(Play)Building Sexuality Education: Using participatory drama as queer pedagogy to explore youth experiences of sexuality education

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Abstract

The recent sex education curriculum update in Ontario sparked controversy in the media, reflecting a moral panic around sex education in Canada. Since its introduction in 2010 and implementation in 2015, debates ensued over the content of the curriculum, however, little attention was on the form through which it is delivered. This study explores experiences of sexuality education to critically reflect on the ways adolescents navigate discourses of sexuality through formal and informal education. In this thesis, I review discourses of sexuality education and argue that queer pedagogies can be used to foster critical, and queer spaces to negotiate sexuality. I conceptually frame playbuilding (Belliveau, 2006; Norris, 2009; Weigler, 2001), a drama-based research methodology, as a queer pedagogy and mobilize it in this study to co-author a play with participants based on our collective experiences. This participatory drama-based research process involved an exploration of themes and constructs in sexuality education, translating these into dramatic forms, and performing the co-authored scenes to an audience. Through playbuilding, this research tells critical stories of six individuals negotiating their experiences of the discourses of sexuality education. I explore the ways queer pedagogies in sexuality education and playbuilding, in particular, can create spaces wherein youth can exercise agency as sexual subjects and critically reflect on adolescent sexuality.

Keywords: sexuality education; playbuilding; queer pedagogy; arts-based research; Ontario sex education;
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# Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. ii  
Acknowledgements .............................................................................................. iii  
Table of Contents .................................................................................................. iv  

Chapter 1: (Play)Building Sexuality Education: Using participatory drama as  
queer pedagogy to explore youth experiences of sexuality education .......... 1  

Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................ 10  
  The History of Sexuality Education ................................................................. 10  
    Regulating Sexuality in Schools .................................................................. 12  
    Ontario Sexuality Education ...................................................................... 16  
  Critiques of Sexuality Education .................................................................. 18  
    The Innocent Child and Hypersexual Teenager ........................................... 18  
    Heteronormative Curriculum with a White, Able-Bodied Bias ................. 21  
    Pleasure Absent and Empowerment Neglected ....................................... 26  
  Pedagogical Interventions ............................................................................ 29  
    Queer Pedagogy ......................................................................................... 30  
    Drama-Based Interventions ...................................................................... 38  
    Playbuilding as Queer Pedagogy ............................................................... 39  
  Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 42  

Chapter 3: Methodology and Design ................................................................ 43  
  Theoretical Foundations for Playbuilding ...................................................... 43  
  Playbuilding as Qualitative Research ............................................................ 44  
  Design of this Study ....................................................................................... 49  
    Ethics and Informed Consent ..................................................................... 49  
    Participants ................................................................................................. 51  
    Director/Actor/Researcher/Teacher ............................................................ 52  
    Challenges and Limitations ....................................................................... 53  
  Data Generation .............................................................................................. 55  
    Exploration ................................................................................................. 55  
    Engagement ............................................................................................... 57  
    Co-authorship ............................................................................................ 58  
  Data Mediation ............................................................................................... 60  
  Dissemination through Performance ............................................................. 62
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Narratives</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: A Journey Through Sex Education (Script)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Sharing Critical Stories through Playbuilding</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behind the Script</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections of a D/A/R/T</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Conclusion</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queering Sexuality Education</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Ontario Sex Education Curricula (1998 vs. 2015)</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Ethical Entry into Research</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excerpts from Research Ethics Board Application</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and Design</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Risks and Benefits</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Consent, Withdrawal, and Feedback</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Recruitment Script</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Information and Consent Form</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Poster</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate of REB Clearance</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Play)Building Sexuality Education: Using participatory drama as queer pedagogy to explore youth experiences of sexuality education

In September of 2015, an update to the 1998 version of the Health and Physical Education curriculum was implemented in Ontario schools. The curriculum update included changes to sex education that sparked controversy over its content and the ages at which certain topics should be taught. News media widely covered the curriculum changes, parents’ responses, and political debates. In this chapter, I contextualize the moral panic in response to the curriculum update as shown through 2015 media, discuss key differences between the two curricular documents, establish the research problem, and outline the chapters in this thesis.

Ontario sex-ed dispute: Why 1 mother will keep her kids home (CBC News, 2015a)
Ontario Sex Ed: How founded are the fears of ‘indoctrination’? (Davidson, 2015)
Sex ed protest leaves 1 Toronto school almost empty (CBC News, 2015b)
Protesters rally against sex-ed curriculum (Hall & Bateman, 2015)
Sexual Indoctrination: an attack on parental rights, family and children’s souls (Iacobelli, 2016)

Headlines such as these appeared in news outlets both online and in print, indicating a moral panic surrounding the curriculum update. Fears around the new sex education curriculum were amplified by Christian right wing groups like Canada Christian College and Canada Action, whose leaders called the proposed curriculum “a form of corruption”, “sexually explicit”, and “bordering on criminal” for its goals to teach young children about same sex marriage, sexual orientation, and gender identity (McVety, 2010, paras. 2, 3). Articles in support of the curriculum also emerged responding to the moral panic and attempted to address fears, or myths, such as:
“Explicit sexual content, including oral and anal sex, consent, and rape will be taught to children as young as six,” and “Children will be taught graphic information about homosexuality and gender fluidity and forced to view them as normal, accepted practice” (Pickles, 2015, paras. 4, 8). Although parents’ outcry over the curriculum change kept children home from school as a sign of protest (CBC News, 2015a, 2015b; Hall & Bateman, 2015), 87% of Ontario parents are in support of school-based sexuality education (McKay, Byers, Voyer, Humphreys, & Markham, 2014). Public discourse on sexuality education has a long history in Ontario, as sex education has been taught in Ontario schools since at least 1905, when travelling teacher Arthur Beall instilled Christian values and morality as he taught boys that “masturbation drained their life fluid” (Bliss, 1970, p. 107). According to Cassel (1987), a social service nurse named Agnes Haygath was employed by the Ontario Health Department from 1925 to 1933 and travelled through rural Ontario to show films on health to students (mainly girls, unless there was no other health professional who could teach the boys). Despite over a century of teaching sexuality education in Ontario, this 2015 curriculum update received a backlash that demonized its content and attempted to reassert parents’ control over their child’s knowledge.

How “radical” are the changes to the sex education curriculum? While Christian right wing groups would argue that the updated material is corruptive and not age appropriate (Davidson, 2015; Iacobelli, 2016; McVety, 2010), Pickles (2015) believes that the major change is an increase in detail:

Where the 1998 curriculum provided broad topics and left it to the discretion of the individual teacher to interpret them, the 2015 curriculum actually makes it EASIER for parents to see and understand exactly what their children will be learning in school. By providing the detailed concepts and teaching prompts, the curriculum makes it clear what information teachers are expected to provide and
makes the curriculum less susceptible to the teacher's intentional or unintentional biases (para 21).

This increase in detail can be seen as the Grade 1-8 Health and Physical Education document increased in length from 40 pages to 244 pages (Ministry of Education, 2015a; Ministry of Education and Training, 1998) and with the inclusion of learning outcomes with teacher and student prompts for each topic. Certain changes were in keeping with advances in the rights of LGBTQ+ persons, including the legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada (Government of Canada, 2005), which can be seen through a three-fold increase in terms relating to gender-identity (McKenzie, 2015). In addition, the curriculum reflects advances in technology and social media as it now includes discussions on cyberbullying, stereotypes and prejudice (McKenzie, 2015). McKenzie conducted a textual analysis of the two documents and found that while the updated curriculum takes strides in the area of equity and inclusion, the five-year delay in implementing the curriculum points to power dynamics that prevent social change. A minority community opposition caused the initial curriculum update to be held back for “rethinking” (Benzie, 2010) and in April 2010, Ontario reverted back to the 1998 content (Houston, 2013). McKenzie argues that the 1998 version of the curriculum in Ontario “does not reflect how young people now find information (e.g., social media), excludes references to healthy, pleasurable sexuality and omits queer and trans* issues” (p. 7). Although the updated curriculum attempts to address some of these silences, McKenzie’s analysis points to the continuing power dynamics in sexuality education, wherein some are included and their voices valued, and others remain excluded, without power, and with dismissed voices.

Sex education falls under the section previously called “Growth and Development” in the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000; Ministry of
Education and Training, 1998, 1999), which has since been renamed “Healthy Living” (Ministry of Education, 2015a, 2015b). As Pickles (2015) states, the updated curriculum includes more detail and nuanced understanding of concepts, which can be seen through its revisions regarding sexual violence. In the 1998 curriculum, violence (sexual or otherwise) was only discussed in the Personal Safety and Injury Prevention section and not under Growth and Development along with other sex education topics. In contrast, the updated curriculum links violence and sexuality by discussing sexual violence under the Healthy Living section throughout several grade levels in connection to consent, decision-making, and prevention (Ministry of Education, 2015a; 2015b). See Appendix A for a table comparing the 1998 and 2015 curricular documents.

The updated curriculum also improves definitions of “sexuality” and “sexual health”. Connell problematizes the definition used in the 1998 curriculum:

‘Sexuality’ is first defined in Grade 9 [as] the total expression of an individual’s femaleness or maleness through that person’s feelings, beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours. It is a complex expression of the whole person. Sexuality reinforces and affirms the individual as a human being and allows the role of female or male to develop. One’s sexuality is the integration of a multitude of personal characteristics and factors. (Connell, 2005, p. 262).

Connell argues that this definition is vague and does not refer to sex or physical intimacy at all. The ambiguous language shown through this definition, which actually refers more to gender than sexuality, can inhibit the communication of accurate and relevant knowledge to youth. In contrast, the updated curriculum defines sexuality as:

A term that encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours,
practices, roles, and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors (Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. 237).

This updated definition is taken from the Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008) and moves towards a more holistic perspective on sexuality. However, in the updated Ontario curriculum “sexuality” is frequently defined in reference to “health”. The new curriculum has a strong emphasis on sexual health, the definition of which is also adopted from the Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education:

A state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected, and fulfilled. Sexual health is influenced by a complex web of factors ranging from sexual behaviours, attitudes, and societal factors to biological risk and genetic predispositions (Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. 236).

The updated definitions for “sexuality” and “sexual health” include references to “pleasure”, “eroticism”, and “desire”, which allude to a discourse of desire in sexuality education that has been missing (Fine, 1998). Even with the changes to these definitions, however, we must ask how they are put into practice. How does one teach pleasure, desire, and eroticism in a sex education classroom? Through this research, I will explore alternative pedagogies that queer the classroom and seek to include a discourse of desire.
Youth are seeking out and engaging in discourses of desire in various ways outside of formal education. Connell (2005) contends, “even if schools are not doing it for them, young women are doing it for themselves” (p. 265). She offers the example of The Little Black Book for Girlz: A Book on Healthy Sexuality (St. Stephen’s Community House, 2006), which is an honest approach to talking about sexuality through poems, drawings, and interviews. Similarly, online resources for sex education are becoming increasingly available and popular. A simple Google search will lead a knowledge-seeker to several online resources including SexEd Library; Sex, Etc.; and Scarleteen (Answer and Rutgers, 2017; Scarleteen and Heather Corinna, 2017; Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, 2017). Agrell (2008) explores the value of sex education classes in light of the growing popularity of online resources. Agrell cites Alex McKay, of the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada, who “believes traditional sex education still plays an important role but says the curriculum has been suffering in schools across the country” (para. 15). As President of the Canadian Teacher’s Federation, Emily Noble acknowledges the need for more professional development for educators, however, maintains that the internet is not the most accurate resource and poses risk to students (Agrell, 2008, paras. 19-20). While Barar, a program manager of Sex, Etc., agrees that there are challenges with the clutter of information (Agrell, 2008, para. 21), online resources may be the alternative to school-based sexuality education that youth are seeking. Young people may also find sex education through more indirect forms, such the recently launched Sexual Wellness Center under Pornhub, a popular website for viewing pornography (Pornhub, 2017). Another example of indirect sex education may include the recent Netflix release, Big Mouth. This animated comedy follows the often embarrassing and awkward transition into puberty and adolescence and is based on the creators’ and writers’ experiences. Big Mouth creator and voice
actor Nick Kroll says, “As open as society is, there are still certain things that we feel like are too awkward to talk about… and those are the things we wanted to zero in on specifically” (Eadicicco, 2017, para.1). In doing this and sharing embarrassing (and sometimes gross) stories, the show uses humour to educate and bring attention to relevant issues for youth.

There seems to be a contrast and disconnect between formalized sexuality education and the increasingly popular alternative educational resources mentioned above. While educators may try, through curriculum or otherwise, to be the most reliable and primary source for sexuality education, we must acknowledge the barriers of the system within which they operate. In this research, I problematize the construct of adolescent sexuality which is generally reinforced through formalized sexuality education and in response, pursue research that explores the experiences that highlight the voices of adolescents themselves. I employ playbuilding (Belliveau, 2006; Norris, 2009; Weigler, 2001) as a queer pedagogy (Britzman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998) to deconstruct the experiences of sexuality education and transform them into critical stories (Flores Carmona & Luschen, 2014) told through dramatic forms. I engaged in this study with the aim to practice playbuilding as a queer pedagogical intervention that prioritizes student-centered learning and the deconstruction of discourses that govern adolescent sexuality. With this approach, I sought to explore the following research questions:

1) **What are the experiences of first-year university students talking about sexuality inside and outside the classroom setting?**

2) **How may playbuilding facilitate agency among participants as sexual subjects through a four-day intensive playbuilding process and through the performance of the devised pieces?**

3) **What does playbuilding offer as a queer pedagogical intervention into discourses on sexuality education in Southern Ontario?**
(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Definitions

In this research, I use the term sexual subjectivity, which was developed by psychologists Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck (2005) and according to Schalet (2009), provides a bridge between feminist perspectives on adolescent sexuality and public health research. Sexual subjectivity refers to “the capacity – or lack thereof – to feel connected to one’s sexual desires and in charge of one’s sexual decision-making process” (Schalet, 2009, p. 135). Schalet also references Martin’s (1996) theorizing on sexual subjectivity and its link with attaining nonsexual agency and a positive sense of self. Martin argues that one’s sexuality affects their ability to desire and enact change in the world. Fields (2008) also advocates that this subjectivity is central for young people, situated in embodied experiences of agency, and contributes fundamentally to self-value and participation in a community. In exploring sexuality education and to support “thick desire” (Fine & McClelland, 2006) in this research project, I use sexual subjectivity to refer to the ways young people can enact agency and feel sexual desires.

I use the term “sexuality education” rather than “sex education” to acknowledge the lifelong learning process outside of formalized curricula. Walker and Milton (2006) define sexuality education as “a process of life-long learning to acquire knowledge, develop skills and form positive beliefs, values and attitudes that are incorporated into a person’s self-definition and personality” (p. 419). This nuanced definition has also been adopted by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), as being “multifaceted, having biological, social, psychological, spiritual, ethical, and cultural dimensions” (Gougeon, 2009, p. 278). When I use this term rather than more commonly used “sex education” or “sexual health education”, I am speaking broadly about formal and informal sexuality education that may occur through embodied experience and learning about sexuality through home, school, work,
and media. When referring to formalized education, such as Ontario’s Health and Physical Education Curriculum, I use the term “sex education”, keeping with the language used by the provincial government (Ministry of Education, 2015a; 2015b).

Following this introduction chapter, my thesis continues with Chapter 2, a review of the literature on sexuality education which shows how from its development, sexuality education has been used as a tool to manage the perceived “problem” of teen sex (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Carlson, 2012), and socialize teenagers into healthy adult sexuality. I review scholarship that criticizes sexuality education frameworks as heteronormative; having a white, middle-class, and ableist bias; and denying pleasure and empowerment. In response to these critiques, I review queer pedagogical interventions, based on the combining of queer theory and critical pedagogy, which may open up new possibilities in sexuality education. Chapter 3 outlines my methodology – playbuilding – detailing its theoretical basis and the research process. Playbuilding (Belliveau, 2006; Norris, 2009; Weigler, 2001) can be considered both a research methodology and a pedagogical intervention, and I conceptually frame it as a queer pedagogy (Britzman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998) using the theoretical lenses of queer theory and critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2011). Chapter 4 is the script I co-authored with five participants through the playbuilding process, which serves as both data and data analysis, simultaneously (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995). In Chapter 5, I tell the critical stories (Flores Carmona & Luschen, 2014) that contributed to the writing of the script and link each scene back to the literature. I explore the themes that arose through the research, how we negotiated their meanings collectively, and how we shared those collective meanings through the script. I conclude with Chapter 6, wherein I revisit playbuilding as a queer pedagogy and offer its uses in sexuality education and the possibilities for further research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The euphemism, “the birds and the bees,” can be traced back to several suspected origins, one being the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1825), who lamented his loneliness while the bird and bees “stir” outside (Kelleher, 2000). This phrase became one of the most well-recognized analogies for sex, most often used to answer children’s bold questions without mentioning anything too risqué. The survival of this playful analogy speaks to a history of regulating sexual knowledge and the ways knowledge is communicated to children and teenagers. In this chapter, I review a body of literature on sexuality education that references this history of regulation, describes current debates, and offers suggestions for moving forward.

In this literature review, I describe the development of sexuality education as an instrument of moral regulation and contextualize the 2015 update to the Ontario sex education curriculum. I will give an overview of three prevalent critiques of dominant sexuality education frameworks in the West. I suggest pedagogical interventions to mitigate the biases evident in these critiques and to contribute to a small body of literature that focusses on the pedagogical implications of delivering sexuality education. I discuss pedagogical interventions that “queer the classroom” ultimately to suggest the use of “playbuilding” (Belliveau, 2006; Norris, 2009; Weigler, 2001) as a queer pedagogical intervention into Ontario sexuality education.

The History of Sexuality Education

Contemporary pedagogical frameworks of sexuality education can be traced back to a key moment in history that saw what Michel Foucault (1990) describes as a “proliferation of discourses” on sexuality (p. 18). Foucault traces a multiplicity of discourses on sex back to the eighteenth century, when the ways in which sex was discussed became highly regulated:
It would be less than exact to say that the pedagogical institution has imposed a ponderous silence on the sex of children and adolescents. On the contrary, since the eighteenth century, it has multiplied the forms of discourse on the subject; it has established various points of implantation for sex; it has coded contents and qualified speakers. The sex of children and adolescents has become an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed. (pp. 29-30)

In this excerpt from *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault maintains that rather than a denial or repression of sexuality, the 18th to early 20th centuries saw the emergence of sites through which sexuality was highly debated. These discourses in key areas such as medicine, psychiatry, and education signified a constant process of defining and regulating acceptable and unacceptable forms of sexuality. It was during this time that population emerged as an economic and social problem (Foucault, 1990), therefore, Kehily (2002) argues, “the sexual conduct of a population [became] an object of classification, administration, and regulation” (p. 52). One of the sites through which this regulation of sexual conduct occurred is education, and specifically, formalized sex education. Foucault’s genealogy of sexuality was a key work that has since prompted scholars to examine schools as sites of discursive construction and regulation of sexuality (Allen, 2007; Carlson, 2012; Kehily, 2002; Paechter, 2004). In examining the regulatory function of sexuality education, Carlson (2012) describes the emergence of programs and pedagogical techniques that initiated a limited canonical discourse on sex. Historically, students would demonstrate their knowledge of the canon through a public examination with questions on normative sex relations, procreation, and perversion. Carlson describes this formalized education that emerged in the eighteenth century as a “new language of sexuality” in which experts taught sexuality, and students spoke of it, both using this new language that “disciplines it, regulates, it, and medicalizes it” (p. 128). In the following sections, I will
elaborate on the regulation embedded in formalized sexuality education and situate the Ontario curriculum in this history.

**Regulating Sexuality in Schools**

Schools are sites of production and regulation of sexual identities (Allen, 2007; Kehily 2002; Paechter, 2004). According to Kehily (2002), this regulation happens through use of binary constructions such as “public/private, adult/child, teacher/pupil, male/female, proper/improper to organize social relations within the school in ways that seek to demarcate and prescribe the domain of the sexual” (p. 4). These organizational binaries are fundamental to “official school culture,” which regulates students’ bodies and more specifically, sexualities, in ways that do not detract from the functionality of schooling (Allen, 2007, p. 223). Allen further describes “official culture,” which reflects the dominant interests in schools: “that education of the mind is a priority and that issues of the body are a distraction to be managed” (p. 223). This mind/body split refers to Cartesian dualism, which Paechter (2004) claims has led to a paradoxical marginalization and simultaneous disciplining of students’ bodies. From Paechter’s analysis, the intertwining binaries of mind/body and reason/desire are evident in the organization of social relations and governing of sexuality in schools.

The binary reason/desire is reflected in what Sears (1992) refers to as the techno-rational worldview, which guides the framework, organization, and delivery of sexual content to students (p. 7). What Foucault (1990) called a “reasonable, limited, canonical, and truthful discourse on sex” (p. 29) was prescribed in the eighteenth century and has remained to be the prevalent content of contemporary sexuality education. Sears sees curricula as an instrument of sexual and social control due to its emphasis on sexual behaviour and measurable consequences with negative connotations (e.g. adolescent pregnancy, abortions, and sexually transmitted infections).
This is conveyed through curriculum design that places priority on rationality and communicates this knowledge technically (Sears, 1992). The techno-rational framework of sexuality education can be seen through history as an emphasis on sexual health. However, we find that discourses of sexual health have also been intertwined with discourses of sexual morality for the purpose of regulating adolescent, child, and non-reproductive sexualities (Foucault, 1990; Furneaux, 2011; Haywood, 1996).

The web of discourses on sex at the beginning of the eighteenth century drew on morality as well as rationality. Governments were dealing with populations, not individuals, and therefore were concerned with “policing sex” through public discourses. Foucault (1990) argues that for the first time, the progress of a society depended on the sexual conduct of individuals to maintain the number and “uprightness” of citizens organized by family units” (p. 26). Therefore, sexual conduct of individuals that was not procreative was considered to be abnormal and, as a result, disciplined through discourses of deviance and perversion. Flanagan (2011) claims that dominant discourses of sexual morality created two images of childhood sexuality: “the demonic child” corrupted by original sin and “the innocent child” devoid of sex (p. 74). Because childhood sexuality was not procreative, it was deemed as immoral, or rather, unnatural (Flanagan, 2011). Non-reproductive sexualities were also being equated with immorality because they were “unnatural”. Discourses in psychiatry and criminal justice described sexual acts of this kind as “frauds against procreation”, and “crimes against nature” (Foucault, 1990, p. 30). These discourses were further produced and reinforced by the creation of homosexuality as an identity, and heterosexuality in its opposition (Furneaux, 2011; Foucault, 1990). As a result of scientific discourses and disciplining of sex, sexologists “created terms including homosexuality, heterosexuality, and nymphomaniac” (Furneaux, 2011, p. 769). The web of scientific, medical,
and public discourses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries posited that there were “normal” and “abnormal” sexualities (Flanagan, 2011; Foucault, 1990; Furneaux, 2011). The historical and increasing web of discourses on sexuality influenced the development of curricular content that upholds morality and rationality (Sears, 1992), which I argue, ultimately promotes a certain conception of normality. Canadian sex education carries this legacy, as shown by the 2015 Health and Physical Education Curriculum placing emphasis on reproductive processes and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (Ministry of Education, 2015a). Perhaps the notion of morality has become secondary to health in Ontario’s updated curriculum; however, contemporary frameworks use the emphasis of health to implicitly communicate the same binaries of normal and abnormal as described above.

The concept of normal is one that infiltrates society and communicates a sense of belonging. Normal implies an opposite or difference - abnormal. We are socialized to see things in this binary relationship, one that tells us how to categorize people into spaces of belonging or exclusion. Adams (1997) investigated normality in post-World War II English Canada and maintains that the force of normality limits the sexual expression and identities available to adolescents. Referencing Foucault’s (1980) analysis of power, Adams says normalization is so powerful because of how it “uses its subjects” (p. 13) to police one another. Normalization is a tactic of social control that homogenizes certain people, while at the same time creates differences and excludes Others. Adams argues that moral regulation, another tactic of social control that relies on moral differences to perpetuate inclusion and exclusion of certain people, insidiously limits possible social identities while at the same time maintains the appearance of normality in these limited choices.
The limitations created through sex education, as Adams (1997) points out, are implicit but powerful as the force of normalization communicates what is “healthy” and inevitably, what is “unhealthy” to teenagers. Sex education curricula as an official vehicle of knowledge may be one of the key ways that teenagers seek validation of their sexual desires, expression, or identity. However, if these are outside the bounds of what is socially constructed as “normal,” they are denied validation, and instead their desires, expression, and identity are marginalized.

Traditionally, sex education in Canada has presented normal as cis-gender, heterosexual, white, and Christian. Behaviours and identities outside of these parameters were mobilized in a moral panic over youth sexuality post World War II (Adams, 1997). Adams believes the two major sources of anxiety – youth and sex – led to an effective form of self-regulation because of people’s fears of being labelled delinquent. Thus, the sexual health information communicated to teens normalised and validated heterosexuality while demonizing homosexuality, among other problematized practices, both in sex education and obscenity laws (Adams, 1997). Connell (2005) similarly examined contemporary Ontario sex education, arguing that “health” carries “an assumption of medical authority, normativity and objectivity”, which is dangerous because establishing a norm for sexual health also defines those outside of the norm as “unhealthy” (p. 261). We must acknowledge the forces of normalization and moral regulation, which are not necessarily medical or scientifically based, in establishing sexual health through the newest curriculum update in Ontario.

**Ontario Sexuality Education**

Following the 2015 update to the Ontario curriculum and its subsequent controversy, the current state of sexuality education in Ontario presents an opportunity for reflecting on its new content and delivery. Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) is an
organization that petitioned the Ministry of Education to follow through on their first attempt to update the curriculum in 2010 (Hammer & Howlett, 2010; Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, 2013). In an initiative with a similar organization, Ontario Association for the Support of Physical and Health Education (OASPHE), OPHEA (2013) released a statement of health-centric principles to be met by the Ministry of Education in order to provide an efficient sexuality education. One such principle is:

> Sexual and reproductive health is a fundamental part of overall health and well-being. Therefore, the right to health education includes the right of youth to receive education that enables them to be informed about these important aspects of health and to avoid sexual and reproductive health problems (OPHEA, 2013, p. 4).

OPHEA’s principles indicate a strong emphasis on sexual health and well-being, but how do we define sexual health for youth today? The updated curriculum includes “having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences” as part of defining sexual health (p. 5). Clearly there is an acknowledgement that sexual health, pleasure, and safety should fall in tandem in Canadian sexuality education, however, the curriculum continues to emphasize health far above pleasure. Health-related terms like “HIV” and “STI” appear 23 and 26 times throughout new curriculum document, while “sexual pleasure” is mentioned only twice (Mckenzie, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2015). Mckenzie argues that by focussing on negative aspects of sexuality and excluding references to pleasure, "youth remain vulnerable to media influences that perpetuate unrealistic sexual expectations, an unhealthy body image, and misogyny" (p. 12). The curriculum is not a standalone text that disseminates information without the influence of other social institutions (church, parents, media); these institutions discursively construct adolescent sexuality from different perspectives and show multiple meanings of health and pleasure. I argue
that the curriculum must engage with external sources, recognizing the limitations and possibilities offered through various sites of sexuality education.

Although it may be difficult for discussions of pleasure to be integrated into the Ontario curriculum, the 2015 update does reflect undeniable technological change and the availability of information through the internet and social media. In light of mass amounts of “e-information” available, Ensslen and Ursel (2015) advocate for the importance of the updated curriculum, which seeks to educate students before they learn about sex from friends or the media. The availability of information outside formalized curriculum is a threat to its techno-rational framework (Sears, 1992) and design as an instrument of regulation and control of sexuality (Allen, 2007; Carlson, 2012; Kehily, 2002). According to Ensslen and Ursel (2015), the updated curriculum maintains that the best information is reinforced in the classroom. What is the best information and who determines it? The Public Health Agency of Canada’s (2008) holistic definition of sexual health implies that the “best information” should not be limited to what results in fewer teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, or other risky sexual behaviours, but extends to the overall well-being and sense of belonging for youth. This indicates that a departure from the techno-rational framework of sexuality education is necessary considering modernization and mass sharing of information through technology.

Maticka-Tyndale (2008) examined the sexual health and behaviours of Canadian adolescents from the 20th century until present day and states that “today’s youth are experiencing better sexual health and taking more measures to protect their sexual health than prior generations of youth did” (p. 85). Maticka-Tyndale points to evidence of youth taking precautions even when using online communication technologies, which has only recently become a factor in considering youth sexual health. As the culture of communication changes
with text messaging and social media, so do the ways teens communicate about sex. Maticka-Tyndale sees these technologies as tools for youth to connect. Curricular content and pedagogy should reflect these advances and even utilize them where possible. Although she sees positive movement for sexuality education in Canada, Maticka-Tyndale argues that three major areas are still problematic in sex education: STIs continue to be a challenge; LGBTQ+ youth face discrimination; and rural, poor, and aboriginal youth are most poorly served by sexuality education. The 2015 update to the Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum meets some of these challenges by including more preventative education on STIs and earlier recognition of gender identities. However, is the health-centered curriculum change as radical as the news media presents? More importantly, is the update as radical as it should be to foster inclusive and anti-oppressive educational spaces?

Critiques of Sexuality Education

The Innocent Child and Hypersexual Teenager

Sexuality education curriculum and pedagogies are designed with particular subjects in mind. These subjects – children and adolescents – and the way they are socially constructed influence the content of curricula and its delivery. The term “adolescence” was constructed through psychological and medical fields in the early 20th century as the limen between the impulsive child and rational adult (Carlson, 2012). This transitional period comes with assumptions about how youth should (or must) be managed both in private and public, including at home, school, work and in the streets. Schools, as sites of discursive practice, have the managing of child and adolescent bodies built into their curricula, pedagogies, and school cultures. The techno-rational frameworks that sex education emerges from in North America are designed to manage the sexual drives and passions that, as Carlson (2012) insists, are considered
a threat to society if left unmanaged. Carlson points to the mind/body split that gives priority to reason over desire. There is a fear that bodies overcome with desire are a threat to the reasonable mind which is to be nurtured and stimulated in school settings. Because sex education deals explicitly with the physical, it is a risky space where bodies must be acknowledged. Evidence from the literature I describe below indicates that they are acknowledged, however only as “problematic”.

Carlson (2012) and Bay-Cheng (2003) analyze the correlation between “adolescence” and “problematic” in sexuality discourses. Bay-Cheng describes this dominant construction of adolescent sexuality as controlled by an intense sex drive that must be managed by laws and morality. The idea that teenagers have an uncontrollable sex drive can be credited to Freud’s biologically deterministic perspective that posits the Id as an insatiable appetite that must be moderated (Bay-Cheng, 2003). This idea took root in public discourse because the commonplace wisdom of the day assumed that pleasure was a threat to marriage. In the 1950s, family structure and marriage depended on patriarchal values that organized society and therefore regulated non-reproductive sexualities (Adams, 1997; Carlson, 2012). In a cyclical relationship, common understandings of sexuality inform the creation of curricular content and pedagogical techniques, which in turn produce and reproduce discourses of sexuality.

Perhaps what makes adolescent sexuality so "dangerous" is when it is juxtaposed with childhood innocence. There is a pervasive assumption that children do not have sexual desires or impulses, and if they show deviant behaviour, it is merely out of curiosity and can be managed. Angelides (2004) and Flanagan (2011) studied the social construct of children as innocent and asexual, which reinforces that a radical transition happens around the age of puberty. Tracing childhood innocence back to discourses of child sexual abuse in the 1970s, Angelides argues that
children have been desexualised and their innocence has been constructed in relation to adult sexuality. Van Vliet and Raby (2008) also examine childhood innocence and consider children’s right to sexual health education. They contend that the childhood time of innocence, play, and asexuality is seen by adults as pleasurable and carefree, reinforcing that children are vulnerable and in need of protection. The need to protect innocent children contributes to public discourse about delaying sexual health education. Kitzinger (1988) suggests that the emphasis on childhood innocence prevents children from having knowledge that they need to keep themselves safe. Because of this, Van Vliet and Raby argue for a rights-based approach to sexual health education, stating that "young people are sexual beings who must be provided with the information and skills necessary to negotiate the pleasures they may experience and the dangers they may face" (p. 267). Their right to such information is grounded in various international documents, the most important being the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The right to sexuality education should encourage a positive approach to teaching sexual health rather than the current focus on prevention of negative behaviours.

The social construct of childhood innocence in contrast to mature adult sexuality places adolescents in a transition period where they are neither innocent, nor mature. The framing of adolescents in this transition is usually in a picture of raving hypersexuality (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Carlson, 2012). Exactly when does this spiral into hypersexuality occur? Conversely, where does the transition into rational adult sexuality begin? While individuals' experiences are unique, teenagers are treated with the same assumption: they are "problematic" and need management. Raby (2006) argues that literature and popular culture overwhelmingly frame teenagers as “at-risk, peer-centred social problems in the process of becoming adults” (p. 11). While this framing fails to acknowledge the fluidity of adolescent experiences, Raby states that it also reinforces the
assumption that “young people are caught in a storm of raging hormones” (p. 11). Without questioning the universality of these assumptions, sex education continues to reconstruct and define adolescent sexuality without nuance or contextual relevance.

**Heteronormative Curriculum and a White, Able-Bodied Bias**

In the creation and implementation of curricula that seek to regulate hypersexual adolescents, schools implicitly and explicitly teach content with a heteronormative and white, able-bodied bias. In a 2014 study of American LGBTQ+ youth’s experiences of sex education, Gowen and Wings-Yanez organized curricular content into three themes: heterocentricity, silencing, and pathologizing. I will make use of those three categories here to discuss the heteronormative and white, able-bodied bias that exists in dominant sexuality education frameworks.

Heterocentricity in sexuality education perceives heterosexuality as the norm, leaving LGBTQ+ youth feeling like the information is not relevant to them (Gowen & Wings-Yanez, 2014). While curriculum dictates what is and is not taught in classrooms, school settings themselves are also a sort of implicit curriculum that ritualizes heteronormativity. School rituals like yearbook superlatives, school dances and accompanying music contribute to the heterosexual normalization of adolescent experiences (Pascoe, 2007). Explicit heteronormative curricular content is communicated primarily through the emphasis on penile-vaginal intercourse. Bey-Cheng (2003) describes normality in sexuality education as “located within a monogamous, coitus-centered relationship between a man and a woman” (p. 67). One way that this is emphasized is in the “discourse of readiness,” as Ashcraft (2006) calls it, leading up to losing one’s virginity, or first sex (Lamb, 2013). Lamb argues that the emphasis on losing one’s virginity in penile-vaginal intercourse implies that any other sexual activity is not sex at all. This
heteronormative framing of sex erases all other sexual experiences as valid and normal, even though we have evidence that masturbation is the most common form of sexual activity (Kinsey, 1948, 1953 as cited in Carlson, 2012). Further, the focus on pregnancy prevention in curricula implies heterosexual intercourse. Sexuality education teaches lessons about heteronormativity and exclusion to teenagers who are seen as “becoming” sexual beings and will thereby enter the adult world with an accepted sexual maturity. Peer interactions and performance of sexual normativity (by teachers and administrators) contribute to the school environment youth are subjected to most of the time, and it is this environment that defines certain experiences of sexual and gender identity as natural. The process of negotiation of sexual identities for youth begins their course of becoming sexual citizens and happens within the school setting among social relations but is also governed by the formalized sexual education they receive.

Silencing refers to lack of representation outside the dominant group (white, heterosexual, and able-bodied) in curricula (Gowen & Winges-Yanez, 2014). Lack of representation passively silences youth who identify as LGBTQ+. This refusal to acknowledge how gender identity and sexual orientation apply to everyone reinforces that heterosexual persons are “normal”, while “abnormal” sexualities are ostracized. This is not just a concern of recognizing LGBTQ+ information as of equal importance, but about LGBTQ+ young people’s sense of safety and belonging in schools. Gowen and Winges-Yanez’s study found that some students believed that an inclusive sexuality education would ease discrimination and bullying of LGBTQ+ teenagers. One youth suggested that discussing LGBTQ+ issues may help de-stigmatize those identities or orientations (Gowen & Winges-Yanez, 2014). There will be practical, immediate benefits of a more inclusive curriculum, such as LGBTQ+ teens becoming aware of resources available to them, as well as transformational benefits after the explicit
acknowledgement of the need to talk about LGBTQ+ issues in the school sexuality education curriculum.

Ignoring the implications of race in sexuality education is another form of silencing. Whitten and Sethna (2014), after conducting a content-analysis of Ontario public secondary school curricula and federal sex education policy, argue that while this curriculum includes information about sexual diversity, it operates through a lens of “racelessness” (Backhouse, 2007). Based on the assumption that Canada is multicultural and therefore not racist, “racelessness” removes race from the curriculum and silences racialised students’ experiences of sexuality. Analysing the curriculum and Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health led Whitten and Sethna to conclude that those documents “reduce the reality of racism to individual beliefs, prejudices and ignorance, and normalise it by describing racism as a ‘fear of strangers’ who are somehow different” (p. 422). In the 2015 Ontario curriculum, race is mentioned in the context of bullying, inclusion, and discrimination. However, there is only a single reference in connection with sexuality and it is framed as being generated from students following a teacher prompt (Ministry of Education, 2015b). By silencing a racialised group through delivery of curricula, the privilege of the dominant group is reinforced, and its power maintained. When considering the Ontario sex education curriculum in a critical light, there must be attention on the history of silencing Indigenous people in Canada. Hunt (2016) argues that silencing occurs when we ignore Canada’s colonial history; violence against Indigenous women and girls is often posed as a statistic of high risk without any information about colonization. Sexual assault is within the domain of sexual health education, and yet there is a silencing of marginalized groups who experience trauma, because trauma can be seen as an individual health problem. Hunt insists that focussing on trauma as an individual problem prevents a focus on social problems that contribute
to the conditions of producing violence, specifically the assimilation and institutionalization of Indigenous children through the residential school system.

Like race, it seems disabilities are often invisible in curricular content. In a qualitative study, Esmail, Darry, Walter, and Knupp (2010) found that stigma and assumptions about disability renders individuals invisible in dominant discourses on sexuality. Their findings reinforced that sex is the domain of the “white, heterosexual, young, single, non-disabled person” (p. 1151). Esmail et al. describe the effects of common misconceptions about people with disabilities that present them as “child-like, asexual, and in need of protection” (p. 1151). The fact that apart from its inclusion in definitions, the subject of disability currently has only one reference about how persons with disabilities access information regarding sexual health. This suggests there should be a stronger acknowledgement of disability in the Ontario curriculum. The further point that the one reference is framed as a potential student response question which places the expectation on students to voice their unique subject position and sexual needs (Ministry of Education, 2015b) is even more of a reason for inclusive change. Race and ability are similarly silenced in the classroom; regardless of the degree of their physical visibility, people of colour and people with disabilities are made invisible.

“Pathologizing” content refers to instances where sexual orientation is only addressed in a negative context (Gowen & Wings-Yanez, 2014). This recurring narrative compares queer lifestyles to harmful consequences, for example, by pairing sexual orientation with risk of sexually transmitted infections (Gowen & Winges-Yanez, 2014). One way this is employed is in both the conservative and liberal agendas for sexuality education. Connell and Elliot (2009) argue that each side discursively constructs “archetypal children” as innocent and vulnerable victims of sex (p. 86); for conservatives, this child is the “pregnant teenager”, while liberals use
the “suicidal gay youth” as embodiments of their concern about youth sexuality. Regardless of their different political orientations, these negative constructions pathologize teen sex by viewing sexual behaviours and identities as the source of a social problem. Further, race can also be a factor in pathologizing adolescent sexuality. Fields (2005) examined the negative constructions of African-American girls and the discourses of corruption and promiscuity that accompany their sexual behaviour. Similarly, in addition to the silencing that occurs for marginalized groups, there is a pathologizing of Indigenous youth in Canada. Hunt (2016) and Oliver et al. (2015) maintain that speaking of the high risk of sexual violence against Indigenous people without information about colonialism naturalizes the risk on Indigenous bodies and ignores settler complicity and responsibility. Oliver et al. point to evidence that higher rates of HIV among Indigenous young people is linked to colonialism in a number of ways. They argue that the systematic Othering of Indigenous women in particular created health inequities, “which in relation to HIV manifest themselves in the forms of gender violence, coercive sex and survival sex work” (p. 911). Oliver et al. suggests that the treatment of Indigenous women through colonization came out of fear of women’s agency and led to the racialisation and sexualisation of Indigenous women that places a negative stigma on their sexuality to this day. Colour-blind curricular content and pedagogy does not address Canada’s colonial past and present, and I argue, perpetuates the negative associations with sexual violence upon Indigenous women.

These critiques point to the need for intersectional sexuality education in Canada that acknowledges the structural barriers for LGBTQ+, racialised, and differently-abled persons in accessing sexual health information and developing sexual subjectivities. These subjects need to be explicitly represented in curricula for sexuality education that does not assume heteronormativity and does not tolerate the silencing or pathologizing of Others.
Pleasure Absent and Empowerment Neglected

With decisions to include certain material in curriculum, there are decisions to exclude certain topics, whether they be deemed taboo or unnecessary. This body of excluded information is called the “null curriculum” (Eisner, 1994; Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986). Scholars argue that the curriculum is heterocentric (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Fields, 2008; Gowen & Wings-Yanez, 2014; Lamb, 2013), which means the null curriculum includes information suited towards non-heterosexual persons. In addition, Flinders, Noddings, and Thornton (1986) argue that affect (values, attitudes, and emotions) has also been a huge part of the null curriculum. McKenzie’s (2015) analysis of the curriculum update demonstrates a huge increase in references to “gender identity” and “bullying”, thereby bringing affect into sexuality education to an extent. However, the null curriculum still includes feelings that we avoid introducing in classrooms – namely, pleasure and desire. What Sears (1992) calls the “hidden curriculum” refers to how curriculum is implicitly delivered through educational spaces, and when it comes to sexuality, there is an “overemphasis on rational decision making and the failure to explore eroticism associated with sexuality” (p. 13). The emphasis on rational decision making can be seen in how sex education fits into Ontario’s greater Health and Physical Education curriculum. Of the four categories – Living Skills, Active Living, Movement Competence, and Healthy Living – sex education falls under the Healthy Living section, which includes: “learning about health, making healthy choices, and understanding the connections to everyday life” (Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. ). The emphasis on rationality and health is evidence of a discourse of individual decision-making dominating the curriculum, while a discourse of desire is still missing from sexuality education (Allen, 2004; Fine, 1988; Fine & McClelland, 2006).
Why is desire and pleasure largely absent in sexuality education? As Paechter (2004) asserts, the mind/body split that governs sexuality education prioritizes reason over desire in the fashion of Enlightenment. Similarly modernist, pleasure is seen to be of the body, and therefore can be seen as dangerous or threatening to the order of the sex education classroom. However, the absence of pleasure is linked with denying the empowerment of adolescents. Fine (1998) addressed this in her essay on the “missing discourse of desire” in sexuality education. While Fine focusses her analysis on young women, this is not to say that male pleasure is present in sexuality education. The little space for male desire is occupied by information about “wet dreams”, “erections”, and the onset of an interest in the opposite sex (Allen, 2004). While these topics are heteronormative, when considered in conjunction with the absence of female desire they also reinforce hegemonic masculinity by positioning young men as active and desiring subjects. Sexuality education is a site that reinforces and produces particular subjectivities; these subject positions are constructed differently for young men and women, and therefore there is a gendered difference in the consequences of a missing discourse of desire (Allen, 2004). Fine argues that by leaving desire out of the teaching of sex education, young women are positioned primarily as victims of sexual violence and are left unable to exercise agency. Revisiting the subject after 18 years, Fine and McClelland (2006) again advocate for desire in sex education:

Educated as neither desiring subjects seeking pleasure nor potentially abused subjects who could fight back, young women were denied knowledge and skills, and left to their own (and others’) devices in a sea of pleasures and dangers (p. 298).

Because desire was part of the “null curriculum,” a “hidden curriculum” (Sears, 1992) of sexual danger presents young women in a problematic position as victims, rather than desiring subjects.
Allen (2004) also advocates for desire in sexuality education, saying a discourse of erotics can empower young women and also offer young men a broader range of sexual subjectivities beyond the constraints of hegemonic masculinity. Invoking a discourse of erotics in sexuality education would frame desire as a right extended to all young people of any gender or sexual identity. Allen says this can only happen if spaces are created where desire and pleasure are legitimated and positively acknowledged. The new curriculum also advocates for this space, stating that when discussing difficult topics, “it is important to give students an opportunity to explore all sides of the issue to promote understanding” (Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. 39). However, the still-present emphasis on health-related terms over attitude-related terms (Mckenzie, 2015) shows a lack of space to explore pleasure. Fine and McClelland maintain that discussing pleasure is essential because it is linked to empowerment as teaching pleasure in sexuality education reconstitutes “sexual subjects with the capacity for, and right to, positive experiences of sexual desire and pleasure” (Allen, 2004, p. 152). A “thick desire” would situate sexual activity within a larger context of social structures and would require educators to walk alongside youth as they navigate the dialectics of danger and pleasure, dialectics which are "braided, parasitic, nested inside one another" (Fine & McClelland, 2006, p. 326). Including a discourse of desire in sexuality education is a complex process that critically engages with sexuality, justice, and power and departs from formalized sex education in Ontario.

The Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008) acknowledges the wide variety of factors that determine sexual health but does not discuss pleasure as entwined with empowerment, as in Fine and McClelland’s (2006) analysis. In comparison, Connell (2005) calls attention to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) (1975) definition of sexual health, which describes it as “an integration of the somatic, emotional,
intellectual, and social aspects of sexual being, in ways that are positively enriching and that enhance personality, communication, and love” (p. 41). Furthermore, the WHO definition says that fundamental to sexual health are “the right to sexual information and the right to pleasure” (p. 41). The way those rights can be prioritized in educational settings is not only through curricular content, but also through a queer or critical pedagogy that destabilizes the preconceived notions of normal and abnormal or healthy and unhealthy behaviours.

**Pedagogical Interventions**

The literature I have reviewed thus far illustrates critiques of sex education and the opportunity to intervene. Scholars have critiqued the content and framing of sexuality education and call for pedagogical interventions for a re-framing of curricula. In light of the update to the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum in 2015, some problematic silences in the previous curriculum have been filled, specifically regarding inclusion of gender diversity and sexual orientation. However, I argue that to engage a thick desire (Fine & McClelland, 2006) in sexuality education in Ontario, pedagogy must also be taken into consideration to complement the updated curricular content. In this section, I will explore the concept of queer pedagogy (Britzman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998) as well as arts-based interventions into sexuality education.

**Queer Pedagogy**

Queer pedagogy is the application of queer theory to teaching and learning and also draws upon concepts from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011). Drawing on poststructuralism, queer theory emerged from the work of scholars such as Judith Butler and Michel Foucault and is concerned with deconstructing dominant categories like normal/abnormal. Kehily (2002) believes that this goes beyond inclusive identity politics, as “queer” shifts the “focus from sexual minorities to a consideration of sexual majorities,
specifically the politics and practice of heterosexuality” (p. 43). In addition, Weeks (1998) describes queer theory as an examination of the perverse at the center of the normal and an effort to constantly work to unsettle binarism and suggest alternatives. Placing these goals in conjunction with critical pedagogy suggests new pedagogical possibilities in education that disrupt power structures.

The critical pedagogy movement emerged as a social justice approach to education (Giroux, 2011) and it has uncovered the power imbalances that exist in dominant curricular and pedagogical frameworks. One of these dominant frameworks is what Freire (1970) describes as narrative education, which is dependent on a relationship between a narrating subject (teacher) and listening objects (students). Freire argues that the contents of the teacher’s narration are often detached from reality and “alien to the existential experience of the students” (p. 52). In this common model, also called the “banking concept of education”, students are depositories waiting to be filled up by the teacher’s narration (Freire, 1970). The problem for this model when it comes to sex education is it places the teacher as the bestower of knowledge and reason while positioning students as ignorant absorbers of information, leaving little or no room for inquiry, desire, or empowerment. Critical pedagogy exposes the structure of the banking model of education, allowing us to see its problems -- especially for sexuality education. However, this theoretical framework sees the students as the oppressed and the structure as the oppressor which may not be the most helpful approach for intervening into sexuality education. While I agree that the structure must be transformed, this research uses a post-structural concept of power as dynamic and productive to see these students not as oppressed, but as implicated in creating knowledge and embodying discourses of gender and sexuality.
Applying queer theory to pedagogy involves a critical examination of what is assumed to be the “natural” order of gender and sex (Jones, 2011). Beyond expanding curriculum to include gay and lesbian writing, Britzman (1995) argues that queer pedagogy extends to a shift in the “constitution of bodies of knowledge and knowledge of bodies” (p. 151). Queer pedagogy seeks to reposition subjects of difference from their place outside normalcy to reconsider their representation inside education. This is a process signifying actions, not actors (Britzman, 1995), which means “queer” is seen as a verb, rather than an identity. Luhmann (1998) uses “queer” in this way:

Pedagogy, when attached to feminist, anti-racist, radical, or anti-homophobic, is critical of mainstream education as a site for the reproduction of unequal power relations. Similarly, queer turns critically against the practices of normalization at stake in the study of sexuality (p. 141).

A part of the act of “queering” is engaging with the relationship between knowledge and ignorance, which Britzman (1995) maintains is “neither oppositional nor binary,” but rather, “they mutually implicate each other, structuring and enforcing particular forms of knowledge and forms of ignorance” (p. 154). This is a more productive way of seeing knowledge and ignorance as contextual and dynamic, as opposed to the techno-rational orientation of education, which aims to fill the void of ignorance with knowledge. Ignorance is not simply a lack of knowledge, it is also produced by certain knowledges and is represented by the absences in hegemonic discourses (Britzman, 1995). Previously, I argued that traditional sex education curricula neglects empowerment and pleasure; these silences are part of the “null curriculum” and are produced by prioritizing normative knowledges that are represented in sex education. Luhmann (1998) calls this representational absence injurious; however, inserting lesbian and gay
content is not the only remedy against homophobia. This solution follows the assumption that homophobia stems from a problem of representation and the lack or distortion of gay and lesbian subjects. However, scholars call for not a mere addition of gay and lesbian writing in educational spaces, but an expansion of the definition of normal. This refers back to Britzman’s call of attention to bodies of knowledge and knowledge of bodies. Queer pedagogy requires a critical rewriting, not simply adding material as an afterthought.

Queer pedagogy is also a reaction to the problematic relationship between the learner and the teacher in knowledge transfer and it looks at how this transfer reinforces ignorance and normalised discourses of topics across the curriculum, including sexuality. Luhmann (1998) suggests that the focus of pedagogy should begin with epistemology, questioning “how we come to know and how knowledge is produced in the interaction between teacher/text and student” (p. 151), which moves past the fixation on the teacher as holder of knowledge and wielder of power. To think of knowledge as something that can be mastered is problematic in sexuality education, and queer theorists recommend a disruption of the binary of knowledge/ignorance just as they call for a disruption of the binaries of gender/sexuality. I argue that what Britzman (1985) seeks in a queer pedagogy – “exploring what one cannot bear to know” (p. 165) – disrupts the binaries of teacher/student and knowledge/ignorance by prioritizing a student-led process and critically examining and deconstructing differences in knowledges. Queering, in this case, opens up the bounds of expectations in the educational setting to value student voices, make inquiries into the differences between formalized sex education and media portrayals of sexuality, and to imagine an understanding of adolescent sexuality unhinged from the dominant social order.

What does queering the classroom look like? The following studies envision “queer” through self-reflection, student-led learning, and gender exploration. Bey and Washington (2013)
conceptualize linking queer theory with critical pedagogy to dislodge curriculum from its static form to re-envision it as a performance. This process is one of self-reflexivity for the authors who look at their own experiences to explore acts of queering the classroom. One author (unspecified) describes his middle school experience of navigating the spaces between normativity and deviance when he would create and share nude drawings of classmates and teachers. Albeit this activity could be considered inappropriate, Bey and Washington envision this as an example of engaging queerly with “the space between what was known, observed, discussed, and secretive about sex, sexuality, gender, and power” (p. 124). In a university classroom setting, Buck and Parrotta (2014) describe how student-led exercises can be used to challenge heteronormativity and to allow students to create alternative models (of sexuality and sexuality education). The authors prompted students to consider what is left out of the sex education curriculum. One way this was done was by having the students read “If Men Could Menstruate” (Steinem, 1995) and then design masculine hygiene products (Buck & Parrotta, 2014). In this activity to “make the familiar strange” (Kleinman, Copp, & Sandstrom, 2006), the students were repositioned as educators and policy makers, allowing them to consider models of sex education that are not so dependent on the male/female binary (Buck & Parrotta, 2014).

DePalma (2013) describes a participatory action research project where researchers and educators used art in English primary schools to interrupt heteronormativity. The children constructed self-portraits that considered their gender identity from the initial gender “assignment” at the moment of birth (DePalma, 2013, p. 7).

What becomes central to queer pedagogy is a consideration of space. Quinlivan and Town (1999) describe a shift in their research from a focus on LGBT identity politics to an interest in how secondary schools operate as “heteronormalizing institutions” (p. 509). They
understand this as a queer space of inquiry, looking towards queer pedagogy as a potential for affirming sexual diversity (Quinlivan & Town, 1999). Their research suggested that it is important to provide a venue where participants can “articulate their experiences and have them validated” (p. 518), thereby creating the space to deconstruct heterosexuality and explore how heteronormativity is presumed in school settings. Quinlivan and Town envision the space that queer pedagogy creates as potentially offering a wider range of sexualities to students. Through their process, research participants were able to share with one another and connect over their shared experiences, which affirmed their realities and allowed exploration of new ways of thinking. In another example of “queering”, Drazenovich (2015) believes that sex education fails to address the explicit information available to youth through media and thus utilizes queer pedagogy because it is concerned with deconstructing normalcy (Britzman, 1995). Drazenovich’s project includes deconstructing caricatures of LGBTQ+ identities in the media and popular culture. Drazenovich also suggests a relationship between the terms “queer” and “two-spirited” as they share an ambiguity and fluidity that offer potential for sex education. Ultimately, Drazenovich stresses that “care of the self” (Foucault, 1990) through desire and pleasure is central to the process of identity formation (p. 13). Even common understandings of sexuality acknowledge its effect on identity formation, reinforcing the notion that sexuality education is indeed a key space through which educators must facilitate exploration of the lifelong processes of creating identity and sexuality.

Queer pedagogy aims to create spaces of deconstruction and exploration, and while Drazenovich advocates for “care of the self” to be addressed in sex education, the process can also be seen as “risking the self” (Luhmann, 1998, p. 151). Greteman (2013) says that sex education is inherently “risky” and that this risk is central to queering the classroom. Departing
from techno-rational education frameworks, queer pedagogy encourages learning as a process of *risking the self* rather than finding the self (Luhmann, 1998). Greteman takes Luhmann’s concept of “risking the self” and uses the risky sexual activity of barebacking as a pedagogical tool. Barebacking is the phenomenon of men knowingly engaging in risky sex without using condoms. Greteman argues that barebackers are on the “outside of sex and sex education,” inhabiting the position of “Other” outside sexual norms (p. S21). Including attention to countercultural behaviours in the curriculum could be productive for sex education to “move beyond simple epistemological questions (what students should know or think about sex?) to also think about how subjects emerge in relationship to other subjects” (Greteman, 2013, p. S24). Ultimately, Greteman is using the example of barebacking to signify the positions of sexual subjects that are edited out of sex education in the name of “normalcy” (p. S24). He envisions queering pedagogy in this case as considering the relationships between sexual subjects – namely, those “inside” sex education, and “Others” who are located outside of curriculum.

Although Greteman (2013) advocates for a “risky” sex education, going outside the bounds of set curricular frameworks has its challenges. An example of these challenges can be seen in Quinlivan’s (2012) study, a research project in which she and a teacher used popular culture texts in a New Zealand high school health class to destabilize normative gender and sexuality. Through the process, some students re-inscribed and policed “the heteronormative discourses we were attempting to destabilize” (p. 512). In a reflection of the ways the students, teacher, and researcher handled a situation where some young male students made homophobic comments in order to establish their heterosexuality, Quinlivan suggests that emotionality must be attended to within queer pedagogy. Queering the classroom “makes the familiar strange” (Kleineman et al., 2006), which may come with high levels of emotionality and anxiety for both
the teacher and students. Quinlivan suggests that her reaction to the stressful situation, which framed emotionality as a problem to be negotiated, prevented exploration of the power relations that generated the emotionality.

As Quinlivan (2012) alludes, queer pedagogy holds difficulties and limitations. Allen (2015) explores the limits of applying queer theory in her university course entitled, Learning Sexualities where he explains the difficulty of utilizing something as “elusive and unrecognizable” as queer theory in the classroom. Allen’s paper is explicitly not a “how to” guide for implementing queer theory in a university setting. She explains that prescribing a template for queer pedagogy is antithetical to queer theory itself, “as a way of thinking that seeks to unsettle normative ideas around what, for example, constitutes a ‘successful course’” (p. 765).

She describes the discomfort felt by students and professors alike when sexuality is the object of discussion. Navigating emotions of unease is the task of a skilled educator wishing to engage productively within queer pedagogy. Allen describes the difficulties of creating safe spaces and contends that “all spaces of learning are risky” (p. 767). In the spirit of “making the familiar strange,” Allen’s teaching sought to undo dominant meanings around sexuality. One way she did this was by offering students tools to help them “notice sexuality everywhere and view it differently from before” (p. 768). Allen points out the restrictive climate of education, which prevents representation of certain images of sexuality in the classroom, such as bestiality, pedophilia, necrophilia, sado-masochism, polyamory, rape, asexuality, and sexual fetishes. Queer pedagogy seeks to question the normalization of certain images and pathologization of others, however, Allen argues that including such images may risk the course’s viability. With the attempt to employ queer pedagogy in the classroom, the limitations of an educational context become apparent. Educators and students alike are subject to the overwhelmingly powerful
definitions of what is right and wrong, and what is acceptable and unacceptable according to discourses of adolescence and childhood. It is for this reason that we must employ “queer” as an active and dynamic verb, continually creating space in the curriculum to investigate discourses of normality.

Whitlock (2010) echoes this sentiment in a self-reflexive narrative essay, wherein she describes her concept of queer as an active process. Whitlock (2010) pictures a “queer triangle of biological sex, desire/pleasure/sexuality, and gender – with ‘power’ in the center” (p. 82). Putting the non-linear and elusive “queer” into a geometric shape helps her make sense of queer theory and speak of it to university students. In teaching a university education course, Whitlock searched for queerness by departing from lecture and exam pedagogical strategies and instead instructed using primarily small group discussion and activities. The final project of the class was assigned with minimal guidelines and without a grading scheme, leading to one student’s choice to present his analysis of the classroom relations (Whitlock, 2010). A flexible course structure and peer-sharing changed this student’s perspective on his relationship to others in the course, which Whitlock describes as his “growing awareness of himself as a Self, resistant to normative sexual, gender, and biological boundaries” (p. 89). She proudly saw this student “owning his queerness and putting (him)Self in relation with the Other” (p. 89). This demonstrates what Britzman (1995) advocates: queer pedagogy extends to a shift in “the constitution of bodies of knowledge and knowledge of bodies” (p. 151). Ultimately, “the process of how we make ourselves through and against others” (Luhmann, 1998, p. 153) is a risk, but one that I argue can open up possibilities. Analysing her own queer pedagogy, Whitlock admits that it consists mostly of integrating LGBT identity politics into the classroom, which “reinforce[s] assimilationist stereotypes” (p. 96). Queering pedagogy, therefore, must be a
process of continual assessment, reconsideration, and renewal to not fall in the trap of assimilation and to critically engage a “thick desire” (Fine and McClelland, 2006).

**Drama-Based Interventions**

Scholars have advocated for using the arts both in queering the classroom and in sex education. For example, Bey and Washington (2013) describe their use of visual arts to explore subjugated knowledge in the sex education classroom. Similarly, DePalma (2013) conducted a gender exploration exercise with children through the creation of self-portraits. Participatory theatre can also be a means of queering the classroom as it reconfigures the classroom framework through “facilitating collaborative, action-oriented problem-solving” (Ponzetti et al., 2009, p. 94). Participatory theatre emerges from the theory of popular theatre (Boal, 1979; Kidd, 1982), which involves the sharing of stories and lived experiences. Ponzetti et al. conducted a study in 2009 to evaluate the effects of a dramatic presentation called *Are We There Yet?* which aims to create a safe space where youth can navigate confusing messages about sexuality. They base the use of theatre for this topic on three opportunities: “for pleasure (enjoyment), identification, and distancing” (p. 94). Humour is a key tool to establish comfort and ease among the youth audience and performers and through participation, students identify with the characters portrayed and can respond in a fabricated scenario separate from the high-stress of a real-life experience. Conrad (2008) also used popular theatre to mediate sensitive topics as they relate to “at-risk” high school students in Alberta. The process drew on the students’ experiences, highlighting the issues most relevant to that population. Conrad describes this process:

[It] began with a series of games and activities for group building, trust building, and skill development, moved on to the exploration of themes through brainstorming, image work and discussion, then into devising, storytelling of incidents from their lives and the creation of scenes based on these stories. As we
created the scenes, we animated them to explore the issues raised, using techniques adapted from Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed (p. 17).

From this type of work, the participants’ interpretations and negotiations of their own stories evolve into scenes. I agree with Conrad (2008), who insists that the scripts developed through popular theatre are not simply explanatory; they are meant to be “expressive and evocative” (p. 18). Drama can be a powerful tool for exploration and negotiation of themes relevant to students, and therefore presents possibilities for sexuality education.

**Playbuilding as Queer Pedagogy**

Playbuilding (Belliveau, 2006; Norris, 2009; Weigler, 2001) is an arts-based research methodology that serves as a metaphorical canvas on which participants can paint their experiences, feelings, and desires. It was developed into a research methodology by Norris after much work in a theatrical genre called Collective Creation (Norris, 2018). Norris (2009) claims that playbuilding seeks to blur genres and move towards interdisciplinary work, making research accessible to a larger (non-academic) community. Playbuilding has use across many fields with its intent “not to report findings but to provide evocative texts that invite live audiences to engage in discussion for the mutual learning of all” (Norris, 2009, p. 21). I frame playbuilding as more than an arts-based research methodology; it can be used as a queer pedagogy to challenge power in the classroom, disrupt notions of normality, and subvert dominant knowledges.

Participants in a playbuilding process join a collective venture where everyone collaborates in the production of knowledge and meaning making. Norris (2009) calls the participants (cast) Actors/Researchers/Teachers, or A/R/Tors. He borrows this term from Irwin’s (2004), “a/r/tography,” which is arts-based living inquiry. A/r/tography asserts that “knowledge and understanding are produced through the process of inquiry, the body, and being(s)-in-
BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

relation” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxii). Playbuilding uses another fundamental component of a/r/tography – “the importance of self and collective interpretation,” which according to Irwin and Springgay (2008) are always in a state of becoming (p. xxiv). The arts-based living inquiry central to playbuilding relies on two fundamental concepts of queer pedagogy: “risking the self” (Luhmann, 1998) in a process of collective interpretation; as well as a shift in the “constitution of bodies of knowledge and knowledge of bodies” (Britzman, 1995). Through dramatic exercises and storytelling, we risk the self by collectively exploring experiences, and embody those experiences as we create scenes. Like queer pedagogy, playbuilding is an active and dynamic verb involving continual renewal and renegotiation.

Playbuilding presents opportunities for knowledge creation, interpretation, and mediation. Using dramatic forms such as tableaus, mime, choral speech, puppetry, word collage, shadow scene, inner dialogue, mirror exercises, machines, narration, flashbacks, second takes, fast-forwards, and freezes the participants mediate their experiences which demonstrates the “intricate relationship with content and how it is transmitted” (Norris, 2018, p. 295). The playbuilding process allows the cast to negotiate how they want to tell each story and how to do so in an effective and powerful way. In this way, A/R/Tors are considering their audience’s and their own interpretation, point of view, entertainment, time, and space – just a few elements that affect how we form knowledges and tell stories. Dramatic forms can also demonstrate how these knowledges are fluid and changing. In this way, the “normality” of lived experiences is called into question and stories are situated in a web of discourses and social relations.

Employed as a queer pedagogy, playbuilding challenges the conventional understanding of knowledge, seeing participants as subjects constructed by a web of discourses. Further, the participants co-author a play, which places knowledge creation in the hands of the collective.
(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

The “co-authorship” that is encouraged in the playbuilding process involves a negotiation of stories which are unfixed and cannot be assumed to be representative of actuality. As indicated by the following statement by Stephen Banks, representation of the actual is an impossible feat:

> The opposite of fact isn’t fiction but something like error. The opposite of fiction isn’t truth but something like objectivity or actuality. Any genre or piece of writing that claims to be objective, to represent the actual, is a writing that denies its own existence. (Banks & Banks, 1998, p. 13)

This is one of the tensions of playbuilding: attempting to mediate stories rather than represent them accurately. The cast is not reifying and entrenching original stories, but creating something new. Playbuilding and its counter-cultural conception of knowledge presents an opportunity to see the content of sexuality education as negotiable in a larger context of social discourses of sexuality. For this reason, I argue that engaging with playbuilding as a queer pedagogy creates the space for sexuality education in Ontario that is contextually-relevant and empowering for youth as sexual subjects. “Queer” remains elusive and fluid while it seeks to deconstruct normalcy and therefore its flexibility may be difficult to envision in a structured classroom. Because creating and performing theatre focuses on the body, it suggests a reversal of the reason/desire and mind/body binaries embedded in education and therefore presents an opportunity to engage “queerly” with “thick desire” in sexuality education.

**Conclusion**

I suggest a pedagogical intervention such as playbuilding because the 2015 update to the Health and Physical Education Curriculum does not go far enough. Although the changes to sex education in Ontario were necessary and move in a positive direction, updating content to match progressive LGBTQ+ politics does not meet the needs of youth today. Mckenzie (2015) argues
that queer theory illuminates the main reason for controversy around sex education in Ontario; heteronormativity persists as an ideology that resists the sexuality education that youth need today. For this reason, I advocate for innovative and creative pedagogies that empower youth as sexual subjects. In a response to scholars like Fine and McClelland (2006), who call for thick desire in sex education, I envision a pedagogical space that allows for exploration and critical engagement with sexuality as constituted by our social structures. Sexuality must be situated within the social relations that are complicated by social media, internet pornography, and increasing recognition of gender and sexual fluidity among youth. Rather than an instrument of regulation, sexuality education should be an invitation for teenagers to explore within safe spaces what they would be already exploring in the hallways or on their phones. It is through a queer pedagogy that we can envision a sexuality education that does not construct teenage sexuality as “problematic” or ignores colonial legacies and hierarchies, and instead increases the bounds of pleasure and desire to encourage empowerment. A queer pedagogical intervention can interrupt the health-centric and normative orientation of the Ontario sex education curriculum, opening up the possibilities for youth to navigate sexuality with renewed agency.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Design

In this chapter I describe the methodological framework of this study. I address the theoretical assumptions underpinning this research and describes playbuilding (Belliveau, 2006; Norris, 2009; Weigler, 2001), a form of applied theatre (Prentki & Preston, 2009), qualitative arts-based methodology (Leavy, 2015), and intensive participatory-action oriented research process (Conrad, 2008). I also outline the design of this study and detail our collective playbuilding process.

Theoretical Foundations for Playbuilding

In the previous chapter I argued that playbuilding can be considered a queer pedagogy. This particular application of a drama-based methodology to research sexuality education is grounded in queer theory and critical pedagogy. Although the theoretical framework and social justice orientation of this research is a combination of queer theory and critical pedagogy, I also employ a constructivist philosophy to address the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions involved in a methodology such as playbuilding. Constructivism provides a framework for interpretation, while queer pedagogy as a transformative framework is useful in deconstructing the power structures and knowledges that govern sexuality education.

According to D.C. Phillips (1995), constructivism is based on the presupposition that “human knowledge – whether it be the bodies of public knowledge known as the various disciplines, or the cognitive structures of individual knowers or learners – is constructed” (p. 5). Queer theory provides a complementary de-stabilization of knowledge as it is a lens through which we can deconstruct these knowledges and analyze the power relations at work. Using these theoretical foundations this research assumes that 1) the body of knowledge that is taught as part of traditional sex education frameworks is constructed, and 2) the embodied knowledge
of learning is constructed and reinforced through traditional education frameworks. Lincoln and Guba (2013) describe a constructivist epistemology as a transactional relationship between knower and the knowable that is contextual, highly subjective, and mediated by the knower’s prior experiences and social position. This epistemology reinforces the vignette format of storytelling in playbuilding research as Norris (2018) claims that vignettes have the potential to provide a polyphony of perspectives, rather than focusing on a single narrative.

Due to both the shortness of each scene and the multiple variations of the theme, audience members are not given the opportunity to align with any character rather the structure alienates them from the narrative (Brecht, 1957), structure and directs them toward the theme (Norris, 2018, p. 293).

Axiologically, a constructivist philosophy assumes that “objectivity is rejected as a possibility when inquirer and research participants act together to co-create knowledge and create a new, shared reality” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 41). The playbuilding process welcomes the subjective values and experiences of each cast member (including myself as the primary researcher and co-creator with the participants). Playbuilding as a methodology shares constructivism’s ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, making it an appropriate methodology that “delves into the minds and meaning-making, sense-making activities of the several knowers involved” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 40). The varied and multiple meanings that evolve out of this research provide a complexity of views to be analyzed through a queer pedagogical lens.

**Playbuilding as Qualitative Research**

Applied theatre has been used as a tool in education and research alike. Prentki and Preston (2009) define applied theatre as a broad set of theatrical practices that extend beyond the scope of conventional, mainstream theatre and respond to the lived experiences of people. The
content that is created and performed resonates with its participants and audiences and explicitly or implicitly expresses a desire for social and community change (Prentki & Preston, 2009). Applied theatre is also employed under the umbrella of research-based theatre, in which “the script of performance is solidly rooted in non-fictional researched reality” (Saldaña, 2011, p. 14). A leading scholar in research-based theatre, Saldaña (2005) advocates for “dramatizing the data,” or translating significant selections of narrative collected through various research methods into written script (p. 2). As a part of a shift towards dramatic re-creations of data, “playbuilding” (Weigler, 2001) was developed into a research methodology by Norris after much work in a theatrical genre called Collective Creation (Norris, 2018). Playbuilding has an epistemological similarity with the nonfiction novel and Ethnodrama (Mienczakowski, 1995; Saldaña, 2005), both of which construct stories from the lived experiences of the research subjects into literary and theatrical presentations. The distinction between playbuilding and theatre-based methods like Ethnodrama, is the involvement of participants as co-authors and co-researchers through the three phases of research (data generation, data mediation, and dissemination). The primary purpose of playbuilding is “not to report findings but to provide evocative texts that invite live audiences to engage in discussion for the mutual learning of all” (Norris, 2009, p. 21). This intent speaks strongly to the accessibility and application of research across disciplines and to community spaces. The dissemination of knowledge is through the mode of theatrical presentation, where the dramatic forms used “can amplify the material, engage the audience, and in some instances, can say as much as the content being presented” (Chenail, 2010, p. 128). Playbuilding challenges the conventional understanding of research by not only approaching inquiry with a different intent, but also by presenting the material to a community as well as a scholarly audience (Leavy, 2015).
Playbuilding is comparable to other participatory methodologies that require a fluidity in process as researchers negotiate the subjective stories and knowledges being explored. Norris and Sawyer (2017) compare playbuilding to duoethnography, a methodology in which two or more researchers engage in qualitative dialogue on their different experiences of the same phenomenon, which holds an ambiguity in that “while it professes to foster the articulation of the voices of others, it simultaneously advocates an interrogation of those stories, disrupting previously held narratives and unsettling the duoethnographers” (p. 4). While playbuilding in this study is about student voice, I do not assume that stories or voices are fixed, but that they can be negotiated in a particular way through the rehearsal process. This is why the rehearsal process is simultaneously a type of data generation and analysis, providing rich examples of students negotiating their knowledges and subjectivities through dramatic forms.

The process of Playbuilding can be described using the visual symbol of a kite (Norris, 2009). Norris uses the geometric shape of a kite to symbolize the expanding of work and possibilities through the Playbuilding process from a narrow topic, visually represented by the bottom point of the kite. Then comes a “saturation point when this process concludes and a refocussing occurs”, which begins at the widest part of the kite and narrows to the top point (Norris, 2009, p. 55). According to Norris, Playbuilding does not follow a customary format that divides research into three “acts” – data collection, data analysis, and dissemination (p. 21-22). Rather, Norris calls these data generation, data mediation, and performance, and explains that the three acts may be simultaneous. Norris does not use the term data collection: “since research questions and acts will elicit their own unique responses, the information is ‘generated’” (Norris, 2018, p. 306). In addition, he uses “mediation” instead of “analysis” to make explicit the “intricate relationship with content and how it is transmitted” (Norris, 2018, p. 295). The fact
that these acts may be simultaneous distinguishes Playbuilding from other qualitative methods in which there is a clear separation between data collection (i.e. interviews), analysis (writing the script), and dissemination (performance) (Leavy, 2015, p. 184).

The [A/R/Tors] have stories that they want to tell, beliefs that they want to share, and questions that they want to address. They enjoy the collaborative process and theatre both as a means of meaning-making and as a form of presentation. The cast members are rich in data and willing to spend considerable time examining themselves and others to better understand the phenomenon we have chosen to investigate (Norris, 2009, p. 42).

As participants and researchers alike take on multiple roles as actors, directors, and researchers, together, we re-create and re-examine our own stories and attach meaning to them. Osberg, Biesta, and Cilliers (2008) would call these meanings placeholders (p. 221), as acquiring knowledge and exploring lived realities is a complex process that must be continually re-negotiated.

Playbuilding rehearsals are comparable to a focus group in which theatre is the medium for articulating thoughts. First of all, a broad topic is decided – in this case, sexuality education. Second, the group begins to share personal stories and experiences with said topic, thereby establishing trust within the group as individuals are making themselves vulnerable. This is part of the bottom half of the kite, the expanding of possibilities that include collection of scene ideas, themes, and metaphors. One way of recording these contributions is by the participants writing their ideas on blank file cards (Norris, 2009). After a few rehearsals, these file cards are categorized into folders: themes/metaphors/issues, scene ideas, rehearsed scenes, quickies, external research, songs/props/costumes, potential titles, and keepers (Norris, 2018). These serve as tangible evidence of the sharing and exploration of experiences and thoughts of the cast.
While one might see this as data collection, Norris (2009) emphasized that he doesn’t believe data can be collected, but sees the file card system as a way of recording the conversation. At this point, the widest point of the kite, scenes are identified and the focus begins to narrow. However, the process still allows for flexibility in allowing more data generation as memories and thoughts are provoked by the development of scenes.

Scenes may use different dramatic techniques that distance the audience from reality and encourage a critical viewing. Experimentation with drama forms also allows the cast to vary the ways of both generating and telling stories. Over several years of playbuilding, Norris and various casts have used “tableaux, mime, choral speech, puppetry, word collage, shadow scene, inner dialogue, mirror exercises, machines, narration, flashbacks, second takes, fast-forwards, and freezes” (Norris, 2018, p. 295). He sees these theatrical possibilities as ways to “mediate” the content, offering numerous possibilities for transmitting the information (Norris, 2018). The playbuilding process will allow the cast to negotiate how they want to tell each story and how to do so in an effective and powerful way. In this way, A/R/Tors are considering their audience’s and their own interpretation, point of view, entertainment, time, and space – just a few elements that affect how we form knowledges and tell stories. Dramatic forms can also demonstrate how these knowledges are fluid and changing.

When the time for performance of the scenes arrives, the spiral nature of Playbuilding only increases, as data generation and dissemination happen simultaneously. After a scene portraying problems or issues is performed, the audience is invited to analyze it and make suggestions, adding pieces of their own experiences. From this the scenes evolve, incorporating the input from the audience and actors as their experiences are fluid and reflective of performing in front of different audiences (Norris, 2009). For about 10-15 minutes “the A/R/Tors and
audience member discuss issues that the ending scene and other scenes in the play have evoked. They work and rework scenes in order to explore possible, appropriate ways to deal with the situations presented” (Norris, 2009, p. 207). These conversations with the audience continue in smaller groups and then again in a large group. “This process is unique for research dissemination as the final product is co-created by the original researchers (A/R/Tors) and their audience. Data and insights no longer remain fixed” (Norris, 2009, p. 208). And so, we see how the dialogue is given life and can carry on, almost as if a kite inscribed with questions, thoughts, and feelings is set free into the wind, to be picked up once again.

**Design of this Study**

This research study was conducted at Brock University’s Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts and occurred within the academic semester from January to April 2017. In this section I describe the core elements of this research study, including its ethics, participants, my role as a researcher, and challenges. Following this, I will detail three stages of data generation (collection) – exploration, engagement, and co-authorship – as well as the mediation (analysis) and performance (dissemination) of the co-authored scenes.

For clarification, I use the term “participants” when referring to the five students who took part in this study. When I use the term “cast”, I include myself as an A/R/Tor. I also use the term “D/A/R/T” when referring to my role, an abbreviation of Director/Actor/Researcher/Teacher which Norris uses to distinguish the director (and primary researcher) from the other A/R/Tors.

**Ethics and Informed Consent**

Ethics approval was obtained through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board. The sensitive nature of the topic and the co-authorship involved in playbuilding posed some
challenges regarding ethics. I deeply considered the complexity and potential ethical issues when preparing for this research. See Appendix B, Ethical Entry into Research for excerpts from the ethics application, recruitment scripts, and consent forms.

I originally sought ethics approval to conduct the research with local high-school students, which involved an additional ethics application to a local school board. My proposal to conduct research in a local public high school was denied by the school board on the basis that it would be too great a time commitment for the students involved. For this reason, I requested a modification to Brock’s Research Ethics Board to conduct the research with first year university students in hope that they would have recent experiences with high school sex education to share.

Participants were informed in the Letter of Invitation/Consent Form (see Appendix B) of the possible risks and benefits of participating in this study. This study required the cast to be vulnerable as they share personal experiences with one another. The public performance posed further social and emotional risks. These ethical dilemmas required me to establish a secure environment where participants were protected from the abuse of sensitive, personal information. I began the process by initiating a discussion around creating a safe space. We agreed on the following: 1) Active Listening, 2) Confidentiality, 3) Judgement-Free Zone, 4) Shared responsibility in co-authorship and contribution. Another way I established a tone of safety was by using “Check-ins” and “Check-outs”, where A/R/Tors could openly discuss things that happened during or in-between rehearsals (Norris, 2018). To encourage vulnerability and respect for one another, it was my job as D/A/R/T to set the tone for the rest of the A/R/Tors to feel comfortable maintaining. In addition, I introduced the public performance by explaining that
while this play was co-authored based on personal experiences, the actors were not necessarily representing their own stories.

Participants

The participants in this study were five first year Dramatic Arts students from age 18-24. All participants (not including myself) had attended either public or Catholic high schools in Southern Ontario. These participants were invited to attend playbuilding rehearsals in a studio at Brock University’s Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts where we shared stories and experiences of sex education and translated these into dramatic forms. My sample of participants was not limited to students who graduated from high school within the past two years, as I had initially hoped, but did reflect their shared position as first year university students. This was a key characteristic as the participants’ familiarity with one another was evident and beneficial to building tones of trust and play in the playbuilding process. The majority of our cast (four out of six, including myself) were Caucasian and female, while the other two A/R/Tors were one Caucasian male and one female of Asian descent. The sexual and gender identities of the cast were unspecified. With the exception of a few rehearsal hours, all participants were involved in the process from the first rehearsal until the final performance.

I was aiming for 8-15 participants in total as a typical playbuilding cast consists of ten to fifteen A/R/Tors (Norris, 2018). A larger number enables smaller groups to work independently on scenes, and with several scenes being constructed simultaneously, a greater number of scenes are developed in a short time period (Norris, 2017). With a cast of only six, it was important for us to work all together and quickly develop scenes.
Director/Actor/Researcher/Teacher

As the primary researcher, I enacted the additional responsibility of directing by facilitating rehearsals and acting as timekeeper. The role of director, however, comes with a power dynamic that must be minimized for the purpose of this research. Norris cites Scudder (1968), who asks “How can one teach with authority, as an expert in a discipline, without violating the integrity of students?” (p. 133). As a facilitator and social justice researcher, it was important for me to research and create with the participants rather than to “teach with authority”. As Norris (2018) suggests, establishing a discussion circle and a talking object (a stuffed lobster, in our case) “decentralizes the power away from the D/A/R/T making all of the cast responsible for the voices of each other” (p. 300). By establishing active listening in this way, participating as an A/R/Tor, and continually reflecting on power dynamics through the process, I attempted to remove authority from my role.

The uncertainty of the role of the D/A/R/T is aligned with the flexibility of the methodology and compares to a fluidity necessary in queer pedagogies. The D/A/R/T serves as a guide to make practical and artistic suggestions, but does not exclude them from participating and collaborating with the cast as an equal contributor. It is the responsibility of the D/A/R/T to find artistic unity in the topics, stories and experiences being explored while honouring the perspectives of all (Norris, 2018). Throughout the process, I found myself being cautious of leading or pushing the cast towards certain ideas. This tension became easier over time as the participants became more comfortable developing, editing, and reshaping scenes. I explicitly position myself within this research as a subjective voice, but did not want to let my voice be stronger than any other participant’s. When writing about her doctoral playbuilding research, Diane Conrad (2008) states:
As in any case, no text can claim to be free of the author’s subjectivity (Banks & Banks, 1998), my scripts are constructions, but self-consciously so. I acknowledge that even in my choice of moments to script an interpretive process was involved, thus my account of our participatory work is inherently partial (p. 18).

As one of six authors, I did make direct contributions to the script, all the while using exercises to facilitate the contribution of other A/R/Tors.

**Challenges and Limitations**

**Entry**

Early in the planning stages of this research, I decided to conduct the study with high-school aged youth. Through my supervisor, I had a connection to a high school drama teacher in the region who was thrilled to hear of this project. However, in order to conduct research in a public school, I had to apply for ethics approval from the school board as well as Brock University’s Research Ethics Board. In April 2016, I received advice from a professor who had experience working with this population, urging me to apply to the school board as soon as possible. Within a month, I proposed my research with an ethics application to a local school board. After delaying a June meeting, the board informed me that I would not hear their final decision until the fall. I did not hear from them again until late September, 2016, when I received their decision to deny my proposal:

> While the Board recognizes the benefit of research, this must be balanced with a commitment to research in schools that is educationally beneficial and relevant, with minimal interference with the regular program… Our decision was based on some of the requirements stated in your proposal, e.g., a big time commitment for students. (Personal Correspondence, September 29, 2016).
With very little rationale for their denial, I questioned the societal factors that may have influenced this decision, for example, the political debates and media attention around sex education since the introduction of the updated curriculum in September of 2015. This obstacle barred me from conducting research with minors and from working within the secondary school system I was attempting to critique; therefore, I was forced to change my project to work with university students.

This change in research participants may have changed the outcome of the study. I observed two significant aspects of working with university students that were likely different from working with those in high school. First, several of the cast members had taken an introductory sociology or women’s and gender studies course the year this study occurred, which may have made them more critically conscious. Second, most of the participants had been in grade 12 when the new curriculum was introduced in 2015, so they did not feel much of an impact, especially as their significant experiences of sex education occurred during middle school.

**Audience**

What is a play without an audience? While I envisioned scenarios of performing in front of teachers, guidance counsellors, and students, I hoped that we would at least have an audience willing to engage in discussion around the topic. In order to craft a play that was directed to a specific audience, I left it up to the cast to determine who our intended audience should be. On the second day of playbuilding, the cast shared a strong desire to perform our play for high school students. An opportunity opened up around this time to potentially perform for an audience of guidance counsellors from a local private school. We hoped that we would be able to schedule a performance for this interested group of guidance counsellors and open to students.
However, due to scheduling issues on both sides, we were unable to reach this population. As the end of term neared, I decided that we would have to perform regardless of our audience, so we scheduled a performance and invited family, friends, Brock and other community members. This generated a positive response around campus – I even heard several strangers talking about their plans to attend – however this attention did not lead to a strong showing at the performance. While we had a small audience of about 15 attend, their intrigue and willingness to engage in the topic showed through a rich talk back session.

Data Generation

In this section, I describe the playbuilding process based on my research journal notes and video recordings of rehearsals. I divide this part of playbuilding into three sections demonstrating the initial exploration of a topic, deeper engagement with the themes, and co-authorship as scenes are developed into a play.

For clarity, this research extended over four dates in January (21, 22, 25, and 29), one rehearsal on April 8th, and the performance on April 9th. With the consent of the participants, I video recorded all rehearsals and the performance in order to review them and reflect on the process.

Exploration

I began the playbuilding process by facilitating an informative discussion about the research study. By emphasizing that we are co-authors in the process, I invited participants to contribute their ideas throughout our rehearsals. I reiterated the expectations and information in the consent letter, including a reminder that participants could withdraw at any time, and that confidentiality was expected. We discussed expectations for creating a safe space, and
committed to actively listen, maintain confidentiality, maintain a judgement-free zone, and share responsibility as co-creators.

Following this introduction, I led the group through drama exercises to build a group dynamic of play. Drama games like “Zip Zap Boing”, “Oi”, and “Big Booty” quickly became a constant in our rehearsals. I led two games, while the third was suggested and taught by a participant. All are rhythm games and rely on intention and focus. Next, I introduced an applied theatre game that required participants to alternate taking “power positions” in the rehearsal space. This exercise introduced the undertone of power dynamics in the topic we were about to explore.

We began exploring the topic of sexuality education through a variation of an exercise called Playlist. In the initial icebreaker version, everyone shared with the group five favorite movies or TV shows. In the second version, I asked the ARTors to write down 5 things (concepts, words, phrases, memories) they immediately associate with sex education. One at a time, participants shared these with the group, which provoked the majority of exploration and discussion for the day. I took this opportunity to introduce the File Folder system that we would use to organize our ideas. We labelled the 8 folders (Themes/Metaphors/Issues, Scene Ideas, Rehearsed Scenes, Quickies, External Research, Songs/Props/Costumes, Potential Titles, and Keepers) and I welcomed the cast to record ideas generated from the Playlist activity on cue cards. As the first participant shared their list, discussion ensued and other A/R/Tors commented on their similar or differing experiences. Our initial ideas showed a variety of experiences between Catholic and public education as well as varying experiences from grades 5-12, and we found that experiences of high school sex education were not as frequently mentioned as memories from middle school. This initial sharing activity took about two hours and generated
many scene ideas and themes we recorded on cue cards. We used a talking toy, a small stuffed lobster, to aide in taking turns sharing. Our lobster travelled around our discussion circle many times as one participant’s story would provoke and inspire another’s ideas. In just a half day of building the tone of playbuilding and generating initial ideas, we already had great momentum.

We continued to explore the topic through an exercise focussed on desire and seduction. I led the participants through an improvisation based on a Mirror Theatre (Norris, 2009) exercise I had participated in previously. The A/R/Tors are given roles as either flowers or bees with different motivations. The flowers were given the instruction to express “want”, “need” and “desire” through their words and body language. A few variations on this exercise brought about a discussion about consent and sexual violence. This exercise emphasized the cast’s shared lens as first year university students, and we reflected on the lack of attention to consent and sexual violence in high school sex education in comparison to its increasingly visible place in university culture. A clear theme emerged as we neared the end of the first day of playbuilding: high school sex education is disconnected from the prevalent sexual violence on university campuses. We “Checked-out” at the end of the six-hour rehearsal with shared positive reflections on the work we had done and excitement to continue to explore, learn and co-create.

**Engagement**

At the beginning of our second day of playbuilding, I did a “Check-In” with the cast where the group agreed on an expectation to continue our exploration of the topic, but to reach a clear direction by the end of the day and even complete at least one scene. After an introductory game, we reviewed about 30 themes/issues and about 5 scene ideas recorded the previous day. We began to strategically engage with these ideas by categorizing them into five themes: 

*Parental Influence, In the Classroom, Outside the Classroom, Societal Gender and Sexual*
Norms, and What’s Missing? From this categorization exercise, discussion arose organically and began to focus on personal sexual ethics, which we commonly understood as one’s personal and moralistic understanding of sexuality. We discussed the pressure to negotiate our own sexual ethics while filtering the outside influence of peers, teachers, parents, and media and decided that the concept of personal ethics would become a guidepost for the structure of our play. From this discussion, I led the group in an exercise to draw a line representing their journey of personal sexual ethics. Everyone drew a different line – some jagged, some loopy, some with drastic changes and others with subtler “ups” and “downs”. As our journeys overlapped and intertwined on the whiteboard, we could see a visual representation of the structure of the play we were building together. We decided that we wanted to write a play that told a chronological story of our separate and shared journeys.

Co-authorship

After the cast began to feel a clear direction for our play, we began working on scenes. This is a point in the process Norris calls the Turn: “Like the ever-nebulous research term, saturation, there comes a time to take what is generated and begin to polish. Here, both points of the kite begin to turn inward, bringing a focus to the work” (Norris, 2017, p. 292). The shift to improvising and moving through scenes was difficult at first, but necessary due to our limited amount of time. Norris (2017) acknowledges this tension and the question that often arises in research: how much data is enough? While considering the input of the cast, it is ultimately the D/A/R/T’s responsibility to decide when to stop generating scenes and begin polishing. I believe we would have benefitted from more exploration, however, so even as we began focussing on developing scenes, the improvisation and data generation continued. We began scene development by improvising an opening group monologue. I asked the A/R/Tors to stand in a
line and in no particular order, to echo some of the ideas from our conversation on personal ethics earlier that day. After some initial hesitation, I decided to prompt the cast with a line, “Here you are, 18, 19, 20 years old, on your own journey”. From there, “I” statements emerged from the A/R/Tors one after another. They naturally fell into a rhythm, building off of one another’s statements. A pattern of referring to sex as “it” became significant and we discussed how to make this ambiguity clear in the scene.

The next scene we worked on focussed on one of the first aspects of a journey through sex education – parental consent. We struggled with how to show the simple experience of getting a permission form signed in a way that shows the lack of autonomy youth have in sex education from a young age. The cast debated the significance of the scene but decided that it was important in establishing the context of our play. We explored the use of inner dialogue (one actor speaking for their character who is physically acted by another actor) in this scene which helped us establish the awkwardness of entering into sex education as well as parental expectations for talking about (or not talking about) sex. The next scene we worked on quickly evolved into a game show format as a way to present the attitudes towards certain “buzzwords” you may find in the sex education classroom (anatomically-correct, colloquial, and slang sexual terms). While working on this scene, the cast considered the juxtaposition of light and “fun” scenes such as this one with more serious scenes yet to come.

After two full days of playbuilding, our work continued into two additional evening rehearsals. In these shorter rehearsals (2-3 hours), it became slightly more difficult to focus on the material when compared to six-hour weekend rehearsals. The stress and fatigue of a long day played into a shared urgency to construct scenes and shape them into a play. Regardless, I felt that the tone among the cast was relaxed and comfortable; there was a shared understanding to
how we would approach the work as a team. More personal stories arose with ease and rich discussions ensued around our differing experiences. When these stories were shared, we saw similarities, differences, and most importantly, gaps especially around the topics of rape culture, pleasure, and race. By this point in the process, the cast was aware of the dichotomy between what we experienced in sexuality education and what we did not experience. These silences in curriculum and school culture were of great interest to the cast, which led us to wrestle with how to represent silences and the silenced. Rather than finding value only in our lived experiences, we found that our shared non-experiences, or the null curriculum (Eisner, 1994; Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986), was of more interest and was something that needed to be explicitly talked about in a dramatic form. However, it was easier to devise scenes about our experiences - which sometimes ventured into humorous representations - than it was to devise scenes representing non-experiences. When I say non-experiences, I do not mean things that the cast speculates on because they were not exposed to, but rather things that we are keenly aware of at this time of our lives in a university setting that we were not made aware of in middle/high school. We asked similar questions: “why was this not talked about?” and the play quickly became about creating a space where we could talk about these silenced topics. This is represented in one scene where we simply sit in a circle and have a conversation about hook-up culture. Fine tuning these scenes involved playing with different staging, different ways of reading lines (or writing lines, as I was writing on my laptop as we rehearsed). When we felt that we had a complete script, I shared it with the cast digitally and we waited for a performance to be scheduled.

Data Mediation

In this study, there were two parts of data mediation. The first stage occurred as the cast
translated the generated stories and experiences into dramatic vignettes. Playbuilding does not require the three acts of research (data generation, mediation, and performance) to be separate, but rather, translates data into dramatic forms by creating scenes simultaneously engaging in both generation and mediation (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995; Norris, 2009). The first phase was detailed in the previous section, “Data Generation”. The second stage then occurred as I continued to reflect on the information generated or recorded through the process in order to write this thesis.

The playbuilding process and performance were recorded by videotape and I kept personal journal notes. In addition, all cue cards from rehearsals and the final script are also considered data for the purpose of this study. However, it would be contrary to the research philosophy and methodology to see the data generated through this study as “fixed”. The co-authorship that is encouraged in the playbuilding process involves a negotiation of stories, which are unfixed and cannot assume to be representative of actuality. One of the tensions of playbuilding is in attempting to mediate stories rather than represent them accurately. When practicing applied theatre, Preston insists that there must be attention on the ethics and politics of representation, stressing a collaborative approach to creating art (or researching) with a group of people, rather than “on” or “for” (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p. 67). This spirit of collaboration and representation was a large part of our collective analysis, wherein we discussed the risk of speaking “for” a community and avoided reinforcing certain narratives. The cast was not reifying and entrenching original stories, but creating something new. Through the playbuilding process, the cast worked together to find an appropriate way to mediate their stories and translate them into dramatic forms.
Dissemination through Performance

On April 9th, 2017, we performed *A Journey Through Sex Ed* for the public as advertised by word of mouth as well as by a poster circulated through email and social media (see Figure 1). After some difficulty scheduling a performance exclusively for our intended audience (high school teachers, guidance counsellors, and students), we still performed the play to a small audience including community members, graduate and undergraduate students. In this study, theatre is the mode of inquiry and the mode of presentation. Through the dissemination of data, the audience is brought into the exploration and inquiry embedded in the playbuilding process. The relationship that occurs between the cast and audience through performance and talk-back continues the research by provoking further discussion and inquiry into the topic. Just like A/R/Tors are invited to share their experiences through playbuilding exercises, the audience is
now invited to contribute their reflections having just seen the performance. Norris (2017) advocates for the participatory dissemination of playbuilding research as a pedagogical act. “Rather than presenting information and conclusions, the activating scenes are designed to invite discussions with the audience, making the events dialogic” (Norris, 2017, p. 296). In this way, playbuilding is like a queer pedagogy extended to a community audience, inviting them to engage in transformational conversations about power: in the teacher-student relationship, content of curricula, and form of delivering information in sexuality education.

Critical Narratives

The following chapter is the co-authored script “A Journey Through Sex Ed”. Though I have emphasized that the script is the product of data generation and mediation simultaneously, I will further mediate the “data” (video, cue cards, script, and journal notes) using narrative inquiry. Clandinin (2013) simplifies narrative inquiry as a way of understanding and inquiring into experience. In more detail, narrative inquiry is when an inquirer comes alongside participants to explore their experiences, including the “social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individual’s experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42). In Chapter 5, I detail the critical narratives the cast shared through the script and connect the themes to the literature discussed in Chapter 2.

Clandinin’s concept of narrative inquiry includes the recognition of how people live out and tell stories, and that journeying alongside them in research and inquiry leads to retelling stories. “Because we see that we are changed as we retell our lived and told stories, we may begin to relive our stories” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34). This applies to playbuilding as we share our lived experiences through discussion, exercises, and improvisation. In the process, we collectively inquire into these stories, their contexts, and how they relate to one another. This
retelling could be considered what Flores Carmona and Luschen (2014) call critical stories, which “speak to the constitution of experiences within a socio-political context” (Barone, 1992, p. 1). The nature of storytelling in playbuilding fosters an environment where A/R/Tors can critically inquire of themselves and one another’s stories. While Chapter 4, the script, recounts these in dramatic form, I unfold the critical stories that contributed to our co-authored script in Chapter 5. These emerged from a process seeking to acknowledge the social context of our lived experiences, recognize the gaps and silences in knowledge, and illuminate counternarratives (Flores Carmon & Luschen, 2014). The performance of the scenes is a reliving (Clandinin, 2013) of the shared stories to provoke a discussion with the audience. In order to discuss these realms of experience, I analyzed the video, cue cards, journal notes, and script to illustrate the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of the stories that emerged through the process.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have described the theoretical framework behind playbuilding along with an overview of playbuilding as methodology. In addition, I outlined the specifics of this study, including its design, ethics, participants, my role as the D/A/R/T, and challenges faced over the duration. I describe the playbuilding process in three stages: data generation, data mediation, and performance and conclude by introducing the next chapter, *A Journey through Sex Education*, and the narrative approach I have taken for analysis in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4: A Journey Through Sex Education (Script)

A research-based play co-authored by:
Emily Clegg, Frances Johnson, Josh Loewen,
Elizabeth Martin, Charissa Sanche, and Joanna Tran

This was a public performance, so identities of the performers were known and therefore are credited above as authors, however, pseudonyms are used in the script. See Appendix B, Ethical Entry into Research.

Scene 1
5 individuals stand staggered around the stage. The following is spoken as a group monologue by the cast.

OFFSTAGE: Here you are. 18, 19, 20, 21, 24 years. On your own journey…
SARA: I’m still learning
JESSIE: This is me, this is who I am, my past made me who I am today
JANE: I still don’t know what I want
DAVID: I’ve learned more in the past 6 months than in the past 6 years
SARA: I’m more than just a stereotype
ANN: I’m making my own decisions
JESSIE: I’m learning how to love myself
JANE: I didn’t know I was allowed to love my body
SARA: I wish I knew it was okay to talk about it
DAVID: I always thought I would be judged for talking about it
ANN: I thought I would be laughed at for talking about it
JESSIE: I learned that my mind was my own worst enemy
SARA: I’m not the only one who wants to talk about it
JANE: Everyone has their own personal stories and experiences they want to talk about
DAVID: Finally, we’re getting a chance to talk about it

(the last “it” is repeated by each cast member in whispers, medium, and high volume as they look at one another)

Scene 2
Child (SARA) enters with two pieces of paper as Mom (ANN) enters with a mimed laundry basket on her arm. Two other individuals stand on either side of the stage, facing the characters for whom they will speak Inner Dialogue (ID). SOPHIE is Mom’s Inner dialogue, JESSIE is Child’s.

CHILD: Mom, I have a couple things for you to sign. We’re going to the science center on Tuesday. And… there’s another form in there… just take a look.

Mom takes the forms and Child steps away, but lingers.

MOM: Oh, fun. Okay.
MOM INNER DIALOGUE (ID):  Sex Ed? Already? Isn’t she a little young for that? I wonder what they’re learning at this age.

CHILD ID:  This is so awkward…

MOM ID:  I bet she has questions. I should talk to her about it.

CHILD ID:  …I hope she doesn’t want to talk to me about it.

MOM:  Yep, I’ll sign these Honey.

Child exits

MOM ID:  I know, there was this great book on entering womanhood that my mom gave me when I was that age. I’ll find that and give it to her.

MALE CHILD:  (yelling from offstage) Mom, what’s a wet dream?

MOM:  (taken aback)

MOM ID:  Oh shit.

MOM:  Ask your father!

Scene 3

5 individuals stand on in two diagonal lines forming a V-shape. Gameshow Host (JANE) enters with excitement to the center of the stage.

HOST:  And welcome back to “SEX EDUCATION”

Cheers by contestants

HOST:  Our topic for today is the Seventh Grade! Contestants, things you will hear in the Sex Ed Classroom

DAVID:  Abstinence is Key!

HOST:  DING DING DING

ANN:  Clitoris? (pronounced wrong)

DAVID:  Isn’t that the capital of Oregon?

HOST:  BUZZ

JESSIE:  Masturbation!

Contestants giggle

HOST:  DING DING DING (aside) Only if you’re a boy.

SOPHIE:  Fallopian Monster!

Contestants do fallopian monster gesture, waving arms back and forth

HOST:  DING DING DING

DAVID:  Contraception!

HOST:  DING DING DING, but not in Catholic School

ANN:  Genital Herpes

Contestants show disgust

HOST:  DING DING DING

SARA:  Surprise boner!

Contestants Giggle

HOST:  BUZZ. We use the term ERECTION.
SOPHIE: Abstinence is the only 100% safe contraceptive method!

HOST: DING DING DING. The most popular answer!

Contestants applaud

JESSIE: Whoopsies?

HOST: Can you be more specific?

SARA: (explains, laughing) Pull out game not strong bro

HOST: BUZZ

SARA: Homosexual

HOST: (clears throat) And that’s all the time we have today folks, join us next week on “SEX EDUCATION”!

Slow clap, and confused looks from contestants

Scene 4 (Quickie)

One individual hands out pieces of gum to the audience.
Another enters to Center Stage.

JESSIE: (chewing gum, speaks sensually until gum is spit out) Imagine you have a piece of gum. Your mouth salivates at the thought of chewing that gum. It’s juicy and sweet. The taste is gonna move ya. You chew that gum, and it will lose its flavour. (Spits it out into their hand)

Now, is this gum ever going to be new again?

Nobody wants already chewed gum.

Scene 5

Two individuals enter the stage, one with a banana and a condom in the wrapper, one with a sock and a shoe. They demonstrate putting the condom on the banana and sock on the foot simultaneously. ANN as Banana, JESSIE as Foot.

BANANA: First, you will take the condom out of the wrapper. Make sure you do this carefully.

FOOT: Your sock should be rolled up into a little circle.

BANANA: Pinch the end of the condom as you place it on the penis--

FOOT: --So you have room for your toes.

BANANA: Now roll the condom down the penis.

FOOT: Roll the sock up your leg.

BANANA: Now you can safely practice -

FOOT: Shoe activities.

Scene 6

One Teacher (JANE) is downstage, at the front of the class. 5 students are in desks (or chairs) in an orderly fashion. As the teacher goes through several slides, the class reacts in various ways – embarrassment, immaturity, fascination, disgust

(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION
TEACHER:  (shows anatomical diagrams, male and female, on the screen) Here we have a diagram of male anatomy… and female anatomy. This is what genital herpes looks like. Which is why you should use Condoms. ALWAYS. But even with PERFECT USE, condoms are ONLY 97% effective in preventing pregnancy. That’s THREE in a HUNDRED people who get pregnant. With TYPICAL USE, condoms are only 85% effective!

BELL RINGS, students leave classroom – push their chairs to the side and grab their backpacks. Teacher exits.

Girls gather together
ANN: Can you lose your virginity to a tampon?
JESSIE: Oh my God, maybe. What’s a blowjob, like I don’t understand?
SOPHIE: Check Urban Dictionary.
JESSIE looks it up on her phone.
ANN: I wonder if it hurts the first time. Like what if it’s too big? What is “normal size”?
JESSIE: (reading from phone) “To lick, blow, and suck on a man’s dick. Proper technique including rubbing his balls with left hand, stroking dick with right hand in sync to the pace you are moving your mouth. To go all the way and deep throat is much desired, while doing this begin to hum and moan. This will send him up the wall.”

Girls look stunned
SOPHIE: I’m never doing that.

2 other students gather in another area on stage.
DAVID: (looking on snapchat) Have you seen this snapchat bubble: “Does Size Matter?”
SARA: Of course it does! Have you seen those guys in porn?
DAVID: …umm how do you watch it? I can’t do that on my computer, it’s in my living room.
SARA: You can just watch it on your phone! Just make sure you clear your browser history in case your Mom takes it to check.
DAVID: Oh okay. Cool, thanks man.

BELL RINGS. Students nod bye and part ways.

Scene 7
TAKE ONE
Two female students (JESSIE and ANN) enter the scene wearing school uniforms. The kilts are above knee height.
A female teacher (JANE) walks by.
TEACHER: Girls, it looks like your skirts are rolled up a little high. Uniform check. Can you please go on your knees and see if your kilts touch the floor?
The students do this, their skits are too short, and they get sent to the office for a uniform infraction.
TEACHER: To the office. You girls know this is distracting and inappropriate in school.

TAKE TWO
The same two students walk through the school hall.
A male teacher enters (DAVID).
TEACHER: Girls, uniform check.
The two girls hold their fingers to their thighs, not fully extending to show that their skirts are longer than where their fingers touch.
The teacher reluctantly lets them go.
GIRLS: (walking away and whispering) What a perv. - He was obviously looking at our legs. - Gross.

Scene 8 (Quickie)
Two cast members (JANE and SARA) enter the stage.
INTERVIEWER: (holding a mimed microphone to the other) Obama just legalized gay marriage. Do you believe a man can love another man?
INTERVIEWEE: What do you mean, “do I believe”? It’s like climate change. You’re stupid if you think you get to have an opinion. It is what it is.

Scene 9
All cast members enter stage, staggered.
SOPHIE: Because Rape Culture exists:
JANE: I’m experiencing it in University
DAVID: I’m learning that “No means No” isn’t good enough
ANN: “Yes means Yes”
SARA: I learned that if I order an “Angel Shot” at Hooters, the bartender will get me out of an unsafe situation.
SOPHIE: I can wear a nail polish that detects roofies in my drink.
JESSIE: I know that I should bring a friend out to protect me at a bar or party.
JANE: One out of four North American women will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime.
ANN: But 57% of Indigenous women are sexually abused.
SOPHIE: Members of the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities are also at a high risk.
DAVID: 15% of sexual assault victims are boys under 16
SARA: 60% of all victims are under the age of seventeen.
JESSIE: Rape Culture exists everywhere; in universities and high schools.
JANE: But I guess you ran out of time to talk about it
ANN: Maybe that’s why so many people stay silent.
Scene 10 (Quickie)

DAVID is upper stage as a flower. SARA enters as a bee (buzzing). She pulls out her phone.

SARA: OOhhh. There’s a flower 3km away from me. (swipes right)

Buzzes off.

Scene 11

All cast members transition into a semi-circle, and begin discussing Hook Up Culture.

ANN: Did you hear that Jess and Gabriel hooked up?
SARA: What? OMG?
JANE: Who cares?
JESSIE: What do you mean who cares? That’s a big deal.
DAVID: It’s not that big of a deal.
SOPHIE: Well what is hooking up to you?
JESSIE: Well in high school I was told it was kissing, nothing more
JANE: Ya, but now it means sex.
ANN: Well there’s, like, levels of hooking up, first base, second, third, home run.
SARA: I’ve heard it’s like a quick bone.
SOPHIE: What do you mean like two minutes?? That’s no fun?
DAVID: What’s quick?
SARA: Whatever man, you do you.
JANE: I consider hooking up like a drunken mistake, it wasn’t well thought-out or planned.
SOPHIE: Why does it have to be a mistake?
ANN: Well if you’re in a relationship or having responsible sex, you don’t call it hooking up.
SARA: How is impulsive sex irresponsible?
ANN: There’s this idea that women who sleep with a lot of guys and it not being an intentional empowering thing, are sluts or damaging themselves.
SARA: My friend had one hook up on tinder and was shamed for it by my two girlfriends but then my gay friend is on Grindr all the time and it’s no big deal.
JESSIE: That’s such a double standard.
JANE: Hook up culture is based on people having casual sex, but women are still shamed for it.
DAVID: It doesn’t make sense.
SARA: Well it was reinforced for me first by my parents and in school as well that having sex is related to personal ethics and because of this it was hard for me to figure out what my ethics were because their ideal had a very clear definition of “right and wrong” sex.
(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

SOPHIE: So what was good sex in that case?
SARA: In a relationship - it has to mean something, hooking is outside of that. We don’t think about hooking up as a meaning intimate connection.
JESSIE: I think what our generation is feeling is that hooking up is okay, not hooking up is okay. We shouldn’t judge people for their choices.
DAVID: People can do what they want. Who am I to tell you what to do?
ANN: So regardless of what we were taught, we still need to figure out what we’re personally okay with and not let other people’s judgements decide for us.
JANE: It’s a learning process.

Scene 12
All cast members grab a mask and a piece of paper (labelled “TRANSGENDER”, “INTERSEX”, “ASEXUAL”, “BISEXUAL”, “QUEER”, and “HETEROSEXUAL”). They walk on to the stage one at a time, reveal their label, and freeze. Once everyone’s “sexuality” has been identified, everyone puts on the mask and folds up their label, except for “HETEROSEXUAL” who keeps theirs exposed.
The final image is six individuals wearing masks, appearing to be the same, except there is only one sexuality visible: heterosexual.

END.
Chapter 5: Sharing Critical Stories through Playbuilding

As collective counterstories emerge through dialogue and discussion… they prompt critical transformations in the knowledges of our students, ourselves, and our disciplines (Flores Carmona & Luschen, 2014, p. 2).

As I write this chapter, it has been about two years since my interest in this topic was sparked during my first term of graduate school, which coincided with the Fall 2015 implementation of the updated Health and Physical Education Curriculum in Ontario schools. This playbuilding research project has served as a forum to critically engage with stories of sexuality education shared by the A/R/Tors, and as a catalyst to re-examine my own experiences.

Barone (1992) defines critical stories as those that situate the constitution of experiences in a socio-political context. These stories should “acknowledge their development within historically situated conditions, recognize the gaps and silences in dominant ways of knowing, and seek to illuminate counternarratives” (Flores Carmona & Luschen, 2014, pp. 1-2). I maintain that playbuilding as a methodology and queer pedagogy seeks to create critical stories through the act of sharing and converting experiences into dramatic forms. The resulting play doesn’t have a coherent storyline but instead portrays a collage of experiences of sexuality education through a vignette format. In this chapter, I will outline the critical stories told through A Journey Through Sex Education by answering the following questions:

What was the content?

How was the content decided?

What were some problems or limitations of the methodology?

How does this study extend the topics discussed in the literature?
Finally, I will also situate myself in this research by including an account of my own critical story and my experiences in the collective process as a Director/Actor/Researcher/Teacher (Norris, 2018).

**Behind the Script**

*A Journey Through Sex Education* tells a collective story generated by six individuals. The story reflects our shared social positions as Brock University students looking back on specific moments over a journey through formal and informal elementary, secondary, and post-secondary sexuality education frameworks.

**Scene 1**

The play opens with five individuals scattered on stage. Together, they bare inner thoughts that were inspired by a formative conversation during the playbuilding process.

*I’m still learning*

*This is me, this is who I am, my past made me who I am today*

*I’m making my own decisions*

*I wish I knew it was okay to talk about*

*Finally, we’re getting a chance to talk about it*

This group monologue includes several “I” statements following one another, reflecting our initial exploration of the topic and a shared recognition of the complex process of learning and speaking about sex. Through lines like “I’m still learning”, we allude to the lifelong learning process of sexuality education, which involves a continual negotiation of personal ethics, desires, and cultural influences. Although we experienced some difficulty in beginning to work this scene, we improvised it several times after which I noticed a pattern emerging in the dialogue: the cast refers to “sex” as “it” several times throughout the scene. We discussed the significance
of this pattern as a sign of the silencing that occurs when discussing sex in certain contexts. Using “it” may neutralize the connotations that comes with a word like “sex”, “sexuality”, or other “dirty words”. The cast decided to emphasize their use of “it” to show a discomfort and regulation that comes with speaking about sex in certain spaces. This ambiguous language reinforces the new language of sexuality (Carlson, 2012), which continues to discipline, regulate, and medicalize it. As an introduction to the play, this scene also alludes to the discourse of individual morality (Fine, 1988), as evidenced in lines such as, “This is me, this is who I am, my past made me who I am today” and “I’m making my own decisions”. Individual morality is a prominent thread throughout the play, and I will discuss its significance more below, through multiple perspectives in scenes 4, 6, and 11. This scene as a group monologue illustrates the self-reflexivity that we employed through the process in order to craft critical stories from our experiences of sex education.

Scene 2

After the opening group monologue, the play commences a chronological journey beginning with a moment that occurs for many families just prior to the child starting formal sex education. Depending on the school board, there may be a consent form or an information letter regarding sex education that is sent home to parents. The audience is shown an exchange between mother and child while they also hear the inner dialogue of each character, spoked by another A/R/Tor. Through inner dialogue, we explored the awkward feelings on both sides of speaking about and obtaining consent for sex education and at the end of the scene, there is a reference to the gendered ways parents relate to their children and speak about sexuality. From offstage, a male child asks his mom what a wet dream is and she responds by re-directing him to his father for an answer.
This scene was the first that we developed to completeness and we found it was difficult to move from talking about the scene to improvising it. As we explored the theme of parental influence and consent, the cast debated: *what problem are we trying to uncover?* One A/R/Tor suggested, “Applied theatre doesn’t have to give an answer, it just has to pose a question” (Process videos, January 22nd, 2017). Rather than pigeonholing parents or implying that they are a barrier to sexuality education, this scene acknowledges parents’ roles in the process of learning and talking about sexuality. The cast shared varied experiences of openness, discomfort, and silence when talking to their parents about sexuality. One A/R/Tor, when discussing the role of parents in talking about sexuality, said, “It wasn’t a conversation I knew how to bring up, or even wanted to have. I’ll figure it out on my own before talking to my parents about it” (Process Videos, January 22nd, 2017). While that conversation may vary from family to family, the use of a consent form for sex education implies a key role for the parents as the gatekeepers in deciding what information their child will learn. We presented this scene to complicate the notion of parental consent for sex education.

Members of any society carry with themselves a working definition of childhood, its nature, limitations and duration. They may not explicitly discuss this definition, write about it, or even consciously conceive of it as an issue, but they act upon their assumptions in all of their dealings with, fears for, and expectations of their children (Aries, 1988, p. 15).

As Aries argues, the construction of childhood, specifically that of childhood innocence, implies a role for parents to protect against what is seen as “unnatural” for children. Ironically, however, parental protection may actually prevent children from having knowledge that they need to keep themselves safe (Kitzinger, 1988). Among scholars who problematize the construct of childhood innocence are Van Vliet and Raby (2008), who argue that young people have the right to be
provided with “the information and skills necessary to negotiate the pleasures they may experience and the dangers they may face” (p. 267).

Scene 3

This game-show style scene depicts several terms or phrases that one may hear in the sex education classroom. By “playing” with a small collection of colloquial and common buzzwords that relate to sex education, we portrayed the different attitudes towards language in sex education. While some answers earn giggles, others are met with disgust. There is a clear distinction between the “right” and “wrong” answers, as shown by the “BUZZ” and “DING DING” sound effects by the game show host and these are further emphasized by applause or other reactions from the rest of the cast. This scene developed very organically after looking at the pile of terms on cue cards that we categorized as “In the Classroom”. There was an ease that came with a simple and non-realistic presentation of relevant themes in sexuality education, which greatly contrasted with the previous scene where we struggled with representing true-to-life characters. Here, the focus was on the content rather than the individuals involved which allowed us to show strong reactions to these terms.

The cast reflected on the immaturity and humour that accompany colloquial or slang terms in sex education. “Fallopian monster”, for example, was recalled by a cast member from a sex education lesson as a humourous comparison to the anatomical diagram of the uterus and fallopian tubes. While humour can be disruptive and potentially a bullying tactic in schools, Allen (2014) discusses the pedagogical possibilities of using humour in sex education. Looking beyond negative articulations of humour in sexuality education, Allen offers examples of students and teachers using humour to queer the classroom and open up new possibilities. We use humour in the play in a similar way that Allen conceives of its value in sexuality education;
humour can be used as a form of resistance to the regulatory mechanisms of school-based sex education, and to ease the tensions, discomfort, and power imbalance between teacher/student (or performer/audience). The references to abstinence within this scene carries a less humourous tone. Instead, the emphasis of abstinence is made clear and reinforced as the “most popular answer”: Abstinence is the only 100% safe contraceptive method. I recall this phrase being reiterated throughout middle and high school sex education, but for some participants the emphasis was more implicit, as one A/R/Tor recalls: “She would just constantly remind you that the only way to absolutely not get pregnant and not get an STD is abstinence” (Process videos, January 22nd, 2017). An important development in the new Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum is in its approach to discussing abstinence. An outcome from the 1998 curriculum states: “Explain the importance of abstinence as a positive choice for adolescents” (Ministry of Education and Training, 1998, p. 18). The updated curriculum shows a more nuanced understanding of sexual decision-making in the following outcome for grade seven:

   The importance of having a shared understanding with a partner about the following: delaying sexual activity until they are older (e.g., choosing to abstain from any genital contact; choosing to abstain from having vaginal or anal intercourse; choosing to abstain from having oral-genital contact); the reasons for not engaging in sexual activity; the concept of consent and how consent is communicated; and, in general, the need to communicate clearly with each other when making decisions about sexual activity in the relationship (Ministry of Education, 2015a, pp. 195-196).

As evidenced in the playbuilding process, our school-based sex education experiences did not teach this complex perspective on abstinence. Perhaps the updated definition of the revised
curriculum will encourage a more holistic understanding of abstinence as one possibility among many.

**Scene 4**

This scene is the first of three “Quickies” (Norris, 2009), or short scenes that briefly communicate a theme. This interjection is an example of several analogies used in sex education that are primarily directed towards women and encourage abstinence until marriage. Based on an account shared by one of the A/R/Tors, this scene depicts a woman demonstrating chewing gum as a metaphor for having sex, specifically emphasizing that *gum* should only be chewed once, which is meant to convey the message that sex is meant for one person. We discussed other analogies used, namely one comparing a sexually active woman to a dirty shoe with the implication: why would anyone want to marry a dirty, old tennis shoe?

*Nobody wants already chewed gum.*

These stress that sex damages a person, and to avoid being “used up” like a dirty shoe or a stick of gum, youth should remain abstinent.

Object lessons such as these reinforce discourses of victimization and individual morality in sexuality education (Fine, 1988). In analysing the previous iteration of Ontario's sex education curriculum, Connell (2005) argued that discourses of victimization and individual morality dominate in the Ontario sexuality education curriculum and mutually reinforce each other, while the discourse of desire is largely absent. These two dominating discourses manifest in the “emphasis on abstinence and consequences of sexual intercourse in the curriculum, how gender roles are reproduced and how sexual health is socially constructed and, finally, what issues are omitted” (Connell, 2005, p. 257). As a cast member hands out gum to the audience during this scene, we try to draw the audience into the experience of listening to this analogy. We presented
this scene to depict an example that removes agency from students through sex education. This is a great contrast from other scenes in that it does not show students’ reactions, but only presents the educator’s perspective. I argue that this analogy shuts down conversations about sexuality rather than opening up empowering spaces for exploration and questioning and advocate that we must create spaces in and outside of sexuality education for these critical conversations:

In order to understand the sexual subjectivities of young women more completely, educators need to reconstruct schooling as an empowering context in which we listen to and work with the meanings and experiences of gender and sexuality revealed by the adolescents themselves … by providing education, counselling, contraception, and abortion referrals, as well as meaningful educational and vocational opportunities, public schools could play an essential role in the construction of the female subject—social and sexual. (Fine, 1988, pp. 36, 50)

Scene 5

Early on, the cast recognized that we had disparate experiences as two A/R/Tors had been in Catholic schools while the rest of us were educated in the public (or charter) system. This became an important theme for us to acknowledge, and we created this scene from our own experiences and a viral video of a teacher in a Catholic school who came up with an alternative to a condom demonstration (Johnson, 2012). This scene depicts two simultaneous “contraceptive” demonstrations using a condom and banana, and a sock and foot.

They didn’t talk about condoms once; they didn’t talk about or really address sex at all. I mean they did, but they explained it in a way that was like the creation of life. Because in Catholic school, that’s how you learned it (Process videos, January 25th, 2017).
The A/R/Tors who attended Catholic schools surprised the rest of the cast with their reflections, including the lack of teaching on contraception, and the explicit restrictions around when sex is appropriate. According to one student, sex was reduced to three qualities: 1) for procreation, 2) a special bond between a man and woman, and 3) within the bond of marriage. With these restrictions on how sex could be spoken about, it is inevitable that teachers and students find alternatives to teach and learn about sexuality.

People would like say things, and people had older siblings and would learn different words and stuff. I didn’t know what all of these words meant and I kind of had to look things up on my own (Process Videos, January 22nd, 2017).

While some students would learn from older siblings or the internet, this scene refers to an example of a teacher finding alternative ways to teach the null curriculum, which in this case, includes contraception.

Scene 6

One of the casts’ most significant shared memories of sex education is of a scene that looks a lot like this one. A teacher stands at the front of the class and quickly moves from slide to slide, displaying male and female anatomical diagrams and offering statistics on condom effectiveness. We then move into a hallway setting to show the contrast between information discussed in and outside of class. Peer to peer conversations were more exploratory and secretive as students learned together and from one another about pornography and terminology for sexual acts. This contrast shows the null curriculum – what is left out of the curriculum – still is not value-free or without the influence of morality and normality. This scene names two important electronic sources for modern sexuality education: the hugely popular social media app,
Snapchat, and Urban Dictionary, a website similar to Wikipedia where anyone can contribute a term and definition.

“Everything I learned about sex was either from my friends or the internet” (Process videos, January 25th, 2017).

This scene acknowledges how information about sexuality is given and received differently in and outside of the classroom. When considering the use of graphic images to show STD symptoms, one A/R/Tor made a connection to cigarette packaging and saw a similar scare tactic used to discourage unprotected sex and smoking. This approach to teaching sex education falls under the discourse of victimization (Fine, 1998) as it pathologizes sexual behavior by only discussing it in the context of negative outcomes.

In addition, the ‘effects of saying yes’ are all negative—the emphasis is on loss, stress and risk, while pleasure, fun and satisfying curiosity are absent from the discussion. Even the discussion concerning ‘safer sex’ (e.g. using contraception and/or STD prevention) excludes any acknowledgement of pleasure or fun—the use of condoms is described as reducing spontaneity and sensitivity—and is presented solely within a context of responsibility (Connell, 2005, pp. 258-259).

Connell’s analysis of the 1998 Health and Physical Education Curriculum shows how discourses of victimization and individual morality are enforced by silences in the curriculum around options for unintended pregnancy, sexual orientation, and sexual behavior. The curriculum update has made room for technological advances, as the following outcomes from grades 4 and 7 show (Ministry of Education, 2015a):

Risks associated with communication technology, precautions, and strategies for using these technologies safely (p. 140)
Benefits and dangers, for themselves and others, that are associated with the use of computers and other technologies, and protective responses (p. 194).

Different types of bullying or harassment, including the harassment and coercion that can occur with behaviours such as sexting, and preventing or resolving such incidents (p. 198)

However, the language seen in the above outcomes maintain the tone of danger and risk, rather than pleasure and desire. Considering a large number of online sexuality education resources, perhaps there should be room to discuss technology as a positive complement to curriculum, one that moves closer to including the missing discourse of desire in sexuality education (Connell, 2005; Fine, 1988; Fine & McClelland, 2006).

Scene 7

At this point in the play, we begin to stray away from the experiences within the sex education classroom, because sexuality education also happens in other spaces through the monitoring and regulation of adolescent sexualities. One way this occurs is through the use of dress codes and school uniforms, which several cast members had experienced to different extents; two of whom had attended schools with a complete uniform requirement. This scene illustrates the gendered power relations involved in monitoring uniforms, from the teacher’s and students’ perspectives.

Dress codes are a form of governing and regulating the sexual subjectivities of students and continually enforce and reproduce a dominant form of girlhood in schools (Pomerantz, 2007). When girls do not conform to these regulations, Pomerantz argues, three discourses can be seen in how they are disciplined by teachers, administrators, and the public media. The three discourses of responsibility, deviance, and needing help position girls as a risk to their school
community, to boys, and to themselves, respectively (Pomerantz, 2007). My own experience of wearing a uniform from grade 7 to 12 was shared by one other cast member, and others echoed similar feelings from having to follow a school dress code. Various methods are used to determine appropriate dress, including two ways to check skirt length which we show in this scene. We observed the way this exchange occurs and changes based on whether a male or female teacher is the one performing the uniform check, and through this scene we acknowledge the gendered power relations involved in a teacher monitoring a students’ clothing. There may be more potential for backlash if a male teacher disciplines female students for inappropriate dress, as shown in this scene as female students accuse the male teacher of perversion under their breath. Dress codes are in place because clothing can be a form of sexual expression, something that is seen as distracting in schools and therefore must be managed. This perspective, which is based on adolescent hypersexuality (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Carlson, 2012), reinforces discourses of victimization and individual morality (Fine, 1988).

Scene 8

The second “quickie” speaks to a changing perspective among youth regarding gender identity and sexual orientation. This is a short exchange wherein one character “interviews” another, asking about their opinion on gay marriage. As the cast discussed our experiences of sex education, one A/R/Tor made a comparison to climate change: despite evidence of its factual happening, there are still debates about the existence of climate change. This can also be seen with gender and sexuality – a changing perspective is undeniable with the increase in LGBTQ+ media representation, law changes, and curriculum change. This is evident in the curriculum update that increases references to gender identity from only 7 times in the 1988 curriculum to 19 in the 2015 document (Mckenzie, 2015). Regardless, the general public still debates about the
morality of gender identities and sexual orientations. The Interviewee responds: “What do you mean, ‘do I believe’? It’s like climate change. You’re stupid if you think you get to have an opinion. It is what it is.” The cast poses a challenge through this scene: individual opinions do not change the reality of someone else’s life choices. As we discussed non-dominant sexualities, one A/R/Tor reflected on the privilege of ignoring a problem because you don’t experience that problem, a sentiment that comes up in numerous race, class, gender, and ability issues. The approach to this scene showed critical thinking about LGBTQ+ politics and self-reflexivity in considering the ways heteronormative people can cause harm or show allyship and solidarity in the ways they speak their “opinions”.

Scene 9

This scene is the first that is more focussed on our experiences as university students. At this point, the play shifts from typical topics covered in formal sex education to a sobering presentation on rape culture, a prominent topic on university campuses. By offering statistics in this scene that allude to a number of populations that are at a high risk of sexual violence, we show that rape culture should be acknowledged more outside of university culture.

But 57% of Indigenous women are sexually abused.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities are also at a high risk.

15% of sexual assault victims are boys under 16

60% of all victims are under the age of seventeen.

Rape culture is often discussed in the context of university-aged women, as indicated by this widely shared New York Times article: “1 in 4 Women Experience Sex Assault on Campus” (Pérez-Peña, 2015). Through this scene, we try to shed light on underrepresented groups who are at a risk of sexual violence. This scene came about through a fascinating improvisation that I
adapted from Norris’ (2009) repertoire of drama exercises. I asked two A/R/Tors to play flowers (one male, one female), and the other three to play bees who were given the instruction to use “want”, “desire”, and “need” as motivations for interacting with the flowers. When beginning the exercise, one bee asked for consent from their fellow cast member, “Freedom to touch?”, then prompted the flower to respond with “You have to say freedom granted or no” (Process videos, January 22nd, 2017). This set a tone that continued throughout different iterations of the exercise. Rather than being an exploration of desire and seduction, this became an exploration of how these are limited by consent. The A/R/Tors were hesitant to play up attraction but used bargaining techniques to win over their flower: “I can offer you a good life, financial support” and “I used my ‘Superlike’ of the day on you”. More significantly, the flowers used disinterest to express non-consent, both implicitly through body language and explicitly by saying, “I think you should go, I feel uncomfortable”. After checking that the cast member was just acting and not actually uncomfortable with the exercise, we discussed how this situation is comparable to that of being picked up in a bar.

We reflected. We shared the feeling of being left utterly unprepared by school-based sex education to deal with sexual violence at the level we encounter it at university (Research Journal Notes, January 22nd, 2017).

One A/R/Tor discussed their recent consent education as having shifted their perspective from a “No means No” mentality in high school to “Yes means Yes”, which emphasizes enthusiastic consent. Another cast member brought up a shift in their perspective when they became aware of the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada. We used the statistics in this scene to acknowledge the silencing of minority groups in sexual assault education: children, racialised persons, persons with disabilities, and men. These statistics tell a
different story, one of victims that are not white, able-bodied, university-age women, and who have traditionally been silenced in sexuality education. Silencing occurs when we ignore Canada’s colonial history and position Indigenous women as high risk without any information about colonialism (Hunt, 2016). I realize now that this scene does just that, in a way, by presenting a statistic without acknowledging the colonial history and generational trauma as a factor in the crisis of violence against Indigenous women. Unfortunately, this scene is incomplete as it should tell us more about the discourses that continue to silence certain subjectivities in sexuality education. We also mention the higher risk of sexual violence of individuals with disabilities without detailing the stigma and assumptions that renders individuals invisible (Esmail et al., 2010). Esmail et al. found that sex is the domain of the “white, heterosexual, young, single, non-disabled person” (p. 1151). As mostly white, heterosexual, and non-disabled persons, the cast strived to acknowledge the silenced voices in sexuality education, however, this required much more time, engagement, and attention to the reasons why those statistics exist.

Scene 10

In this scene, another “quickie” is used to depart from the tone of the previous scene and provide a comedic moment. In a short exchange, two A/R/Tors are on stage as a bee and a flower. The bee is looking at their phone while buzzing around and utters one line: “OOhhh. There’s a flower 3km away from me”. The bee gestures a “swipe right” on their phone and in doing so, references the popular hook up and dating app, Tinder. This scene is a reference to the playbuilding improvisation on desire wherein we acknowledged the importance of Tinder in facilitating sexual experiences. We included this scene because Tinder and other hook up apps may facilitate a discourse of desire (Fine, 1988) that is absent from sexuality education. Allen
(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

(2004) advocates for a discourse of erotics that “involve[s] the acknowledgement that all young people, whatever their gender and sexual identity… are sexual subjects who have a right to experience sexual pleasure and desire”. Using Fine’s work on a missing discourse of desire, Allen believes that a discourse of erotics is about “creating spaces in which young people’s sexual desire and pleasure can be legitimated, positively integrated and deemed common place” (p. 152). Tinder may be a space outside the classroom where there is room for a discourse of desire and erotics which may aid in bridging what Allen (2001) calls the “knowledge/practice gap” between the knowledge gained from sexuality education and what young people do in practice (p. 120).

Scene 11

Continuing the topic of hook-up culture from the previous “quickie,” this scene is presented as a casual discussion amongst friends about “hooking up”. The cast sits in a circle and begins to question the social conventions that are constructed around “hooking up”. We chose to stage it in this way as a call back to the first scene, which ends with the line:

*We’re finally getting a chance to talk about it.*

This informal conversation is a huge contrast from the unease and discomfort shown in earlier scenes. We improvised this scene and recorded the lines, hoping to maintain an organic tone of conversation and to echo many of the conversations we had in playbuilding rehearsals. The form of this scene is especially important because its presentation as a conversation is meant to convey what occurred within the playbuilding process and as a model for what talking about sexuality openly looks like.

This scene emphasizes “personal ethics” as an important factor for young people when making decisions about sexual behaviour. One cast member in the scene spoke of her parents
instilling her with a strong sense of personal ethics, including what was right and wrong in terms of sexuality. The importance of “personal ethics” is connected to the discourse of individual morality in sexuality education (Fine, 1988) as it places the responsibility of appropriate (normal) sexual decision-making on the individual and implies consequences if the wrong decision is made.

Your ethics are established as you get older. But when you are a kid, you submit to your parents’ beliefs (Process videos, January 22, 2017).

A powerful statement was made by one cast member when referring to her teachers and parents, who instilled a strong moral and ethical standard through her upbringing: “I didn’t know why I felt so terrible” (Research Journal Notes, January 22, 2017).

Our discussion around personal ethics was very much connected to the role of parents and teachers in teaching morality as part of sexuality. Connell’s (2005) analysis of the Ontario curriculum shows how discourses of individual morality and victimization mutually reinforce each other, leaving little room for a discourse of desire in sexuality education. The same can be argued for home life, school culture, and other sites of learning sexuality outside of the classroom. If individual morality or personal ethics are invoked to continually frame sexuality as a moral issue, we lose the possibilities offered through discourses of desire and erotics.

**Scene 12**

Our final scene is a silent depiction of the invisible and visible sexualities and gender expressions in schools. Originally, we struggled with how to represent the experiences of non-dominant sexualities because they were not reflected in our own experiences. However, addressing the heteronormativity in sexuality education and school culture was important for us
as a cast. In this scene, A/R/Tors emerge from backstage each with a piece of paper and a mask. Each piece of paper reads one of the following subjectivities: TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX, QUEER, BISEXUAL, ASEXUAL, and HETEROSEXUAL. Each label is revealed one by one, and then everyone pulls a white half-mask down over their eyes. Finally, the labels are all folded up and hidden, with one exception; heterosexual remains to be the only label seen amongst a group of six masked individuals.

By using masks, we show the normalization (re)produced through school culture and curricula, which seems to assume a universal adolescence that is white, able-bodied, hypersexual, and heteronormative. The labels are intended to communicate the variety of sexualities and gender expressions that could be present, but are hidden due to the dominance of narratives of heteronormativity. The silence and somber tone of this scene presents a final image of the play, however does not conclude the story. It is left open ended, to be continued in the talk back, in future projects, and in our own lives as we continue the journey of negotiating discourses of sexuality.

**Reflections of a Director/Actor/Researcher/Teacher**

In this section, I situate myself in the research and share reflections that were significant to me prior to and throughout the playbuilding process. As I, like the other A/R/Tors, shared my personal experiences, I began to re-examine the circumstances and influence of certain moments.

If story has huge power to move the listener and/or witness to new realizations, it is also huge for the teller, in what our own storytelling can reveal to our selves about our selves. While telling stories clarifies different realities for others, they are self-clarifying and self-empowering. Not only in the therapeutic act of telling, but also in our ability to see our own experience in a new light, socially and culturally contextualize (Flores Carmona & Luschen, 2014).
I am one of four daughters. With the exception of my youngest sister, we were homeschooled for most of elementary and middle school until entering a Charter school when I was in the seventh grade. Prior to Grade 7, the only sex education I received was through a book called something like *What’s Happening to My Body* that my mom probably ordered from a Christian educational resources store. As far as I can remember, that was it! No follow up discussion, no awkward or nosy prying from my mom. I was full of curiosity – who wouldn’t want to know what’s going on with your changing body? Thanks to that book, menstruation, body hair, and body odor were covered, but the only thing I really knew about sex was from my parents and church; it was “a beautiful thing between a man and a woman in marriage”. I began attending school in Grade 7, which came with a long overdue exposure to school culture and adolescent sexuality. For the first time, I was learning about sex from peers on the bus, friends in the hallways, and teachers in the classroom. The school halls buzzed with sexual references, which often came in the form of sexual harassment, although I didn’t know it at the time. In contrast, our gender-segregated sex education classrooms were stifling with awkward silences and the occasional giggle. The animated anatomical diagrams, sexually transmitted disease statistics, and body image lessons faded quickly away. Only a short section in a Health, P.E., or Leadership class, sex education seemed like an afterthought and was by no means the primary source for learning about sexuality. Instead, I learned about sexuality covertly, by talking with peers through cell phones and instant messaging or by reading magazines like Cosmopolitan. I also learned that by simply being in a female body, I would be subject to objectification, sexualisation, and harassment. I didn’t seek out those lessons but learned them regardless.

Jump ahead about ten years to when I began this thesis and my youngest sister was only 12. She is my window into current “youth culture” as I poke fun at her selfies and endless
Snapchat usage. I was struck by this popular app, Snapchat, and the in-app links to huge media outlets such as Cosmopolitan, New York Times, and Buzzfeed. As I considered the access through such a popular social media platform to the online Cosmopolitan Magazine, I remembered skipping class in high school to read a Cosmo with my best friend. As if the makeup and style tips weren’t enough to get teenage girls to read the magazine, articles entitled “20 ways to please your man” easily sparked curiosity around sexuality. As a millennial who experienced the exponential growth of technology and the internet, I also witnessed a leap towards increasingly accessible information about sexuality through social media. I was intrigued, and began to question: how do teenagers learn about sexuality today? With the introduction of the updated curriculum in Ontario and these reflections on my sister’s current experiences, I was keen to examine alternative pedagogies for sexuality education, which brings me to today.

Reflecting on this playbuilding research, I am very proud of the critical stories that we created and performed. I felt a sense of comradery as these 5 participants, strangers to me at first, showed from their enthusiastic engagement that they cared about the topic as much as I did. We built a strong group dynamic that brought an ease to the process and sometimes made it feel less like research, and more like a group of friends talking, playing, and improvising together.

Something I didn’t anticipate was how familiar the cast was with one another, even with the knowledge that they were all in their first year of the Dramatic Arts program. I was the outsider at first, so I used drama games and exercises to encourage trust and collaboration. In a brief rehearsal process, this group of passionate artists made me feel welcome and that we were, in fact, a team of co-authors.

I observed an increasing level of critical thinking and agency as the playbuilding process went on. After beginning on the first day with a few exercises to establish this tone and asking
critical questions through discussion, I saw the other A/R/Tors begin to facilitate critical thinking in one another. I was conscious of this dynamic throughout the process as it was important for me not to be the authoritative voice of the researcher or director, but maintain my status as one of six voices. By the end of the first day, the A/R/Tors seemed very comfortable with asking questions of each other and pushing each other to develop critical lenses through which to view our stories. My role as the D/A/R/T required some encouragement to the cast to remain focussed or to move on from a scene. However, I did not feel that I was leading the group towards certain themes or topics, rather, storytelling drove the momentum of content-generation and in response, each cast member played a role in mediating this content, connecting it to other themes, and translating it into scenes.

I believe, like in all playbuilding projects, this play is incomplete. It does not have a conclusion because we continue on the journey of negotiating knowledges of gender and sexuality. If I were to end this play differently, I would echo the group monologue from the beginning with reflections on where we would like to go. There is no conclusion for this play that can easily summarize experiences of sexuality education, which are made up of complex and fluid personal accounts and subjectivities. The ending should look forward, and in the spirit of self-reflexivity, always continue to look back. As Norris (2009) says, “We want our audiences to leave haunted, thinking about the issues and how they might apply the gleaned insights to their own lives” (p. 215). There are many possibilities for how these scenes and this play can end, but the uncertainty invites the audience’s contribution and further consideration. The end is a challenge to change.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

"A Journey through Sex Education" reflects not only the individuals who wrote it, but also the contexts in which they experienced sex education. For all the participants except myself, formal sex education took place in Southern Ontario public and Catholic schools. The gaps that are illustrated in the play – silences around LGBTQ+ persons, race, pleasure, rape culture – reinforce the need for continued improvement in curricular documents and pedagogies. Furthermore, educators need tools to facilitate discussion around these topics that traditionally have been part of the null curriculum. In light of the recent moral panic around sexuality education in Ontario, we must consider why parents and community members fear changes to the curriculum. In his study, Elliot (2010) finds that generally, “parents do not think of their own teenagers as sexual subjects” (p. 206). Elliot attributes parents’ understandings of their children and a broad moral panic around youth sexuality to the polarizing discourses of dangerous teenage sexuality and childhood innocence. According to Jones (2011), the constructions that result from these discourses are “rhetorical children” that distract us from what real children are saying (p. 384). Instead of the rhetorical children that are often mobilized in debates around sexuality education, Jones suggests we use a Queer lens to conceptualize a child’s subject position:

This child can inhabit and move between sexual identities and cultures, although it is also ‘subject to’ them to a certain extent. Because of the possibilities of personal agency within and between sexual systems, this child is understood as a ‘subject’ rather than just a construct (Jones, 2011, p. 384).

Although it may be difficult to envision the manifestation of this sexual subjectivity, we have tools to create spaces in which we could see sexual subjects with personal agency. Queering
(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

sexuality education involves deconstructing curricula and utilizing student-led pedagogical tools to center young people’s voices and desires. Jones argues that young people desire topics in sexuality education that are not a part of the traditional canon of ‘appropriate’ content.

The most frequently requested item was ‘how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners’, which mobilises a discourse of desire and pleasure typically ‘missing’ from sexuality education. Other issues were dealing with relationship break-ups, understanding the emotions in relationships… and a greater need for content on homosexuality and homophobia (Jones, 2011, p. 385).

The disconnect between what students are given through school-based sexuality education and what they desire to discuss shows a rift between constructions of children and teenagers and the experiential knowledge and unique subjectivities of youth today. This research attempts to bridge that gap by showing the co-negotiated critical stories of A/R/Tors after critically engaging with topics of gender and sexuality through drama games, improvisation exercises, and discussions. Employing playbuilding as a queer pedagogy in this research allowed me to facilitate rehearsals that used storytelling and dramatic improvisation to discuss the participants’ experiences, feelings, and knowledges around sexuality education.

Through this research project, I sought to explore the experiences of youth discussing sexuality in and outside the classroom. In addition, I inquired how playbuilding may facilitate agency among A/R/Tors and what playbuilding may offer as a queer pedagogical intervention into discourses of sexuality in Southern Ontario. Revisiting these research questions, I can see the dramatic collection of experiences recorded in the script, A Journey through Sex Education. Through the script and Chapter 5 which details the development of each scene, I can also see the critical conversations that took place between A/R/Tors and speak to sexual agency in discussing and presenting these topics. This playbuilding project is a queer pedagogical intervention as it
(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION
tells a different story from one that has been present in the media and in much research on sex
education in Ontario. By centering youth voices and opening up space for critical inquiry into
sexuality education, we can see more possibilities for youth in developing healthy sexual
subjectivities.

Queering Sexuality Education

As I reflect on this research, I must address the question: Can playbuilding be considered
a queer pedagogy? In this section, I review the tones of playbuilding (Norris, 2018) that align
with queer pedagogy and discuss the challenges of using playbuilding in this project.

Playbuilding as a methodology emphasizes research with rather than on or about others
(Norris, 2015). This collaborative research process allows participants to generate scenes and
invites public engagement through dissemination. This is the tone of playbuilding that centers
participants’ stories and places the researcher alongside participants through the process.
Playbuilding encourages inquiry by provoking questions like “What do I know?” and “How do I
re-conceptualise what I know from the conversations with other cast members, the external
research and the processes of creating theatre?” (Norris, 2018, p. 299). These questions parallel
queer pedagogy’s goal to unlearn and reconfigure our relationship with knowledge. Without self-
critique and self-exploration, knowledges and epistemological assumptions remain unchallenged
and we reinforce the dominant knowledges that we attempt to deconstruct. Queer pedagogues
must acknowledge the risk of reinforcing norms, anticipate tension/discomfort, and respond with
self-reflexivity and emotionality (Allen, 2015; Quinlivan, 2012). This tension is connected to
representation, another tone of playbuilding that relates to the way we treat and portray the Other
within scenes (Norris, 2018).
We cannot speak for the Other. What we can do is provide conversation starters as incomplete as they may be and invite our audiences to add to our incompleteness. Then we all become co-learners and co-teachers. (Norris, 2018, p. 304)

We chose to write the final scene of the play using silence, masks, and signs to communicate instead of dialogue. Without the authority to speak for the Other, we must use care to represent characters (or sometimes choose not to) and avoid writing narratives on behalf of those who are not involved in the process.

A significant challenge the cast faced in this playbuilding project was time, specifically a lack of time to dwell in the process. I am very grateful for the time the participants dedicated to this project as they are in a very demanding program with several projects ongoing. Ideally, we could have spent double or triple the amount of time for playbuilding rehearsals. This would have allowed for deeper exploration and engagement with the content, and more improvisation to create scenes. I would have liked the cast to stay in the shit, an acting lesson that I personally learned after working with a director in theatre school. We must commit to an improvisation even when it is not working and in moments of discomfort, uncertainty, and pure confusion. This is when revelations and discoveries happen; we are pushed outside of our comfort zones and have artistic discoveries just from dwelling in the world of the scene. Given the extra time, I would have pushed the cast to dwell in improvisations longer and to experiment more with the staging of scenes. This also would also have lent to more time developing scenes’ exposition and economy (Norris, 2018). Exposition and economy refer to the ease with which we communicate themes and context to the audience. To do this, I believe we could have used more visual aids, signs, and cues that aid the audience in their understanding.
On April 9th, 2017, the cast presented twelve scenes about sex education to an audience in a small studio theatre at Brock University. The single performance was over in a short fifteen minutes and I found myself looking at the audience, eager to hear their responses and relieved to accomplish a large phase of my research. A short talk-back followed with cast members reflecting on their experience and audience members probing for insight into the process. At the talkback, two A/R/Tors spoke of the significance of coming together as a cast and learning about others’ experiences that may have differed from their own. Each playbuilding project will reveal different truths that reflect the co-authors. One audience member asked how this type of play could be done again with different groups, specifically younger children in schools. I answered by addressing the barriers in doing so, as my request to complete research with high school students was denied. However, this particular play could be shown again, and I believe would resonate with high school and middle-school aged youth. Better yet, a new play can be authored in a different space, with a different group of people. This can be done by educators and facilitators who have a base knowledge in applied theatre and devising. Collective creation (Berry & Reinbold, 1985; Norris, 1989) has been utilized in school settings for decades, and playbuilding as an iteration of this provides more possibilities for carrying out critical conversations and engaging with thick desire. The single performance on April 9th is unique, constructed and written by six A/R/Tors and their lived experiences. Another playbuilding project may reveal different truths that are reflective of the individuals who co-create it.

Future Research

Through several sections of this thesis I have discussed the missing discourse of desire (Fine, 1988) in sexuality education. Following up from her 1988 essay, Fine amends her challenge to a “thick desire”, which “places sexual activity for all people, regardless of age or
gender, within a larger context of social and interpersonal structures that enable a person to engage in the political act of wanting” (Fine and McClelland, 2006, p. 325). Like Fine, I believe that young people are entitled to a broad range of desires and are capable of discussing these critically through a range of social sites (schools, health care, popular culture, social media, family). Thick desire extends beyond sexual desire and promotes a healthy sexual subjectivity. Fine and McClelland (2006) insist, “Economic, social, and corporeal struggles must be linked through the bodies, imaginations, dreams, and demands of young women and men” (p. 326). The framework that Fine and McClelland propose shifts sexuality education to an intersectional relationship with class, race, ability, gender, and age.

When we asked, “What do you need in the way of sexuality education?” young people were clear: “More conversations like this, where we’re asked what we think, what we want to know (Fine and McClelland, 2006, p. 326).

To facilitate these conversations, Fine and McClelland invite educators and others to “create a surge of information and conversation about sexuality, power and justice” (p. 328). In addition, thick desire demands public subsidies in order to fund the social, educational, legal, economic, and medical supports that youth need when developing complex sexual relationships. Using a framework of thick desire, the need for future research parallels the need for social sites to become spaces in which conversations about “desire, danger, power, and bodies can be reclaimed as spaces for doubt, giggles, honesty, negotiation, struggle, pleasure, pain, and information” (p. 328). Engaging in thick desire does not only happen through curricular documents, programs and campaigns can be housed in libraries, clinics, community centers, churches, and on the Internet. I suggest future research that continues to explore the pedagogical possibilities of informal sexuality education and its relationship with school-based sexuality
education. I hope that in finding alternative ways of learning and unlearning, we can continue research along side youth and engage thick desire by telling critical stories and reflecting on how we write and rewrite knowledges of sexuality education.
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(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

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The following table outlines the differences between the two curricular documents. Sex education falls under the “Growth and Development” (Ministry of Education, 2000; Ministry of Education and Training, 1998, 1999) and “Healthy Living” (Ministry of Education, 2015a; 2015b) strands of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum.

While the secondary (Grade 9-12) curriculum comprises four Healthy Active Living Education (HALE) courses, students are only required to earn one compulsory credit in H&PE towards their high school diploma (Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 19). In addition, there are three specialized destination courses in Grades 11 and 12, the content of which I do not include in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>1998 Curriculum</th>
<th>2015 Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Simple life cycles of plants and animals, including humans&lt;br&gt;- Major parts of the body and their proper names (Ministry of Education and Training, 1998, p. 12)</td>
<td>- Body parts (including genitalia) and correct terminology&lt;br&gt;- Recognizing exploitative behaviours (inappropriate touching, verbal or physical abuse, bullying) (Ministry of Education, 2015a, pp. 93-94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>- Similarities and differences between themselves and others (e.g., in terms of body size or gender) (p. 13)</td>
<td>- Basic stages of human development and related bodily changes (p. 108)&lt;br&gt;- Consent is introduced as standing up for oneself and enhancing personal safety (saying no and respecting the right of another person to say no) (p. 109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>- Basic human and animal reproductive processes (e.g., the union of egg and sperm)&lt;br&gt;- Basic changes in growth and development from birth to childhood (e.g., changes to teeth, hair, feet, and height) (p. 14)</td>
<td>- Healthy relationships and challenges in a relationship (p. 121)&lt;br&gt;- Visible differences and invisible differences (including learning disabilities, personal or cultural values, gender identity, sexual orientation, allergies, and more) (p. 124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>- Four stages of human development (infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) and the physical, interpersonal, and emotional changes appropriate to their current stage&lt;br&gt;- Healthy relationships (e.g., showing consideration of others’ feelings by avoiding negative communication)&lt;br&gt;- Challenges (e.g., conflicting opinions) and responsibilities in their relationships with family and friends (p. 15)</td>
<td>- Risks associated with communication technology, precautions, and strategies for using these technologies safely (p. 140)&lt;br&gt;- Various types of bullying and abuse, including bullying using technology, and identify appropriate ways of responding (p. 140)&lt;br&gt;- Physical changes that occur in males and females at puberty and the emotional and social impacts that may result from these changes (p. 141)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5 | - Strategies to deal positively with stress and pressures that result from relationships with family and friends  
   - Factors (e.g., trust, honesty, caring) that enhance healthy relationships with friends, family, and peers  
   - Secondary physical changes at puberty (e.g., growth of body hair, changes in body shape)  
   - Processes of menstruation and spermatogenesis  
   - Importance of personal hygiene following puberty | - Parts of the reproductive system, and describe how the body changes during puberty (p. 156)  
   - Processes of menstruation and spermatogenesis, and explain how these processes relate to production and overall development (p. 157)  
   - Emotional and interpersonal stresses related to puberty and identify strategies that they can apply to manage stress, build resilience, and enhance their mental health and emotional well-being (p. 158)  
   - Appropriate living skills to deal with threatening situations (p. 157)  
   - How a person’s actions, either in person or online, can affect their own and others’ feelings, self-concept, emotional well-being, and reputation (p. 160) |
|---|---|
| 6 | - Relate the changes at puberty to the reproductive organs and their functions  
   - Problem-solving and decision-making to address friends, family, and peer relationships (p. 17) | - Factors that affect the development of a person’s self-concept (p. 172)  
   - Building confidence and laying a foundation for healthy relationships by understanding of the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during adolescence (p. 174)  
   - Masturbation is defined and characterized as normal and not harmful (p. 175)  
   - Respectful decision-making to build healthier relationships, using a variety of living skills (e.g., personal and interpersonal skills; critical and creative thinking skills; skills based on First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultural teachings) (p. 175)  
   - Connects early introduction of consent to sexuality and relationships (p. 175)  
   - Stereotypes – including homophobia and assumptions regarding gender roles and expectations, sexual orientation, gender expression, race, ethnicity or culture, mental health, and abilities, on an individual’s self-concept, social inclusion, relationships with others – and appropriate ways of responding to and changing assumptions and stereotypes (p. 177) |
| 7 | - Male and female reproductive systems as they relate to fertilization  
   - Facts and myths associated with menstruation, spermatogenesis, and fertilization  
   - Methods of transmission and the symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases, and ways to prevent them  
   - Communication skills to deal with various relationships and situations  
   - Abstinence as it applies to healthy sexuality  
   - Sources of support with regard to issues related to healthy sexuality (e.g., parents/guardians, doctors) (p. 18) | - Benefits and dangers, for themselves and others, that are associated with the use of computers and other technologies, and protective responses (p. 194).  
   - Different types of bullying or harassment, including the harassment and coercion that can occur with behaviours such as sexting, and preventing or resolving such incidents (p. 198)  
   - The importance of having a shared understanding with a partner about the following: delaying sexual activity until they are older (e.g., choosing to abstain from any genital contact; choosing to abstain from having vaginal or anal intercourse; choosing to abstain from having oral-genital contact); the reasons for not engaging in sexual activity; the concept of consent and how consent is communicated; and, in general, the need to communicate clearly with each other when making decisions (p. 198) |
| 8 | - Explain the importance of abstinence as a positive choice for adolescents  
- Symptoms, methods of transmission, prevention, and high-risk behaviours related to common STDs, HIV, and AIDS  
- Methods used to prevent pregnancy  
- Living skills (e.g., decision-making, assertiveness, and refusal skills) in making informed decisions, and the consequences of engaging in sexual activities and using drugs  
- Sources of support (e.g., parents/guardians, doctors) related to healthy sexuality issues (p. 19) | - Factors that can affect an individual’s decisions about sexual activity, and identify sources of support regarding sexual health (p. 215)  
- Gender identity (e.g., male, female, two-spirited, transgender, transsexual, intersex), gender expression, and sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual), and factors that can help individuals of all identities and orientations develop a positive self-concept (p. 216)  
- Aspects of sexual health and safety, including contraception and condom use for pregnancy and STI prevention, the concept of consent, and matters they need to consider and skills they need to use in order to make safe and healthy decisions about sexual activity (p. 218)  
- Attractions and benefits associated with being in a relationship, as well as the benefits, risks, and drawbacks, for themselves and others, of relationships involving different degrees of sexual intimacy (p. 220)  
- Assess situations for potential dangers… and apply strategies for avoiding dangerous situations (p. 217)  
- Impact of violent behaviours, including aggression, anger, swarming, dating violence, and gender-based or racially based violence, on the person being targeted, the perpetrator, and bystanders, and the role of support services in preventing violence (p. 219) |
| 9 | - Developmental stages of sexuality throughout life  
- Factors that lead to responsible sexual relationships  
- Relative effectiveness of methods of preventing pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (e.g., abstinence, condoms, oral contraceptives)  
- How to use decision-making and assertiveness skills effectively to promote healthy sexuality (e.g., healthy human relationships, avoiding unwanted pregnancies and STDs such as HIV/AIDS)  
- The pressures on teens to be sexually active | - Factors (e.g., acceptance, stigma, culture, religion, media, stereotypes, homophobia, self-image, self-awareness) that can influence a person’s understanding of their gender identity and sexual orientation, and identity sources of support for all students (Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 104)  
- Relative effectiveness of various methods of preventing unintended pregnancy or STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and identify sources of information and support (p. 103)  
- The skills and strategies needed to build health social relationships (p. 105) |
- Community support services related to sexual health concerns
  (Ministry of Education and Training, 1999, p. 10)
- Apply knowledge of sexual health and safety, including a strong understanding of the concept of consent and sexual limits, and decision-making skills to think in advance about sexual healthy and sexuality (p. 105)

10
- Environmental influences on sexuality (e.g., cultural, social, and media influences)
  - Effects (e.g., STDs, HIV/AIDS of choices related to sexual intimacy (e.g., abstinence, using birth control) (p. 15)
- Factors that influence sexual decision making and how to use decision-making and communication skills effectively to support choices related to responsible and healthy sexuality (p. 124)
  - Common misconceptions about sexuality in our culture, how these may cause harm to people, and how they can be responded to critically and fairly (p. 126)
  - How being in an exclusive relationship with another person affects them and their relations with others (p. 126)

11
- Factors (e.g., environmental, hormonal, nutritional) affecting reproductive health in males and females
  - Causes and issues related to infertility
  - Skills needed to sustain honest, respectful, and responsible relationships
  - Sources of information on and services related to sexual and reproductive health
  - Reproductive and sexual health care information and services
  (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 10)
- Mental illness and addictions, their causes and manifestations, and their effects on personal health and well-being (p. 141)
  - Factors that affect reproductive and sexual health, proactive health measures and supports to avoid or minimize illness (p. 142)
  - Personal and interpersonal skills to deal with personally stressful situations or to help others deal with stressful situations (p. 144)

12
- Factors (e.g., culture, media) that affect gender roles and sexuality
  - Factors (e.g., attitudes, values, and beliefs about gender roles and sexuality) that affect the prevention of behaviour related to STDs, AIDS, and pregnancy
  - Factors (e.g., healthful eating, abstinence from smoking and alcohol) that contribute to healthy pregnancy and birth
  - Characteristics of healthy, respectful, and long-lasting relationships
  - Communication skills needed to discuss sexual intimacy and sexuality in a relationship
  (p. 22)
- How relationships develop through various stages, and the skills and strategies needed to maintain a satisfactory relationship as the relationship evolves (p. 156)
  - Skills and resources to maintain their personal health and well-being as they become more independent (p. 158)
  - Portrayals of different relationships in the media (e.g., movies, song lyrics, television, print media, Internet) with respect to bias and stereotyping, and how individuals can take action to encourage more realistic and inclusive messaging (p. 159)
Appendix B: Ethical Entry into Research

Excerpts from Research Ethics Board Application

*The following excerpts may have been edited to include clarifications and changes in the research proposal.*

**Methods and Design**

“[Participatory drama] serves this topic and age group because the creation of scenes as well as their presentation allow for safety as they distance the participants and audience from the reality of the topic. This can be done through non-realistic dramatic techniques like the use of a shadow screen, which [suggests] confidentiality. [As a theatrical device, a shadow screen can provide a non-realistic perspective on a scene by concealing the faces of actors behind the screen. While those individuals may still be identified, a shadow screen can send a message to the audience of the characters behind it being the “everyman”, or a crowd of anonymous commentators on a scene. It can also be used as a way of expressing inner thoughts without attaching other actor’s faces to disclosures.] Another example is the use of inner dialogue in a scene or having one actor speak aloud the thoughts of another character on stage. This can make explicit internal thoughts without physicalisation”.

“The rehearsal process depends on building a rapport and trust among the cast.... As the facilitator, I will begin the process with discussing boundaries – personal, private, and public – and drama games to set the “tone” of the process.

‘The public is what we, and most people, already know, including names, clothing, hairstyles and other general, not threatening information. The private is what each individual knows about self that no one else or only a few close friends do. The personal is the collective bridge where private is made known in confidence to the group, some of which may be later presented to a live audience, with or without reference to a particular individual. Trust is essential for the storytelling phase, when participants disclose based on their own comfort levels (Norris, 2017).

As Norris suggests, the cast should be aware of the boundaries we will maintain as a group through rehearsals, and the boundaries that must be kept through performance of scenes. It is for this reason the performance will be preceded by an explanation that the stories on stage are not necessarily the stories of those portraying them.”

“As the process is one of co-authorship by the participants and myself, we will come to a point about halfway through generating material when the cast will decide collectively who the play’s
audience is to be. This will determine for whom they are crafting these scenes. If the cast
determines that the play's content would be best suited for an audience of guidance counsellors
and teachers, then we will invite suitable people from the school community. I believe this may
be a likely option, but it may be that the cast would prefer to create scenes geared towards
a student/peer audience.”

**Potential Risks and Benefits**

“The nature of drama activities at times pose physical risks because they involve movement,
however the risks are no greater than they would encounter in everyday life. The process may
cause a participant to refer to an unpleasant memory that may cause emotional stress. There are
social risks as the methodology asks participants to engage with controversial and sensitive
topics and the experiences that may be of personal origin. The performance of dramatic scenes to
an audience may expose these experiences that participants choose to reveal, however the
participant is in no way obligated to perform as themselves in the final piece or in rehearsals.”

“Typically, the process of creating vignettes alleviates and reconciles psychological and
emotional stress. While this may be therapeutic, it is not therapy nor is it the goal of the research
to bring up these memories.”

“I believe it is of utmost importance in such a circumstance to allow the participant to be heard.
The initial stages of community building will enable the necessary trust to be established to
enable any such occurrence to be dealt with delicately. While I will make explicit to the cast that
I am not conducting research as a form of drama-therapy, I will provide a listening ear as well as
resources should a student disclose a trauma. For this reason, I will ask the school
guidance counsellor to be aware of the process, should their services be required. I will
also make known to the participant other forms of crisis support, including the Niagara Sexual
Assault Centre. Because of the group nature of the project, I will establish clear expectations for
the cast on how to respectfully and generously listen and support their peers. This is why
initial team-building exercises will be an important step in the process.”

“The playbuilding process will begin with explicit expectations of how the cast will conduct
themselves with respect and care for one another. It is my responsibility as the facilitator and
researcher to enforce those expectations. Should a boundary be crossed, I will first address the
incident privately with the individual who said something harmful. It may also be necessary
to address the group as a whole and talk about why something was hurtful even if it wasn't
intended that way. A conflict or display of severe disrespect may lead me to ask a participant to
withdraw from the playbuilding process.”

“The performance of devised scenes to the community will be introduced with a disclaimer that
the actors are not necessarily portraying real persons nor are they necessarily playing themselves.
Co-authorship of the script will pay attention to qualities that may reveal the identity of persons involved in order to minimize breach of confidentiality outside of the group. Pseudonyms will be used in the final script.”

“I will provide resources to the Niagara Sexual Assault Centre. It may be beneficial to also provide contact with Students Against Sexual Assault (SASA) at Brock, which has been a positive support for victims at Brock. I will also make known to them the services provided at the Niagara Sexual Health Clinic.”

“I will mitigate this risk by allowing the cast to decide collectively who their audience may be. If the students feel that the content needs to be presented to their peers, they may very well be aware of the risqué nature of the play and deem it necessary to be shared. This may have to be addressed after the audience is determined, and I will welcome the cast's input into how we can establish the tone of the play so that peers do not capitalize on an opportunity to make fun. Also, as stated in my initial proposal, the audience will be made aware that the actors are not necessarily representing their own stories, and are therefore caricatures”.

“This will primarily be of benefit to the cast involved in the process as it provides a setting rich in opportunity to exercise agency and critical thinking about the messages of sexuality and their effect on youth. The co-authorship involved in playbuilding also provides opportunities for active participation in acting, directing and playwriting. The process may enrich an individual’s interest and skills in drama.”

**Participant Consent, Withdrawal and Feedback**

“Students will be informed prior to beginning and on commencement of the study that they are able to withdraw from the playbuilding process at any time. Should a participant wish to withdraw, they will no longer be required to attend rehearsals.”

“Due to the collective creation of dramatic scenes and ideas, it will be difficult to trace one individual’s data and therefore if a participant withdraws from the study, we may not be able to withdraw their data. However, in the event a participant should withdraw, we will ensure no details that can be traced to the individual are included in the final script or performance.”

“Participants will be provided with relevant sections of my thesis by March 1, 2017 in order to provide me with feedback. In addition, due to the collective nature of this process, students will be invited to a group meeting to discuss the presentation of my research. Any data they request to be removed will be omitted from my thesis.”

“I will provide a written summary to offer the students my analysis on our collective playbuilding and presentation. Because the entire cast co-authored the play, I will provide the
“Similar to the entire playbuilding process, the follow-up debrief will take place in a group setting where the cast will be asked to reflect on the presentation of the play. These will take place shortly after presenting the play and in the same place as our rehearsals. The debrief will maintain the same expectations made clear at the beginning of the playbuilding process, relying on trust and respect within the group to reflect on our collective experience.”

**Oral Recruitment Script**

Hello, my name is Charissa Sanche and I am a Masters student in the Social Justice and Equity Studies program here at Brock. I did my undergraduate degree in Theatre and began to explore Applied Theatre and Theatre for Social Change during that time. I am currently working on my thesis, called (Play)Building a Holistic Understanding of Adolescent Sexuality, with Joe Norris, who teaches Applied Theatre/Drama in Education in this department. I am studying how youth negotiate their understanding of sexuality through their formal and informal sex education. This research will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the new Sex Ed Curriculum and how it is implemented.

In this study, we will use an innovative form of arts-based research called playbuilding. I am looking for 8-12 participants who have graduated from high school within the last two years. If you volunteer as a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in three days of rehearsals in January. The participants, or cast, will use discussion and improvisation to create scenes on themes of adolescent sexuality and sex education. The rehearsals, held at the MIWSFPA, will be full days (6 hours long) on one full weekend and one additional Saturday. I will provide lunch for the cast on all three days. You will also be asked to perform the scenes we create for an invited audience that may include students, faculty, and interested community members.

You will receive a credit through Experience BU for participation in this study, which will be recorded on a co-curricular transcript that records activities outside of coursework. I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Brock Research Ethics Board. If you have an interest in practicing and learning skills related to Applied Theatre, I encourage you to contact me for more information! No performance experience is necessary! If you are interested in participating in this study, please take one of the Information Letters from your instructor, which has my contact information on it.
Letter of Invitation / Participant Consent Form

Date: January 9, 2017
Project Title: (Play)Building a Holistic Understanding of Adolescent Sexuality

INVITATION
I, Charissa Sanche, Graduate student researcher under the supervisor of Dr. Joe Norris, as part of my Masters Thesis in Social Justice and Equity Studies at Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled (Play)Building A Holistic Understanding of Adolescent Sexuality. The purpose of this research project is to explore how teenagers negotiate their understanding of sexuality through their formal and informal sexuality education. In order to determine students’ perspectives on the new Health and Physical Education Curriculum, this research will examine the messages concerning sexuality that teenagers must navigate through their formal sex education, peers, families, and the media.

WHAT’S INVOLVED
In this study, we will use an innovative form of arts-based research called playbuilding. As a participant, you will be asked to take part in a playbuilding project, during which you, other participants and the researcher will co-author a play depicting topics concerning adolescent sexuality. This will involve rehearsals over two weekends (two Saturdays and one Sunday) in January at the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts. Rehearsals will be up to 6 hours (with lunch provided) and will explore the experiences of students with messages concerning sexuality through their peers, families, the media, and formal sex education curriculum. As co-researchers and co-authors, the cast will present scenes they create to a public audience. The rehearsal process will be recorded by video and written on cue-cards including scene ideas, issues, and other topics of discussion for further analysis. Following the performance, a final group debrief will also be recorded for analysis by the researcher. The collectively written script will be presented as findings of the research, but other data sources will only be available for the researcher’s analysis and not shared publicly.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
Possible benefits of participation include positive experience devising a play with peers concerning relevant and necessary information to teenagers. The process will give you the opportunity to learn and practice skills related to Applied Theatre/Drama in Education. The devised play will be presented to an audience that may include students, faculty, and interested community members, giving them a strong understanding of how adolescents understand their sex education. The process will encourage a group dynamic that relies on trust, respect, and humility and the performance of scenes may encourage a better understanding of issues of gender and sexuality among audience. The cast will receive a credit for participating through Experience BU, which will be reflected on their co-curricular transcript. Since the study will deal with controversial and sensitive issues, minor risks could be associated with participation; however, the insights that will come with examining issues around sexuality could also be considered a benefit. Topics may be triggering to individuals; however, I will do my best to create a safe space in which issues can be discussed with care for one another. Should participants seek information or aid with the discussed topics, I will refer them to the Niagara Region Sexual Health Clinic (905-688-3817), the Niagara Sexual Assault Centre (http://niagarasexualassaultcentre.com; 905-682-4584), Brock Student Health Services (brocku.ca/health-services; 905-688-5550 x3243) or Brock Personal Counselling (905-688-5550 x4750) for education, support, or counselling services.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All participants will be expected maintain confidentiality through the playbuilding process as all personal experiences are shared within the safe space of rehearsals and are not to be shared with others not involved with the research process. Due to the public nature of the performance, participants’ identities will be known,
(PLAY)BUILDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

but the origins of the fata will be kept confidential to the playbuilding process and among the cast. When performing the devised pieces, it will be made clear to the audience that the actors in the scenes are not necessarily depicting their own personal experiences.

Written data collected during this study will be stored on a password-protected hard drive and will be kept for five years solely for the researcher’s use. For the purpose of future publications concerning the study and playbuilding process, I will keep recorded video and the final script indefinitely. Videos will not be released in any reports or publications. In all publications, pseudonyms will be used in place of the participants’ names. Access to this data will be restricted to the researcher, Charissa Sanche and her supervisor, Joe Norris.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Because of the collective generation of scenes, a participant’s contributions may not be easily removed from scenes should they choose to withdraw from the study. The scenes will be re-cast with other participants and no personal identifiers will link the story to the withdrawn participant.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

After completing the playbuilding process and following my analysis, I will send you relevant sections of my thesis and welcome your feedback on my representation of the playbuilding process and performance. Participants will be credited for co-authorship in the chapter of my thesis that includes the script. Any participants who wish may join the researcher for a meeting to discuss the presentation of her research. Any data participants wish to be removed from my findings will be omitted. Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Joe Norris (Faculty Supervisor) or Charissa Sanche (Graduate Student Researcher) using the contact information provided above. The District School Board of Niagara and your child’s school principal have approved this study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [File # 15-336-NORRIS]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Charissa Sanche
Graduate Student
(902) 698-7087
charissa.sanche@brocku.ca

Joe Norris
Faculty Advisor
(905) 688-5550 Ext. 3596
jnorris@brocku.ca

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.
PARTICIPANTS NEEDED
FOR DRAMA-BASED RESEARCH ON SEX EDUCATION

We are looking for first year university students (17-19 years old) to participate in a study called "(Play)Building a Holistic Understanding of Adolescent Sexuality". The purpose of this research project is to explore how teenagers negotiate their understanding of sexuality through their formal and informal sex education. In this study, we will use an innovative form of arts-based research called Playbuilding.

Participants will co-author a play based on themes that concern high school students’ experiences with sex education. This study, over two weekends in January, will involve intensive workshops at the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts. The group will use discussion, media, drama games, and improvisation to create scenes depicting how teenagers understand sexuality. The play will be presented to an invitation-only public event that may include students, faculty, or community members who have an interest in the project.

The cast will be offered credit for participation through Experience BU.

No performance training necessary. May be of special interest to students pursuing
Applied Theatre or Drama in Education.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer, please contact:
Charissa Sanchez, Principal Student Investigator, Graduate Student, Social Justice and Equity Studies MA Program, Brock University
charissa.sanchez@brocku.ca, (905) 688-7087
Faculty Supervisor: Joe Nannis, Dramatic Arts, Brock University.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University, [15-396]
Certificate of Ethics Clearance

DATE: 9/13/2016

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: NORRIS, Jee - Dramatic Arts

FILE: 15-036 - NORRIS

TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Charless Sanchez
SUPERVISOR: Joe Norris

TITLE: (PLAY)BUILDING a Holistic Understanding of Adolescent Sexuality

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW Expiry Date: 9/29/2017

The Brock University Social Science Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University’s ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 9/13/2016 to 9/29/2017.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 9/29/2017. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics webpage at http://www.brocku.ca/researchpolicies-and-forms/research-forms.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

Jan Petters, Chair
Social Science Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, or school, and/or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of these facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.