack knowledge, are asexual quasi-subjects and that only adults are learned and permitted to know about sexuality. Adults were positioned as holders of sexual knowledge and children and

27 I do not intend to imply that those within an RSI or sexual conservatives wish to create environments that promote the bullying and abuse of LGBT youth. However, the research that reveals the ways in which hostile homophobic attitudes are emotionally and physically damaging for LGBT youth demonstrates the weak and specious distinction in the Christian perspective that attempts to separate the condemnation of sexual acts from the condemnation of individuals (‘hate the sin, not the sinner’).
adolescents were positioned as ignorant or ideally ignorant of sexual knowledge. What can be
gathered from the voices of those opposing the ORC was that parents, teachers, and politicians,
by virtue of their status as adults, do not require sex education. There are numerous reasons why
this assertion is false. Many parents do not have up-to-date facts about sexually transmitted
infections and research has shown that even teachers in training do not receive specific education
concerning sensitive issues in sex education; they can feel unprepared and uncomfortable with the
subject (Robinson and Ferfolja 2001; Langille et al 2001). Many adults and educators do not have
access to the research that reports on youth sexual activity, and they can be in denial about youth
sexual behaviours (Langille et al 2001; Ninomiya 2010; Elliot 2010). This research serves to
disrupt the cultural narrative that positions adulthood and childhood/adolescence on a sexual
knowledge-based and developmental continuum.

The Catholic Question

The presentation of sexual orientation as unproblematic was a major issue specifically for
the Catholic School Boards of Ontario. The backlash to the ORC was also a reaction to the
inclusion of information that did not necessarily posit sexual expression and desire outside of
heterosexual monogamy as fundamentally dangerous, such as acknowledgements of
masturbation, non-procreative sexual practices and same-sex desire. The position that is presented
in Catholic school curriculum is that homosexuality is not a sin but homosexual acts are morally
wrong. Homosexuality is covered in Catholic schools in Grade Eight within the curriculum called
Fully Alive, a family life education program sponsored by the Ontario Conference of Catholic
Bishops (Fully Alive 1992). According to Fully Alive, “[i]t is not sinful to have homosexual
tendencies, but sexual acts between people of the same sex are morally wrong” (Fully Alive:
Teacher’s Edition 1992: 84). Catholic school board members opposed the ORC arguing that it
undermined the religious freedom of Catholic parents who wish to instill certain values in their children, among those values being that homosexuality should not be accepted in society.

Catholic schools have a constitutionally protected right to pen their own curriculum in order to protect their religious freedom. Utilizing this power, they ultimately stated that they would not support or implement the ORC since it betrayed the Church’s ideology of sexual morality.

The Government is facing mounting pressure to definitively respond to the issues stemming from the rights of denominational schools and the way that the Catholic Church’s position on homosexuality conflicts with the Ontario Human Rights Code. As was mentioned earlier, the ORC included information about the important role of community support networks for LGBT individuals, such as gay-straight alliances in schools. Ontario LGBT advocate organization Queer Ontario and Xtra Magazine have recently reported on the fact that gay-straight alliances (GSA) are prohibited in Catholic school boards in Ontario (Houston 2011). Queer Ontario has written to Education Minister, Leona Dombrowsy, demanding that Catholic schools be held to the Ministry policy that allows GSAs to be formed in schools. There has yet to be a response from the Government.

Social support for LGBT teens and the inclusion of GSAs in schools are important factors contributing to the mental and physical health of these youth. A recent US study published in Pediatrics showed that the suicide rate among LGB28 teens in areas that lacked social support was significantly higher than in those areas where support networks were available. Among LGB youth, the risk of attempting suicide was 20% greater in unsupportive environments compared to supportive environments, such as those that were more politically liberal and had available

28 The study did not include data on transgender or transsexual youth.
GSAs (Hatzenbuehler 2011). Unfortunately, there is little to no research on the experiences of LGBT youth within Catholic school environments. When research so clearly reveals the relationship between the health of LGB youth and supportive or unsupportive social environments the negligence of the Ontario Government in its decision to shelve the ORC is made starkly apparent.

**The Handling of the Backlash in Government**

The opinions and arguments of those debating the appropriateness of the ORC in the Legislature invoked the same ideologies, the PSI and RSI, and the same cultural and historical belief that posits children and adolescents as asexual, innocent, and ignorant. The debate transcripts revealed the extent to which proponents of opposing ideologies were entirely unwilling to listen to the others’ reasoning.

Hudak’s rebuttals often invoked the historical narrative that positions children and adolescents as quasi-subjects and he also used rhetorical strategies that emphasized the vulnerability of children. His constant reiteration of children’s motor and cognitive developmental states alongside the prospect of sex education served to emphasize the ways that children are not considered full subjects and simultaneously drew attention to their vulnerability (‘six year olds who are learning to tie their shoes;’ ‘who are barely able to spell’). He also collapsed the contents of the entire curriculum under the term ‘sex education,’ removing the age-appropriate distinctions that are essential to consider for a sensitive subject like sex education.

Pupatello’s attempts to bring rational points to an emotionally charged subject were virtually ignored. Dombrowsky and Pupatello’s responses to the conservative member’s accusation that there had been no consultations with parents fell on deaf ears. This highlights the arguments made by McKay about the fact that debates between oppositional ideologies are often
irresolvable. Both parties appeal to their own ideologies in debating and this merely allows them to talk passed one another (1998).

**Government Capitulation and Provincial Confusion**

The reactions among the proponents of the ORC to McGuinty’s decision to drop the changes to sex education varied. Many were surprised, others shocked, and some were angered by the Premier’s actions. A common response was the criticism that the Premier surrendered to a vocal minority group that did not reflect the opinions of the majority of Ontarians or Canadians more broadly. Even some educators from the United States had been paying close attention to the way that the debate played out and were disappointed with the result. Elizabeth Schroeder, executive director of Answer, an organization based at Rutgers University that provides and promotes comprehensive sex education, was quoted in The National Post in an article titled ‘Sex-ed backlash inhibits McGuinty’, stating:

> I thought this is so fantastic that someone is finally setting the stage that, to be comprehensive, sex education cannot start in high school or even middle school — you have to start early because everything is a building block. I was so excited. Then when I saw they changed their minds, I thought: Oh great, why don’t you just move down here. That’s what we do in the States, kow-tow to parents groups and religious leaders instead of sticking our feet in the ground and saying ‘We are the educational experts.’ […] We certainly don’t have parents deciding whether or when or how to teach math so why are we so apologetic about this topic that actually saves lives (Humphries 2010)?

This response from a citizen deeply embedded in the sex education debates in the US, debates that are far more contentious than those in Canada, is somewhat disheartening. Her commentary addresses several key issues. The Liberals absolutely turned their backs on the educators and researchers who, like any other school curriculum, put together requirements for Ontario youth and intended to present the most up to date and comprehensive curriculum possible. The
submission to a vocal minority based on a deep-seeded cultural anxiety surrounding child and adolescent sexual knowledge as well as fierce opposition from some citizens speaks to the dominion of the narrative of child and adolescent asexuality as well as the potency of the politically organized religious conservatives.

The emotional rhetoric being deployed by religious conservatives may not seem as though it could be responsible for the shelving of the ORC, but the impact of metaphorical images or ‘figurations’ of children and adolescents as asexual, innocent, and ignorant of sexual knowledge cannot be underestimated. Commonly believed ideas and shared interpretations of subjects inform government policy, the law, and opinions of citizens (Castaneda 2002).

The Liberals must be held partially accountable for the failure of the ORC. They were unable or unwilling to meet the challenges that a vocal minority could conjure and were unable to diffuse the alarmist, emotional rhetoric regarding child and adolescent sexuality that was being utilized by the opponents. The Government was unable to adequately mediate the province’s ideological pluralism.

**Government Response and Political Liberalism**

When considering the principles of political liberalism and the appropriate negotiation of ideological pluralism in a society the response of the Ontario government can be considered insufficient for numerous reasons. Again, political liberalism is not concerned with which sexual ideology is correct or valid, but rather it must affirm the existence of multiple sexual moral truths and this means balancing the two prominent sexual ideologies, the RSI and PSI. I have demonstrated the ways in which the debate over the ORC in Ontario reflected arguments on behalf of both of these ideologies and, considering the ways in which battles rooted in ideology
are typically incommensurable, a mediating body is always required. The Government’s role is to ensure that all groups have a protected right to freedom of belief, and that the proponents of the various sexual ideologies should not restrict or impede the rights of the others.

Recounting Rawls, McKay notes that a society or education is undemocratic when only one ideology dominates curriculum, and the RSI has dominated sex education curriculum for many years. Mediating this imbalance does not mean that the PSI should be privileged over RSI, no matter how much one might believe that it is better. McKay cautions us, stating: “the proponents of a particular sexual ideology, regardless of whether it is restrictive or permissive, violate the spirit of democracy when they successfully implement public school-based sexuality education programs embodying only that ideology” (McKay 1998: 120).

On the surface, both of the battling sexual ideologies that were identifiable in the debate over the ORC appear to be out of line. The ORC itself was more left leaning in its contents; however, the way in which the content was presented was not in a manner that limited the ability of those advocating a RSI to instill their preferred values in other ways. In other words, the ORC did not present a contentious topic, such as sexual orientation, in such a way that demanded that students support the identity without question. Rather, it presented the information in a way that highlighted the importance of having respect for others and being informed about various groups in society. Because the RSI is determined to limit the amount of sexual knowledge that children and adolescents receive it can be categorized as an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine or ideology.

29 Rawls uses the term ‘comprehensive doctrine’ but McKay chooses ‘ideology’ to serve a comparable function in his work.
The opponents of the ORC who operated within a RSI represented what would be deemed an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine/ideology because of the way they sought to restrict knowledge. Furthermore, this ideology betrays the criterion of reciprocity in political liberalism, since not all citizens are recognized as free and equal in this conceptualization—people who are not heterosexual are not considered worthy of equal representation in curriculum, and children and adolescents are not seen as equal in the way that their knowledge is being limited and policed.

While McKay acknowledges that the RSI becomes an unreasonable doctrine when it opposes the inclusion of topics such as the need to respect individuals with different sexual orientations, he does not believe that it is the role of education to instill tolerance or attempt to convince youth of the morality of this sexual identity. Since there is still significant opposition in society to this effort, it would be undemocratic to insist that youth adopt this view. Regarding the comprehensive doctrine that positions homosexuality as immoral, he notes that

If we demand its suppression, an appeal to democratic principles in advocating the equal expression of perspectives that affirm homosexuality collapses in contradiction. How can we argue for the expression of gay and lesbian positive perspectives in public schools, particularly those that exist in communities that are largely hostile to those views, when we simultaneously argue that those who believe that homosexuality is wrong have no right to express their own conceptions of the moral good life (McKay 1998: 159)?

McKay believes that education should promote moral autonomy and not moral indoctrination from a liberal or conservative perspective. He does, however, condemn those sex education programs that refuse to acknowledge sexual orientation because it can be considered an affront to the principles of political liberalism. The absence of the issue of sexual orientation in

30 McKay concedes that the act of placing discussions of homosexuality within the context of morality can arguably be considered ideologically biased.
sex education indicates that the rights of all people in a society are not being respected equally, and this is unreasonable and undemocratic. This thesis advances his argument about the inclusion of sexual orientation in sex education, contending that the exclusion of this topic is in fact undemocratic and reflects the Ontario Government’s capitulation to an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine.

It is worth noting that McKay wrote his book, *Sexual Ideology and Schooling*, in 1998 and since that time in Canada, same-sex couples have been granted protections and status that, in law and *in theory*, nearly equal those of heterosexuals. McKay’s claim that proponents of an RSI have a democratic right to view homosexuality as immoral and to protect their youth from receiving information that would suggest otherwise is contradictory to the criterion of reciprocity that is a foundational concept of political liberalism. Though he does advocate for the inclusion of sexual orientation in sex education in a rights-based form, I disagree with the preliminary presentation of the RSI as reasonable considering its evaluation of LGBT people. The conditions that define reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive doctrines are predicated on the criterion of reciprocity that states that all people are to be considered free and equal in a liberal democracy. At a base level, the RSI does not position LGBT people as equal to heterosexuals in society, thus this ideology’s entitlement to fair and equal representation in matters of mediating ideological pluralism must be forfeited.

Likewise, children and adolescents in society are among those who are not formally regarded as citizens; they are instead situated as developing quasi-subjects and are not considered
free and equal. Children and adolescents are rarely included in the way that sex education or curriculum more broadly is generated and one may label this as undemocratic. This conceptualization and treatment of youth also violates the criterion of reciprocity. Furthermore, the conditions for the realization of Hawkes and Egan’s Agentic Child (2010) state that children and adolescents must be viewed as sexual subjects and included in the planning of sex education. The current dominant conceptualization of children and adolescents as outlined in Chapter Three violates their democratic rights under political liberalism and prevents the progression of a cultural understanding of the Agentic Child.

As was noted earlier, the ORC reflected a PSI—a break from the long history of RSI that dominated sex education in the province. Though the principles of political liberalism would not defend the validation of PSI within sex education, the call from opponents to the ORC to censor and limit certain materials from sex education reflected the motives of an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine. Thus, it can be said that the ORC, the opponents to the ORC, and the Ontario government all failed to meet the requirements of political liberalism and were undemocratic according to this model. The Government, the body responsible for ensuring the fair and equal representation of all ideologies, then, committed the most egregious act of all in its shelving of the ORC.

To summarize, the shelving of the ORC validated the concerns of a certain minority

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31 The issue of children vis-a-vis citizenship and equality is not developed by Rawls in Political Liberalism (1993), nor is it addressed by McKay (1998). Rawls seems to envision “people” as strictly adults.
32 I realize that I am approaching the limits of the criterion of reciprocity, however this is an important point that supports a key argument. Adults position children and adolescents as proto-citizens and quasi-subjects and this translates to the inability or unwillingness to acknowledge child and adolescent sexual subjectivity.
voice in the Ontario population and this was at the expense of the holistic sexual health of youth, and LGBT youth in particular. When the Government capitulated to a vocal minority in the province, a minority which represented a RSI that can be considered unreasonable on at least two counts, it violated the basic principles of democracy as outlined by political liberalism.

**McKay’s Democratic Philosophy of Education**

McKay developed his democratic philosophy of education through building on and incorporating the principles of political liberalism as outlined by John Rawls (1993). After reviewing the extent to which RSI and PSI differ, McKay advises us to step back and acknowledge the ideologies that we all subscribe to. He writes,

> all too frequently, our culture, including our schools, have sought to issue commandments about sexuality to adolescents rather than to assist them in developing the critical skills to make well thought out decisions […] Beginning in adolescence, sex education programs need to teach students to identify prevailing ideological positions on sexuality, what they suggest about what it means to live the good life (1998: 149).

When considering McKay’s democratic philosophy of education, the handling of the ORC by the Government and the resulting current H&PE curriculum are insufficient. A democratic philosophy of sexuality education will only be truly democratic if it,

> functions to help those who create and implement curricula, conduct sexual research, provide therapy and counseling, advocate for high quality sexuality education and clinical services, and those who make public policy decisions to reflect upon their own biases and assumptions (McKay 1998: 6).

Furthermore, a democratic philosophy of education must work to accommodate ideological and moral pluralism regarding sexuality and must also “foster the democratic right of all people, including young people, to deliberate between different points of view and arrive at their own convictions” (Ibid).
A democratic philosophy of education is informed by neither particular religious nor secular liberal conceptions of appropriate sexual expression and sexual information—it must affirm the existence of numerous sexual ideologies and moral truths. Students must be educated about democratic values and they should be provided with opportunities to reflect on their own values and those of others (ibid: 144). This type of sex education would also be nondiscriminatory and would “fully support the needs and desires of all students” (ibid). The ORC does not reflect a democratic philosophy of education, though perhaps Ontario sex education will resemble this ideal more closely in the future.

I advocate for an approach that recognizes the research that has demonstrated the sexual knowledge that children and adolescents have and an approach that enables curriculum that parallels their understanding and includes them in a collaborative planning process. I also believe that this needs to be realistic in terms of what age children should start receiving sex education. Thomas Wickes, a child psychologist and active figure in the social hygiene movement\(^{33}\), shrewdly stated that “[w]e cannot leave the building of the road until it is time to embark upon the journey and then expect to find it safe and easy going” (Wickes 1927: 288 in Hawkes and Egan 2008: 455). Echoing the sex education experts that were overpowered in the provincial debate, I still believe that this education needs to begin at an early age and with an acknowledgment of the multiple groups of sexual values that people defend and validate in society.

\(^{33}\) The social hygiene movement was problematic for the way that it attempted to control the sexual behaviour of certain populations and for this it can be considered conservative in nature. However, I wish to draw attention to the ways in which the movement can be considered liberal since it was one of the first instances where sex and sexuality were being spoken about publicly effectively challenging the previous tradition of the time that positioned these topics as indisputably taboo.
Addressing Potential Limitations and Critiques of Liberalism

Though the behaviour of the Government in validating an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine or sexual ideology was found to be unjust and undemocratic according to the principles of political liberalism, there are some issues with this framework that are not entirely compatible with my broader goals for Ontario sex education. I will briefly review some major critiques of political liberalism and offer my own modifications.

Political liberalism calls for the separation of public and private matters and it privileges and promotes objectivity in governance. This is contrary to the social critique that informs my research and theoretical convictions. I also question the capacity of individuals in positions of power to be objective or politically neutral. One could cite the obviously embedded sexual ideologies within the reactions and actions of politicians over the ORC as evidence of this lapse.

Some of the most common critiques of Rawls’ political liberalism are that he fails to adequately account for religion, culture, and family (Young 2009). He seems to approach religion as a battle that has already been settled, which it clearly is not. His conception of reason and the criterion of reciprocity are said to reflect neutral values though many argue that these conceptualizations are never neutral and reflect the reasoning of a particular ideal that is not outside of ideology. This coincides with another major critique of political liberalism that also denies its neutrality and positions it as a veiled argument for secularism (Beiner 2009). The overarching critique is that political liberalism is embedded in a liberal ideology and its major offense lies in the way that it pretends as though it functions without this bias.

These are important critiques but I think that political liberalism was valuable in the way that it presented a more moderate framework and still positioned the Ontario Government as incorrect in its concession to religious conservative values. Perhaps political liberalism does not
privilege religious ideology as much as some feel that it should, but the RSI and the goals of the religious conservatives in the debate were deliberately attempting to limit the rights of other groups and this was in no way democratic.

In his subscription to political liberalism, McKay does not believe that morality should be taught in schools since there are conflicting ideas of what is and is not moral in our society. But when sexual orientation is concerned, Canadian society has formally established that this minority is entitled to the protections and rights of citizenship afforded to heterosexuals and thus should not be considered within the realm of morality. These rights are not yet fully recognized in Canada and, as I demonstrated in Chapter Two, LGBT youth are still significantly disadvantaged and marginalized as a result of this. That being said, I do not believe that social change in the form of acceptance and tolerance will be achieved through a strictly rights-based, isolated approach to addressing issues of homophobia. Some proactive measures that would prompt institutions, particularly government institutions, to follow the Ontario Human Rights Code and reflect the law are necessary. This belief and the pursuit of this cause is outside the parameters of political liberalism.

As I have argued, curriculum is not neutral and it is not devoid of value judgments and morals; it is a map of what a society considers to be moral and good (Apple 2004). The principles of political liberalism are an ideal but since they are not honoured by the state-created curriculum and politicians, those subscribing to ideological camps whose values and morals are still not reflected in curriculum will continue to fight for the privilege of being recognized. I support the effort of people who wish to have their ideological values reflected in curriculum since morality is contextually and historically created, and without lobbying and activism societies would not

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34 By ‘rights’ I am referring to the fact that the exclusion of sexual orientation from curriculum is an act of discrimination.
progress. The claim that governments can be neutral is also false, and these groups must draw attention to these facts and fight for representation\textsuperscript{35}. The idea of striving for political stability as political liberalism tries to do is an admirable goal, however I do not believe that it is achievable. Debates stemming from ideological pluralism will always occur, but political liberalism is merely one suggestion on how to mitigate this feature of modern democratic societies.

In my hopes to affect meaningful social change through education I recognize that I am working from a progressive leftist, queer-feminist ideological position and also within a world that is still very much a modernist system. I also acknowledge that some queer theorists often advocate for separatism and reject assimilationist projects, and my work may be categorized under the latter. Utopian projects that engage with theories of political liberalism have previously been criticized\textsuperscript{36} because they are seen as attempts to normalize some sexual behaviour, which reinforces a politics of exclusivity and there is a concern as to whether the creation of new normative categories function to perpetuate the marginalization of other groups. I mean to draw specific attention to the labeling of those who ‘belong’ under the umbrella term ‘queer’ or LGBTTIQ2S\textsuperscript{37} who enjoy and may wish to maintain a status as undefinable. However, in dealing with education policy and the provincial governments, all of which function in a bureaucratic and modernist fashion, categories and boundaries are still quite indispensable. It is also worth noting that curriculum is very structured and can be altered, but radical change is unlikely when new material is debated extensively and subject to a government—a Canadian society—that is characterized by ideological pluralism. I think that alternative sexual orientations and homosexual

\textsuperscript{35} Assuming that this representation of values and morals in government is not oppressive.
\textsuperscript{36} The meta-narrative style and universalism embedded within political liberalism are also inconsistent with the postmodernist theories that I more fully support.
\textsuperscript{37} This is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transexual, Intersex, Questioning, 2-Spirited.
representations should be present in many different classes and subjects, however this will take time. Achieving this type of change will be slow and incremental. The revoked revisions are a strong sign that progress will not be achieved all at once, and that there is much to be done on the Left in terms of organizing and lobbying government (Apple 2006; McDonald 2010).

The Rising Influence of the Right in Canada

“Today we have progressed to the point where we are again fighting the battles of the sixteenth century—over revelation and reason, dogmatic purity and toleration, inspiration and consent, divine duty and common decency. We are disturbed and confused. We find it incomprehensible that theological ideas still inflame the minds of men [sic], stirring up messianic passions that leave society in ruin. We assumed that this was no longer possible, that human beings had learned to separate religious questions from political ones, that fanaticism was dead. We were wrong” (Mark Lilla 2007 in Beiner 2009: 81).

The Government’s decision to shelve the ORC marks a success earned by the Canadian social and religious right. It is an indicator of the rising influence that the right is wielding at this time in Canada and that a liberal democratic system will not always protect all citizens. This incident is not merely happenstance; there have been other examples of the social conservative and religious right working to influence government policy in recent years. For example, when Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, who has recently come under fire for partisanship, revised the Canadian Immigration Handbook and cut out elements that educated new citizens on Canada’s commitment to equality and diversity, namely the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 and legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada in 2005. The Canadian right is demonstrating a concerted effort in ensuring that Canadian policy reflects conservative and, at times, religious values (Warner 2010; McDonald 2010).

McVety became a key figure in this debate and the ways that he and his organizations, The Institute for Canadian Values and the Christian College of Canada, framed the content of the ORC impacted the general reception of the document. McVety has been a prominent political and
religious figure in Canada for many years and has made a career out of his involvement in numerous moral campaigns that specifically oppose liberal social policies such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and sex education. Though his religious identity is by no means a secret, since his title indicates his ideological affiliations and McVety often reveals himself as a devout evangelist, he never explicitly cited religious reasons for opposing the controversial elements of the ORC. The organizations that these religious conservatives like McVety represent do not readily reveal the religious conservative foundation that they are built on and they are able to command wider influence through rhetorical tactics such as those outlined by Irvine (2002) and by making proficient use of media in order to promote and disseminate their messages (Apple 2006; Apple 2004). As I mentioned earlier, Michael Apple has devoted numerous books and published articles to revealing the ways in which the right has been able to amass greater levels of public support in the past couple of decades by being able to link values and concerns in the minds of citizens that come to define what eventually becomes ‘common sense’ in the political discourse (2006). The opposition to the ORC was firmly rooted in a conservative religious sexual morality or the RSI, though McVety was cautious to refrain from invoking religious causes in his mainstream campaign against the ORC. The secularization of beliefs and values that are rooted in religious texts may have influenced those who were unfamiliar with McVety and his right-wing organizations and this strategy was deliberate because of the skepticism that religious arguments are usually met with in Canadian society.

Once the ORC was shelved, many news reports began covering the backlash from left-wing bodies that were accusing McGuinty of capitulating to a religious social conservative minority that did not reflect the opinions of most Ontarians. The news reports all seemed to characterize the outrage of the religious and social conservatives as merely a minority group of
radical right-wing people who could not mobilize support in a liberal-minded nation such as Canada. Canada’s history as a leftist nation allowed many to believe that this type of right influence would not amount to many political successes. Thus, when the small but vocal minority was able to successfully convince the government to rethink the ORC, many were left befuddled.

Tom Warner and Marci McDonald both make strong cases illustrating the rise in influence that the right is currently cultivating and experiencing in Canada. In his book, *Losing Control: Canada’s Social Conservatives in the Age of Rights* (2010) Warner argues that Canadian politics and Canadian culture are experiencing a proliferation of the New Right in response to the civil rights gains and a liberal social climate that has dominated Canadian society for the past four decades. McDonald makes a similar argument in her book, *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* (2010), which details the interconnected worlds of prominent Christian and evangelical figures and Canadian politicians. She details the alliances between these groups and the incumbent efforts of the religious right to bolster youth support and ensure that these youth are parachuted to the most influential arenas in Canadian society. The goal among these burgeoning Christian nationalists is to influence Canadian policy in such a way so that it reflects the teachings of the Bible—that it is a religious duty to influence politics so that the civil world may be designed in the image that the scriptures promote.

According to McDonald, the stealth with which this initiative is being conducted is also an important trend that allows religious individuals to secularize their religious beliefs, or only reveal their religious affiliations after being elected into office. The successful effort of prominent members of the Christian Right in Canada to halt the ORC lends credence to the theories of Warner and McDonald.
Through emotional rhetoric that played on the longstanding historical and cultural anxiety regarding child and adolescent sexuality, Canadian religious conservatives were able to influence the Ontario Government to an extent that allowed them to see their sexual ideology reflected in sex education curriculum. The lack of preparation in mediating ideological pluralism on the part of the Liberals and the undemocratic decision made by Premier McGuinty has failed LGBT students in particular and is a blemish on this Government’s political record, a record that is allegedly renowned for liberal social policy and a commitment to social justice.

Having situated the debates over the ORC within broader ideological and moral disputes, themes, and beliefs about the ‘nature’ of sex, gender, families, education, and knowledge, the failure of the curriculum is more clearly understood. By outlining a moderate political theory that addresses how governments should or can mediate ideological pluralism and battles rooted in ideologies, the inadequacy of the decision made by the Ontario government can be understood as undemocratic and deplorable.
Chapter Six

Conclusion

The response to and rejection of the Originally Revised Curriculum (ORC) reveal features of Canadian society and Canadian politics that are rarely seen. The ORC served to highlight the ideological pluralism that can both unite and divide Canadians, and revealed religious conservative strongholds. The content of the ORC was progressive and realistic in terms of the realities that children and adolescents face in contemporary society, and when the Government was willing to acknowledge child and adolescents as (potential) sexual subjects it was rebuked. Though the anger of the Canadian religious right may not have been shared by all Ontarians, their petitioning that focused on the cultural accessibility of discourses that define children and adolescents as innocent and asexual were strong enough to result in the abandonment of the curriculum.

Summary of Contributions

In the previous chapters, I elucidated some of the factors that led to the Ontario Premier’s sudden policy turnabout. This showed that Canada’s international reputation as a progressive and liberal society is not infallible and that this image merits contemplation and questioning. My research demonstrated that the longstanding popular images of children and adolescents as asexual and ignorant of sexual knowledge are problematic. The popular yet contradictory view of children as ideally asexual and potentially hypersexual complicates efforts that seek to inform adults that children and adolescents are sexual subjects that require sex education. The goals of the ORC, which were to enhance and modernize sex education in the province, were sound and essential. This work also develops or adds to the body of literature that
argues that our culture lacks a theory of adolescent and child sexuality and that it desperately needs one. By compiling research on the sexual subjectivity of youth and theories of child and adolescent agency, I have assisted in fostering a theory that is important for adequately fostering holistic sexual health among youth living in the twenty-first century.

The way that access to children is managed and fought over in the field of education was shown to reflect adult desires to maintain the ideal image of children and adolescents as asexual. This was accompanied by the fear of adolescent hypersexuality and related to the attempts to inculcate heterosexuality. The policing of curriculum by certain groups can be seen as an attempt to maintain and control the heteronormative status quo by ensuring that youth receive ‘proper’ socialization. This successful management initiative simultaneously prevented social change through curriculum in the forms of tolerance and acceptance of LGBT individuals.

A peculiar and disturbing feature of the debate was the fact that opponents to the ORC succeeded, in part, based on reviling the references to nonheterosexual orientations and alternative family forms. The success of this pleading marks a staggering gap between the way that rights protections may function in theory and the way that they are not always honoured and reflected in practice. Though Canadian law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and though same-sex couples are afforded the same legal rights and benefits as heterosexual couples, there is still a resistance in the Province to extending full and equal treatment to LGBT individuals. By failing to include LGBT identities in the core curriculum, the Ontario education system is complicit in the continuance and proliferation of homophobia in schools. Furthermore, the result of the uproar over the ORC indicated that the very individuals and policy makers who script laws that prohibit institutionalized homophobia and discrimination also flout those laws.
The prospect of acknowledging child and adolescent sexuality without immediately and unconditionally referring to sexual abuse and corruption is part of the problem. The potency of the specter of child and adolescent sexual abuse in our society must be acknowledged, but if we cannot move past these worries in order to instill children with positive, healthy values of sexuality then we are failing in our duty to adequately prepare youth for all that they face in contemporary society and in the future. Adult anxiety can no longer obstruct the goals of nourishing holistic sexual health for today’s youth. We must move past this reluctance to view children as sexual creatures with varying degrees of awareness regarding sexual matters in order to educate and better prepare the youth of Ontario for a lifetime of sexual development. This shift is long overdue, and the evidence provided illustrating the effects and ubiquity of modern media and communication and information technologies should serve as merely one indicator of the urgency with which to move forward and adjust our cultural preconceptions about child and adolescent sexual knowledge. Though the task will not be easy, a new discourse of child and adolescent sexual agency can be constructed.

Lessons from the ORC

The successful protest against the ORC reveals that there is still a latent and powerful unease surrounding child and adolescent sexual knowledge that can be tapped and utilized in moral campaigns. Though the failure of the sex education component of the ORC is a disappointment, I think that there is much to be learned from the events that led to the revisions being erased. I wish to briefly discuss some of the ways that future sex education curriculum revisions may achieve a different fate based on lessons from what transpired in Ontario in April and May of 2010.
The Liberals were not prepared for the unique challenges that the ORC generated. By not coming forward to the public more openly with the ORC when it was proposed, the Liberals relinquished control of the debate before it even began. Once McVety’s vitriolic press release was made public, the tone of the debate was set and the public’s reception of the curriculum was informed by this initial introduction. If they would have announced the planned revisions, the Liberals could have had more control over the way it was being presented and received, and perhaps could have mitigated some of the negative reactions. Furthermore, the Liberals did not coordinate their responses when they were being interrogated about the ways in which the ORC would be implemented and what groups would be granted discretionary privileges. A synchronized, rehearsed and united coalition is essential for future initiatives aiming to alter sex education curriculum.

If new sex education curriculum is to be proposed and permitted in the coming years then the issue of teacher training will need to be addressed. Teachers in training need better preparatory instruction in order to handle potentially sensitive matters like sex education. The issue of teacher insecurity with sex education can also be mitigated by having specially trained teachers cover sex education in Ontario classrooms. If teachers are not part of the solution, the problems that lurk within the hidden curriculum will still impact student learning and may counteract efforts to instill values of tolerance and respect, and holistic sexual health in students.

Opponents fiercely and repeatedly reiterated the accusation that the Liberal Government did not consult with parents when creating the ORC. The Liberals insisted that they had consulted with parents, but this fact did not stop the onslaught from Conservative party members and other opponents of the ORC. One solution to this could be an overtly transparent approach to curriculum revision in the future. If the Liberals were to advertise the research and consultation
processes going into new curriculum, this argument against new sex education could potentially be circumvented. This is also dependent upon the acquiescence of both parties to abandon the games and partisanship associated with politics\textsuperscript{38}, features that can impede the achievement of meaningful goals in government.

The concern that parental authority was being undermined by the information in the ORC was prevalent. In the future, the Government needs to work towards dismantling the idea that the state and parents have antagonist and competing roles in the education of children and adolescents. Other successful or well-received sex education programs have involved parents more closely in curriculum development and implementation by including parent information nights. These evenings would allow parents to be educated on the research that exists about child and adolescent sexuality and also learn about what their children would be taught in sex education. This way parents would be more included in the education process while working collaboratively with teachers, effectively minimizing the antagonism between these groups that are both instilled with the capacity to socialize and educate youth.

The revoked revisions are an indicator of the fact that social change and progress on matters relating to sexual minority rights will only be achieved incrementally and only with hard work and activism. Yes, same-sex marriage is legally recognized and sexual orientation and gender identity are protected in the Ontario Human Rights Code, but these advancements are part of a larger, continuous project of activism that seeks to achieve and protect social equality and justice. The Province refused to officially acknowledge these groups in the school curriculum and this has highlighted the need for action. But there may be a silver lining in this story. The shelving of the ORC was a setback, but Irvine (2002) asserts that the fierce opposition to LGBT-

\textsuperscript{38} It is widely believed that McGuinty’s decision to shelve the ORC was indicative of his awareness of the provincial election scheduled to take place in the fall of 2011.
friendly policies can sometimes function to publicize intolerance in society in a way that creates awareness of the very hostility that these groups need to be protected from. Unfortunately, the Government was not prepared to protect the democratic rights of some individuals at this time.

The controversy that the ORC generated and the response of religious conservatives indicates that the power and influence wielded by the right is not limited to the United States. Proponents of the ORC only reacted and mobilized after McGuinty’s decision to shelve the sex education portion of the ORC—post hoc politics that proved to be insufficient. Canadian leftists can no longer assume that progressive legislation and initiatives will be victorious simply by default and cannot dawdle when challenges to social justice surface.

Luker (2006) indicates that one of the reasons that children and adolescents in Sweden can receive comprehensive sex education without public controversy is because it is a largely homogenous country. Conversely, Canada is among the most multicultural nations in the world. Since values about sexual morality can be tied to culture, ethnicity and religion, the Government needs to always consider this diversity when curriculum is being constructed. Considering this fact in relation to the ideological pluralism revealed by responses to the ORC, it is evident that current political processes are not adequate in defending and balancing the interests and values of different minority groups in the province. The balancing of freedom of belief and protection from discrimination will be a recurring theme in future debates over sex education and in Canadian politics more generally.

A prodigious concern surrounding the decision to shelve the curriculum is the differential treatment and accommodation of denominational schools in the Province. If Catholic schools are to be funded by the Government, it is in some ways unethical and unlawful for these schools to be able to dictate or deny state sanctioned curriculum. Challenges to the discriminatory authority of
the Catholic School Board have been made and won in the recent past, such as the case of Marc Hall who won the right to bring a same-sex date to his Catholic school prom in 2002. Hall’s case was decided in an injunction and thus is not a legally binding precedent. Nevertheless, it remains an important case that reveals the ongoing struggle between state legislation and the constitutionally protected rights of denominational schools. There should be some accommodation of religious freedom and freedom of belief, but not when it contradicts laws that are aimed at protecting and fostering a tolerant, safe environment for marginalized groups in society.

As I mentioned in the introduction, social change is intimately tied to the education of children. If we want to nurture holistic sexual health in youth so that they may live comfortably with their sexual orientations and gender identities, feel confident in their decisions to abstain from or participate in sexual activities and foster understanding between individuals on all of these divergent paths, democratic education must be cultivated and protected.

Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

In the finite scope of a Master’s thesis, there are areas of this provincial debate over sex education that I did not have the space to address. One area that could be explored is the way that the different provinces arrived at their current sex education curriculum and how these curricula differ across the country. Successful strategies can be shared so that Canadian youth can benefit from sex education across the country.

Perceptions of sexual morality are influenced by numerous factors and some that have been omitted from this study are race, ethnicity or ethnic heritage and class. The way that these groups may or may not evaluate sexual morality differently than others in Ontario and Canada is worth researching and would be an essential consideration in the next attempt to revise Ontario
H&PE curriculum. Furthermore, some research has revealed the ways that certain populations (e.g. racialized, lower class) are targeted more aggressively with comprehensive sex education because of statistics and assumptions about their sexual behaviours. The prevalence of this trend in Ontario would be worth exploring.

In my research, I looked at the historical cultural perceptions of child and adolescent sexuality, however I did not investigate the ways in which ideas about child sexuality differ from those about adolescent sexuality. Studies that explore the similarities and differences in the perceptions of these two closely related groups would be fascinating and useful for strategic and focussed curriculum development as well as fostering an adult understanding of child and adolescent sexual subjectivities.

Some other abstract questions remain unanswered in this research. Who should be allowed to influence curriculum? What should the role of education be and what limits should be imposed on its subject matter and influence? There are, at times, competing interests and values between governments, politicians, minorities, experts, teachers, parents, and students. Whose voices should count, whose voice should count the most and why? If we take the view that all of these mentioned groups are stakeholders in education, do we risk perceiving education as a commodity? And what are the implications of this for a democratic society?

Final Word

I look at the failure of the ORC as a disappointing and upsetting incident, however I am hopeful. The pressure exerted from the right was enough to cause the Premier to shelve the curriculum but this reveals the way that activism can influence social change. Should the left organize, control the initial dialogue surrounding new sex education curriculum and tread carefully when considering the longstanding cultural anxiety regarding child and adolescent
innocence and ignorance, then the result could be different when the next opportunity to revise sex education arises. I strongly believe that this kind of curriculum can succeed in the near future but only with hard work and diligence.

It is worthwhile to remember that Canada is still one of the most progressive nations in the world on many issues. Consider Singapore, for example, where it is explicitly stated in their sex education curriculum that it is against the law to propagate homosexuality. There are numerous countries in the world where homosexuality is still a criminal offense, punishable by imprisonment and execution. Though I do not wish to dilute the arguments in this thesis by appealing to relative injustice, it is worth acknowledging that there are other countries where speaking out against the government is considered a paramount transgression and can lead to severe consequences. Since I occupy a privileged position in society, I have the good fortune of being able to question my Government without too many reservations. In many ways, Canada is still a world leader in progressive politics and civil rights, but the Government of Ontario, for complex and multifaceted reasons, was unable or unwilling to meet the challenges presented by an ideologically pluralistic society. Though I have become somewhat disenchanted by the political process and the Canadian government, the future is ripe with new opportunities for activism, social change, and the reinstatement of social justice.
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Appendix A
Institute for Canadian Values’ Online Petition

“Stop Corrupting Children” Printable Form

We believe that:

■ Children should have the right to grow and flourish in an environment free of sexual exploitation,
■ Children should have the right to a sense of security and belonging derived from a loving and nurturing atmosphere which shelters them from harm,
■ It is wrong for Ontario’s new sex education curriculum to introduce sexually explicit material to children in Grade 3.
■ This is a form of controlling the minds and desires of young children who should not have to think about sex at such a delicate age,
■ Teaching children about same-sex relationships, sexual orientation and gender identity is completely irresponsible.
■ This new sex education curriculum will leave a profound, negative, physiological scarring on our children and confuse them about their gender. If we and our Government cannot protect children, is there any good in us?
■ We, the undersigned ask Premier Dalton McGuinty to stop the implementation of the new Ontario Elementary sex education curriculum.

Please fill in and submit the form below:

Name ____________________________________________________________________________

Sure Name _______________________________________________________________________

Full Address ______________________________________________________________________

City ___________________________ Province __________ Postal Code ______________________

Telephone: ________________________ Cell: __________________________

fax: ____________________________ Email: __________________________
Appendix B

Press Release: April 19th, 2010

www.stopcorruptingchildren.ca

Mr. McGuinty, Withdraw Sex Ed for 8 year-olds

Toronto, ON Monday, April 19, 2010 Leaders from various family focused groups with over 100,000 active members are calling for Premier Dalton McGuinty to withdraw the new Ontario Sex Education Curriculum, set to be implemented this September. The leaders are organizing Ontario parents to protest the new program by withdrawing their children from school on the Monday after Mother’s Day, May 10th and joining a proposed rally in at 12:00 noon in Toronto. The location will be announced at www.StopCorruptingChildren.ca.

Dr. Charles McVety, President of Canada Christian College states that “it is unconscionable to teach 8 year-old children same-sex marriage, sexual orientation and gender identity. It is even more absurd to subject 6th graders to instruction on the pleasures of masturbation, vaginal lubrication and 12 year-olds to lessons on oral sex and anal intercourse. Mr. McGuinty plans to teach our children sexually explicit material that he did not give to his own. The Premier is not acting in trust. He must stop this form of corruption.”

Brian Rushfeldt, Exec Director of Canada family Action said “Ontario’s new sex education curriculum for 3rd – 7th graders is bordering on criminal. Canada prosecutes persons for corrupting minors with explicit sex. To cause confusion in a young child’s mind about being male or female is evil and teachers should refuse to present this onerous material.”

Rev. Ekron Malcolm, Director of the Institute for Canadian Values states “I believe this is a form of controlling the minds and desires of our young children who should not have to think about sex at such a delicate age. This is just another form of exploitation through so called “inclusive education.”

Parents are asked to sign a petition at www.stopcorruptingchildren.ca

For interviews please call:
Dr. Charles McVety 416-391-5000 ext 224
Mr. Brian Rushfeldt 403-295-2159
Rev. Ekron Malcolm 416-391-5000 ext 344