

**EXPLORING YOUTHS' UNDERSTANDING OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS
THROUGH THE EDUCATION SECTOR: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY**

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN HEALTH
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

October, 2022

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Abstract

Adolescence is a vulnerable period for youth across the world. It is a period of new learnings with opportunities to understand and develop perspectives on health and well-being. With youth beginning to engage in intimate relationships at an earlier age in the 21st century, concentrating on the learning opportunity they have in school is paramount. The nature of what has been deemed important to teach in schools has changed throughout history, and focus has shifted from home/family skills to teaching youth how to be competitive in the job market. Amidst this emphasis, opportunities for them exist to learn about *building healthy intimate relationships*, one of the foundational elements of most people's lives.

Using an Institutional Ethnography (IE), I trace the lived experiences of youth in how they understand intimate relationships, and how their learning experience is organized through the high school Health and Physical Education (H&PE) course. I provide an empirical exploration of how the *work* of teachers and youth is socially organized by a biomedical, employment-related, and efficiency-based discourse. Through interviews with teachers and youth, I trace the control those ruling relations such as institutional expectations, performance reports, and timetabling enact over the experience of teachers and youth. My findings show how texts such as the *H&PE curriculum*, the *Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) guidelines*, *Ministry of Education Performance Reports*, and the *timetable* organize the day-to-day activities of teachers and students and reproduce different disjuncture for youth. This disjuncture includes some of their experiences being subordinated, difficulty relating to curriculum, and an experience of healthy living discussions being skimmed over across sites. My findings show that the experience of youth in learning about healthy intimate relationships is not akin to the espoused vision outlined in the H&PE (2015) curriculum policy. These findings have

implications for policymakers, activists, and school administration alike, which call for an investigation into who is in power when it comes to youth's learning needs, and a restructuring of existing institutional practices that allow for the flexibility required to broach the topic of healthy intimacy in a comprehensive manner.

Acknowledgements

Pursuing a PhD was not something I ever imagined as a young girl. As a teenager who immigrated to Canada during her adolescent years, from an Islamic country, I was not aware of the social and cultural capital one would require to participate in discussions and academic spaces, often dominated by people very different from myself. While the finish line always seemed too distant, I know now that this project and journey would not have been possible, in the slightest, without the support of my academic community, my family (Mom, you're #1), my friends, and my faith.

I have known my supervisor, Dr. Farah Ahmad, since the beginning of my Masters of Arts (M.A.) degree, where her expertise in her field and passion for women's health and equity drew me to work with her during the pursuit of my M.A. Upon entering my PhD journey, I knew I could have no better mentor and leader than Dr. Ahmad, whose discipline, standards, and support, cradled my journey through one of the most complex and rewarding projects of my life. While I was once quite intimidated by her breadth of expertise and wisdom, I have now come to see her as a kind, generous, and inspiring mentor whose teachings will remain with me for life. Thank you Dr. Ahmad for being the genuine and considerate role-model you have been for me.

My committee members, Dr. Gillian Parekh and Dr. Lynda Van Dreumel, have shown me what an excellent supervisory committee entails. From their responsiveness to their concern for me regarding my personal and professional ventures, I consider myself fortunate to have found advisors who are genuine, respectful, and so persistent about ensuring my success. Their expertise and approach to guiding me through this path has been exactly what I needed, and has helped me bring my vision to light. For that, I am forever grateful.

Just as important to my success, has been the support of my family. My parents, Nafisa, Rafiq, and my husband, Hassan, this doctorate is yours as much as it is mine. Dad, you have been a pillar of strength & support, and Mom, you have been my safety. Thank you for being incredible grandparents, and giving me the gift of time. You have freed me and provided me with the privilege to explore this project and attempt to bring light to an issue I hold close to my heart. My stresses have perhaps weighed heavier on you than I. You have been my lifeline. Hassan, as I always say, you are the pep in my step, and the best life-partner I could have chosen. Mariam, you have always provided me the unlimited snacks and late-night dinner services I required to keep going, thank you for being the best sister. My brothers, sisters-in-law, their children, and my in-laws, have all been supportive and offered me opportunities to laugh, relax, and enjoy life while I pursued this arduous journey. To my mother-in-law, Rahila, thank you for encouraging me to pursue graduate school, and for inspiring me through your experiences. To my friends who have been my sanity, being available for me to offload my stresses and demand their company for unplanned hangouts and charades, you are all precious. Similarly, my academic community includes generous friends willing to proofread, discuss ideas, and share woes throughout these years. Ambreen, Aaron, and to many others, thank you. As well, the IE community, especially Dr. Janet Rankin, who so generously met with me unencumbered by her schedule and offered me critical insights about IE. I am also grateful to my research participants who shared their narratives and experiences with me about how they have navigated the learning and teaching of healthy intimate relationships. My children, Aidyn and Adam, you have been the light of my life these past two years, and in looking at you I have found motivation and strength I could never dream of. I am filled with joy at the experiences you two have already brought my way, and I hope, at least in some small ways, to help build a better world for you both.

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List of Acronyms

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease
CSR - Common Sense Revolution
CST - Critical Social Theory
DH - Department Head
EQAO - Education Quality and Accountability Office
GBV - Gender Based Violence
H&PE - Health and Physical Education
HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HDSH - Human Development and Sexual Health
IE - Institutional Ethnography
MYSP - Multi-Year Strategic Plan
NCIPC - National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control
OCT - Ontario College of Teachers
OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OS - Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements (2016)
OSSD - Ontario Secondary School Diploma
OSSLT - Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test
OPHEA - Ontario Physical Health Education Association
PA - Professional Activity
PLAR - Prior Learning Assessment Survey
RO - Research Objective
SNAF - Standard North American Family
SOAP-R - Subjective, Objective, Analytical Plan, and Reflexivity
STI - Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WHO - World Health Organization

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of my dissertation. It begins by explaining the motivations behind why I chose to conduct this research project, followed by an overview of the research objective and a summary of the research method I used to complete it. The chapter then concludes with an overview of each chapter within my dissertation, aided further by a schema to help the reader visualize the interconnections between the research and the overall organization of the dissertation.

1.1 Explaining the Why

The role and responsibility that the institution of education plays in the lives of youth is something that has been a focus of attention and sometimes a concern for parents, students, and broader society (Mørch, 2003). Society's concern for the young, to ensure that they have opportunities to immerse themselves in experiences and knowledge which allows them to become functioning members of society, has historically and presently influenced young people's experiences of 'growing-up' (Mørch, 2003; Robson, 2019). For decades, educational policies and processes that target youth have been designed, removed, and re-imagined with varying motivations.

As a student-researcher who is passionate about the field of health policy and equity, and as someone who experienced the Ontario secondary education system as an immigrant, I am keen on exploring the design of a segment of the education sector and how youth experience it. My experiential knowledge as a high school student in Ontario navigating intimate relationships led me to explore the topic of this study. I am interested in learning about how an institution as expansive as the public school system caters to the needs of youth, particularly in regards to educating them on intimate partner relationships. From my own lived experiences and from

anecdotes from the youth around me, I hear many stories of heartbreak, unhealthy relationships, and troubles that youth face in navigating this sensitive yet crucial subject. Additionally, I hear from them about the perils of social media and about the all-consuming world that virtual platforms create, exposing youth to both the benefits but also some of the dangers of technology. Far too often, I hear of the toxic culture of begrudging ex-partners leaking intimate photographs of their former partners, followed by an unforgiving chaos that the victimized party then must endeavour. Scholarly evidence examining the fallout and legal responses to this unique type of privacy invasion underscores the magnitude of these negative behaviours (Morassutti, 2018).

As a doctoral candidate in the field of health policy and equity, I chose this opportunity to inquire about the education sector's role in regards to teaching youth about healthy intimate relationships. It is no small feat to participate in an organized institution of learning almost every weekday from the young age of 3 or 4 until high school graduation. Participation in such a system which is predominantly organized by adults who determine what is deemed mandatory, is bound to create a highly nuanced experience for those who participate in it.

The focus of my dissertation research is on understanding youths' intimate relationships, youth is defined here as individuals aged 15-24 years old (UNESCO, 2018). I focus strictly on romantic intimate relationships that comprise both physical and/or emotional intimacy, with varying degrees of commitment and exclusivity (Brown & Amatea, 2000). A range of theories posit that in terms of intimate relationships, youth do not emerge from adolescence as 'blank-slates', and those patterns of understanding and/or having intimate relationships are germinated through experiences in adolescence (Laursen & Jensen-Campbell, 2014; Lyons et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2009). Research has found that developing an individual identity and building strong personal ties and group affiliations are two key tasks of adolescence, and that social support and

communication are crucial in the development of adolescent relationships (Brown & Larson, 2009; Collins & Steinberg, 2007; Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). Therefore, the formative years during which youth begin to develop intimate relationships are a critical period for learning about how to build healthy intimate relationships (Pittman et al., 2000), and a substantial amount of time during those formative years is spent in the school education system.

Rooted in my interest of studying healthy intimate relationships and how education institutions in Canada respond to intimate relationships, I learned about the efforts that have been implemented over the past few decades to embolden the position of schools in teaching youth about healthy and unhealthy intimate relationships. Sporadic efforts have taken place across various provinces in Canada, with Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta receiving frequent mention for implementing pilot programs such as the “Safe Dates Project” (Foshee et al, 2005), or “The Fourth R: Skills for Youth Relationships” (Wolfe et al, 2009). However, these programs and initiatives have been faced with challenges in finding a reputable and permanent place within the policy domains that promote the mandate of education. Focusing on the province of Ontario, there has been a neoliberal influence on the education sector through changes in governance and accountability, the role of the government, and a progression towards finding administrative and service efficiencies (Sattler, 2012; Basu, 2004). Even when teachers attempt to foster and nurture the knowledge youth may need in the area of healthy intimate relationships, they often face institutional barriers beyond their control.

As a student-researcher who adheres to a Critical Social Theory worldview, exploring this field meant uncovering how the concept of power shapes the experience of people. Critical Social Theorists seek to identify and critique those powers or concepts that lead to domination or oppression of any people. They are aware of the mediating relationship whereby social systems

and people produce each other. Having immersed myself in the works of Dorothy Smith (2001, 2006, 2007), the founder of Institutional Ethnography (IE), and having reviewed numerous articles and books that employed or explained IE, I took to selecting this mode of inquiry to organize my dissertation research project. Researchers using this approach are often cautioned against pairing it with a theoretical frame; a Critical Social Theory worldview, however, is the same ground upon which an IE inquiry is based. The shared goal of these ways of understanding the world is to shed light on how people's experiences are designed and influenced by people elsewhere, often with more power, and often unbeknownst to those in less privileged positions.

1.2 Research Objective

My research objective was to explore how ruling relations may influence youths' understanding of intimate relationships, and how their understanding may be socially organized vis-à-vis the educational sector. To begin, I strategized about how I would study what was happening where youth spent the most time – the education system, which became the “location” of my research. To tether my research into the materiality of texts (Smith, 2001) and their activation by people, I puzzled over what role, if any, the Health and Physical Education (H&PE) Curriculum of Ontario may play in organizing this experience for youth.

Even though various other institutions such as the family unit, television and social media, peers, etc., also serve as a medium through which youth internalize notions of healthy or unhealthy intimate relationships, for the purpose of my research scope, I chose to explore the social organization through the H&PE course. My initial exploration through interviews with youth examined the ways in which they learned about intimate relationships. Through these conversations, the H&PE course in provincially-funded public high schools in Ontario became an explicit ground for my extended empirical analysis, considering all high school students in

Ontario are required to take at least one H&PE credit in order to graduate. Across all its curricula, the course contains the strand of Healthy Living which includes the topic of intimate relationships.

Since most student informants that I interviewed had taken the grade 9 H&PE course, this was the curriculum text that I analyzed first in order to understand how it reproduces a social organization of experiences for youth. Listening to accounts from student informants confirmed that their experiences were filled with disjuncture that did not align with the espoused values of the H&PE curriculum. The role and history of H&PE in lending to youths' experience of building an understanding about healthy intimate relationships became even more intriguing, and I employed an IE as a way of exploring this phenomenon.

1.3 The Institutional Ethnography (IE) Way of Looking

My interest is in the powers that be, which IE refers to as *ruling relations* (Devault, 2006). While the forthcoming chapters in my dissertation will provide an in-depth explanation of this strategy of inquiry, I will outline the foundation of this way of seeing the world at this point. In learning about IE as a novice researcher, I found a few examples that took daily objects of our lives and peeled away the layers that allowed those objects to exist within our lives and consist of specific meanings. One impactful example of this work was by Deveau (2008a) who very succinctly explained his story of how a common office chair nudged him towards understanding the specific epistemological way that an IE requires (Deveau, 2008a). Prior to learning about IE, Deveau (2008) internalized chairs as a problem for him due to his disability, where his employers and doctors would expect him to resolve his own personal problem due to his inability to sit for long periods of time during work hours. An IE, however, demands an experiential way of knowing about chairs. Deveau (2008) states that he would not have had a problem with chairs

if the chair was not designed to be a part of the everyday work organization. The requirement of the organization was to place chairs in order to provide comfort for people, and the ability to complete their work; based on Deveau's (2008) experienced reality, however, that practice was not inclusionary, but actually exclusionary of his needs. Being able to peel back the *social* processes and activities that placed that chair in that location in the first place is the central tenet of IE (DeVault & McCoy, 2012).

An IE requires that a researcher acknowledges that there are often lines of fault between the ways of knowing something. The knowledge attained through experiences, referred to as *contested knowledge*, is often different from knowledge attained objectively. Contested knowledge recognizes that implicit assumptions inform an individual's interpretation (Smith, 1990). For Smith (1990) the idea behind contested knowledge is that the way one learns anything is framed through their particular standpoint, thus what can be claimed as objective knowledge is knowledge from their standpoint. To explain further, constructs such as "mental illness, crimes, violence", etc., can be seen as constructs that are posited as objective but are based on experiential knowledge (Smith, 1990. p.372). This way of seeing the world therefore requires a specific epistemological approach. A focus on the embodied knower (i.e., which, for the purposes of my dissertation, are study informants) is required in order to understand how things happen the way that they do. It unpacks the professional lingo, or the neat organization and categorization people do within their thinking to explain a process. For example, the mental work a health care provider does to assign a patient as urgent, high-needs, or terminal can be seen as mediated by texts. *Texts* are understood in an IE to consist of institutional discourses which are activated when a person uses them in some way. Texts have the ability to coordinate social

relations, keeping these texts in view is a way to remain focused on the institution that organizes each experience.

Further, a specific ontological approach is also required in order to understand the IE strategy of inquiry. Defined as the concern with the nature of existence and with the structure of reality, an IE stance is *subjectivist* and requires that the researcher removes or transfers agency away from concepts that are often presupposed or taken for granted without being explored or analyzed (Rankin, 2017). It holds a subjective view of reality where reality is based on place, person, context, and the experience held by people at that location; it stands on similar ground as Critical Social Theory ((CST) to be explained in Chapter 4) wherein what is explored is understood to be organized through powers elsewhere, and where reality is historically built (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011; Rankin, 2017).

Therefore, I found that an IE way of looking allowed me to explore how contested claims of knowledge are present within the institution of education. Through my previous research and lived experiences, I had developed hunches about the experience of youth. In order to study and learn what was happening at their location, I decided that an IE would serve as a well-suited strategy to inquire about their experience of understanding intimate relationships.

1.4 Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the existing literature within the field of healthy intimate relationships and relevant Canadian education sector policies. In this chapter I will share my take on the literature with a critical eye to identify how certain discourses are dominant and promote the association of healthy intimate relationships with sexual education, and how this is implicit within the work that informants do. This chapter will provide a background for understanding

some of the challenges that student informants experience, and the institutional boundaries within which educator informants operate.

In Chapter 3, I will present my research procedures and the methods I used in this inquiry. I begin the chapter by outlining the research paradigm underpinning my research, followed by an overview of the IE method of research. Next, I will provide the rationale for selecting IE for my research, highlighting how its modes of inquiry are implemented throughout my study. Once the theoretical frame of my research is established, the research question and the two-phase design of the study will be described, which includes an overview of the profiles of student informants (high school and university students) and educator informants (high school teachers) who were interviewed for this study. The identification of key texts analyzed in this research is also summarized. The chapter will conclude with a summary of how IE tenets such as field notes, mapping techniques, and textual analysis are employed throughout my dissertation.

In Chapter 4, I will use the IE tool of a *problematic* to illuminate the lines of fault (Smith, 2007) in the student informants' accounts within my research. In an IE, a problematic is not the research question, nor is it a specific problem to be explored; it is instead those instances of disjuncture or disconnect where the intended experience differs or is at odds with the actual lived experience of those in that location (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987). I will use accounts from student informants to establish a general argument about the way in which they experience participating in the H&PE curriculum, and how the activities of educator informants are implicated in the ways student informants come to learn about and understand intimate relationships. Three accounts will be presented, where I will note the tensions student informants experience as they engage in this learning environment.

In Chapter 5, I will explicate how a biomedical view of intimacy becomes a part of the educator informants' ideological practice. I will describe how the ideological code of regulation-oriented thinking organizes educator informants' *work*, and I will review the work process of administering surveys. I will trace how the work process of administering surveys is reinforced through an institutional accountability circuit that rules over the experience of study informants. In doing so, I will analyze how the subject of H&PE is socially organized in school.

In Chapter 6, I will show how performance and evaluation mechanisms become a schooling priority that appear to build a disjuncture for youth. Next, I will provide an analysis of how the ruling relation of performance and evaluation embeds itself into the work of educators and becomes the traditional way of thinking for educators and student informants. I will then discuss the work of reporting requirements and curriculum expectations, and how texts such as performance reports and other outcomes-based measures build a discourse of employability amidst teachers and students. I will then describe how this impacts the ways in which H&PE is coordinated across multiple sites, and how this creates the disjuncture of relatability that youth experience.

In Chapter 7, I will explore the administrative process of timetabling and describe the role it plays in coordinating youths' experiences of learning about H&PE. I will describe how the process of timetabling allows for discussions related to healthy living to be skimmed over or rushed. In addition, I will show how the everyday practice of teachers' gathering teaching resources is influenced by timetabling, and how student informants experience the disjuncture that lies in discussions of healthy living being skimmed over.

Chapter 8 consists of the discussion and conclusion of my study, including its limitations. In this chapter, I will discuss the role of a neoliberalist philosophy in organizing the major

discoveries I found in my research. I will expand on the policy implications of the discourse I found to be present in organizing the experience of youth in school and in learning about H&PE. To conclude, I will offer future directions for research and elaborate on the importance of this research.

The high-level schema below (Figure 1) provides a visual of the chapter summary presented above, as well as a glance at the various relations of rulings and disjuncture discussed throughout my dissertation:

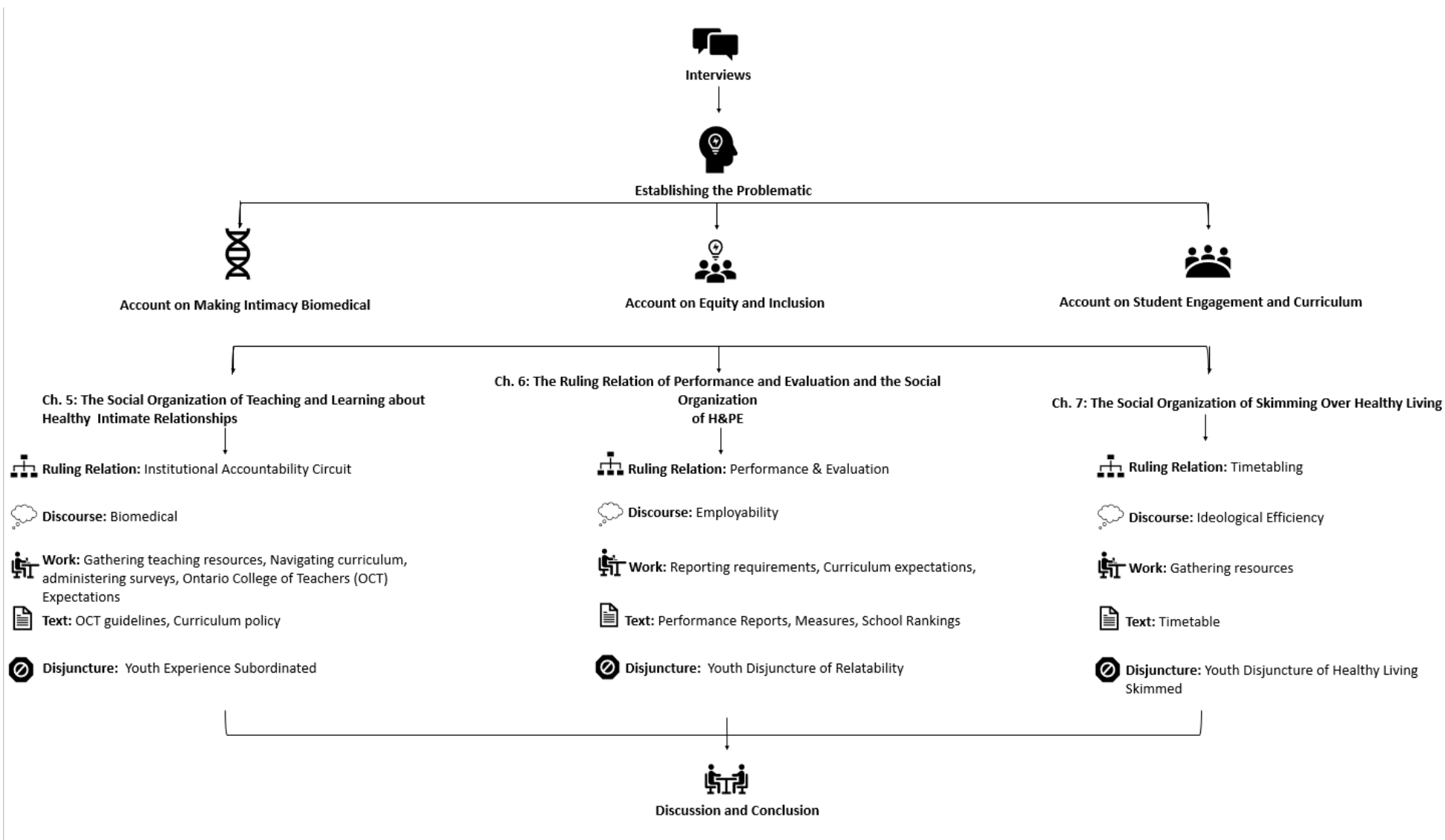


Figure 1: High-Level Schema of Exploring Youths' Understandings of Healthy Intimate Relationships Taught Through the Education Sector

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Synthesis

In this chapter, I will review and synthesize the literature surrounding the field of policies and programs related to healthy intimate relationships. I conducted a comprehensive literature review with the aims to improve my understanding and prepare for field research. This was not a linear process, and many times I learned from the study informants and went back to search for literature to gain deeper insights. With the aim of conciseness, I first present here the changing dynamics of youth's experience related to intimacy today, the ways healthy intimate relationships are defined and discourses to examine and address this area. Next, I present my learnings related to the education sector, such as the governance and regulation of the teaching profession, followed by a focus on Ontario curriculum and its contextual aspects. My search of literature was through scholarly electronic databases (e.g., Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Google Scholar, PsycINFO, JSTOR, and Springer Link) using combinations of keywords like partner and/or women violence/abuse/battering/dating; adults or adolescents or teens; and school or education with or without Canada or Ontario. I also approached dissertation advisors for suggestion on relevant resources. The main goal of my literature review and synthesis will be two-fold in that I will 1) identify gaps in the literature to contextualize the importance of my dissertation, and 2) position myself critically within the popular discourse of knowledge and evidence and analyze the influence of ruling relations in coordinating how people's text-mediated activities hold within them the dominant themes that appear in the literature.

2.1 Setting the Stage

Canadian youth comprise one-quarter of the country's population (Statistics Canada, 2018).

They are part of Canada's future and, hence, societal support in their developmental years are of

paramount importance. This is very relevant today as the majority of North American youth are undergoing different experiences than those of past generations in terms of the developmental opportunities and daily socialization experiences, due to an evolution in the education system, in digital technologies, and in intimate relationships (Lenhart, 2015).

To begin, the developmental opportunities faced by youth have increased in recent years as fewer youth are dropping out of school and therefore more are spending time in educational settings, such as high schools. For instance, according to Statistics Canada, high school dropout rates have reduced from 22% to 9% for men and 19% to 5% for women between 1990 and 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Furthermore, today's youth are more connected virtually than any other generation with nearly 100% of youth using the Internet on a daily basis for purposes such as staying aware of current events, news, and maintaining social connections (Statistics Canada, 2016; 2018; Lenhart, 2015). This includes a heavy reliance on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. as primary communication tools to connect with others, and as a source of entertainment to fill time (Belfort, 2017; D. Boyd, 2007; Charteris et al., 2018; Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). *Digital Flirting*, for example, has become an entry-level element used by many youth for letting their potential romantic interests known to others, who could then express their interest in them romantically, if so desired (Lenhart, 2015). The socialization experiences that youth undergo have also changed as studies show that youth are beginning to date at earlier ages. For example, in contemporary North American culture it has been found that by the age of 18, over 80% of American youth have had some experience of intimate relationships (Charteris et al., 2018; Estévez et al., 2017; Florsheim, 2003). Following suit, studies also suggest that the nature of intimate relationships held by youth today differs from the past few decades (Meier & Allen, 2009). For example, in 1978, 59% of individuals

(including youth) aged 18-34 were married compared to 30% today, and couples are increasingly deciding to cohabitate instead of getting legally married (US Census Bureau, 2018; Rabin, 2018). These changes depict that youth today have a very different experience than prior generations, with different relationship dynamics and complexities (Rabin, 2018).

2.1.1 What are Healthy Intimate Relationships?

The notion of the word ‘healthy’ with regards to intimate relationships is one that is subjective. Even though a solitary definition of what a healthy intimate relationship constitutes does not exist, a general understanding can be presented. One can explore the definitions of ‘health’ and draw an understanding from there. According to a commonly used definition, health can be defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or illness (Constitution of the World Health Organization, 1948.) The dimension of social wellbeing in association with health encompasses a healthy intimate relationship. Another way to understand healthy intimate relationships is through the process of exclusion and examining what the undesirable qualities are in an intimate relationship. For example, the American National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) (2005) defines a healthy intimate relationship as one where there is respect, equality, honesty, physical safety, comfort, sexual respectfulness, independence, and humour. This does not suggest that a relationship must be perfect or uphold all of these traits, but the NCIPC warns against unhealthy behaviours as being red flags, or *risks*, often leading to extreme behaviours (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2002). Therefore, intimate relationships that uphold these positive characteristics are likely to be healthier.

In addition, unhealthy intimate relationships can often include abuse. Abuse can encompass physical, mental, sexual, verbal/emotional, financial, and/or other harms, and has the

potential to have serious immediate and long-term consequences on peoples' wellbeing, including economic stability and social relationships (Briere & Rickards, 2007; Fergusson et al., 2008; McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015; Weisz & Black, 2010). Scholars have recognized that a large majority of abuse is of a *gendered* nature (Stöckl et al., 2013). For example, on a global scale more women are subjected to abuse than men, with women being five times more likely than men to experience sexual abuse (Office of National Statistics (ONS), 2015).

Unhealthy intimate relationships are an issue that the Canadian federal government recognizes as a priority for prevention. One of the ways this is being done is through addressing and preventing Gender Based Violence (GBV) - a term used to describe violence directed at individuals because of their gender, gender identity, or perceived gender (Status of Women, 2017). For example, the federal government's 2017 initiative entitled *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* was the first in Canadian history to put in place a federal action plan to end gender-based violence. One of the pillars of this strategy is *prevention*, which identifies that "adolescence is a key time to provide young people with the knowledge and skills to develop healthy relationships that are free from violence and abuse" (Status of Women Canada, 2017, p. 6). This focus on the prevention of unhealthy behaviours during a young age is partly driven through and supported by discourses in the literature. The term *discourse* refers to "the way in which language is used socially to convey broad historical meanings. It is language identified by the social conditions of its use, by who is using it, and under what conditions. Language can never be 'neutral' because it bridges our personal and social worlds" (Henry & Tator, 2002, p. 25).

2.1.2 Discourses of Intimate Relationships

To date, the scholarly work relevant to youth and intimate relationships has addressed three overarching discourses: the health promotion approach; the social intervention approach; and the explanatory theoretical approach. At the same time, the literature is saturated with discussions of unhealthy intimate relationships and there is a focus on the predictors and prevention of violence. For example, scholars have studied the prevention of dating violence (Ting, 2009), the effectiveness of violence prevention interventions (Wolfe et al., 2009), potential moderators and mediators of relationship violence (Bachar & Koss, 2001), the prevalence of intimate relationship violence due to risk factors (Masselink et al., 2018), technology and dating (Rosewarne, 2016), and the prevalence of violence in different types of relationships (Veenstra, 2011).

The lifestyle-focused health promotion¹ approach is the most dominant discourse, and its basis is rooted in reducing the *risk* of ill-health amongst youth by enlisting the help of education strategies to engage youth and teach them about the risks of sexual intimacy and their *individual* role and control over managing their health (Crocker et al., 2019; Gilbert, 2014). For a long time, sex education and theories of adolescence health have been focused on the concept of risk (Gilbert, 2014). The critical branch of health promotion approach, however, may also include elements of community actions, development of personal skills, and reorientation of the health services (Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986). Scholars in the individual-focused health promotion field primarily focus on the idea that youth need support in building skills and knowledge for healthy sexual development and behaviour, and underscore how the risks of peer pressure and sexual coercion during this age period are motivators for teaching sex education

¹ Health promotion is a sub-field in the Public Health discipline (source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>)

(Crocker et al., 2019; Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2011; E. Miller et al., 2012). Thus, lifestyle-focused health promotion approaches view sex education as a primary strategy for achieving improved sexual health outcomes for youth and utilize school-based or community outreach programs as the main source for offering this education (Kirby et al., 2004; Layzer et al., 2014).

Critics of the *individual*-focused health promotion approach share their findings on youths' disinterest in learning about sexual education from public-sector education teachers and a lack of consensus on the efficacy of holistic models that include community health or peer educators (Crocker et al., 2019; Kann et al., 2018; Temple-Smith et al., 2015). Importantly, they argue that significant attention in the field of public health has focused on problematizing youths' sexual behaviour as *risky* through concerns like sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancies (Shoveller & Johnson, 2006). They highlight the shortcomings of the public health focus, through lifestyle-focused health promotion, on modifying sexual behaviours considered risky and teaching youth behavioural and lifestyle choices considered unhealthy. They argue that such public health aims promote a risk discourse that renders "safety and goodness" as healthy and others (e.g. critical awareness about the quality of relationships and meaning of intimacy beyond sex) as "marginalized" (Shoveller & Johnson, 2006, p.1). Such risk discourses could then deterministically moralise, pathologize, or police particular behaviours among youth (Naezer, 2018; Shoveller & Johnson, 2006; Gilbert, 2014).

Within the discourse of social interventions, intimate relationships among youth are hypothesized as being a roadmap or predictor of how youth will forge intimate relationships as adults. Social interventions are thus looked upon as favourable strategies to implement at an early age through the education system to help empower youth to differentiate between healthy versus unhealthy behaviours and prevent future instances of abuse or violence in adult

relationships (Pittman et al., 2000). An example of one such intervention is “The Fourth R” which is a 21-lesson curriculum program delivered over 28 hours by teachers, accompanied by additional training on the dynamics of dating violence and healthy relationships. The results of this program show that dating violence was around 2.5 times greater among students who did not receive the intervention compared to those who did (Wolfe et al., 2009). With few exceptions, many social interventions remain as projects and are not adopted at the system level. Thus, the critics of social intervention approach argue that when programs are offered through individual schools (instead of a system-based approach), challenges emerge due to a lack of core guiding rules, variations in measurement, and limitations to generalize evidence. Some point to a lack of theoretical frameworks, but find such programs to be promising (Whitaker et al., 2006a).

The explanatory theoretical discourse rests on identifying risk markers and building theoretical frameworks that explain violence in intimate relationships. The most widely used model for understanding intimate relationship violence is the Ecological Model which views violence as a result of factors operating at the individual-, relationship-, community-, and societal-level (World Health Organization, 2012). For example, Artz et al (2014) offer a comprehensive review of how exposure to IPV exacerbates children’s risk for lifelong negative outcomes that impact them at an individual level, but also broadly at a societal level (Artz et al, 2014). Similarly, other scholars emphasize the relationship between IPV and the role that socioeconomic factors play in the occurrence of violence (Fang & Corso, 2007; Korkmaz et al, 2020). Other popular theoretical approaches include Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2001), Feminist Theory (Dobash & Dobash, 2003), Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1980), Coercion Hypothesis (Dutton et al., 2005) and Behavioural Theories (Bell & Naugle, 2008) seeking to explain interpersonal or dating violence (Shorey et al., 2008). The scholars then identify

predictors of violence in intimate relationships and propose interventions towards the various risk markers such as low-income, substance abuse, etc. They make propositions such as of an association between dating violence during the youth years and continuity of aggression into adulthood (Carlson, 1987; Shorey et al., 2008; Fang & Corso, 2007). For instance, a United States-based study that investigated involvement in dating violence among youth in high school found that nearly 40% of respondents reported being a perpetrator of dating violence, and 38% reported being a victim in a dating context (Malik et al., 1997). A contribution of research in the explanatory theoretical discourse is identification of differences in rates, magnitude, and experience of intimate partner violence by gender, socioeconomic status and so forth (Carlson, 1987; Shorey et al., 2008; Fang & Corso, 2007; Korkmaz et al, 2020). In Canada, intimate relationship violence in adults costs women their lives, costs taxpayers over \$7.4 billion annually, and lead to profound and lasting effect on children in the form of psychiatric disorders and trauma (Canadian Women's Foundation, n.d.). Explanatory theoretical approaches therefore operate on a discourse of preventing violence in intimate relationships by explaining and then intervening towards the various risk markers (Spencer et al, 2021). Despite the preventive aims of explanatory theoretical frameworks, often they give limited attention to research on community and societal influences and structures that are conducive to unhealthy intimate relationships. There is discussion amongst scholars of the discursive framing and symbolic dimension of the language used to discuss violence, and how it is linked to societal and institutional structures that condone violence. These structures include omnipresent gender-based discrimination in society which is a product of patriarchal norms that subjugate social control over women (Lieber & Roca I Escoda, 2015; Trom & Zimmermann, 2020).

This comprehensive review of literature in the area of intimate relationships and youth highlighted a primary focus on violence in intimate relationships (Artz et al., 2014; Fang & Corso, 2007; Korkmaz et al., 2020). To summarize, scholarly knowledge about youths' understanding or experiences of intimate relationships has centered on unhealthy behaviours and ways to prevent or treat them through various interventions. Within this, three major discourses were identified. First was the life-style health promotion approach which considers specific youth behaviours as risky and problematic and shapes the experience of youth by offering instructions on how to engage in sexually safe practices to avoid infections, diseases, and unwanted pregnancies. In the subsequent section I show the presence of this discourse in the H&PE curriculum's (2015, Revised) mandated approach to teaching Ontario youth about healthy intimate relationships, as it includes an emphasis on safe sex.

Secondly, I found a social intervention approach which seeks to educate and empower youth to learn about healthy versus unhealthy behaviours in intimate relationships. The goal of this approach is to teach youth about positive dating habits through education. With the exception of a few programs, this work is largely sporadic and difficult to evaluate systematically (By et al., 2019; Niolon et al., 2016; Pittman et al., 2000; Whitaker et al., 2006a). Some scholars identify "projectism" as hampering system-based improvements and policy development (Green, 2012). Projectism is a common result of a neoliberal philosophy wherein reform efforts result in a "contractor to government" market where organizations become facilitators of change through interventions that occur simultaneously by different contractors, however, end up creating a fragmented and inefficient system that does not lead to systematic change in a specific direction (Green, 2012, p. 311). Neoliberal policies can be described as those in which economic control is sought to be transferred from the public sector to the private

sector, typically through deregulation, privatization, and reduction in government spending; one of the core principles of neoliberalism is individualization and self-interest (Schrecker & Bambra, 2015).

The third discourse is one that focuses on theoretical explanations of violence in intimate relationships and remains concerned with its consequences, seeking to present empirical evidence that can develop appropriate interventions and violence prevention strategies.

All three of these main discourses identify the issue of violence in intimate relationships as problematic, and consider education as one method of intervention and prevention. However, within these discourses, the role of institutional and societal structures that are conducive to violence, such as acceptable gender norms and the discursive language used to discuss violence are commonly overlooked. Additionally, the promotion of individual responsibility to take action against intimate partner violence, as well as a focus on individual risk markers that make one more prone to violence can be seen to stem from a *neoliberal* policy model. This ideology is apparent within the discussed discourses as various intervention approaches remain limited to educating individuals, and do not highlight or consider the need for broader policy and societal changes.

2.2 The Education Sector

As shown above, the role of education through programs or interventions is seen as paramount in the prevention of violence in intimate relationships, especially for youth. However, a system-based approach whereby the sector of education implements such programs through its policies is likely to have wide scale impact on youth. Taking this into consideration, I decided to position

my inquiry within the public education sector for its policies² related to health and healthy intimate relationships while looking for traces of the dominant discourses that I identified in the literature.

The public education sector (defined here as organized educational school settings as opposed to extra-curricular settings like sports teams or dance clubs, etc.) has generally been acknowledged as a learning environment for social progress, social change, equality, and the fight for social justice (McCulloch, 2011). Although youth also develop understanding and form healthy relationships outside of educational settings, as this occurs at home and during extra-curricular or play activities (Larson & Verma, 1999), the educational sector is likely the primary setting where this learning occurs. Since the 1700s, the Canadian education sector has undergone radical changes from initially being controlled by the church to becoming provincially governed in the 1900s (B. McKay et al., 2008). Participating in the education sector is mandatory for Canadian youth, since by law they must engage in recognized schooling such as public school, private school, or homeschool (Boyd, 2021; Education Act, 1996). Depending on the province or territory, children may start school anywhere between the ages of 3 to 6 years old and continue until they are between 16 and 21 years old (Education Act, 1996). Thus, the education sector has become one of the key learning environments where youth spend the majority of their time and gain not only formal education but a broad range of knowledge and experiences.

In this light I argue, in alignment with other scholars (Larson & Verma, 1999), that the educational sector is a location where youth encounter a critical opportunity to build and learn about foundational aspects of intimacy. Although Canadian provinces and jurisdictions have

² Government of Canada defines policy as “A course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, political party, organization, or individual. Policies have three interconnected and ideally continually evolving stages: development, implementation and evaluation.” Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/public-health-practice/skills-online/glossary-terms.html>

adopted strategies to address intimate relationships, research related to the education sector for this health aspect from the standpoint of youth is scarce.

Yet, scholars have found that youth are open to learning and developing social skills, norms, and values while navigating through school settings, and receive many such opportunities on a daily basis (Hopkins et al., 2014; Larson & Verma, 1999; Pilkington, 2004). Scholars have documented how learning environments that specifically engage participants in a set of rules, scripts, and goals, are associated with experiences of (re)forming knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, emotions, and motivations (Berry et al., 1997). Since education plays an integral role in the lives of youth, it is important to understand the historical underpinnings of this sector and how it is structured.

2.2.1 The Governance of the Education Sector

In order to understand the present-day organization of the Canadian education sector, it is important to understand how it is governed and implemented. In Canada, provincial and territorial governments today have the exclusive responsibility for all levels of education, and there is no ministry or department of education at the federal level (Robson, 2019; Government of Canada, 2022). Schools on First Nations reserves are, however, funded by the Federal Government as regulated by the Indian Act (1876).

Given the provincial and territorial jurisdictional power over education, its structure varies depending on each area's unique political and social circumstances (Robson, 2019). Each jurisdiction has its own Education Act – a legal document outlining in detail the roles of teachers, students, eligibility criteria, accountability programs, etc. – and has split its education system into pre-elementary, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary programs (Robson, 2019). At least one department or government ministry is responsible for the governance of

education within each province or territory. These governing bodies are administered by publicly-elected officials who provide provincial or territorial oversight, assisted locally by smaller units such as school boards, school divisions, and/or education councils (Robson, 2019). School board members are also democratically elected individuals, providing a way for the general public to have purview into the education structure. Figure 2.0 below (adapted from Robson, 2019, p.92) provides a high-level overview of the individuals and groups involved in primary and secondary school decision-making in Canada.

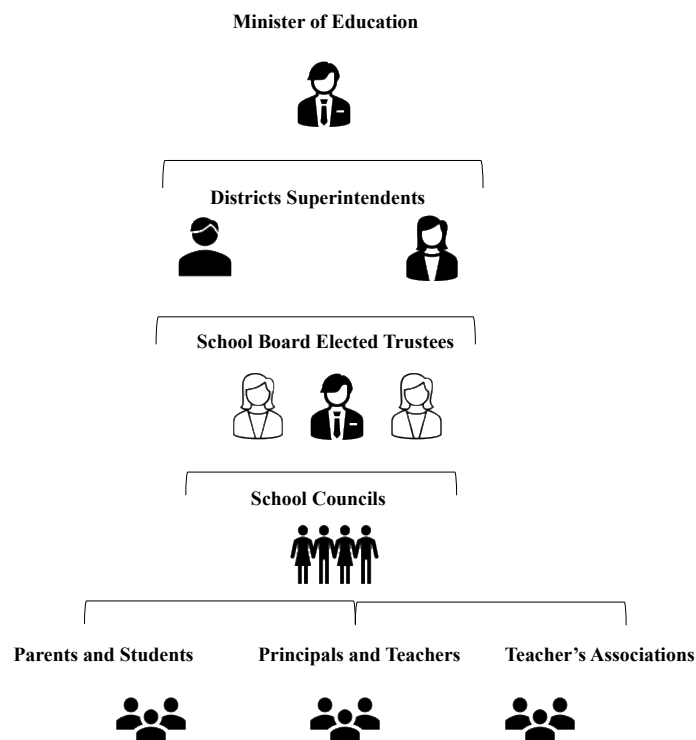


Figure 2: Decision Making Groups in Primary and Secondary Schools (Robson, 2019)

One paramount and unifying feature of the public school system across Canada is the role of curriculum. The curriculum is defined as the content of schooling, that is, the information that is learned in the schooling environment (Robson, 2019). The curriculum expands beyond subjects

like mathematics and science, it also includes education for preparing students to become future workers and citizens. It has a socializing nature and can be seen as a social construct with complex nuances about knowledge, assumptions, and power struggles (Robson, 2019).

Discussions such as who decides what goes into the curriculum, what assumptions about knowledge are embedded within its practices, etc. are often broadly researched by scholars (Robson, 2019; Wien & Dudley-Marling, 1998). Organized by grade, curriculum documents outline the information and skills that educators are expected to teach. However, educators have autonomy over how they approach the curriculum, which can be shaped by their own pedagogy and training. As such, curriculum design, implementation, and review are often key topics discussed by scholars.

2.2.2 The Regulation of the Profession of Teaching

The term “regulation” refers to a rule or directive that is made and maintained by an authoritative body in which the authoritative body regulates its profession and shapes the work and experiences of its constituents, such as teachers (Voisin & Dumay, 2020; for more in-depth critiques of the field of regulation, see Young and Grimmet (2015), Gannon (2005), Marrin et al (1999), and Van Nuland (1995)). The act of regulation is meant to ensure broad enactment of the developed policies, and enact a key element of accountability to the public, and public protection (OCT, 2022). Following similar frameworks for regulation allowed the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) to highlight the importance of self-governance in public-facing professions (Nuland, 1998).

Founded in 1995 as part of the educational reform in Ontario, the OCT was established as an organization that would operate at arm’s length from the government with the goal of strengthening the teaching profession while making it more accountable to the public, with the

purpose of protecting the public's interest (Nuland, 1998; OCT, n.d.). The teaching profession is self-regulated, indicating that members can govern themselves as they have the specialized knowledge required to do the job. The regulations are meant to ensure broad enactment of the developed policies, and enact a key element of public accountability and protection (OCT, 2022). This is achieved by implementing standards and procedures for the teaching profession related to a teacher, the certifying process, developing and maintaining ethical and professional standards, new teacher accreditation, and disciplining breaches of conduct.

From its implementation, the act of regulating the profession of teaching was received by teachers with mixed feelings (Nuland, 1998). While some considered it beneficial, others opposed it, citing the risk of members of the public having the ability to sit on committees that would discipline teachers, as well as the loss of power from existing bodies that governed teachers, such as the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ontario Teachers' Federation³ (Nuland, 1998). Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada (along with British Columbia) that has a self-governing model that extends its jurisdiction beyond just the registering and deregistering of teachers, as outlined above.

2.2.3 The Ontario Curriculum

In Ontario, the delivery of education in public schools is guided through curriculum policies and implemented through curriculum guiding documents. The Ministry of Education's justification for implementing a curriculum was to establish higher standards of education that include observable and measurable learning outcomes. Since its implementation in 1997, all publicly funded schools in Ontario are now required to use *The Ontario Curriculum*, which outlines

³ OTF is the professional organization that advocates on behalf of teachers. At its core, OTF represents the voice of teachers in the province, and is responsible for speaking out on behalf of teachers. It is the Federation's duty to work explicitly and implicitly in the interest of the province's teachers. (OTF Website, 2022).

curriculum requirements and specific learning expectations throughout each of the elementary and secondary school years. The curriculum was developed by the Ministry of Education using a curriculum review cycle to ensure that it remains current, relevant, and developmentally appropriate (See Appendix A for the Curriculum Review Process in Ontario). The outcomes-based learning focus of the curriculum in Ontario was a shift from the Common Curriculum of 1995 (the Ontario Curriculum's predecessor) which posited a holistic policy framework that stated, "all teaching should be based on a view of life as an integrated whole, in which people, things, events, processes, and ideas are interrelated" (p. 19). Additionally, the stance of The Common Curriculum of 1995 emphasized student ownership of learning and a "shift in curriculum emphasis to more integrated programming and active, inquiry-oriented learning" (p. 19). The switch to the Ontario Curriculum of 1997 included a very explicit focus on providing consistency and establishing learning expectations. For example, the preamble of the document stated:

The provision of detail will eliminate the need for school boards to write their own expectations, will ensure consistency in curriculum across the province, and will facilitate province-wide testing. Province-wide consistency will be helpful to students who change schools, and will help parents in all regions to have a clear understanding of their child's progress. (Ontario Curriculum, 1997, p. 2)

Since the late 1990s, the curriculum in Ontario has predominantly influenced what students learn, and how. Its focus on observable and measurable expectations has led to the development of a whole system of assessment, reporting, and outcome-monitoring processes to determine how successful the implementation of the curriculum has been. For example, the Ministry of Education states on its website:

The Ministry of Education is responsible for developing curriculum, while school boards and schools manage the implementation. Having province-wide curriculum and assessment policies provides for consistent planning, implementation, evaluation, and reporting of student learning and achievement across school boards (Ministry of Education, 2021, para.1)

The Ministry of Education in Ontario, which is the beholder of the curriculum, further goes on to explain the roles of school boards and teachers, guiding them to plan the units of study, develop a variety of teaching approaches and strategies, and “select appropriate resources to address the curriculum expectations and meet the needs and abilities of the students in their classes” (Ministry of Education, 2021, para. 4). The Ministry of Education emphasizes the importance of curriculum expectations, labelling them as mandatory, and further breaks down the relationship between curriculum expectations and the assessment and evaluation process.

Assessment is defined as “the process of gathering evidence of how well a student is doing” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p.143), while evaluation is defined as “the process of judging the quality of student learning against set criteria and assigning a value, mark or grade” (para 8). The Ministry of Education (2021) states that the purpose of assessment is to improve student learning, with the expectation from teachers to provide students with helpful feedback and coaching for improvement. Assessments are also supposed to help students learn independently, set individual goals, monitor their own progress, determine next steps, and reflect on their own thinking and learning (Growing Success, 2010). The combination of Ministry of Education’s policies on both assessment and evaluation set out all teaching requirements and curriculum expectations from grades 1-12 (Growing Success, 2010, p. 147). These are important aspects of the curriculum in Ontario that help design the structure of a school.

2.2.4 The Context of Curriculum Revolution

The curriculum changes that occurred in 1997 were driven by a perceived poor performance of Canadian students in international rankings and high dropout rates (Wien & Dudley-Marling, 1998). In Ontario, the education reform strategy was developed and based in the *Common-Sense Revolution* (2003), which was a conservative political platform, running from 1995-2002, that pushed for reducing taxes, balancing the budget, and bolstered claims that the current education system and staff were ineffective and inefficient. The shift towards an outcomes-based curriculum in Ontario in 1997 took place against the backdrop of a broader national movement regarding education reform in Canada in the 1990s and 2000s. With its proclamations of increasing teaching effectiveness and efficiency, this revolution sought to bring control and restraint to a system deemed to be chaotic by the government at the time. One of the main transformations of this reform included efforts to convert existing education into outcomes-based education, with a strong emphasis on performance and evaluation (Wien & Dudley-Marling, 1998). As boasted by the government, the focus of this model of education was on producing young people who have skills that are valuable in the market and are profitable. Driving this effort, the government introduced the standardization of curriculum expectations, which was posited to promote consistency across the province and provide a results-based criterion that had measurable learning outcomes for each student (Robson, 2019; Wien & Dudley-Marling, 1998).

This reform of curriculum in Ontario included the development of expectations within the curriculum for each subject, including *overall expectations* and *specific expectations* (Wien & Dudley-Marling, 1998). *Curriculum expectations* are mandatory and describe in general terms the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of each grade (Ministry of Education Webpage, 2021). They are divided into sections, referred to in the

curriculum as *strands*, which help teachers organize the various sections (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, Revised). Each curriculum contains an achievement chart that provides a standard province-wide guide for teachers to assess and evaluate student achievement of the expectations in the particular subject or discipline (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, Revised).

Prior to the implementation of the *Ontario Curriculum* in 1997, the *Common Curriculum of 1995* stated that teaching should be based on a view of life as a whole. The 1995 curriculum emphasized student ownership of learning by stating that students should own their learnings and that its goal was to provide a “shift in curriculum emphasis to more integrated programming and active, inquiry-oriented learning” (Common Curriculum, 1995, p. 7). Similar to the Ontario Curriculum of 1997, the curriculum of 1995, too, however, consisted of expectations using language such as “by the end of grade 9, students will...”, which was a radical departure from the progressive pedagogical philosophy that supported thoughtful schools in Ontario in the 1960s. During the 1960s, schools encouraged flexible problem-solving skills that engaged students in discovery, learning, and critical thinking which promoted an integrative vision of teaching and learning (Wien & Dudley-Marling, 1998).

Taken together, the changes in education reform over time in Ontario underscore a move towards an increasingly outcomes-based teaching ethos. Today, the structuring that happens in schools can be seen to align with the institutional philosophy of neoliberalism, which seeks to generate a student-body that is competitive and prepared for economic contribution as soon as possible (Sattler, 2012). One such example of a neoliberal shift in the education sector can be seen in the development and implementation of the H&PE curriculum, discussed next.

2.2.5 The Curriculum on H&PE & Healthy Living

The curriculum for H&PE has seen shifts in the way that it has approached education on healthy intimate relationships. An extensive review of the history of sexual education in Ontario is offered by Hutchinson-Grondin (2016). Key points relevant to my research include an understanding of the tumultuous nature of the H&PE curriculum, which historically underwent changes to reflect what were considered major concerns in society that were important for youth to learn, and what was deemed acceptable by parents and the public at the time. During the 1950s, the crux of the physical education course focused on physical activity that students were required to master. The curriculum in the 1960s began to include theoretical concepts with the goal of expanding beyond physical activity to an environment of personalized learning experiences and individualistic goals (Sherrill, 2016). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, debates occurred in the media and within government organizations about the sexual morality movement, increasing numbers of venereal diseases, increasing teen pregnancy rates, and changes to the nuclear family structure; these led to a focus on the role of schools in preventing these health and/or social issues (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016).

Such education began to be perceived as important by society in part due to the fears of losing youth to the counterculture hippie movement, which was categorized as rejecting patriarchal ideals and rebellious against middle-class values (Wilson, 2006). Additionally, with the onset of the sexual revolution in the 1960s and fears of girls receiving inadequate knowledge about building stable relationships and being at risk for sexual violence, the Ontario Department of Education started to offer guidelines to school boards about what information should be included, who should teach it, and supplementary resources (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). These guidelines left the decision of teaching sexual education to the discretion of local school boards, along with leaving resource planning up to the teachers. Teachers had a choice to teach topics of

their choosing. The expectation upon teachers was to build students' morals and values instead of focusing on sexuality and intercourse alone (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). At this time, there were concerns about teachers' inability to spend time covering these concepts due to a lack of training and experience. Fears of teachers' unpreparedness to teach such concepts have been voiced since the mandate of sexual education began to be taught in schools. For example, Toronto's Director of Education Graham Gore argued in 1966 that "Effective family life education is hindered by the young, immature and inexperienced teacher or the one who feels incompetent or uncomfortable in the presentation of the subject" (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016, p.149). These expectations were also the result of a significant shift in the role of teachers in the delivery of H&PE curriculum from the 1950s to 1960s, where the focus changed from teachers producing top-notch athletes to teachers taking on the role of nurturing adults who shaped students' minds and social values (Carlson & Ginglend, 1968).

During the 1960s and 1970s, students commonly received instruction that was conflicting as explained here (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). Even though the curriculum guidelines stated "students should develop an understanding of the nature of human sexuality not only as a means for reproduction, but also as an aspect of individual personality" (Ontario Department of Education, Curriculum S.29A, 1969), there were implied penalties for engaging in intimacy outside of marriage, and conventional sexual norms and abstinence were emphasized (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). At this time, when relationships and intimacy were discussed, the focus was always on highlighting immorality and consequences of engaging in sex, such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) and pregnancy (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). Although, the designers of the guidelines at that time did not claim to understand the woes of youth in navigating their realities. Instead, the H&PE curriculum for high school students guided schools

to set up Student Health Committees to discover and investigate student health challenges (Ontario Department of Education, curriculum S.29, 1969). Student and group discussions were promoted as a way to elicit meaningful conversation that teachers could mediate, limiting the amount of technical information being shared from a teacher to the student, and to avoid complaints of teachers promoting sexual activity (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). While there was controversy about the lack of teacher qualifications and the association of sexual instruction with promoting promiscuity, the provincial Department of Education continued to push school boards to implement sexual education in school, but avoided responsibility for the content of the courses (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). Such aversion from clear provision of guidance on the core principles for policy implementation led to a culture of relying on each teacher's comfort level and confidence as a prime determinant of whether or not students received sexual education, and of what kind (Balter et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2004; Garcia, 2015).

While public debate continued to occur regarding the mandate of teaching H&PE in schools, by the 1980s, significant health concerns due to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) epidemic began to cause great panic. Viewed as a death sentence and considered a consequence of the sexual revolution and loose sexual morality at that time, the fate of health education became sealed. Identifying health and physical education as a point of preventative intervention, the Education Minister at the time required all school boards in Ontario to teach HIV and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) education through the H&PE curriculum (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). Leaving it up to school boards once again, the Ministry of Education granted teachers and boards the autonomy to design education as they saw fit. The curriculum began to serve as a discourse of public health risk concerns and be shaped by the

views of the teacher and general public, and in 1987, sexual health education became mandated by the Ministry of Education.

2.2.6 The Fortification of the Link Between Sexual Education and Public Health Risk

While sexual activity is an important component of healthy intimate relationships, it is just one aspect of the complexities associated with intimacy. The association between risky sexual behaviour and its impact on public health, however, is one that has been discussed and critiqued in literature for decades (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). Over the past 20 years, risky sexual behaviour has been associated with compromised health, in part due to the global HIV epidemic (Johnson et al., 2009). The education sector has been used as a government policy intervention to help reduce the rates of STIs and unplanned pregnancies in Ontario, as well as in most developed countries (Johnson et al., 2009). The directive to include a mandatory health and physical education curriculum came in 1987, after the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion began to include *Achieving Health for All* as one of its objectives in the mid 1980's (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016). Pushed through as a result of the AIDS crisis, many school boards began to scramble to collect the resources and find the motivation to build education related to sexual activity and its consequences. As a result, students began to experience a public health risk-based approach to learning about sexual education.

More recently, the H&PE curriculum in Ontario underwent drastic changes from the long-standing curriculum content that was in place for 17 years (Ministry of Education, 2021) between 1998 and 2015. In 2015, the H&PE curriculum content for all grades was modified under the direction of Ontario's Liberal government (Bialystok & Wright, 2017). Modifications were made to reflect the current climate and relaxed moral and political views on sexual education, and included updates on materials related to sexual development, diversity, sexting,

bullying, and consent, to name a few. Today, the healthy living strand of the H&PE course contains four content areas within the health topics that can be covered as per the H&PE curriculum. The content areas include Healthy Eating; Personal Safety and Injury Prevention; Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours; and Human Development and Sexual Health (HDSH), which is the component of the healthy living strand which consists of the topic of intimate relationships. Teachers are guided in the curriculum by the Ministry of Education to deliver these topics in an integrated manner, and to at least aim to meet the overall expectations listed in the curriculum, if not the specific expectations (which will be elaborated upon in upcoming sections). The rationale to include these four overarching topics as part of the H&PE curriculum (2015, revised) was because they were considered to be fundamentally connected to students' "daily lives" (P.40).

These modifications, however, did not prevail without challenges. As the curriculum changed, some students received the revised H&PE (2015) curriculum content while some continued to receive the more conservative H&PE (1998) curriculum. Tensions over the updated curriculum content boiled over and took the form of protests, parents opting their children out of sexual education altogether, and online forums and petitions insisting on the exclusion of various sexual education-related elements from the curriculum content (Bialystok & Wright, 2017). Citing the incompatibility of Western values with non-Western values, many Canadians challenged the curriculum of the modified H&PE content based on specific religious and cultural beliefs (Bialystok & Wright, 2017). While a large amount of this opposition was geared towards the modified H&PE curriculum of grades 1-8 that introduced children to the topics of sexuality and gender at an earlier grade than the previous curriculum, the public dialogue of teaching young children and youth about sex became prominent. The role of the teacher and their comfort

level in teaching H&PE, and specifically healthy living, continues to be explored and warrants a review in order to appropriately frame my research.

2.2.7 The Role of Teacher Training and H&PE Curriculum Implementation

Very few research studies have done an extant review of how the Ministry based policies and guidelines of teaching H&PE translate into what occurs in a classroom (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016; Sethna, 1995). What research does exist has shown that youth “overwhelmingly requested honest, comprehensive content delivered by nonjudgmental, well-educated health professionals in a comfortable environment” when it comes to discussing school-based sexual health education (Corcoran et al., 2020, p.98; Larkin et al., 2017). The desire for such traits is connected to the way in which teachers are trained, and their comfort level teaching the concepts outlined in the curriculum. Studies on teacher preparation for teaching sexual health education find that there are missed opportunities for providing systematic training in the theory and practice of sexual health education during teachers’ training in the Bachelor of Education programs across Canadian universities (Cohen et al., 2012; McKay & Barrett, 1999). The relationship between teachers’ training and their willingness to deliver concepts related to health and sexual education has been examined, and researchers have found that teachers who did not have a background of education in health and physical education were, on average, only somewhat willing to teach health and sexual education and their willingness varied between topics (Cohen et al., 2012). Providing comprehensive education to teachers related to health and sexual education while maintaining professional boundaries and respecting diverse cultural and religious differences amongst students is pedagogically challenging for teachers. Fidelity to adhering to the curriculum topics and guidelines is significantly influenced by their comfort and self-efficacy regarding health and sex-related instruction. A critical element to note here is that discussions on

sex, in broader society, are often met with discomfort – not just in schools. In Canada and the US there is a social stigma/cultural judgment often associated with openly discussing sex. A study on the implementation of sex and health-related topics by trained teachers in Indiana revealed that 84% of teachers omitted at least one of the modules from their sexual health education program due to lack of comfort with the content (Tappe et al., 1995).

The role of teachers' comfort level and training in delivering health and sexual education has been reviewed and critiqued in the literature (LaChausse et al., 2014; Tappe et al., 1995). For instance, researchers have found that H&PE teachers are often expected to implement top-down, one size fits all approaches that are designed with the intention of solving a public health-risk issue, without receiving appropriate training, education, or resources. The responsibility of shaping the minds and influencing the beliefs of youth is placed upon teachers with little governmental or organizational support (Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016; Leahy et al., 2015). There are numerous published and unpublished studies capturing the opinions of teachers about the H&PE curriculum, its changes, satisfaction, and challenges with implementation (Cohen et al., 2012; Decorby et al., 2005; Leahy et al., 2015; McKay & Barrett, 1999; Phillips & Martinez, 2010; Robinson & Melnychuk, 2009).

There has, however, been limited analysis of how these actually translate from the standpoint of youth in high schools in Ontario. For example, qualitative and quantitative research exists exploring the H&PE curriculum and examining its implications on race and culture (Petherick, 2018), internalization of messages related to obesity (Kirkpatrick & McIntyre, 2009; Petherick, 2013), the inclusion of marginalized groups (McMinn, 2017), and teacher perspectives on curriculum implementation (Robinson & Melnychuk, 2009). However, very few studies exist that focus on the experience of youth in learning about healthy intimate relationships through the

curriculum. In Ontario specifically, the literature is predominantly comprised of surveys or content analysis studies that discuss and critique the potential of the H&PE curriculum to marginalize different groups of students based on race, culture, sexual orientation, etc. (McMinn, 2017; Robinson & Melynychuk, 2009).

Recently, Vanner (2021) found the H&PE curriculum to contain numerous opportunities for teachers to address the issues of consent, gender-based violence, and other concepts related to healthy intimate relationships. Vanner (2021) found that issues related to healthy relationships are raised uncritically and promote the sense of individual responsibility and agency through the guide of individual choice for engaging in sex, barring issues of power discrepancies and marginalization. This work also explored opportunities for teaching about healthy relationships by analyzing key documents such as the H&PE curriculum and conducting interviews with high school teachers about their experience teaching about gender-based violence within the H&PE course. Vanner's (2021) work has been demystifying the complexities associated with teaching H&PE in Canada, and her work utilizes a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis to examine power relations embedded within language use to uncover power relationships and social inequities. She analyzes the Ontario curriculum and the ways that teachers take it up to illustrate the extent to which the curriculum engages students using critical perspectives that illuminate gender norms, relationships of power, and intersectional perspectives and experiences related to gender-based violence. While Vanner's (2021) work offers a comprehensive analysis of the power and equity-related issues within the implementation of the H&PE curriculum in Ontario, it does not explicate how the lived experiences of teachers and students are organized through the daily activities that they are involved in. Vanner's (2021) work highlights the systems of power that

are in play but does not uncover how they are activated within the daily lives of those they impact.

Additionally, an unpublished thesis from a student-researcher who analyzed the H&PE curriculum from the perspective of youth was identified (McIntyre, 2012) and found that youths' experience of participating in the H&PE curriculum has a negative impact on their self-esteem and sets unrealistic body image expectations that embrace a discourse of *healthism*, defined as a belief that positive physical health can be achieved easily through individual effort through lifestyle choices. With the exception of the two studies aforementioned, the majority of research related to the H&PE curriculum explores issues related to the quality of the curriculum, delivery challenges, assessment of physical literacy, reasons for decreasing enrollment rates, and historical and critical analyses of biases within the curriculum (Connell, 2005; D'Andrea, 2012; Decorby et al., 2005; Faulkner et al., 2008; Hutchinson-Grondin, 2016; Jachyra, 2016; Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013; McMinn, 2017; Peterson, 2012; Petherick, 2013; Robinson & Melnychuk, 2009; Sethna, 1995; Young et al., 2021). Most of these studies offer recommendations and suggestions for policymakers, teachers, and administrators that revolve around notions of curriculum delivery. McIntyre's (2012) work offers important contributions to the field of H&PE in Canada, but is limited in its scope and method as it focuses only on experiences of youth in Toronto through focus-group interviews. McIntyre's (2012) work is also limited to a healthism and obesity discourse through which she analyzes the dominant beliefs around health education. While this is a pivotal discourse to uncover, especially due to its roots in the public health risk approach to physical education, it also does not uncover the organization of these experiences and how they are reproduced across sites.

As such, there are no studies to my knowledge that have conducted an institutional ethnographic exploration of the youths' experiences learning about healthy intimate relationships through the education sector in Ontario. An exploration of the institutional powers that socially organize the H&PE curriculum to address the topic of healthy intimate relationships in the way that it does is missing from research. This is a critical knowledge gap considering education about building healthy intimate relationships is one of the most promising approach of preventing dating and other intimate violence in intimate relationships and building an understanding of healthy boundaries right from early years of adolescence (Antle et al., 2011; Foshee et al., 2005; K. Peterson et al., 2018; Weisz & Black, 2010).

2.3 Literature Summary and Dissertation Rationale

Thus, my literature review on intimate relationships, youth and the Canadian education sector directed my attention to the contested experience of high school youth who engage in H&PE education. Despite an abundance of texts detailing the importance of system-based education of youth about healthy intimate relationships, as well as the ability of the education sector policies to customize and cater to youths' needs, I was unable to reconcile this with my own experiences and of those insights I obtained through talking to youth. Through my experiences, I found that youths' needs in regard to developing a foundational understanding of critical concepts related to intimate relationships have gone largely unaddressed. Moreover, while Ontario has adopted strategies to educate youth on intimate relationships, research in the area about the experience of engaging in that education from the standpoint of youth is scarce. Therefore, the rationale for my dissertation is grounded in these observations, whereby I sought to examine the experiences of youth as they participate in Ontario's grade 9 H&PE curriculum course (2015, revised). Using an IE approach that draws on experiences from both teachers and students, I looked analytically at

the work of teachers and the social organization of activities in high school, with a goal of understanding whose interests are guiding the work happening within the education sector in order to develop an empirical foundation for policy change.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research procedures and methods used in my dissertation. It begins by outlining the research paradigm underpinning my research, followed by an overview of the IE method of research. Next, I provide a rationale for selecting IE as the method for my dissertation and highlight how I utilized its modes of inquiry throughout the study. Once the theoretical frame of the research is established, I describe the research question and the two-phase study design. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of how I employed IE tenets such as field notes, mapping techniques, and textual analysis throughout the study.

3.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is the set of basic beliefs that define the nature of the world for the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). It influences the basic beliefs of ontology, epistemology, and methodology that a researcher holds. The overarching research paradigm I adhered to throughout my dissertation is the Critical Social Theory (CST) worldview, with its emancipatory focus on examining power dynamics. This paradigm aligns with the research objective (RO) of this project, which was: *To explore how ruling relations may influence how youth learn to understand intimate relationships, and how their understandings may be socially organized vis-à-vis the educational sector.* Using a CST paradigm, I critically explored and evaluated the education sector to identify how the status quo propagated experiences of subjugation amongst youth.

A CST is a dialogic philosophical paradigm that seeks to unpack issues of power and justice, regardless of the methods used to collect data (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Critical social theorists uncover historical and subjugated experiences of suffering, conflict, and collective struggle to challenge the status quo. They aim to improve the state of society and the human condition by identifying power differences and how they can be changed. CST concerns itself with the way in which social institutions and cultural dynamics impact people's lived experiences, including equity and social justice (Giroux, 2013; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Under the CST paradigm, the historical and social forces that produce inequalities are critiqued to help highlight systematic and institutional arrangements, including how people create them and how they may be ameliorated. This research paradigm lends itself well to IE as IE's focus on *ruling relations* gives it the potential to be a "resource for activism and for the transformation of the conditions of people's lives" (Marie Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p.61). IE is a method of inquiry with liberatory goals; while scholars usually warn against pairing IE with other theoretical frameworks to avoid artificial alignment of IE with other theoretical requirements, a CST research paradigm naturally aligns with an IE foundation of explicating how an experience is organized by powers elsewhere.

Expanding further regarding the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of CST and how it shares common ground with an IE clarify my argument further. In CST, the ontological assumption (belief about truth) is that reality is socio-historically built. This means that the present reality is understood to be built through a series of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors (Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Kincheloe et al, 1998). Similarly, IE is a way of seeing the world or a strategy for inquiry which posits that the social world can be understood through a grounding in the reality of people who are at that location; rising from the experience

of Dorothy Smith (1987) and her feminist and Marxist roots, IE requires exploring and remaining grounded in the reality of people to understand how it is built through a variety of factors and experiences.

Additionally, CST's epistemological approach (the way in which knowledge is generated) is dialectical and critical of power dynamics. Critical social theorists focus on social structures to challenge the status quo for a better and just society. The epistemology of CST also expresses the importance of how the values of the investigator inevitably influence the inquiry or the subject being investigated (Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Kincheloe et al, 1998). Since I was concerned with the social organization that impacts how youth obtain an understanding of intimate relationships, the philosophical position of CST was well-suited for my research. The emancipatory axiology of CST is also shared with IE axiology.

3.2 Strategy of Inquiry: Institutional Ethnography

The proposed strategy of inquiry for my dissertation was an IE, which is different from a traditional ethnography of an institution. IE focuses on the connections between everyday life actualities and social relations, and how they are organized. An IE study unpacks how people's daily lives are coordinated through processes and impacted by relevancies produced elsewhere, creating institutional maps of situations as a summation of the study (Devault, 2006; Smith, 2006).

Drawing from ethnomethodology, IE focuses on how everyday experiences are socially organized. Smith (2007) argues that using a predetermined linear orientation towards research may perpetuate a risk of theoretical insulation, thus limiting the researcher's ability to deal with unexpected findings, and offers an alternative way of looking at the social:

The idea is to reorganize sociology as knowledge of society so that inquiry begins where people are and proceeds from there to discoveries that are for them, for us, of the workings of a social that extends beyond any one of us, bringing our local activities into coordination with those of others. The project is to extend people's ordinary good knowledge of how things are put together in our everyday lives to dimensions of the social that transcend the local and are all the more powerful and significant in it for that reason. We participate in them without knowing what we are doing (Smith, 2006, p.3)

In essence, an IE study begins with the actualities of the participant's everyday lives and then focuses on how those actualities are embedded in social relations. It is the *standpoint* of the informants that identifies the *problematic*, and directs the researcher's next steps (Smith, 2007).

A standpoint is an ontological concern, it is not a perspective (Rankin, 2017; Smith, 2007).

Smith (2005, P.10) described a standpoint as “a point of entry into discovering the social that does not subordinate the knowing subject to objectified forms of knowledge or political economy”. The problematic in IE is not the problem to be studied, it is how the researcher identifies the place for inquiry to begin, by either noticing a set of puzzles about how particular experiences happen as they do. For the purpose of my dissertation, I explored the standpoint of youth, and participants in this research study are referred to as ‘informants’, which is a commonly used terminology in IE research.

The purpose of using IE is to find traces of *ruling relations* that are embedded in the descriptions of people's everyday work, to show *how* they work, especially when those ruling relations are not supporting the interests of people at that standpoint (Rankin, 2017; Smith, 2006). Ruling relations are not modes of domination but are the forms of textually-mediated coordination that hook people into the social relations of the economy (Smith, 1987, 2005). They

shape how work being carried out at the standpoint must proceed and how that work will be represented. They coordinate what people know about what is happening - even if that knowledge does not quite match what is known from being there (Rankin, 2017; Smith, 2006). The goal of an IE is to not simply produce knowledge on a given subject, but rather to reorient our ways of thinking about social reality and how it can be known (Carpenter & Mojab, 2008).

3.2.1 Difference Between IE and a Traditional Ethnography

An IE enables the investigation of the social relations of institutions that form the ground of people's experiences, often with critical or liberatory goals (DeVault & McCoy, 2012). It is different from a traditional ethnographic approach in that there is no notion of a researcher completing fieldwork then translating a practice or a group in 'understandable' terms for readers. In an IE, the researcher is not an outsider who sets out on a journey to discover and explore and gain knowledge of a setting that is largely misunderstood by broader society. In an IE, the focus is on the local setting as a point of departure for an examination of how the social world is designed; inquiry is based on the real experiences that people have, what people do, and exploring in empirical terms how that experience is organized. The local setting is only the starting point for the examination to help identify the social relations shaping that reality. IE offers tools such as mapping to help draw out institutional complexes to help explicate how the everyday world is shaped within the setting being explored. For example, traditional ethnography is based on the anthropological approach where the researcher seeks to understand the informants' point of view in an objective and descriptive manner (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Traditional ethnography is driven by inquiry, discovery, and learning (Carpenter & Mojab, 2008). IE rejects overarching generalizations (which can be the goal of other research strategies

that seek to validate findings by requiring theories to be generalizable, thus abstract enough to be applicable to a wide variety of contexts) and focuses on the *local* (Carpenter & Mojab, 2008).

Another example to explain IE's different approach to inquiry can be seen through the way in which ethnographic data is used to theorize about a localized setting. In an IE, explication rests in its very materialist and empirical forms. The data is 'made sense of' through actual instead of theoretical connections. The goal is not to generalize, but to discover and realistically demonstrate how ruling relations exist and how they organize the experience the informants share. The goal of an IE is thus to discover beyond the individuals' experience and explicate that experience, often supplemented by maps or diagrams on what is discovered about how that experience was coordinated.

Lastly, IE uses the same data collection methods as other ethnographic modes of inquiry, but differs in its analysis. It does not aim to conduct inductive or deductive thematic analysis, makes no claim of objectivity, and does not attempt to generalize findings (Ng et al., 2013). It analyzes texts by focusing on the ways in which they represent and propagate the dominant discourses of the institution, it analyzes interviews through focusing on how texts are coordinating the experience of people in that location, and it takes the location of the informants as the point of entry towards discovering how their world is organized.

3.2.2 The Rationale Behind the use of IE

I selected an IE approach to conduct my study due to its focus on exploring ruling relations. The concept of building an understanding about healthy intimate relationships is foundational to ones' life, as relationships, love, and connections, are foundational human needs and also change with time; however, there is a disjuncture in what those in power understand the needs of youth to be, and what youth share as their everyday experience. The context and vernacular of

interpersonal interactions are no longer occurring in stable, culturally homogenous or tightly knit communities; they are occurring in transitory, virtual, and multi-stranded relationships. Youth have experienced the rise of technology, including social media, and with that, a plethora of complex issues that they navigate daily. The nature of forming relationships is changing with the accessibility of information and people at ones' fingertips, which has introduced issues such as online bullying, harassment, etc. It is therefore critical to explore what is happening at the location of youth, at the *local level* which is the micro-level setting where their everyday work processes unfold, most known only to them. The mediating role of texts in these work processes can then be mapped to link to the extra-local, or the high-level social coordinators of the local work, such as social/political structures. Therefore, an IE is well-suited to this inquiry, as it allows the researcher to view the world from the standpoint of youth in order to identify the work they participate in as youth, and to explicate how their experience of learning about intimate relationships is organized elsewhere. An IE allows for the experience of youth, who are at the local setting, to be explicated to uncover power imbalances or relations of ruling. It is my hope that this study would open a new space for activism and agency in relation to youth engaging in education that is relatable, relevant, and which allows for their voices and experiences to be incorporated into what they learn.

3.3 The Research Objective & the Point of Entry

While the RO has been identified at the outset, establishing the problematic is a process that occurs as one undertakes the research. In IE, the tool of *problematic* is used to direct attention to a set of questions that are puzzling, which may not be apparent at the beginning of the project (Rankin, 2017). Thus, formulating the problematic is a part of the process of analysis (Rankin, 2017).

Given this context, a set of puzzling questions emerged through my analysis of the initial interviews (the way in which the topic was established as a problematic will be described in Chapter 4). In addition to surfacing during analysis, Smith (1987) encourages researchers to use their experiences to identify the problematic through their own experiences. As such, Smith (2005) suggests that the researcher identifies their stance in relation to the inquiry, instead of methodologically removing oneself from it.

With that goal in mind, my interest in this topic emerged from my own educational experience as a participant in the public school system in Ontario, and through an academic and professional career that was sensitive to the impact of health policy on the health and experiences of individuals. As a doctoral candidate, I have conducted research on intimate relationships, what makes them healthy, what makes them unhealthy, and how Canada has tackled the promotion of healthy intimate relationships through policy and legislation. Part of my exploration included how Canada has responded to this cause through the education sector, including a focus on what students are being taught in high school. As a student who participated in the Canadian education system during high school and as a researcher, I am keenly aware of critics' concerns about the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of education curricula related to intimate relationships (Kilborn et al., 2016). The RO then became the point of entry into my research field, as I took the *standpoint* (Smith, 1990) of youth to study the complex of ruling relations that coordinate their actions and experiences across sites such as the educational sector. While the problematic emerged during the analysis, the following conceptual and theoretical framing clarifies how my dissertation uses IE concepts to explore the problematic:

- a. *Youth*: Although it is challenging to define youth in terms of age ranges due to variations in definition, for the purposes of this research project I have chosen to adopt the United

Nations' age-range describing youth which ranges from 15-24 year old individuals (UNESCO, 2018). I use the term *student informants* to refer to youth throughout the majority of this research project, barring discussions where I refer to youth beyond those whom I interviewed.

b. *Intimate Relationships*: While there is a broad range of literature on different types of intimate relationships such as platonic intimacy, behavioural intimacy, etc. (LaFollette & Graham, 1986), my research is focused specifically on partnerships that are romantic and/or sexual relationships with varying degrees of commitment and exclusivity, ranging from short-term to long-term (Piller, 2008).

c. *The Education Sector*: The education sector is included as a focus to understand whether this formally-organized sector has a role in contributing to how youth understand intimate relationships. It is understood that the factors influencing learning are not only individual and cognitive but also political, social, economic, and cultural (Zimmerman & Woolf, 2018).

d. *Student Informants*: Individuals who are called students are often understood as recipients of the information (Lujan & Dicarlo, 2006). This study however reads the role of a student as a job title, signifying that students' work, including their discussions with teachers, building relationships with peers and friends, participating in their home lives, all be viewed as work towards building their understanding of healthy relationships. This understanding of students as active workers in the school, home, and social spheres help set the frame for understanding the organization of their experience.

e. *Social Organization*: The word "social" here refers to "people's ongoing activities viewed under the aspect of their coordination with the activities of others" (Smith, 2005,

p.227). The organization of the social is understood to be mediated through processes, typically through texts and other discourses which create the fundamental grounding of social life (Devault, 2006). I used social organization to explore how youths' understanding of intimate relationships may be socially organized.

f. *Ruling Relations* Ruling relations are those practices that build a particular way of knowing by imposing a frame of ruling; these are the conceptual frames that suppress the experience of a subject at any location and construct an account based on the ruling frame. For example, Devault (2006) shares an anecdote on having to explain to police officers the story of her mother's death in detail moments after it occurred, stripping away from the story the depth of complex emotions and pain associated with the incident to allow for an abstract capturing of the event for the police. Here, the police officer's goal is to capture a legal and medical account of the incident. However, the relation of ruling is the imposition of the ideological account of the police officer's *work* (process of eliciting details required for their job, as opposed to a true and accurate recollection of the experience of Devault (2006) at that point, at that location).

g. *Institution*: Institutions exist as constructs that change and make meaning according to the individual interacting with that institution. For example, the meaning of a university may be different for a professor than for a student. Important to note is that, in IE, an "Institution" does not denote a physical organization or an establishment such as a school or hospital, but rather serves as an abstract reference to an embodied complex of "ruling relations that are organized around a distinctive function such as education, health care and so on" (Smith, 2006). For my dissertation, an institution is any organization of processes (either mediated

through institutional texts or other discourses) that influences the lived experiences of people (Devault, 2006).

h. *Work*: The meaning of ‘work’ is very generous; any activities that people are actually involved in to ‘get things done’, as opposed to only paid duties (Smith & Turner, 2014). For example, the tasks a teacher would undertake to put together a lesson plan, such as looking up resources online, talking to their peers, etc. would be considered ‘work’ processes in an IE. Note: the term ‘teacher’ and ‘educator’ are used interchangeably throughout my research.

i. *Disjuncture*: A disjuncture is best explained as a *line of fault* where the account of what is truly happening at the local level is different from the account established by an organizational practice. When that person's knowing is being subordinated by the organizational practices, this moment of disjuncture locates a *problematic*, or in other words, a latent puzzle (Marie Campbell, 2003).

j. *Institutional Accountability Circuit*: This is defined as an institutional pathway that reinforces the institutions’ priorities at the frontline, by making people accountable for performance or outcomes produced at their level. These outcomes are of a managerial category and focus on and form a governance over the experience of people as it shapes their work and interests (Griffith & Smith, 2014)

k. *Bifurcation of Consciousness*: This concept in IE refers to the separation of the two modes of thinking that exists within a person, one is based on the way the individual experiences the world, while the other is based on the dominant view that one must adapt to or accept. Bifurcation of consciousness occurs when the experience one has must be set aside because the dominant perspective is embedded deeply in that institution. The dominant

structure or view exists in a privileged position, where it is not aware of, or concerned with the experience of those who are oppressed (Smith, 1989).

1. *Ideological Code*: Smith (1993) explains an ideological code as a socially organized knowledge that is constructed in one location and is then replicated across multiple sites, as a way of regulating local activities and dynamics amongst people. As an example, she uses the notion of a Standard North American Family (SNAF), which she connects to the way school activities are organized, through parent-teacher interviews for example where the assumption is that children belong to a SNAF, comprised of a mother, father, and two children. In her research, Smith (1993) found how the ideological code of a SNAF was reproduced across teachers' conceptualization and had an impact on the experiences of the parents they engaged with.

3.4 Employing IE to Explore Youth Experiences

In order to understand the local, IE rests on three main methods of inquiry. The first is 'talking with people', followed by 'text-reader conversations,' and then 'observation' (Dorothy E. Smith, 2007; Tummons, 2017). As a strategy of inquiry, it also utilizes certain terms that are critical to understanding how to employ this way of looking. These include terms such as standpoint, disjuncture, work, social relations, ruling relations and ideological codes, explained earlier. IE is emergent in nature and can be completed in a variety of ways and lacks a prescribed guide for analysis. Devault and McCoy (2002) compare IE to grabbing a ball of string, finding a thread, and then pulling it out - highlighting the emergent nature of IE.

3.4.1 Talking with Informants

In IE, the process of talking to informants through interviews allows the institutional ethnographer to "explore how people are able to talk about their experiences and the extent to

which they have or have not acquired those discourses that are ordering their action” (Smith, 2006, p.27). Institutional ethnographers use the term *informants* to signal to the reader that a sample of people is not being studied, rather, it is the social organization of institutional processes under investigation (DeVault & McCoy, 2012). It is understood that knowledge is created through talking with people, and that an IE interviewer’s job is to simply listen. There is no objective truth to be uncovered, or theory to be proven. It is not individual experience that is to be described, but a focus on the collective (Rankin, 2017). In IE, the purpose of talking with people during interviews is to build up an understanding of the coordination of activities in multiple sites, therefore interviews in IE need not be standardized (Devault, 2006). Each interview provides an opportunity to learn about the relational chain, and to check the developing picture of the coordinative process (Devault, 2006).

As such, for my research I spoke to high school and university students and high school teachers, using a semi-structured interview guide and a two-phased approach. The ethical approval for conduction of research with human participants was obtained from the Research Ethics Board of York University, Toronto prior to data collection (Ethics Approval Certificate, Appendix B). The consent forms, recruitment materials, interview guide and demographic survey used in the study are provided in the appendix as Appendices C- Semi-structured Interview Guide for High School Student Informants, Appendix D- Semi-structured Interview Guide Educator Informants, Appendix F- Organizations Contacted and Student Recruitment Flyer, Appendix G- Student Informant Informed Consent Form, Appendix H- Student Informant Demographic Surveys, Appendix I- Study Information Sheet, Appendix J- List of Counsellors and Helplines for Youth, Appendix K- Organizations Contacted and Teacher Recruitment Flyer, Appendix L- Educator Informant Demographic Survey, Appendix M- Educator Informant

Informed Consent Form. As described above, I used a semi-structured interview approach instead of structured interviews as it enabled opportunities for the informants and myself to explore unique experiences while still providing a loose framework for the interview (Rosenman et al., 1982). The questions were determined using an open-ended approach to obtain descriptive answers, using language that was easily understandable by the informants. The questions were kept short and non-leading to allow for the pursual of emergent threads from the responses. The interviews were conducted in-person and virtually; the later was a modification due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The average duration of each interview was between sixty to ninety minutes. The interview duration was not found to be impacted based on interviews taking place in-person versus virtually.

Researchers who adopt a CST paradigm adopt specific positions through the research topics to focus upon the way participants are approached; in order to do this, I opted for a stepped approach to my data collection as opposed to a top-down linear question and answer approach (Beudert, 2008). In designing the questions, I embedded probing questions that were aligned with my CST paradigm. This included questions that asked informants to expand on why or how their experiences and opinions came to be formed in the way that they were. Each question was designed to uncover how youths' experience of learning about intimate relationships took place at school and to identify which potential relations of ruling could possibly be influencing their experiences. Such probing led to the identification of various threads.

3.4.2 Informant Characteristics

Overall 32 informants were interviewed (12 high school students; 10 university students; 10 educator informants). The average age of high school students was 18 years and fifty percent

self-identified as males and fifty percent self-identified as females. Of these high school informants, eighty-three percent self-identified as visible minorities and seventy-five percent had prior dating experience. The university student informants had an average age of nineteen years, seventy percent of whom self-identified as males. Of this subset of informants, one-hundred percent self-identified as visible minorities and seventy percent had prior dating experience. Amongst the 10 teacher informants (eight high school; two university), the age range was thirty-five to forty years, with fifty percent of informants identifying as males and fifty percent as female. Of this subset, forty percent self-identified as visible minorities. The average number of years of experience that educator informants had was over ten years. A participant profile is available in Appendix E. The interview procedure and data collection, management, and analysis strategies are described in detail in the upcoming sections.

3.4.3 Texts

In IE, textual analysis aims to uncover the *ideological practices* that produce a certain kind of knowledge that is amenable to the task of ruling. Smith (1990) explains that the mental work people do to associate abstract ideas to specific categories that are a part of their actual work serves as ideological practices that subordinate what can be known about a setting. Texts that are relevant in an IE are those that are *replicable*; these are texts that can be reproduced many times or that can be read/observed in different places at different times. It is their replicability that is central (Smith & Turner, 2014). For example, if informants mention a popular television series or a movie that had an impact on them, those will count as an entry point into further investigation of how that text was organized. Texts are important to IE's social ontology; people's use of texts gives ruling relations a material form that institutional ethnographers can use to investigate crystallized social relations (Rankin, 2017; Smith, 2006). The local is

discovered through a focus on the ways in which texts permit, legitimize, or forbid particular forms of social action (Tummons, 2017). It is not the particular text that is analyzed independently; the text is conceived based on how it occurs and how it enters into and plays its part in the actual settings of people's lives (Smith & Turner, 2014). People's daily lives are impacted by textually-mediated *ideological processes* that are designed by those in power. Texts thus become a ruling apparatus that control the lived experiences of people (Smith, 1990).

Considering this, I conducted textual analysis throughout each conversation during my research (both textual and dialogical) to identify traces of how the interests of texts make their way into the work of student and educator informants. Using textual analysis, I explored how informants activate specific texts and are thus brought into coordination with one another. Organizational texts that permeate the institution of education were investigated to explicate how textual strategies coordinate the way educator informants work with student informants. As such, the following categories of organizational texts were analyzed: a) texts related to the health and physical education curriculum in Ontario, b) texts related to the regulation of teaching and administration work, c) texts related to education policies in Ontario, and d) reproducible texts such as timetables and surveys. I selected texts for analysis based on traces identified through informants' accounts. For example, when educator informants identified the timing restriction of having two to three weeks to teach the healthy living strand of the H&PE curriculum, I investigated the timetable as a text through scholarly research, and also through inquiring about them in subsequent interviews. In addition, I identified texts for analysis through reference chaining and searching keywords based on conversations with informants. For example, I found the *Growing Success* (2010) document through the H&PE (2015) curriculum as it referenced this assessment and evaluation. I also used keywords such as "trusted adults" to trace guidelines from

the OCT explaining the role of teachers. I limited my search of texts related to the curriculum to texts after 1998, to enable the identification of any policies that were a result of the change from the 1998 to the 2015 H&PE curriculum. Other texts that I was unable to access from publicly available search engines were requested from the informants, for example, surveys used by teachers to gauge students' prior learning. Textual analysis was not just limited to the above categories, however. The manner in which educator informants activated their own professional roles as teachers and built a discourse around the profession was also investigated. Such a discourse analysis includes an investigation of the subjects who activate a text through language, through the moments of writing, reading, and understanding it (Rankin, 2004).

Since my research focused on how youth learn about healthy intimate relationships and how those learnings may be organized vis a vis the education sector, I also explored the dialogical social processes within ruling relations that are activated through educators by tracking the activities that educators initiate or participate in, into the institution, and then back again, to conduct discourse analysis (Rankin, 2004; Smith, 1999). A relevant way of analyzing texts includes asking questions such as how are the knowledgeable practices of the work done at this location at odds with what students are experiencing? In turn, how is what the decision-makers think, at odds with the student experience? How is this being organized? The details of the research design, including study focus, recruitment/interview procedures, and data analysis will be explained in the next section.

3.4.4 Mapping

Making sense of data through mapping is an eminent way of managing data and explicating specific experiences. Smith explains the process of mapping in an IE as ones' opportunity to say *you are here*, and then point off to the world in which the researcher stands (Carroll, 2011).

Rankin (2017) further emphasizes this practice and suggests tracking the ruling relations from the local work of people into the work of other people. The goal is to lay out a display of what is happening verbally or pictorially to describe the features of the social practices and their respective material forms and relationships (Rankin, 2017).

In order to understand how the curriculum is created, distributed, and activated, I tracked the work teachers do with it, which is generally understood as a routine part of their jobs. As part of this ethnography, I mapped a coordinated complex of institutional sequences of work and texts into which teachers, principals, and department heads are drawn to participate in. What became visible through this mapping was the standardized working relations and forms of language and text-based sequences of action through which the process of teaching operates. The focus of my mapping was firstly on the discernable activities that teachers espoused to do with the curriculum in the school setting. I began with the health and physical education curriculum, with an analytic goal to situate that text back into the actions in which it is produced, circulated, and read, creating consequences in time and space (Smith & Turner, 2014). The illustrations are drawn from my study of the processes that teachers described they undertake in delivering health and physical education. I wanted to create an account that demonstrated what happens when teachers undertake the task of deciding what to teach, and to make visible how this produces the H&PE education class that youth experienced.

3.5 The Research Design

My dissertation starts with the standpoint of youth who participated in the public school system of Ontario, and was designed using the two-phase model of IE recommended by McCoy (2006). My initial research started with semi-structured interviews conducted with university and high school students, which I transcribed and analyzed side-by-side for the identification of ruling

relations. Side-by-side analysis allowed me to view the commonly identified disjunctures that were emerging across the interviews, hinting towards larger institutions that could be involved in organizing those experiences. When, during analysis, the generated ruling relations aligned with specific institutional processes related to teachers, a second phase of research began wherein teachers and educators who train teachers were interviewed. This phase included slightly modified and broader questions to elicit informant experiences about the practice of teaching youth about intimate relationships. It was designed to learn more about the context within which educators operate at schools, and how they make their decisions about teaching. Questions for the second phase were reviewed with the supervisory committee, and an updated ethics procedure was completed to initiate the second phase of interview collection. Details about each data collection phase are explained in the next section, followed by an explanation of the data management and analysis strategies.

3.5.1 Phase 1 Student Informants: Focus, Recruitment, and Interview Procedure

Student informants were selected on the criteria of having attended high school in Ontario and being between 16-20 years of age. The recruitment strategy included initially recruiting students from York University and was geared towards first-year university students to allow for recent/fresh experiences of high school. Student informants were recruited by sending out email blasts through York University's Faculty of Health Undergraduate Program Director and Assistant, as well as through posting flyers around the York University campus from September 9th, 2019 to March 14th, 2020. These recruitment strategies were highly effective as I received over twenty expressions of interest within the first week. I then followed the protocol established in my research proposal and connected with potential informants via phone to provide study details, inquire about their eligibility and to ascertain and confirm interest in participating.

Through the process of vetting and elimination, a final sample size of ten student informants from York University was obtained from September 2019 to May 2020. These respondents comprised the first group of student informants in phase one of my dissertation.

As an IE requires consistent iterative analysis during each conversation, I maintained a reflective journal capturing the Subjective, Objective, Analytical Plan, and Reflexivity (SOAP-R) note for each informant and connected with the supervisory committee to provide a debrief on the interviews. Through such iterative reflection, I decided to expand the recruitment strategy to include students currently enrolled in high school. This decision was made due to several instances during student informant interviews where students mentioned having difficulty recalling their experience in high school of learning about intimate relationships. In addition, changes had been made to the Health & Physical Education Curriculum in 2015, resulting in differences of education obtained by those who were in their first year of university in 2019, versus those who were over the age of sixteen and enrolled in high school in 2020.

Given issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing at the time, the recruitment strategy for the second group of student informants included utilizing youth groups on Facebook and conducting the remaining interviews with high school students and educators virtually using Zoom or Microsoft Teams, as approved by the ethics board. I modified the youth recruitment flyer and posted on various youth groups on Facebook from May 28th 2020 to May 29th 2020 (details of groups used can also be found in Appendix F). This strategy worked well as I received more than fifteen expressions of interest in less than twenty-four hours. Through this second round of recruitment, twelve additional interviews were held virtually from June 2020 to August 2020. These interviews were highly informative and allowed me to grasp additional threads worthy of exploration, such as connecting with high school teachers who delivered

education on H&PE. In addition, these interviews shed light on the various challenges youth experience in high school, such as a lack of resources to discuss healthy intimate relationships, limited time spent on the topic, etc., which further solidified the importance of my dissertation and topic.

Each student informant interview began after an informed consent process whereby the participant and I went over the consent form together and they were provided with 20 minutes during the beginning of the interview as needed to review the study information sheet, sign the consent form, and ask any questions, followed by the completion of a demographic survey. Each informant was advised of their ability to participate on a voluntary basis, regardless of any impact on their compensation (\$20). In addition, student informants were provided with a resource list to connect with counsellors or helplines in case the need arose, which can be found in Appendix J.

During the interviews, I jotted down minimal notes in order to remain engaged in the conversation and pose analytical questions as the informants mentioned anything that seemed to be a trace of a possible ruling relation. During the interview, I ensured to build in several member-checks throughout the conversation to ensure the informant felt heard and to serve as an opportunity for me to verify accounts. Informant preference was always prioritized during the interviews, and all interviews were audio-recorded using a secure encrypted device. Upon the completion of each interview, I expanded notes in the SOAP-R journal and made notes on what my initial impressions and understandings were. Interviews were initially transcribed by me, after which a transcription service was utilized. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, to ensure that none of the participants' unique experiences were overlooked (Denzin, Norman, Lincoln, 2011).

Lastly, in terms of confidentiality, I was the only one who had access to the audio recordings which were stored on an encrypted drive on my computer. A 3-day access period was provided to the transcription service as I sent the audio recording to them, after which the access was automatically revoked using the software I was using. The transcription service only received one interview recording at a time to ensure control of confidentiality in the process. A confidentiality agreement was also signed by the transcription service. All identifying information, including schoolboards, or mention of any neighbourhoods or landmarks that could serve as identifying information were removed from transcripts. All data was managed digitally, apart from rough maps drafted by me to help with the analysis process; all paper maps were converted into digital maps and then shredded.

3.5.2 Phase 2: Teacher Interviews, Focus, Recruitment Strategy, and Interview Procedure

The focus of phase two of this study was to gain an understanding of how teachers deliver education to youth on intimate relationships, and how they learn about delivering education on this subject. This focus arose from the preliminary analysis of the student informant interviews in phase one, where the majority of student informants identified immense variation in the health and physical education class in Grade 9 where they learned about safe sex (sex was associated with intimate relationships). Due to this, I deemed it important to understand how educators are making decisions about teaching such subject matter, and how those experiences are organized. To explore this further, I recruited educator informants. The initial criteria applied were teachers who: 1) were in good standing with the Ontario College Teachers (OCT), 2) had experience teaching the health and physical education curriculum, 3) had taught in Ontario, and 4) had specifically taught about intimate relationships. These criteria, however, proved to be challenging for recruitment as very few educators considered themselves experienced enough in

the subject matter to participate in the research interview while COVID-19 pandemic was also at its peak. Thus, I inquired teachers' groups on social media ,such as 'Health and Physical Education Teachers Group' on Facebook, regarding the challenges with recruitment. Educators informed me of a few potential reasons such as lack of adequate compensation value, time-restrictions due to COVID-19, and lack of expertise in the subject matter. By this time I had recruited only two educator informants.

Therefore, I modified the recruitment criteria and sought ethics approval by changing the inclusion criteria to teachers who: 1) had experience teaching in Ontario, and 2) were presently or had been in good standing with the OCT. In addition, the interview compensation was increased from \$20 to \$75 to compensate educators for their time as they navigated the challenges of converting their teaching work into the virtual world. I also expanded my recruitment strategy by widening the approached social media groups and word-of-mouth (see Appendix K for details of teacher organizations/groups contacted).Through these modifications I was successful in recruiting eight more educator informants by the month of September, 2020.

I connected with potential educator informants via phone/email to explain the study details and inquire and ascertain their eligibility and confirmation of interest, as established in my research proposal. A final sample of ten educator informants from various school boards was obtained. Amongst these ten informants, two educator informants also had experience of training teachers how to deliver health and physical education. Approval from school boards was not required as educator informants were recruited through social media groups or word-of-mouth. These respondents comprised the group of educator informants in phase two of my dissertation. Similar to phase one, all informants provided informant consent and completed a brief demographic survey. I adhered to the same procedures in both phase one and two, including the

completion of a SOAP-R, consent, confidentiality, and study information sheet, with the exemption of the information sheet on helplines. Below I outline my data management and analysis strategy.

3.5.3 Data Management and Analysis Strategy

While there is no prescribed procedure for conducting analysis in an IE, Campbell and Gregor (2002) offer a primer in analyzing IE data. The main analytic goal of an IE is to hold on to the idea of social relations that are at the heart of one's research interest. In order to do this, one must avoid artificially categorizing and coding data. It is recommended to use data as it arises in its setting, by asking what the data tells the researcher about how the setting is created in the way that it is. A successful analysis supersedes any one account, as well as the totality of what informants know and can tell (Marie Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Analysis is presented by having readers first hear the researcher's analytical point, and then presenting an excerpt of data that illustrates it. In an IE, inserting more examples does not indicate a better analysis. While informants do not share similar experiences, a kind of coherence is discovered by the researcher as they uncover the social relations that organize the informant's experiences and accounts. As I listened to the student informants explain their experiences of the everyday in relation to learning about intimate relationships, I kept in mind the notion of ruling relations to understand how the setting works and how different actors influence it. With regards to working with textual data, one of the main features of an IE is the iterative approach taken towards data management and analysis. In an IE, a researcher takes an iterative and dynamic process of reviewing interviews, drafting maps, exploring documents, and reviewing texts to successively read data and allow for rediscovery (DeVault & McCoy, 2012; Smith, 2006). Doing so fits an IE inquiry with the nimbleness required to move back and forth between texts and the social relations that produce

or activate that text, in order for the researcher to be able to trace how an informant and their experience are organized or influenced by those ruling relations (Smith, 2006).

As such, conversations with student informants began with inquiring about what they understand intimate relations to be, and how they came to develop their understanding. As is traditional in IE, data collection and analysis for my dissertation were not linear; instead, I reached out to informants, who agreed for future contact, more than once as the need arose at various points during the analysis to gain a clearer understanding of their experiences. Through these processes, several texts emerged that were seen as important in organizing both youth and educator experiences with regards to learning and teaching about intimate relationships. Such discoveries assisted in the process of explicating how student informants were experiencing learning about intimate relationships at their location. To track these conversations and connections, I ensured that an *interview diary* (excerpts found in Appendix N) was maintained for each interview, which captured each follow-up communication with participants as well as the original notes that I jotted down immediately after each interview. This data-management strategy resulted in a detailed interview diary, which was used to capture descriptive, observational, and experiential data and create a record for auditing. The collection of notes began on October 29, 2019 and continued throughout the data-collection and analysis phase, especially noting the follow-up conversations with informants after the original interviews, which ended in August, 2021. This interview diary also served as an analytical map as I captured key IE concepts to facilitate the analysis process during interviews, especially utilizing the tool of the *problematic*, to watch it unfold during the conversations with informants. The next section describes the interview analysis process upon the commencement of the interviews.

3.5.4 Interview Analysis

An IE is an analytic project, one where the analysis does not end with interviews being completed. An IE researcher reviews transcribed interviews to begin the second level of data dialogue in a way which is distinct from line by line or thematic coding of data. To undertake the task of IE specific data analysis, I read various different institutional ethnographies, including works from Smith (1999, 2006, 2009), Rankin (2004, 2017), Clune (2011), McCoy (2006), DeVault (2006), Campbell & Gregor (2006) to build a type of analytical map in order to help facilitate data analysis.

As such, to analyze the interviews in phase one with student informants I reviewed the transcripts for any mention of people from whom student informants acknowledged learning about healthy intimate relationships, any *texts* that were impressionable on the informants such as television series, movies, etc., and for any *work* student informants could be seen to be participating in. As per McCoy (2006), questioning what work is being described, who is involved in the world, what evokes that type of work, and how that work may be related to other people or processes to articulate institutional order are useful strategies to analyze interviews. I also focused on naming the ruling relations being identified and labelling the disjuncture that was becoming visible through the informants' accounts. As such, I grouped together informants' comments about engaging with the health and physical education curriculum and other mentions of text and work by using a coding software called NVivo (Version 12); this was analysis at the primary level to provide a manageable way to work with the data. The goal of the first stage of analysis was to map out the complex institutional chains of action in which student informants and their experience of learning about intimate relationships was implicated. A similar approach was taken for the analysis of the second phase of interviews with educator informants, however, there was a greater focus placed upon bringing the institution of teaching about healthy intimate

relationships in school into view. This led to an expansion of the maps initially created, which at first, only included the experience of student informants. In addition, an excel spreadsheet was also created to help with organization, consisting of each ruling relation, a brief description, and the disjuncture identified within those ruling relations. A first draft of capturing ruling relations that became apparent in the first attempt at analysis, as well as disjuncture that I could identify are captured in Appendix O.

In analyzing educator informant interviews with teachers it quickly became obvious that ‘fault lines’ could be searched for, where there were two primary modes of telling: 1) the narrative that outlined the educator informants’ experiences, and 2) the ideological, as demonstrated by what was in the curriculum, and how those two accounts compared with each other. Disjuncture in the lived experience of educator informants versus the espoused goals of the curriculum surfaced within the data. Recalling examples of data analysis in other published IE’s and based on the conversations with educator informants, I turned my attention to distinct types of paid and unpaid work expected or completed by educator informants. This led to the identification of the work educator informants were involved in, such as *gathering teaching resources*. Through a comprehensive analysis of interviews and texts, the problematic was identified, which I continued to use as my focus during analysis, as described in Chapters, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Chapter 4: Establishing the Problematic

In this chapter I first describe, chronologically, the process I undertook to establish the problematic, and then provide details of each problematic which was elucidated through evidence.

At the outset of my doctoral dissertation, the expectation I had as someone who had participated in the Ontario high school system, was that youth would be receiving *some* form of education on healthy intimate relationships in high school. Despite my own experience, I hoped that with the updated curriculum the understanding of healthy versus unhealthy behaviours in intimacy would be covered, giving youth a foundation through which they would be better prepared to handle intimate relationships. My expectation was also that this education would be delivered with the assumption that healthy dynamics in intimate relationships can be taught, and that schools promote active identification of, and intervention in, unhealthy intimate relationships amongst youth to reduce unhealthy behaviours. I expected that high-school health education, mainly through the H&PE course, might provide youth with some tools that align with the nature of their intimate relationships today, which could help build their understanding of which behaviours are considered healthy or unhealthy in a relationship. As such, I imagined that talking to students who were presently in high school or had recently graduated would offer me some insight on their experiences of obtaining such learnings.

The expectations mentioned above were also developed through a comprehensive literature review I completed during my doctoral studies, which included a focus on the Canadian education sector's response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This included a review of the Health and Physical Education (H&PE) Curriculum including content areas and delivery to students in Ontario, as well as broader literature review and critique of the education sector.

When I began speaking with student informants about what they believed to be a healthy intimate relationship, I asked them to share accounts and examples of how they developed their understanding. As the interviews progressed, it became clear that the H&PE course curriculum was one process where intimacy and relationships were almost always discussed, although to varying degrees.

As I explored youths' accounts during my interviews in the first phase of my field research in order to identify how their experience of learning about intimate relationships was socially organized, the *work* of teachers emerged as a dominant ruling relation. Youth described how teachers were playing a role in building this experience for them, but the ways in which they did so appeared mysterious, as the accounts that the student informants shared pointed towards teachers eschewing away from comprehensively discussing topics related to intimate relationships. Thus, I questioned whether class lessons and discussions by teachers could even teach youth about intimate relationships, or if youth were willing or interested in learning about this topic from their teachers.

As Smith (1987) points out, stripping away the taken-for-grantedness of an experience renders it fundamentally mysterious. Student informants' experiences varied. As an example, high school student informant #5 shared that their teacher taught them that sexual relations should only occur after marriage and those children are a gift from God, while high school student informant #6 shared learning about the prevention of STIs while practicing safe sex. In both conversations, they shared that their learnings via the classroom were not enough, and that they could not see themselves represented in what they were learning.

Thus, the organization of this inconsistent experience became the focus of my research. Specific questions about the organization of the H&PE curriculum and its impact on youth

emerged as I reviewed the transcripts. I questioned how the H&PE curriculum was designed and whether youths' needs were taken into consideration, what risks were associated with some youth learning about building healthy relationships in their life, and not others, etc. Such questions led to a concern with what the H&PE curriculum intended to achieve, and why. The core of my inquiry included an inquisitiveness about whether youth connect with what they are being taught and whether their educators have the social and administrative ability to openly hold such intimate discussions with youth. The role of power, funding, administrative policies, and bureaucracy became front of mind for my inquiry.

With these questions in mind, I initiated the second phase of interviews where I spoke with teachers about their experience of delivering the H&PE course. Interviews with teachers offered data regarding the social organization of their work as it related to the health curriculum, and to the act of teaching. Interviews with teachers revealed a great many tensions and contradictions with what the students shared their experience to be, which will be detailed further in subsequent chapters.

In the next section, I present three accounts from student informants (high school and university students) which helped me arrive at the problematic. These three accounts are offered as a mere glimpse into how the problematic emerged, as they contain within them various institutional traces. Data collected through interviews and reviews of publicly-available resources, including policy documents by the Ministry of Education and school boards, are used to show the *lines of fault* where the lived experience of youth in learning about healthy relationships differs from the espoused goals of the H&PE curriculum, and other education policies (See Table 1 for a list of texts analyzed). The first account highlights the one-dimensional experience youth have when learning about relationships and intimacy through a

biomedical approach. The second account details the tensions youth experience due to their inability to influence what is being taught, and the third account details youths' experience of being unable to see themselves represented in what they learn. Each of these accounts will be further explored in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, respectively.

Table 1: List of texts analyzed

Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools (2010)
Health and Physical Education Curriculum (2015)
Ministry of Education School Board Progress Reports, School Rankings, and Performance Metrics
Ontario College of Teachers Guidelines
Ontario Schools: Kindergarten to Grade 12, Policy and Program Requirements (2016)
School timetabling process
Surveys developed by educator informants for students' prior learning assessments

4.1 An Account of Making Intimacy Biomedical

One of the most recurring experiences shared by almost all student informants was learning about safe-sex practices during the health component through the H&PE class, with no mention of fostering healthy relationships. Most student informants recognized this as a weakness in their education, and expressed a desire to have learned about healthy relationships instead of what had now become repetitive information. For example, this is shown in the following dialogue that occurred between a high school student informant and I:

Interviewee: Uh we did like health for like a month. But like, that was basically just regular sex ed but nothing there much.

Interviewer: Okay. Um, can you elaborate on the health unit a little bit? What you learned, what your experiences were like, your thoughts on that?

Interviewee: Um, I don't really remember too much, but all I remember we were just sitting in a room and listening to our gym teacher talk and watch a couple of videos.

That's it. Uh, I mean, most of the information was probably covered again in biology class. So, like in grade 9, and it was just basically something most people already knew, so it wasn't anything new, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. So did you in your gym class, like in your health unit perhaps, have an opportunity to learn about healthy relationships at all?

Interviewee: Um, it wasn't more of healthy relationships, but like how to be safe with one another when uh having intercourse and whatnot. And like, yeah, that's basically it. (High School Student Informant #10)

Based on this student informant's account, the assumption here is that if youth are engaging in forming intimate relationships, there must be intercourse. Notions of healthy intimate relationships seemed to be equated with discussions of sexual education. This became an intriguing concept as I spoke with more participants from different backgrounds, some of whom acknowledged that they would not engage in physical intimacy before marriage, or that they consider relationships to be a lot more than "just sex" (Student Informant #2, #3, #4). I became interested in learning about how this experience of associating intimacy with intercourse, and prevention of the risks of infection/pregnancy came to be organized. The H&PE curriculum document by the Ministry of Education states with regards to human development and sexual health:

Education is more than simply teaching young people about the anatomy and physiology

of reproduction. Sexual health, understood in its broadest sense, can include a wide range of topics and concepts, from sexual development, reproductive health, choice and sexual readiness, consent, abstinence, and protection, to interpersonal relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, affection and pleasure, body image, and gender roles and expectations. Sexual development is one component of overall human development, and learning about healthy human development begins at an early age... Their learning about human development – and their understanding of its many, interrelated aspects – deepens as students get older and as the nature of their relationship changes. They learn more about self, others, and identity; peer, family, and romantic relationships; personal safety; and decision making. Acquiring information and skills and developing attitudes, beliefs, and values related to identity and relationships are lifelong processes (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, Revised, p.42).

Knowing that the curriculum recommends the discussion of romantic relationships through interrelated aspects of human development, I interviewed educator informants about the process of gathering resources to deliver the H&PE curriculum, what requirements they had to comply with, if there was anything they needed to report on, or if there was a set of rules or guiding points that helped them determine what to teach. I learned that teachers were participating in ‘resource collection’ work that was a taken-for-granted aspect of their roles. The impact of the work process of gathering teaching resources, in turn, organized the experience of youth when learning about healthy intimate relationships.

Um, so the old curriculum, OPHEA [Ontario Physical and Health Education Association], had a lesson plan for everything. So I would look at the OPHEA lesson plans, and then I would adopt them based on the needs of my students. Um, now I, with

the new curriculum, OPHEA has some resources but not fully detailed lesson plans. So you kind of draw different ideas from different people. Like I collaborate with my co workers. (Educator Informant #4).

Through my own experiences and research-based knowledge (Moult, 2013) of sexual-education discussions being perceived as a societal taboo in school, especially in North America, I was able to identify a sense of cautiousness in the way educator informants broached topics of sexual education. Educator informants shared accounts of fearing that parents would get upset if the education they delivered was misconstrued in any way; this seemed to be one of the factors that would encourage educators to frame sexual education in a biomedical manner. For example, High School Educator Informant #2 shared their own experience of having to consider parents as stakeholders while determining teaching content:

Yeah. So that can be sometimes tougher, like teachers to teach. 'Cause, uh, one of the main stakeholders you want to consider is parents. And I'm South Asian, and I'm sure that, uh, if I was - like they tell you to talk about safe dating, they talk about consent and stuff, but if you talk too much about dating, I guess some teachers might be afraid to talk too much about dating 'cause they're afraid that the kid will tell the parents that 'hey my teacher said it's okay that I can have a boyfriend or girlfriend. (High School Educator Informant #2)

When I inquired about why the education on health often focused on safe-sex knowledge, I learned about the efficiency of teaching concrete subjects instead of discussing something as complex and abstract, as the components of a healthy intimate relationship:

The most safest way to teach human sexuality is to pathologize it, and take out all the passion, normalcy, and human emotion out of it (leave that to financial enterprises to tap

into that I guess). If you can pathologize it, those who are staunch against young children knowing about it can be relieved to know you didn't paint a pretty picture about sex, and those who are looking at it from a biological point of view can say at least you covered the MUST-knows so students can be informed for when they make their own decisions, what are the risks? I think a lot of people just see it as the safest way to teach human sexuality to the pre-teens and teens in the elementary panel. (High School Educator Informant #10)

Through a very preliminary analysis of educator informant interviews and relevant documents such as the H&PE curriculum, it can be seen that using a biomedical approach to teaching intimacy serves as a middle-ground where teachers are able to deliver a portion of the H&PE curriculum, navigate potential criticism, and satisfy the overall and minimum curriculum expectations required. The needs of youth in that location, however, appeared to be the most subjugated as they continued to receive this instruction, even though it was often considered redundant, basic, or even amusing, as part of fulfilling their roles of being students. This organization of safe-sex promotion will be explored further in the upcoming chapters.

4.2 An Account of Equity and Inclusion

Having the opportunity to speak with both youth who had recently graduated high school as well as youth who were still in high school gave me a wealth of information about how they were negotiating their understandings of healthy intimate relationships. I heard many stories, some of which included experiences of learning about intimate relationships at school, at home, through media, among friends and peers, and from social media. Since taking the H&PE course is mandatory in Ontario for high school students (Ministry of Education, 2018), many were easily able to recollect and comment on their experience of that course. From the interviews I gleaned

an overall feeling of dissatisfaction with the way youth felt that the school system prepared them for dating or intimacy. Youth expressed experiences of being unable to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. I also heard instances where youth mentioned they would “treat that class like a joke” (University Student Informant # 9), and that they “already knew all this”, or that “we learned more in middle school” (High School Student Informant #4), which I inferred as though the education was inadequate or was not delivered at an ideal time or in a suitable manner.

As I read through the transcripts, one of the tensions that became clear was student informants’ inability to resonate with some of the instruction in the healthy living strand but participating in the education regardless as it appeared to be an expectation. They continued to participate in class, even if their interests did not seem to be included in class teachings:

Um, like regular class format with like the teacher like lecturing up at the board and being like saying this and this and this. Like, I feel like it should be more discussion-based. And um, also like peer supported, and then it should be like, instead of like a place for a teacher to tell kids things that they probably already know and take way more time and just like waste so much time, like, explaining things that people either probably know or can be explained a lot quicker. Um, I just feel like it would be so much more helpful for it to be kind of more of like an open conversation. Um, and for people to be able to give and get support from other people. Um, and ask questions about their own relationships, and ask questions. (High School Student Informant #5)

At this juncture, my first inclinations were that these experiences may be related to possible cultural, racial, religious, or sexual identifiers which make youth feel distant from the subject. Upon tracing their experiences further, I learned that the line of fault was broader, and was rooted in the ruling relations, which will be discussed in the upcoming chapters. The account

below details how it was difficult for a student informant to resonate with what was being taught because their lived experiences were being displayed as somebody else's experiences:

I feel like they kind of, they, another thing with the sex ed classes I found was just like, the um, health class in general, um, was that they talked about them from a fairly distant perspective, if that makes sense. So like they talked about, like, the people out there having sex and people out there doing drugs. And instead of saying like, "oh, like, this is you guys too, like we're talking about you." And so I feel like it was very much a sense of like, "oh, like these people, like, people do cocaine and like, this is what happens to them," blah blah blah. And like, it's kind of like making like an us-and-them kind of situation. Whereas I feel like it's, it should, it should be kind of normalized. Like, I, like that, you're gonna try, you're gonna experiment with stuff and that you're gonna, like, this isn't just like a foreign concept, right? And so it's like, and then I feel like, when the time comes to like, actually apply those things to actually, use um, like, contraception, you're not really like thinking about yourself, you're like thinking like "oh, other people do this." Um, and you're really thinking about, like, what you want and what you need, and what's right for you. (High School Student Informant #5)

This distance or sense of otherness the informant mentioned was an experience they had while receiving education during the health component of the H&PE class. This experience is different from what is intended in the texts. In an IE, McCoy (2006) recommends the analytic approach of keeping the institution in view, part of which includes identifying the work the informants describe and then questioning what evokes that work, and how that work is articulated into the institutional work processes and the institutional order. As I employed this technique in re-reading informants' interview transcripts and questioning what their student experience was

textually based upon, I came across the *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy & Program Requirements* (Ministry of Education, 2016). Since the Ontario Schools' (OS) policy requirements (2016) consolidate, in one document, the broad range of policies and programs that affect the educational experience of students in Ontario schools from kindergarten to Grade 12, I selected it as a key text to explore its role in coordinating this experience for youth. The document cites "Equity and Inclusive Education" as the third policy and program requirement and expands to explain that "students should be engaged and empowered by what they are learning, supported by teachers and staff, and welcomed in their learning environment" (Ministry of Education, 2016, p.18). Schools are thus expected to enable environments wherein students are engaged and empowered. In the H&PE curriculum (2015) for example, the importance of providing students with knowledge that is diverse and reflective of student backgrounds and experiences is promoted:

Teachers can give students a variety of opportunities to learn about diversity and diverse perspectives. By drawing attention to the contributions of women, the perspectives of various ethnocultural, religious, and racial communities, and the beliefs and practices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, teachers enable students from a wide range of backgrounds to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. It is essential that learning activities and materials used to support the curriculum reflect the diversity of Ontario society. In addition, teachers should differentiate instruction and assessment strategies to take into account the background and experiences, as well as the interests, aptitudes, and learning needs, of all students. (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, Revised, p.75)

To understand more about why some student informants did not feel that their interests were represented in the H&PE course curriculum, I inquired about the activities that took place in

class. Through speaking with educator informants, I learned about their work processes such as *gathering teaching resources*, which emerged as a text-mediated activity that was seen to be coordinating the experience for youth across multiple locations. One example of their work of gathering teaching resources was the hesitation an educator informant shared in delivering health education that they knew some of their students could not resonate with:

I have students who are still expecting to have arranged marriages, I have students who have been taught very specific gender roles in relationships, um, and expectations that are modeled in their parents' marriage or relationship, and the community around them, that is very hard for, it's hard for them to mesh these ideas. You know, when we talk about consent. Well, I mean, half the, half the girls, sort of, you know, tuck their heads under, and don't want to look up, and don't want to have this conversation because, you know, they, they're waiting for marriage, and they're waiting for an arranged marriage, that sort of stuff. (Educator Informant #4)

While the Ministry's H&PE curriculum and the Ontario Schools (2016) policy requirement outlines a vision of an H&PE class that is student-centred to allow for the modification of education based on students' background, teachers themselves are faced with numerous barriers in creating such an experience due to the ruling relations that appear to exert control over their actions. Through talking to educator informants, I was able to glean empirically the social organization of their everyday experience of work, which in turn impacts youths' experience.

4.3 An Account of Student Engagement and Curriculum

In speaking about their experience of learning about intimate relationships through the H&PE class and having difficulty resonating with the lesson content, some student informants shared that they felt amused by the delivery of the sexual-health content. As an example, some student

informants expressed a lack of engagement as they described ways in which they disregarded or minimized the delivery of sexual-health content with their peers during the health and physical education class:

Yeah. So, we weren't really able to retain much information. Even if we did. And it seem to, no one really took it too seriously, so um, there wasn't much, if any, information that any of us had retained. (High School Student Informant #10)

Another student informant expressed that in order to teach important topics such as intimate relationships, the first step would be to engage students and determine what is valuable to them:

Um. First question about why it would be funny um, about teaching people why people laugh. Mm. I couldn't give you a straight answer. It, it just seems like there'd be quote unquote "meme potential." Um. Second thing. I think it goes back to the point where you said "Shakespeare doesn't seem that important to their life." Like when am I, quote unquote, "when am I, when am I gonna use Shakespeare in real life? Or geometry?" blah blah blah. How to teach these important topics. Um. I guess the first step would be determining in, determining what is important from a youth perspective. (High School Student Informant #8)

The accounts above can be connected to the H&PE curriculum (2015, Revised) which acknowledge the relationship between students' wellbeing and their ability to see themselves represented in the curriculum. This H&PE curriculum states "It is important that students be connected to the curriculum; that they see themselves in what is taught, how it is taught, and how it applies to the world at large" (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, Revised, p.3). It also recognizes the important role teachers play in building an engaging environment for students to help support their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development as well as their health, resilience,

and overall wellbeing (H&PE Curriculum, 2015). As such, the curriculum states that all students should be learning the components outlined in the curriculum, but that teachers should respond to students' needs by adjusting the method of instruction using different resources, providing a wider choice of topics, and even changing the learning environment to promote student engagement. Further, the H&PE curriculum (2015) calls for student engagement as it reads:

Student engagement refers to students identifying with and valuing their learning; feeling a sense of belonging at school; and being informed about, engaged with, and empowered to participate in and lead academic and non-academic activities. Student engagement is strengthened when opportunities are provided for students to take leadership roles in relation to their learning, the learning environment, and their wellbeing; when students are supported in developing the skills they need to be self-directed, self-monitoring learners, through the use of assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning approaches; and when the diverse perspectives of students are taken into account in school decision-making processes. (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, p.10)

The H&PE curriculum (2015) directs teachers to take on the role of co-learner and facilitator to promote authentic experiential learning and provide engagement for students through student-initiated work (H&PE Curriculum, 2015). It encourages planning and scheduling for H&PE courses through careful consideration which allows for the integration of healthy living concepts such as sexual health, nutrition, etc., with other strands of the course, instead of teaching health sporadically or “when gymnasium facilities are being used for other purposes” (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, p.58) and warns that doing so “will not provide adequate opportunities for learning” (p.58). It also recommends that thirty percent of instructional time be allocated to

health education, and grants schools the responsibility to design this structure based on student needs, timetabling, and available facilities.

I draw attention to the text above because speaking with student informants made it seem that they did not feel they were engaged, nor had the opportunity to see their experiences reflected in curriculum. Notably, the H&PE curriculum (2015) calls for students to take a leadership role in their learning. The experience of the student informant captured above is at odds with the written intent of the curriculum presented above. To learn more about how the process of teaching worked and how teachers activated ideological processes to deliver specific pieces of knowledge, I spoke with educator informants about some of their motivations and expectations. Educator informants shared that there were ample student-engagement opportunities, and that the health portion of the H&PE curriculum was co-created with students. Educator informants explained processes whereby they would offer students an anonymous survey opportunity (survey example in Appendix P) at the beginning of the health class to inquire about which topics they wanted to learn about, and would then select the most popular topic and share knowledge that they deemed appropriate:

So sometimes, what a lot of common things that teachers might do and help is they might have a suggestion box, about, that's open for students to ask questions about anything. So basically when we're teaching we want to gauge what students actually want to know about, and that could probably take a premise of what we want to want to talk about.

(High School Educator Informant #2)

Further investigation into the process of student engagement, however, revealed a disjuncture where the experience of youth was not one of feeling engaged or driving their learning goals. Speaking with student informants showed that they found it difficult to establish trust in the

school administration. Listening to these unfolding experiences prompted me to investigate why teachers felt they had to deliver information in the manner that they did. In exploring these tensions further, the *work* processes of teachers began to emerge as ruling relations that coordinated the experience of youth across multiple sites. These processes posed challenges to delivering the curriculum in the suggested manner, and will be discussed in the upcoming chapters.

4.4 Arriving at the Problematic

Adolescence is a complex transitional period during which youth participate in the institution of schooling, as mandated by law in Canada. The period of adolescence is also when participation in intimate relationships typically first emerges (Rice & Dolgin, 2005). Many research studies have shown that by middle school adolescent youth are often engaging in brief, casual dating or in group dating with established couples. Then in late adolescence, dating involves exclusive, intense relationships. Through lived experience, as well as through speaking with student informants I have learned about the complexity and popularity of intimate relationships in high school, for example, one student informant stated:

So I feel like this whole conception of having to have a relationship in high school came about from like, movies as well. Like every single show on Netflix or whatever movies, you always see these little high school girls like, dating people and gossiping and all this stuff. And then people just in their mind, they're like, okay, when I get to high school that's what I have to do. (High School Student Informant #7)

Student informants also shared a plethora of sources through which they consciously and unconsciously learned about intimate relationships, often citing mediums such as social media, television, music videos, etc. Most student informants, however, expressed that they struggled to

believe the images portrayed through these sources, and perceived that they painted a fantasized picture of intimate relationships. For example, they found it difficult to trust the depiction of dating and intimacy in movies and social media because they knew it was mostly constructed for entertainment.

Youth also discussed sources such as the institutions of family and friends as having some form of influence on their experience; however, most youth indicated that it was within the institution of school and their experiences in the Grade 9 H&PE class where discussions on intimacy and dating occurred. This underscores the *problematic* of the organization of youth learning about intimate relationships through the H&PE curriculum, particularly since this was the system-based location where youth could discuss intimacy and dating in the school setting.

As mentioned earlier, IE research provides opportunities for both literal and figurative maps showing how people's activities in different locations are connected to one another (DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith, 2005). As such, Figure 3 below shows the location of youth, as well as a first capture of the work processes and hierarchy of ruling relations (*italic font*) that emerged in establishing the problematic thus far. From this standpoint, I sought to explicate the social organization of health education in Ontario high schools. Using IE, I investigated 'what actually happens' to youths' experience of learning about intimate relationships when they attend H&PE class. I looked at how the experiences among youth vastly differ and traced the role of the curriculum implementation in organizing this experience. While the H&PE (2015) curriculum does not preach a standardized experience for all students across the board, it does lay out overall and minimum expectations, along with considerations for teachers which appear to be disrupted by various factors, as shown earlier. The accounts detailed above provide an opportunity to start exploring the experiential data using the standpoint of youth to help map out the ruling relations

that organize their experience at that level, including the role of teachers, parents, curriculum, Ministry of Education, and other relevant policies.

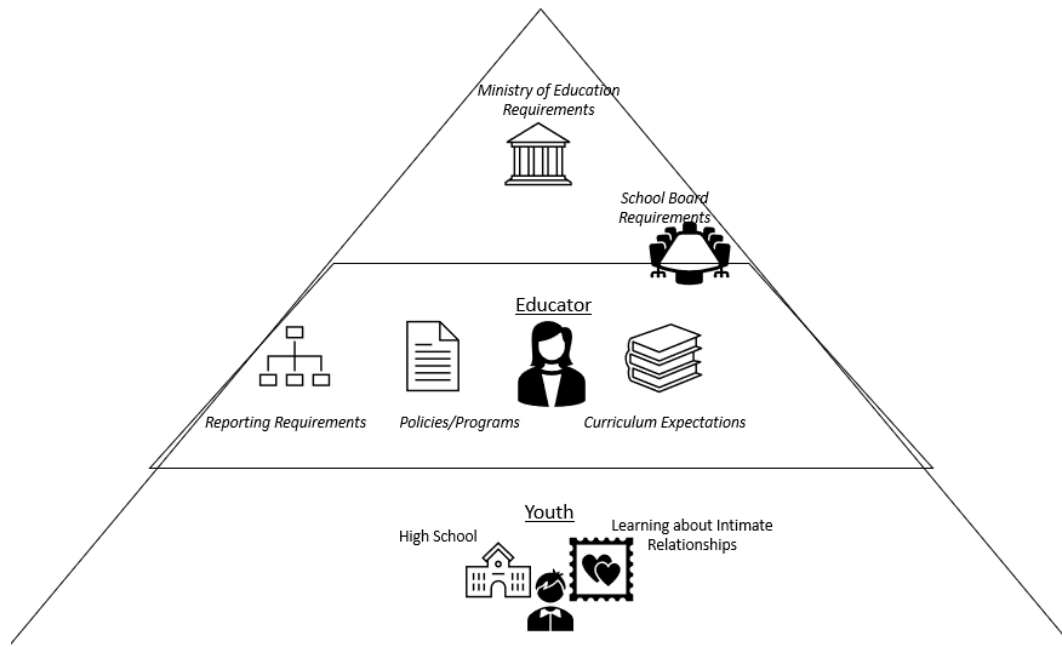


Figure 3: The Location of Youth as Students in a Hierarchy-Based Pyramid of Ruling Relations

4.5 Summary

To summarize, I arrived at the problematic for this research through being motivated to understand, not to criticize, the way student informants I spoke with were experiencing learning about healthy intimacy in a biomedical, sometimes rushed, and often unrelatable manner. I then followed clues from these accounts to identify what was happening at the location of my informants, to investigate how their experiences were being organized. In the upcoming chapters, I use the experiential data obtained from my informants to explore the issues using an IE approach.

Chapter 5: Exploring the Account of Making Intimacy Biomedical: The Social Organization of Teaching and Learning about Healthy Intimate Relationships

In this chapter, I trace how the concept of healthy intimate relationships is socially organized in the H&PE educators' *ideological code* to be biomedical. This is done by showing how the ruling relation of an institutional accountability circuit creates the conditions in which H&PE and healthy intimate relationships become taught through biomedical approaches, and how a regulation-oriented framework is the mode of action that is supported by school administration. To demonstrate how entrenched the institutional accountability circuit is in the work of teachers, I explore the process of eliciting student feedback through surveys and show how this work also reproduces a biomedical discourse due to the institutional structures within which it takes place. Figure 4 below presents an extract from Figure 1, indicating the foci of this chapter.

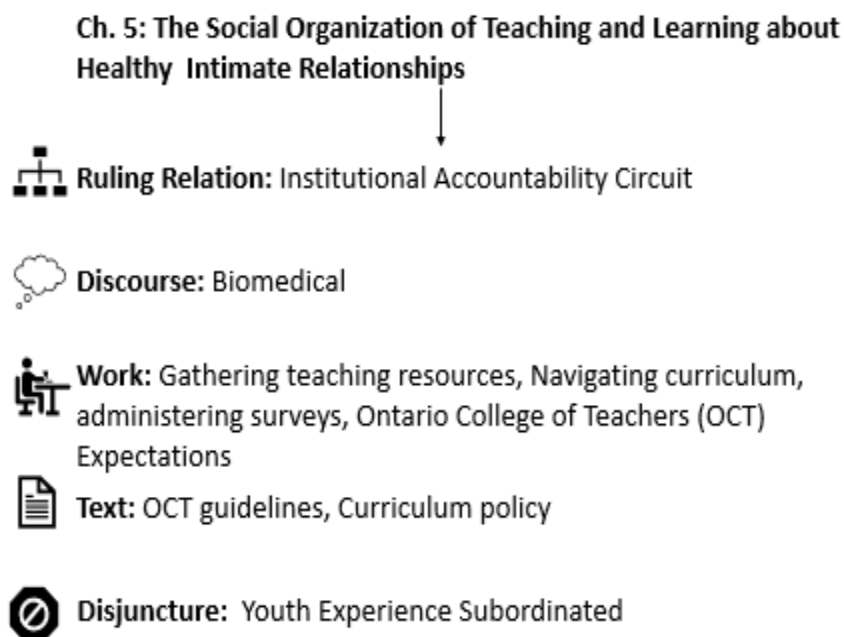


Figure 4: Focused-Schema of the Social Organization of Teaching and Learning about Healthy Intimate Relationships

5.1 Exploring the Social Organization of Educators' Ideological Codes

In IE, the ideas that are normalized in any authoritative discourse are usually concepts that are taken for granted within that way of knowing, which is the *ideological code* (Rankin, 2017). This taken-for-grantedness builds a type of ideological language, or way-of-thinking (e.g. regulation-oriented thinking discussed below) that gives meaning to everyday practices that people engage in. It is a way of knowing about something that does not reflect the embodied or experiential way of knowing about it (Deveau, 2008b).

Tracing the work of educator informants during my dissertation led to the discovery of a predominantly biomedical discourse, socially organized through the ruling relation of *institutional accountability*; while this is an IE concept, it is also used as a ruling relation in this context. The ruling relation of institutional accountability is found to be activated through texts such as the Ontario College of Teacher (OCT) guidelines, and the H&PE curriculum (2015). This ruling relation became apparent in the way that educator informants spoke of carrying out their roles as H&PE teachers, as the conditions that shape their work began to emerge in their accounts.

By speaking with student informants in phase 1, I had learned that the H&PE class was a place where student informants engaged in consistently learning about sexual intercourse, which they mostly associated with intimate relationships. For example, when asked about their experiences of learning about healthy intimate relationships in high school, almost all student informants recalled discussions of safe sex instead of other aspects like intimacy and relationships. As outlined in Chapter 4, this is part of what helped inform the problematic of my study. The educators' ideological code of providing biomedical instruction as a fulfilment of the healthy intimate relationships' curriculum component was later identified as an activity that

helped coordinate a biomedical experience for youth and reproduced it across sites. Through speaking with educator informants, I came across a taken-for-granted ideological code of linking a biomedical view with healthy intimate relationships.

To explore the process of how the institutional accountability circuit might influence an H&PE teacher's ideological code, I began to trace their work related to *Navigating Curriculum* for teaching the H&PE curriculum. I started here in order to understand how texts were involved across sites in reproducing a largely biomedical experience of learning about intimacy. Based on educator informant conversations, I learned that the socially sensitive nature of some topics in H&PE – specifically in regards to the healthy living strand – position them in such a way in schools that they are implicitly encouraged to take an approach that is aligned with the needs of the regulatory body of the OCT and the school (as expressed by Educator Informant #10, p.73). As such, H&PE teachers are tasked with the responsibility of teaching youth about important concepts such as Human Development and Sexual Health (HDSH), topics that are often societally constructed as taboo (Moult, 2013), and which some teachers can be uncomfortable with (Lavery, 2021). While abiding by OCT guidelines is an expectation of all teachers, the nature of topics in the healthy living strand appears to be more vulnerable to regulation-oriented conditions, promoting a closer adherence to the guidelines as an approach to prevent any breaches and disrupt the institutional accountability circuit. Teachers' approach to navigating the curriculum and carrying out their day-to-day activities, then, appeared to be influenced by these regulation-oriented conditions.

5.1.1 How Regulation-Oriented Conditions are Organized

Teaching is relational, it is a process of development between students and teachers that is based on effective communication (DeVito, 1986). Effective teaching requires educators to form a

relationship with students by meeting students' needs (Jimenez & Rose, 2010). Other researchers have found that addressing *student need* through what young people define as 'relevant' is more likely to engage students with education related to intimacy (Allen, 2008; Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Diorio, 1985; Cherrington & Breheny, 2005). They highlight that addressing youths' agency and decision-making power in how they view themselves as sexual beings with a right to sexual knowledge can support their engagement in relationships that are physically and emotionally intimate and can lead to such education being successful (Allen, 2008; Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Diorio, 1985; Cherrington & Breheny, 2005). This is different from the messaging offered to young people through the 1998 and 2015 H&PE curricula which are underpinned by a public-health risk discourse that seeks to prevent teenage pregnancies, abortions, and STIs (Connell, 2006; Smylie et al, 2008).

In order for meaningful relationships between teachers and students to flourish, the conditions within the institution have to enable these relationships to form. In speaking with educator informants and tracing textual ruling relations, I found that in the context of H&PE teachers' ability to build meaningful relationships with students was often limited by the institutional accountability circuit in place that promotes regulation-oriented conditions that encourage a biomedical view of intimacy as a default discourse for educators to rely upon. Through this design of regulation-oriented conditions, youth often experience a disjuncture as their needs are addressed through the institutional accountability circuit within which teachers have to operate, as discussed below.

A close reading of the H&PE curriculum (2015) provides some guidance to teachers on dealing with topics that may be sensitive in nature and directs them to adhere to professional guidelines established by the OCT and by the risk and confidentiality management policies of

their employers (p.15). In the case of H&PE, a principle of flexibility is built into the curriculum to allow for educators to tailor instruction for student-specific learning (H&PE Curriculum, 2015), to cater to the needs of students. Despite this provision, however, the experience of students in learning about healthy intimate relationships was largely biomedical per my conversations with them. For example, a student informant shared how the emotional aspect of forming intimate relationships was missing from their learning experience in high school:

I think the emotional part is missing. It is. It is missing, honestly, um, because from what I remember, um, like, um, every-when they teach sex ed and all this, they're teaching about safe sex and all these diseases and what not. But they never really teach, youth how to um, keep a healthy relationship emotionally. (University Student Informant #5)

The conditions that shape the work of educators in addressing students' needs when it comes to learning about intimacy appeared as educators spoke of how they navigated situations when students approached them with questions related to their personal lives. Where some educator informants were able to speak with students about topics of intimacy as a 'trusted or caring adult' for that student, others shared an awareness of conditions that cause them to be weary of the standards in place for teachers. For example, the OCT guides educators to act as adult ally's or trusted confidantes, but the way this is enacted appears to be shaped by institutional accountability circuits. When asked, for example, about a teacher's ability to choose to undertake the expectations associated with that of an adult ally, an educator informant explained the different approaches:

That is correct. Yes. Like they, like probably OCT might say that, as adults we have to be that caring adult, but not- not all teachers will take that opportunity to do that. Some, there are some pe-, like in all uh occupations, there's some teachers that just see it as a job

description. That they have to make sure that students just have to do well in the class and that's it. That you might not care about the whole student experience. So it really is subjective, depends on the educator itself. (High School Educator Informant #2)

Thus, there appears to be an ideological code at play here that supports the institutional accountability circuit by having reoriented the educator informants' knowledge to a regulation-oriented approach. For example, an educator informant shared their perception of how they thought they would be able to help their students prior to becoming a teacher, and how they now navigate their role as a teacher after becoming a teacher. Of note here is not a critique of whether the teacher chooses to engage in personal conversations with the student or whether they consider that to be helpful or not, I highlight instead, the expectations placed upon them by becoming a part of the teaching profession that exercises a form of control over their behaviour:

I think it's a little bit of both because I was uh, I was a product of Ontario education. And I felt like, I felt like as a student, I thought I'd do a lot [to help students however they needed], but then when you become a teacher you kind of see why teachers act in a certain way and like really, you want to, a teacher might act in certain ways because they want to make sure that students take more ownership of what their own decisions are, and that teachers are, teachers have to be careful on how they present things. For example, like if you do have, like for example going back to your dating question, you might feel like if the student ask an opinion on another person in the class, you feel like that that person's good, but that might not be good to the parent, but you want to make sure that you don't, inherently endorse the student to date that student like, you try to set them up. As that, that is kind of like you are interfering in the student's personal relationships and that kind of goes against the, uh the standard as teachers. Like you don't want to, know,

know-you don't want to involve yourself in student relationships with others, like talking about that much of a personal aspect, that's, you're walking a fine line there. (Educator Informant #2)

To describe how institutional conditions are designed for the satisfaction of a regulation-oriented thinking, such as alluded to in the quote above, I first draw attention to the clash of the textual expectations educators have to abide by. With regards to the unique opportunities and challenges present in a classroom during the discussion of the healthy living strand, the H&PE (2015) curriculum states:

Teachers should follow the principle “first, do no harm” and ensure that the learning environment is always physically and emotionally safe. Because of the unique learning environment, health and physical education teachers often find themselves in the role of caring adult for students. This can be a fulfilling and also challenging responsibility, particularly when students choose to disclose personal information. It is important for educators to know and follow policies and guidelines regarding confidentiality and risk management (as they relate, for example, to suicide prevention) and be aware of professional boundaries and of pathways to professional care. (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, p. 29).

The curriculum text above displays an awareness of the sensitive nature of the classroom related to the healthy living strand. It mentions the fulfilling and challenging responsibility of teaching students about personal behaviours in the healthy living strand, which includes personal safety and injury prevention, and human development and sexual health (H&PE Curriculum, 2015). Discussing these topics requires an open and honest dialogue of life-experiences, situations, and the challenges that youth navigate regularly when they engage in intimate relationships. For

example, an educator informant described how being open and relatable through sharing their own stories helps build a classroom environment that is conducive to these discussions “and sharing as much as, like as many personal stories as I can” (High-School Educator Informant # 5). The H&PE (2015) curriculum calls for educators to present such opportunities to students by helping students “see connections between what they learn and their ability to make important decisions related to various aspects of their health and wellbeing, and they can remind students of the importance of thinking carefully about decisions that could have a major impact on all parts of their lives – physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual.” (p. 16). The H&PE curriculum (2015) suggests that educators should obtain an understanding of their students’ personal backgrounds and life experiences in order to tailor education to their needs:

An understanding of students’ strengths and needs, as well as of their backgrounds, life experiences, and possible emotional vulnerabilities, can help teachers plan effective instruction and assessment...As teachers develop and deepen their understanding of individual students, they can respond more effectively to the students’ needs by differentiating instructional approaches – adjusting the method or pace of instruction, using different types of resources, allowing a wider choice of topics, even adjusting the learning environment, if appropriate, to suit the way their students learn and how they are best able to demonstrate their learning. (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, p. 55)

As mentioned previously, this must be done while following confidentiality and risk management policies of the employer (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, p.15). Similarly, the OCT (2022) presents another conundrum for H&PE educators, in that it considers the discussion of the following topics as a boundary violation of the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*

(Appendix Q) and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* (Ontario College of Teachers, 2021) (Appendix R):

- Talking about sexually inappropriate matters
- Asking sexual or intimate questions of students
- Promoting the idea of educator as friend or confidante

These discussions are considered boundary violations in general. However, the OCT directs educators to use professional judgement and knowledge to shape their decisions, reflect on one's role and responsibility in terms of the areas that they have training/specializations in, and utilize additional expertise as needed. It encourages "doing the best you can for the students in your care" (Ontario College of Teachers, 2020, para. 45). The contradiction that I draw attention to here is how H&PE educators are required to work based on the H&PE (2015) curriculum and the OCT standards, which allow for autonomy in actions, yet they are also bound by explicit ethical standards that direct and shape how they interact with students. While the examples of boundary violations are not inherently problematic given an educator's choice to use professional judgement, it is the categorization of these topics as risky which can be seen to organize institutional conditions that influence an educators' response. Coupled with the impact of institutional accountability circuits on teacher's choice to build meaningful relationships with students, regulation-oriented conditions constrain teachers to adhering to a biomedical view of intimacy as the most appropriate way to address the sensitive nature of topics within the human development and sexual health component of the H&PE curriculum. This supplanting of their knowledge can be seen through how educator informants navigate the unique situations that can arise in an H&PE class (for example in the quote by Educator Informant #2 on [p.105](#)).

Educator informants shared that they teach H&PE in a highly emotive environment, where students can sometimes express distressing romantic situations, or disclose personal information related to family, abuse, fears, and other confidential conversations. As such, the nature of topics listed in the healthy living strand open a door of ambiguity that can initiate a variation of responses from educators, depending upon the conditions of their institution. For example, amongst a variation of possible responses, one teacher may address the students' inquiry directly, while another may guide the student to a counsellor or mental health support resource. While responses can vary– the appropriateness of which cannot be scrutinized here – it can be inferred that institutional conditions shape and influence how teachers' respond. Another organizing factor appears to be the perception of the administrative permissiveness at their school that fosters such communications. For example, an educator informant shared their approach to dealing with a student who may be discussing a potentially unhealthy intimate relationship with them:

Interviewee: So when I tell them the sides of healthy relationships, I don't want to navigate or tell them to leave a relationship or to pursue something else. But I just tell them, what are my observations of good relationships are and do some self-reflection and make them decide. But if they asked me directly to make an action with them? That's probably when I'd say you better talk to your parents.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Interviewee: So one reason about that, because if I, if I recommend something, always, there's always the chance that things kids can go to the parents, and use your name. And sometimes kids, they may paraphrase things that are out of context. And then parents could get upset and parents can complain to your administrative staff and talk to the

administration and say, “your teacher gave my student dating advice? Why is he giving him dating advice when he is their phys ed or math teacher, that is inappropriate”. And then who knows what can really come off of there and create a big can of worms.

(Educator Informant #2)

In the excerpt above, the educator informant can be seen to negotiate how they are able to act as an H&PE educator in their school and appear hyper-aware of the repercussions they may face if they engage in a conversation or discussion that may be deemed unacceptable by parents and school administration. The excerpt above suggests how parents may see H&PE teachers and other teachers in the same way when it comes to the sensitive topic of intimacy, though the curriculum topics differ. This is also an indication of the social stigma associated with topics of intimacy. Other researchers have also found that the determination of what youth learn related to sexual education and/or intimacy has historically, and often continues to be, mediated by what adults such as parents and school administration deem appropriate (Allen, 2008; Aggleton & Campbell, 2000). Often, parents are concerned about what their children may learn about sexual health and how it may impact their actions and choices (Spencer et al, 2012, Aggleton & Campbell, 2000).

What I am uncovering here are the driving factors behind the variation of responses possible in teacher’s responses to youths’ questions regarding intimacy. This is not to say that one response from a teacher is better suited or more preferred than another; but to highlight that the response to students does not occur in an institutional and social vacuum. Mediated by the curriculum but regulated by the educator’s inclination to adhere to the institutional accountability circuit, H&PE educators can be seen to navigate and negotiate the way they interact with students. There is a grey area within which educators operate, whereby some face institutional

conditions that enable sensitive conversations to take place, while others face conditions that restrict such conversations. Within this grey area, adapting a biomedical discourse allows teachers to remain aligned with the institutional accountability circuit.

Looking at one of the ways the institutional accountability circuit shapes the experience of youth, it appears that the power of institutional conditions in guiding teachers' work can lead to a disjuncture for youth. For example, when asked about which resources, if any, at school they may approach if faced with troubles in their intimate relationships, a student informant shared "Um. So I wouldn't go to a person because, well, teachers, I wouldn't really go to. 'Cause I, it feels like they're part of school, school and, like school and life are a little different" (High School Student Informant #8). This quote underlines the needs of youth regarding learning about the emotional aspects of intimate relationships that they may not be receiving, due in part to the institutional conditions that organize a biomedical learning experience for students. However, youth did not express that they need or expect their H&PE teacher to serve as their counsellor or have a solution on how they should proceed with their intimate relationships, but a need to better understand the dynamics of the emotional aspects of intimate relationships, given their transition phase to adulthood. This was expressed by a student informant when they stated:

Umm I think there should be learning about, maybe more emotional things. Because we always look at like the physical part, you know, like sexual education we just talk about like what happens basically like what happens with like the cells or whatever is happening you know, for like the parents menstrual cycle. Or like, you know when you're pregnant, how the baby develops that's what we're learning about. This is all like the physical stuff. What about like the emotional stuff? So that like, you don't want these

girls to like go and make mistakes you know, you need to give them more knowledge.

(University Student Informant #6)

However, the institutional conditions of educational locations inherently categorize teachers as administrative personnel in the eyes of youth, which appears to sometimes dissuade them from building meaningful relationships with their teachers. As mentioned previously, addressing student need through what young people define as relevant is more likely to engage students with education related to intimacy. The H&PE curriculum (2015) calls for educators to teach students about healthy intimate relationships and acknowledges the findings of the 2008 report entitled *Shaping a Culture of Respect in Our Schools: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships* (Safe Schools Action Team, 2008), which found that educators were generally skipping over or avoiding discussions related to healthy intimate relationships. A pull-and-push situation is visible here: on one side educators are required to teach about healthy intimate relationships using a student-centred approach, and on the other side, the curriculum also cautions them against breaching professional codes of conduct, fortified further by OCT guidelines. This is despite the fact that OCT standards are in place to protect students due to the power imbalance between teacher and student (OCT 2020, p.1). Such contradictions enact control over the conditions in which teachers operate and organize a regulation-oriented framework that can sometimes limit teachers' ability to build relationships with students.

As an example of the importance of relationships between teachers and students, the excerpt below illustrates the way in which an educator informant experienced the tension between their role as an H&PE educator with whom students want to discuss personal issues with, and the institutional accountability circuit within which they are required to operate:

Um. They have guidance, right? Um, but, you know, and with their guidance counselors, uh, uh, uh, they, I find, I've been told, um, they don't really have a relationship with them because they, they see them for course-specific things, right? It's different than a rela-, um, a rapport that they would have with a (H&PE) coach, or with a teacher that they've been able to build a rapport with. Where with a guidance counselor, they kind of only go there for short periods of time, and to seek help on a course, and they don't very often feel comfortable opening up, um, to some of the things that are happening in their lives. Uh, so more often than not, they're coming to, um, someone they feel comfortable with. So, they'll come to me and they'll say, "Miss, this is what's happening," and then I'm going to go get them some support in whichever way, um, it, I, I can help support them and usually it is, um, "I need to pass you on to the guidance counselor, who's going to be a better resource for you, and can help you work through this, um, because I have limitations." So, uh, uh, they know where to go, but they may not feel comfortable in going there. (Educator Informant #5)

The challenges educators face in balancing their professions' regulatory requirements within the contextual factors related to their roles and student needs emerged as they spoke about the situations they experience. Educators indicated that institutional pressures enacted control over how they can build relationships with their students, which can result in varied experiences among youth. In the next section, I will show how the work process of administering a survey reinforces the institutional accountability circuit, even though at the surface level it appears to be a mechanism to provide student-centred instruction. I show how the biomedical discourse prevails in teachers' work and continues to limit their ability to build relationships with students.

5.2 Honing In on the Power of the Institutional Accountability Circuit in Reproducing a Biomedical Discourse in Educators' Work

Based on my analysis of educator informant conversations and review of pertinent documents, the administration of a survey to elicit student feedback emerged as one of the work processes that can be seen to reinforce the institutional accountability circuit that socially organizes a biomedical view of intimacy. A student feedback survey, which can be a form of a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), is often administered by educators at the beginning of a course to gauge students' learnings. PLAR is a process whereby individuals assess students' prior learning through formal or informal mechanisms, and it can be used to recognize and value experiential and informal learning (Spencer, 2005). I have selected the survey as a work process to be examined as it emerged as the most-common response from educator informants when asked about how they identify and address student learning needs in class. For example, one educator informant explained:

Yeah. So, again, site specific. But I, I know in our, our school we do um, we do like a question-box kind of thing. And typically start that off the first, first day or two.

Typically the first day, "hey, what are the things you want to know, what are, what are some questions you have? This is your time, your safe space. I'm not your father, I'm not your mother, you know, what are some questions you have?" And that's typically where we start our conversation. It gives you a good idea in terms of the maturity level of the class, and the topics that you think you're gonna wanna, um, really talk about. (Educator Informant #3)

Almost all educator informants mentioned that they use surveys and/or question boxes as a primary work process which they utilize to gather teaching resources and make decisions based

on what these mediums identified to be the areas of interest expressed by students. In the case of healthy living, I argue that the PLAR survey is situated in an institutional accountability circuit wherein it is likely to reproduce a biomedical discourse in discussing intimate relationships which limits educator's opportunities to build relationships with students.

Through speaking with educator informants, I learned that whether an H&PE educator administers a survey to gain this understanding is based on their preference. This type of student involvement in designing the curriculum is motivated by the H&PE curriculum (2015) and best practices as recommended by the OCT (H&PE Curriculum, 2015, p. 11, OCT Professional Practice, 2018). The decision of using a PLAR can also be motivated by wanting to design student-led lesson plans or gaining a sense of the maturity level of the class's knowledge on certain topics. As established earlier, there are overall and specific expectations within the H&PE curriculum. As such, regardless of what the survey responses entail, the topics covered in class must first fit the lens of the curriculum, and also, institutional accountability circuits, which endorse a biomedical discourse. This is especially relevant in cases where parents may feel the education their child receives in school is too liberal or supportive of intimacy. Educators indicated that these pressures are usually met with minimal conflict as long as they adhere to a biomedical view of intimacy and align it with the curriculum in order to avoid further complicated situations, as alluded to by Educator Informant #10, p.73. Medicalizing intimacy for youth places intimacy in a category remiss of its complexities and nuances. The safety referred to by Educator Informant #10 is premised on avoiding complaints regarding the way an educator approaches the topic of intimacy. Most commonly, this includes parents who can be critical of educators broaching topics of sexuality and intimacy, "I don't want them to go home and say "well my gym teacher told me this." Well, well, that's a whole other kettle of fish, right?"

(Educator Informant #4). As another example, one educator informant explained the role of the curriculum in determining what must be taught, and the role of the PLAR:

However, if, let's say we had an average class size of like, 28 kids, and they all had 28, different things that they want to talk about, you might unfortunately pick and choose what you think is the most relevant or important to the overall majority, which could possibly seclude student voice. And that would again, it would be tied back to the curriculum, right? Curriculum always has the precedence, Yeah, curriculum and anything that's relevant to today's culture [according to the teacher]. (Educator Informant #2)

Another educator informant also shared what they consider a disadvantage of the PLAR survey process:

Most times, um, I asked the students what it is. I, I send out a survey. And I ask them what they would like to learn in uh, their health units this year. And I collect them-, the information and then kinda put together the units based on um, I guess the more popular choices. Um, which is good, but it's also bad, because then you have some students that um, may want to learn about other areas, but it just wasn't a popular choice. We have, I think, um, a certain amount of hours. I can't remember the top of my head, but a certain amount of hours that we need to fulfill in the um, in the, uh uh, the health part of the curriculum. And this year, it's just the, it's just going to be a whole different show [due to COVID-19]. (Educator Informant #5)

The accounts above show that there can be institutional pressure upon educators to operate within institutional and curricular expectations. For example, an educator informant explained the allure of a biomedical approach to discussing intimacy in lieu of discussing the nuances of healthy intimate relationships:

Probably because the definition of healthy relationships is so broad, and because that it may cover a lot of things. And there may not be enough resources available out there, and maybe some teachers and be like, they don't have time to create their own resources to do such things, or maybe they just assume that healthy relationships will be covered in the STI part. And they can just check it in their box saying, okay, we talked about STI prevention, we talked about, so that's why you should understand who your partner is, and what their social history is, so you don't get these STIs. And then they, maybe they say, Okay, that's good enough for healthy relationships, but you don't really talk about all these other things". (Educator Informant #2)

As such, institutional conditions are created that promote approaching through a biomedical lens, minimizing the risk of perceived breaches of the OCT guidelines, upsetting parents, and prompting complaints to the administration. It can be inferred then that the biomedical approach to curriculum and intimacy is organized through the institutional accountability circuit. For instance, one educator informant explained:

Sometimes, if you don't feel like you have the support of your administration, in case a student or parent complains about you, you may opt against doing things like this [the survey]. So you might play it safe and just avoid the whole survey, just do a systematic curriculum, regurgitation of what they should learn or maybe take resources from another colleague who's taught the course or just copy the same, because you are afraid of going against the grain. (Educator Informant #2)

Per my analysis of conversations with informants and juxta positioning them with the documents I reviewed on H&PE and various school policies, it appears that on the one hand, administering a survey or a question-box seems to offer an opportunity for students to voice their concerns and

direct their education, but on the other hand, the strength of the institutional accountability circuit limits teacher's choice to modify their plans based on possible survey results. Even though input is collected from students, aside from addressing some of the popular or basic questions that an educator can respond to that will serve the goals of meeting curriculum expectations, educators are restrained in their ability to change their lessons plans in significant manner (due to the institutional accountability circuit). This influences how youth experience their relationship with their teachers. For example, a student informant shared their experience of the class anonymous question box and its impact on class discussions:

It was a useful mechanism, made things easier and made it easier to ask questions that we might have been too embarrassed to ask ourselves, but um I don't think it was helpful to be honest, it was always more what they were required to teach. (High School Student Informant #12)

In the case of the PLAR, there is a tension as it can create a sense of co-creation with students, while the power of the institutional accountability circuit limits the actions teachers can undertake. Although educators would often engage in one of these processes with an intention or goal to teach content that is relevant and meaningful to youth, the institutional accountability circuit hinders the impact of these efforts. Thus, discussing the topic of healthy intimate relationships is placed among a web of risk-averse regulations and institutional culture that must be handled with great diplomacy (which is tethered to a regulation-oriented thinking). For example, the exchange below shows the restrictions within which educators operate, and the impact this could have on the student experience. In the excerpt below an educator informant who is passionate about ensuring that their students are aware of healthy intimate relationships

believes that their students may not be supported in school, and explains how they are limited in how they could navigate this situation:

Interviewee: So, here's what I'm gonna share with you. The current population I'm uh, teaching in is a predominantly Muslim uh, community. Um, students don't talk about their dating even if they are dating. Uh, for many of them, talking to someone of the opposite gender is a huge thing. And if their parents ever found out that they are socializing with a male um, on any um, social media platform, uh, that may be a whole other issue. Um, so they're very private about it. And even the relationships that do occur, occur behind closed doors. They don't happen, um, very often in front of their peers. Um, some do, some, some will, you know, uh, date um, other students in front of their peers, but there's a large portion where they're, they're, they're having a relationship with someone and nobody knows about it, and they meet outside of school, or they talk um, when nobody is around, and uh, nobody really knows about them.

Interviewer: Yeah, and then. So how do you think these students fare? Like how did they find support? Do they find support at all?

Interviewee: They don't. They don't find support because they can't ask mom or dad at home for advice. They probably can't ask siblings for advice, because if their siblings find out that's going to be a whole other issue. Um, unless they truly, truly, truly trust an adult inside the school, they may share some things, but most often than not, they're, they're, they're holding it inside. Sometimes in rare occasions, their closest friend may know about a relationship, and therefore a peer is um, is uh, is uh, giving them advice. And in very rare occasions, I, I remember having a student come to me and say "Miss, I'm very worried about so and so. She is seeing so and so, and I think he's very

controlling," and so on and so forth. Um, in which case you have to have a very vague, you know, a conversation with this student, asking, prompting questions about the relationship that they're having. (Educator Informant #5)

Regardless of what the educator informant knew and understood about the local situation described the aforementioned diplomacy appears to be at play. It can be inferred that the safety that educator informants referred to is a safety against complaints from parents, against breaches of the expectations of the OCT, and against professional repercussions. Being in breach of these socially organized requirements could result in professional consequences for the educator, for example, an educator informant explained how it is often in an educators' best professional interest to err on the side of caution and play by the institutions' rules and expectations:

They are unionized, but then you also feel that you may miss out on opportunities. So what I mean by opportunities is, let's say you paid your dues, you're still being a teacher, but there's a vacant [specific school related] position. So basically, you become-you can apply to be the head of your department, you might feel like if you have any parent complaints against you, because of the subject matter that you might be disadvantaged, to propel your position within the school. So that's why a lot of people may do this. And I guess some other people, that's another thing that might want to motivate people to be on admin side is to get the courses that you actually want to teach. So some people want to teach older kids present because they're a little bit more mature, and it's easier to direct them. And they don't want to teach the younger kids so they probably want to have some sway with the admin so that I can give them my quote unquote, is your schedule or make sure that certain kids that they may have not had a good relationship with is not in their class. There's a lot of politics. (Educator Informant #2)

On the face of it, educator informants were presenting students an opportunity to share their learning interests through the survey. Their work, however, seemed to have been dominated by the institutional accountability circuit. It is not that educators were unwilling to address student need, but that they have very little freedom beyond meeting the curriculum expectations and maintaining a good standing with the OCT and their employer as part of the regulation-oriented requirements expected of them. The underlying biomedical principle of promoting safe-sex and preventing infections guided discussions about intimacy and dating, as those concepts met curriculum expectations and were unlikely to warrant any complaints of misconduct. If topics related to healthy intimate relationships were mentioned on a survey, and an educator taught content related to it, the openness and flexibility required to delve deeply into these conversations was unlikely to be supported by rigid institutional structures. Having such discussions and tailoring them to the student need would be “going against the grain” (High School Educator Informant #2, [p.102](#)). Overall, these structures are designed to keep a consistent set of institutional expectations met and satisfied, and to maintain an institutional order. All of these activities are coordinated within an institutional accountability circuit that embraces a biomedical discourse.

5.3 Summary

As shown in this chapter, educator informants are constantly doing the work of navigating the H&PE curriculum as different situations unfold socially and within classrooms. This work is organized by the professional expectations of the OCT and their employer, both forming the institutional accountability circuit that gives precedence to a biomedical view of intimacy. Work processes that appear democratic, such as the PLAR survey, are skewed towards the fortification of the ruling relation of institutional accountability circuits. These include the biomedical view of

discussing intimacy, to remain abreast of any potential issues or breaches of professional standards and regulations, or parental complaints. Figure 5 depicts a map of this organization, indicating the institutional accountability circuit at play amidst the work of educators:

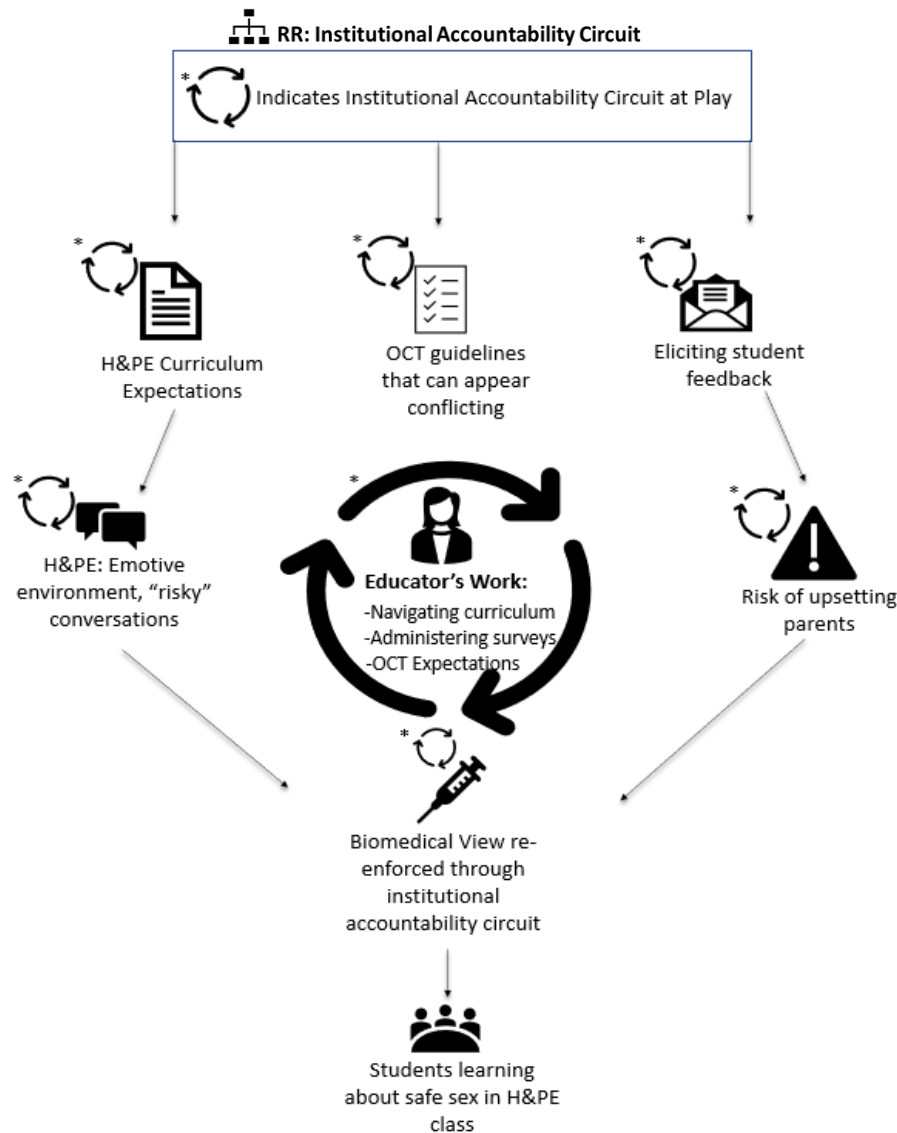


Figure 5: A Map of the Institutional Accountability Circuit at Play

The institutional accountability circuit can therefore be seen to subordinate the experience of youth by organizing the topic of intimacy to remain one-dimensional, and often, difficult for youth to resonate with. This is explored in the next chapter, where I explicate how youth

experience another disjuncture in their ability to relate to the content delivered during H&PE class as a result of the ruling relation of performance and evaluation.

Chapter 6: Exploring the Account of Equity and Inclusion: The Ruling Relations of Performance and Evaluation and the Social Organization of H&PE

In this chapter, I show how the ruling relation of *performance and evaluation* subordinates education related to H&PE, and how the social organization of H&PE is nurtured by an *employability discourse* that is prevalent and underscored by a neoliberal agenda. Notably, I describe how the ruling relation of performance and evaluation is seen to reorient youth perspectives about the importance of H&PE and align them with the employment discourse. Texts such as school board/ministry reports, measurable test results, and various other student success strategies concerned with quantifying student performance appear to enforce the ways in which H&PE is subordinated. Through such coordination of quantifiable, outcomes-based learning pedagogy, I argue that the teaching directions being taken in healthy living strand are often impacted. I demonstrate that there is an undervaluing of H&PE at an administrative level, which organizes a *disjuncture of relatability* for youth, often resulting in the healthy living strand of the H&PE curriculum being difficult for them to resonate with. Figure 6 below presents an extract from Figure 1, indicating the foci of this chapter:

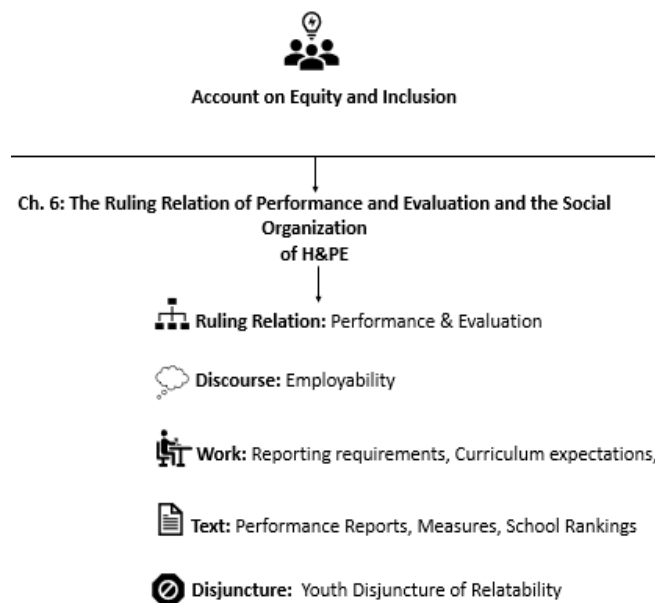


Figure 6: Focused-Schema of the Ruling Relations of Performance and Evaluation and the Social Organization of H&PE

6.1 Curriculum Implementation and the Ruling Relation of Performance & Evaluation

In Ontario, the role of the school board is administrative, as much as it is regulatory (Robson, 2013). Each public school is required to submit performance reports to their school board, which contribute to the Ministry of Education's School Board Progress Reports (Ministry of Education, 2021). Performance measurement also happens at the student-level, where student performance and participation in classes is monitored and reported upon through various mechanisms such as report cards. Through my analysis of conversations with educator informants, I found that the work processes associated with gathering data for reports are coordinated through the ruling relation of performance and evaluation. The complex of ruling relations of performance and evaluation seems to limit teachers' opportunities to address concerns youth may have about a particular topic related to healthy living. This is because the ruling relation of performance and evaluation organizes H&PE in ways similar to the ways in which other courses are organized. They insert a particular way of knowing about health, even though discussing topics related to personal health would benefit from an open and student-centred discussion about what youth want to learn (Allen, 2005; Aggleton & Campbell, 2000). In addition, the performance and evaluation needs of the institution in assessing students' work as learners was also identified in my analysis and will be discussed.

I learned about this limitation as I traced the requirement educators have to abide by when implementing the curriculum, while also adhering to institutional requirements. For example, despite the open-endedness of documents such as the H&PE (2015, Revised) curriculum which calls for student-centred education that students find engaging and empowering, students across multiple sites rarely experienced this (High School Student Informant #10, p. [70](#); High School Student Informant #5, p. [75](#)). Educator informants also

acknowledged the importance of the H&PE curriculum and identified the central role it played in shaping their teaching decisions, as is common for most curriculum-driven courses:

And it's always important that you relate what you're teaching back to the curriculum, it's not something that you feel like you're just pulling out of the air, that you just want to teach for fun. You want to make sure that they're signing up for an Ontario curriculum and that's what's expected, and that you can cite the sources there, that that's why you're teaching it this way. (High School Educator Informant #2)

While the H&PE curriculum (2015) does not prescribe specific teaching resources, a primary challenge when discussing health through a curriculum-structured approach is the pressure educators' face due to the expectation of harmonizing institutional structural requirements such as performance and evaluation reports, and the flexibility required to engage in student-centred discussions for H&PE. Noting that researchers have found that the most effective education on sexual health and intimacy is based on taking into consideration young people's interests and what they consider to be relevant issues, the tension between satisfying institutional requirements and addressing student interests creates various challenges (Allen, 2005; Macintyre et al, 2015). While texts such as the H&PE curriculum (2015) call for customization, institutional practices limit the extent to which this can take place. For example, a student informant recalls health class being similar to a "regular class":

Honestly, it was mostly, mostly what I can remember is like contraception, like putting a condom on a banana. Um, stuff like that, like it really wasn't. I felt like it wasn't, it really wasn't like a safe space, or like an open discussion in any way. Like it was like, it was structured very much like a regular class, which I think it, health shouldn't be. Because

it's like a lot more personal than that, because you're talking about, 'cause the whole point of health class is to talk about your own health. (High School Student Informant #5)

In the account above, the student informant shared their experience of learning about health in a structured way, hinting at the ruling relations that organize their experience in such a way. The tension that appears here is that there is an attempt to objectify, or make measurable, the sensitive and personal aspects of life, which are often abstract and nuanced, to help fit into the needs of various institutions (e.g., school boards, the Ministry of Education, school departments).

A pressure that educator informants appear to navigate is that they are most-commonly required to compress their instruction on the healthy living strand within a 2–3-week period out of a semester (as discussed in Chapters 2 & 7). Within this time duration, one of their goals is to meet the overall and specific expectations as outlined in the curriculum document, as best as possible. As educator informants shared how they organize their work, they hinted at the pressure of meeting curriculum expectations while also navigating the tension of knowing that meeting those expectations may not necessarily mean that students get a customized learning experience, as highlighted by educator informant #4 (Chapter 4, pg. [78](#))

One of the expectations a teacher must satisfy is that of producing an evaluation method that determines whether the students passed or failed in learning the concepts being taught and laid out in the curriculum. This becomes an expectation to satisfy even if the experience at the local level of both the students and the teacher is different. The curriculum document is viewed in this study as a text and its activation then coordinates a process that replaces teachers' local knowledge with an institutional focus on performance and evaluation (in addition to elements discussed in Chapter 5). There are other texts that reinforce this institutional expectation, such as the *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools* (2010)

document that teachers are required to adhere to. This is the official policy document from the Ministry of Education that describes the assessment, evaluation, and reporting policies and practices in Ontario schools, and is intended to improve fairness, transparency, equity, and consistency of the policies across Ontario schools (Growing Success, 2010). Keeping the influence of performance and evaluation present through such texts, curriculum delivery seems to take on a regulatory nature which teachers are expected to activate. Through my analysis of conversation with informants and document review, it appears that deviating from the structured curriculum to address specific areas that some youth may be interested in is not structurally viable. If a teacher is consistently deviating from the curriculum to offer a customized fit for some students within the short-time frame for teaching the healthy living strand, they may risk not being able to cover the other expectations within the curriculum, amongst many others.

This alignment with the curriculum's constrained delivery and institutional requirements for performance and evaluation appeared to contribute to another disjuncture among youth. A consistent focus on covering the material and adhering to institutional requirements was traced to building an underlying narrative that undervalues healthy living. Such limitations on delving into topics that may be pertinent to some students for the sake of building healthy intimate relationships also appeared to incline youth to reorient their perspective on the importance of healthy living. I explore this in the next section.

6.2 The Discourse of Employability and the Discrediting of H&PE

For most student informants, having intimate relationships in high school was a common experience, on par with research suggesting that over 71% of youth in Canada report dating by the age of 15 (Canadian Population Health Initiative, 2008). Despite this, however, most student informants expressed feeling ill-prepared about navigating intimate relationships during high

school and wished to have learned more about forming healthy relationships at a younger age as the pressures of priorities related to career, work, and the search for success increased as they grew older:

Um. I feel like actually. I actually felt like this should be something that, that should be taught in school. I don't know if it's like actually feasible or not, but then, um, like the school always just teaches things on like, on textbooks, about like science and math. But then, this, like the education system just doesn't put a lot of effort in human relationships, which is probably the most important skill that everyone should have. And, like, it's probably a lot easier for me to say it and then actually having it, like practically. But then it'll be great if there's like a course that focuses on, um, like how to socialize with people, how to communicate well. And sex ed should definitely be a lot more, um focused on, especially in high school. (High School Student Informant #7)

Students further elaborated on their ideologies, which can be traced to the neoliberal philosophy. This ideology permeated their school experience with a focus on being responsible and prepared for a financially secure future, but at the same time not having enough time to learn about and engage in healthy intimate relationships. For example, one student informant stated:

Especially with, um, all these different course timings, and all these different programs, and all these people going into co-op, and having part-time jobs now, having home responsibilities, suddenly we don't have that time. And I believe that, if I go into a relationship in this limited time, someone that I don't plan to stay with for long, why am I doing this? (University Student Informant #5)

This particular university student informant continued to explain how the staunch focus on academic performance resulted in an understanding that intimacy and relationships are something to be eventually engaged in the future:

‘Cause this isn’t high school anymore. In which, you date for let’s say the remainder of high school, and most people know that going into a relationship for the remainder of high school, most of them don’t last until afterwards to life and universities, and what not, to go into that mindset, that we’re adults now. (University Student Informant #5)

These informant conversations underscored a theme of ‘growing up’, or adulthood, characterized by a career-first focus, and were reminiscent of the neoliberal philosophy which places emphasis on employability. Based on the account above, having relationships and learning about healthy foundational habits was presumed by youth to be something that develops over the life-course. There was a discourse apparent in the language of associating concepts such as adulthood and university life with obtaining successful employment and optimizing time. Student informants alluded to this ideology in their dialogue as they noted the pressures they must deal with regarding obtaining the necessary qualifications required to get an education, get a job, and then get married:

I don't know like, after university you have to focus on like getting a job, and like I prioritize that first because nowadays we see women who are getting higher positions in companies and doing like, amazing things. And they're doing that first, and I think that I should really focus on bettering myself first before I can like waste my time or even just focus on something else. (High School Student Informant #1)

This student informant placed emphasis on the limitation of time, on the seriousness of university, due to the societal expectation that one is to graduate and land a job upon graduation,

and after that, consider marriage or serious intimate relationships. A recurring concern that prioritized performing well in school and valuing a post-secondary education, often with the goal of ‘getting rich’, emerged amongst student informant accounts. The purpose of education and its association with the goal of economic success appeared to be one of the strongest motivators for youth to participate in post-secondary school. This type of social organization also discredited healthy living education as something to be done individually, on one’s own time. As such, it can be inferred the institutional discourse of employability and the ruling relation of performance and evaluation socially organizes the topic of H&PE in school.

This neoliberal ideology can be traced to the Common Sense Revolution (CSR) (2003). One of the key foci of which was to reduce what the government at the time considered to be wasteful and inefficient practices. Such a neoliberal ideology views students as human-capital to be shaped into economically-competitive future workers with the skills and attitudes required to compete effectively in the market (Rizvi, 2017). As such, while there is a plethora of research on the negative financial and psychological implications that gender-based violence has on the workplace, citing losses of billions of dollars due to both direct and indirect costs, a broadly based, comprehensive, prevention strategy is still not prioritized for education in Canada (Wolfe and Jaffe, 1999; Vanner, 2021). Accordingly, some student informants explained that learning about healthy intimacy may not be something to be taught by a specific teacher in a class:

I feel like, it's not a big thing um, that educational board should be teaching, I feel like, I feel like they should just give like a broad statement about it, but they shouldn't, you shouldn't be something that serious they need to be taught, right? Like, they, they, they already have like guidance counsellors, that people like, I already know people go to, they have special teachers that they talk to for these matters, that they wanna express

themselves to, right? And that special teacher, they they have like, they should have the right to go to whatever teacher or whatever adult that they feel comfortable talking to, but it shouldn't be something that's generally taught by one person, 'cause, 'cause everyone has a different idea of this, right? Everyone has a different idea of a healthy relationship, so, yeah. (University Student Informant #8)

Other student informants made oblique references to individual responsibility. This ideology can be linked to the neoliberal agenda wherein individual responsibility for health is promoted and corrective or biomedical approaches are prioritized, while the *social determinants of health* are ignored (Raphael & Bryant, 2015; K. E. Smith & Schrecker, 2015). For example, the passage below shows how a student informant considered their career to be the number one priority, followed by family and relationships:

I would never put a relationship as my number one priority. I think that is not, in, something anyone should ever do. Because a relationship isn't everything in life. It's a part of it. It's a strong component of it. But, for example, for me, I like to think of it this way. Career is number one, family is number two, and relationship is number three.

(University Student Informant #9)

This sentiment did not come as a surprise since the Ministry of Education has put forth various policies and initiatives designed to prepare youth for the workplace, such as the Student Success Strategy (2003) which boasted “specialist high-skills majors” and “cooperative education” to “prepare students for the future” (Ministry of Education, 2021). Scholars argue that the purpose of obtaining higher education is not to assuage the corporate greed, but to critically engage in the field of progressive ideas, non-commodified values, and critical dialogue (Giroux, 2016; Rhoades, 2013). The increasing embrace of a neoliberal philosophy since the 1960s can be seen

through the way in which a generalized notion of employability dominates the work of educators and students in school. The domination of such a discourse comes at the cost of the disparagement of education related to healthy living, as the role of H&PE as essential knowledge is rarely recognized (Vanner, 2021). For example, Ontario students are encouraged to enroll in co-operative education to obtain school credit requirements as an alternate mode of delivery for academic subject knowledge, with the hopes that they will obtain the skills and connections necessary to become employed once they have finished school (Hutchinson et al., 2001).

Against this strong background of education for the sake of economic success, the role of H&PE is discredited. The way in which H&PE is situated in schools gives the course of H&PE the perception that it is a “glorified recess” (Educator Informant #10), which further jeopardizes the idea of schools as a place to learn about healthy intimate relationships. For example, a student informant below explained the process of selecting courses for the semester; here, the pressure the informant experienced to select courses that optimize what they refer to as “classroom learning” becomes visible as they forego enrolling in H&PE since that can be done outside school:

When you're choosing courses you um, you realize you have a, a limited number, a finite number of course slots, but like, so many more choices to choose from. And when that's the case, you really got to, you know, choose your courses carefully and really place emphasis on um, the courses you want to take. Um so but like, assuming that they're, you know, electives, not, you know, compulsory courses. But yeah, for um the few elective courses I could have taken back in grade 9 and grade 10, um, my parents always um, suggested that I take something that is uh, a lot more, I guess uh, kind of more like, sitting down in like a more, like a more classroom kind of format, rather than say, gym,

'cause gym has always just been looked at as like a form of, you know, physical exercise, um, as an excuse for exercise. And I think that, you know, the way I was, the way I was raised is that, you know, um, you can always just exercise outside to school, exercise like, your own time, in that you can do that anytime. So there wasn't really like, that much of a need for gym. (University Student Informant #3)

The discourse of employability can be seen in this student's account and appears to be reinforced through the ruling relation of performance and evaluation. Youth appear to view the concept of intimacy as something that the education board does not or should not have to cover comprehensively.

Demonstrating the discrediting of H&PE further, an educator informant provided an account of receiving direction to simply finish teaching the H&PE course in an allotted time:

Do whatever you want as long as you get three weeks of health in. Like there's no direction, there's no teamwork, there's nothing, it's just you do what you want for three weeks. And the problem with that is that some teachers might get away with not actually delivering the whole curriculum, maybe just showing a movie for a unit. Um, so I think there's a problem when it's too loose. (High School Educator Informant #6)

Through my IE analysis and review of related literature, youth appear to minimize their focus on skills such as developing healthy intimate relationships, and instead prioritize learning about the importance of performing well in school in order to participate in a competitive market. Studies suggest a positive association between healthy relationships with positive mental health for students and adults, however, it appears that students are rarely provided with the tools to build these skills over their time in high school or learn about them as a pivotal part of their lives (Grundström et al., 2021; Pedersen & Pithey, 2019; Whitton et al., 2013). The impact of healthy

intimate relationships on the wellbeing of a nation is therefore also not well-established or explained in schools and often gets overridden by other concepts in order to meet curriculum expectations, which discredits its complexity and significance. Additionally, as shown in Chapter 5, a biomedical approach to discussing intimacy is well supported within the institution. A neoliberal philosophy condones a biomedical view of education related to intimate relationships as it helps reproduce the traditional social order of education (Molina-berrio et al, 2019).

The effects of neoliberalism have thus resulted in education becoming commodified (Connell, 2013; Danvers, 2019). Its governance, pedagogies, and social relations are seen to be permeated by a neoliberal logic in that the goal of educating people is no longer to simply educate, but to invest in the building of a valuable, higher-income potential future (Giroux, 2013). Theorists point to the idea of the ‘homo economicus’ in which market values and metrics govern every sphere of life, including education (Brown, 2016) in such that the student is viewed as a narcissistic consumer whose desire to learn is motivated by a return on investment (Danvers, 2019; Nixon et al., 2018). Unfortunately, existing policies often undermine the importance of the skill of building healthy intimate relationships and the positive impact this can have on the nation and communities as a whole. Such an organization of H&PE appeared to be pervasive across all the schools whose pupil and staff I interviewed, prompting me to trace how it was being coordinated across multiple sites that are not directly related, explored in the next section.

6.3 The Role of School Boards, and how the Minimum Impact Ideology is Coordinated Across Multiple Sites:

Each school board is responsible for directing the strategic vision and focus for their schools annually, as stated by the Ministry of Education in alignment with the Education Act (1990):

Every school board in Ontario is governed by a board of trustees that has a legislated requirement to ensure the creation of a multi-year strategic plan (MYSP). The MYSP is a visioning and policy document that sets the direction for the board. (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.5)

Studies on the role and impact of school boards have found support both for and against the efficacy of school boards in influencing school performance. While some studies show a positive link between school boards and positive learning of students and financial outcomes for schools, others argue that they serve as wasteful hierarchies that do not impact student learning (Bogotch & Brooks, 1994; Curry et al., 2018; Saatcioglu et al., 2011). Through the goal of finding efficiencies, the education reform has led to changes in the structure and authority of school boards (Sheppard, Galway, Brown, & Wiens, 2013). School boards continue to serve as local education governance authorities, but have been reduced dramatically in number and have experienced loss of autonomy along with an increase in accountability for student learning and district management (Sheppard et al., 2013). Regardless of the various changes in the structure of school boards, they hold a governing power over schools and enact an authoritative role over the decisions and work processes that occur in schools daily. Boards require the schools to prepare and submit an annual operating and capital budget estimating revenues and expenditures for the fiscal year (CODE, 2013). For example, an educator informant explained how restrictions experienced by the school were due to funding allocation and how operating within a limited budget plays a role in the way that school course foci are determined:

So within your superintendency, the superintendent will work with the principals and say, "this is your budget, X number of budget." I know, talking for high school, you know, a budget can be anywhere from 200 to 300 thousand dollars for the year and that sounds

like a ton of money. But when you break it down and you think about, you know, if there's a broken door or broken window, that's coming out of the school budget and simple things like a broken window, it's like 4, 5 hundred dollars. And, multiply that by the number of windows, number of doors. Um, and so that's up to the pr-, principal in coordination with the superintendent in terms of what the focus is on the school, and typically the focus is, is on mental health, um, but not necessarily healthy relationships. And if it is, it would be "oh, you're the phys ed teacher, you know, just maybe talk about it a little bit," and that makes them feel good. (Educator Informant #3)

School boards hold the power of determining the school's budget and planning for resources, which receives a final review from the Ministry of Education and serves as a critical factor in the organization of the student experience (CODE, 2013). Budget planning includes the distribution of teachers and class sizes as well as whether a school can have specialty staff such as a physical education specialist, or a music teacher, etc. Due to budget limitations some schools in Canada have had to raise money through fundraising to obtain a physical education resource (Baic, 2013). Newspaper articles offer excerpts from interviews with key personnel from school advisory committees who acknowledge the under-prioritization of H&PE and the way in which budget perimeters underscore the insignificance of H&PE:

Dr. Tremblay said that as a former chair of the parent school advisory committee in New Brunswick, he saw many schools raise money to hire a physical education teacher. We never do that for math teachers or language-arts teachers or even the librarian. Who decided that physical and health education is a basement dweller? Dr. Tremblay asked. It seems particularly misaligned given the world in which we live in and the trends that we're all aware of. (Baic, 2013).

As mentioned previously, educator informants highlighted a similar sentiment in that H&PE often appears to be an afterthought. Funding is often directed towards resources that will impact a school's bottom line, or help schools appear as highly competitive. This notion of schools appearing competitive appeared as I explored some of the extra-local factors that have an influence on the priorities a school board selects to achieve. Educator informants advised that school priorities are determined based on popular trends or current issues being experienced within a geographical area:

In high school, the focus is typically what's going on in our particular site and location.

So if there was um, a bunch of suicides that happened, you know, the focus of that school may typically be on mental health as opposed to another site where, you know, you have a high um, population that's dealing with drugs. (Educator Informant #3)

School priorities are also determined based on what has a prominent impact on school test scores such as the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) (Singh, 2016). Implemented in 1996, the OSSLT is supposed to serve as an accountability measure for the public education system, enabling different stakeholders such as the public and school boards to gauge the performance of a school. EQAO posits that the OSSLT administered in grade 10 tests the knowledge of students on all subjects: "The OSSLT measures whether students are meeting the minimum standard for literacy across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9" (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test - EQAO, 2021). The OSSLT contains a disproportionate focus on math and literacy education at the expense of physical education, amongst others, even though data from it is supposed to be used for school improvement planning (ETFO-EQAO Testing, 2021; Pinto, 2016):

The agency provides schools and school boards with detailed reports about their students' achievement, as well as contextual, attitudinal, and behavioural information from questionnaires, in an interactive online reporting tool. These data are used to improve school programming and classroom instruction. EQAO also reports the results of the provincial assessments publicly. This helps keep the public education system accountable to taxpayers. (Ministry of Education, 2021)

Evaluations such as school rankings by institutes such as the Fraser Institute, which for the past 20 years has been “the go-to source for parents and educators to measure school performance” (Raptis, 2012), also play an influential role. For example, an educator informant shared how planning and related decisions are influenced by performance and evaluation, which determine school priorities:

Yeah, so they, they do have a planning team um, with the principal. Um, the principal decides if they want, want that be a focus, though the principal decides if they want the team to decide what the focus is of the school. But again, each school is different. Uh, again, I can't talk too much about, about elementary, but the focus tends to be a little bit more on, you know, the literacy scores and the EQAO scores. (Educator Informant # 3)

Research into the funding process has revealed an important role of school rankings and school test performance. Through the restructuring that has taken place in the education sector, having students undergo standardized testing has become the common vehicle for promoting board accountability. Similarly, independent research organizations such as the Fraser Institute gave rise to the ranking of school performance based on the publicly available indicators reported on by school boards (Raptis, 2012). Both testing and school rankings have a harmonious relationship wherein if students perform poorly on standardized tests such as the OSSLT, it

impacts the school rankings and in turn, and can lead to parents moving their children to better-ranking schools (Raptis, 2012). This type of movement negatively impacts a schools' budget, as schools receive per-pupil funding (Raptis, 2012). Not only do low-ranking schools lose valuable human resources when high-achieving children transfer schools, but they lose the financial resources that come along with each individual child. This focus on performance and evaluation organizes a disjuncture for youth, in that they can experience a limited ability to learn comprehensive material that is relevant to them.

These standardized tests serve as measures of accountability built into the school system whereby school boards gauge the sanctity of teachers adhering to curriculum expectations (Robson, 2019). For example, an educator informant expressed how the freedom associated with the coverage of the H&PE curriculum by the Ministry of Education builds an environment where teachers cannot be certain about education youth would have received on H&PE concepts in previous grades:

I think the curriculum piece it's kind of, and it's good, it gives a lot of leeway and, and freedom, um, but maybe like, you know, have a, a little bit of guidance from the ministry in terms of, "these are the main topics that should probab-, should most likely get covered at this grade level," 'cause right-. And they do have it, and it's under overarching goals, but it's not explicit. Um, I, I I, I think it would be nice to know in grade 9, if they took the grade 9 course, these 5 topics should have at least been covered. Um, it, it could have been but you don't know. So just like how we have standardized tests in grade 3 and grade 9 and grade 10. Um, I'm not saying to have a test or anything, but I'm just saying some sort of standard expectation. Once they take this course, they should have covered at least these 5 topics. (Educator Informant #3)

The institutional focus on performance and evaluation related to the measures above appears to establish the insignificance of H&PE. Through the budget planning process, key factors that represent whether a school performs well or not are given precedence and prioritized by school staff. These key factors seem to not include much of anything related to H&PE, which gives the impression that efforts related to H&PE are highly devalued, risk being minimally delivered, and are often perceived as insignificant, which some students, in turn, seem to internalize.

As I have been showing, the accountability strategies employed by educators appear to be linked to the ruling relation of performance and evaluation. Each school board in Ontario is responsible for reporting on 12 indicators that indicate the progress of that school board (See Appendix S for details on each indicator). These indicators are quantitative and are focused on performance and evaluation in areas related to math, literacy, and graduation rates; the results demonstrate how each school board compares against others in the province (Ministry of Education, 2021). The following is a list of these indicators:

- Reading results for Grade 6 students, and progress in this area
- Literacy results among Grade 10 students, and progress in this area
- The percentage of students who have completed 16 credits or more by the end of Grade 10, and progress in this area
- The percentage of students who have completed 23 credits or more by the end of Grade 11, and progress in this area
- The percentage of students who graduated with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) within four or five years of starting Grade 9

These indicators appear to contribute to a culture that undervalues H&PE and regulates the work of school staff accordingly. Overall, my analysis revealed that a focus on performance and

evaluation seems to mediate the work processes and ideological codes that are activated by educators and school administrators in making decisions. Through the requirement of reporting on the above standardized measures, the insignificance of H&PE can be seen to be coordinated across multiple sites. Since a discourse of the importance of employability in defining success is pervasive amongst the language used by school staff, the Ministry of Education, and school boards, H&PE often takes a back seat as its contribution to a school's overall performance evaluation is limited.

6.4 Summary

In this chapter, I explicated how the various reforms in education, such as the CSR of 2003 and the increasing historical neoliberalist philosophy have shaped the view of a school's (including educators' and students') success. Neoliberal reforms have placed more value on knowledge that has a higher return on investment, driven by a discourse of employability. I showed how educator informants in my research were impacted by the ruling relation of performance and evaluation, which influenced their pedagogy. The ruling relation of performance and evaluation appeared to impact student experience of learning about intimacy and created a disjuncture of relatability.

Strategies for the reform of education to focus on performance-based restructuring include conditioning youth to embrace a discourse of employability where healthy living education is undervalued or considered to be a personal endeavour. From a young age, this conditioning appears to instill an ideology that aligns with the neoliberal approach to education. A focus on performance-based outcomes that the Ministry of Education places upon school boards fortifies the idea of student success being linked to employability. Such a framing places impetus on the individual for their own wellbeing and is also a part of the way in which a

systemic focus on a biomedical/public health risk view of intimate relationships is tolerated (as previously established). Figure 7 below presents a summary view of this chapter:

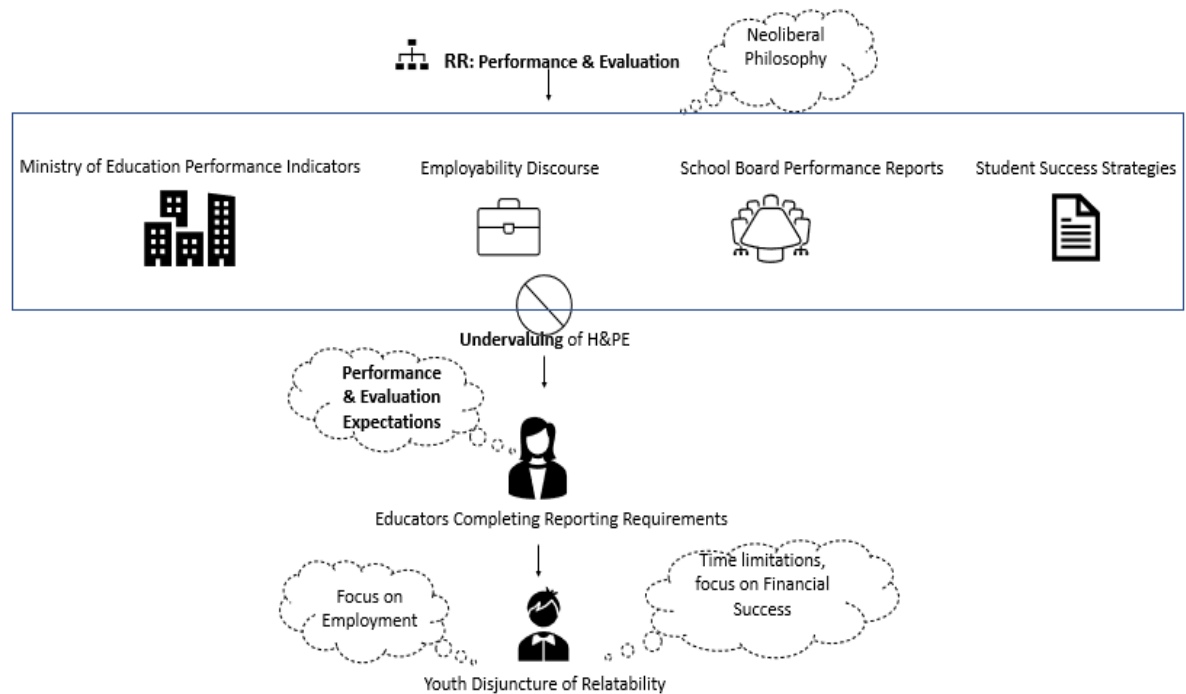


Figure 7: A Map of the Ruling Relation of Performance and Evaluation Building a Disjuncture for Youth

In the next chapter, I will explore how youth experience the H&PE curriculum and how some of their needs for learning about intimate relationships are subjugated by the administrative processes of their school, namely, the ruling relation of timetabling. The notion of the undervaluing of H&PE can be seen in the administrative processes that logistically control how, where, when, and by whom H&PE is taught. I investigate the activities that coordinate this process and demonstrate how H&PE is further undervalued.

Chapter 7: Exploring an Account of Student Engagement and Curriculum: The Social Organization of Skimming Over Healthy Living

In this chapter, I will describe how the potential impact of the healthy living strand of the H&PE curriculum seems to be attenuated through the ruling relation of an administrative process known as *timetabling*. I selected this ruling relation to explicate as it appeared to be one of the core texts that organized educator and student informant experiences across multiple sites. The conditions created by the timetabling process appeared to be one of the common organizing elements as to why the educator and student informants I spoke with often felt rushed to get through the H&PE curriculum. I learned that in various ways, healthy living discussions were being skimmed over due to timing restrictions. I show how this type of rushed learning experience is driven by an *ideological discourse of efficiency* which organized the work of school staff such as teachers and Department Heads (DH). The ideological discourse of efficiency was seen to limit the opportunities teachers' had to delve into subject areas that may be of interest to students. It was also seen to attenuate youths' ability to consider the platform of H&PE class as a valued source of learning about intimate relationships. In this chapter, I will show how the ruling relation of timetabling inserts its influences into the decisions made by teachers, which impacts youths' experiences when learning about healthy intimacy. Figure 6 below presents an excerpt of Figure 1, showing the foci of this chapter:

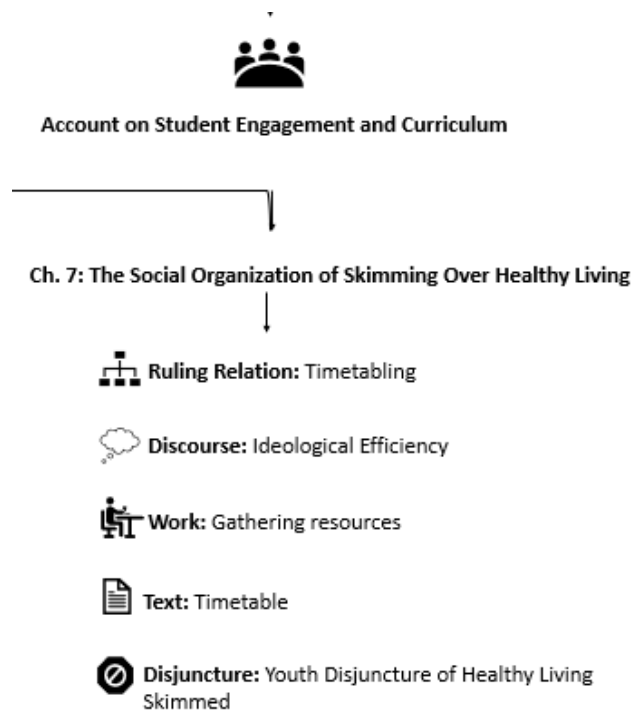


Figure 8: Focused-Schema of the Social Organization of Skimming Over Healthy Living

7.1 The Ruling Relation of Timetabling

Timetabling is the process whereby a DH or a curriculum leader determines “which courses are taught at what days and times, in which rooms, and taught by whom” (Thompson, 2005, p.198).

A DH I spoke with advised that in most schools, timetables are developed by the DH and ultimately approved by the principal and submitted to the school board (Educator Informant #3).

The timetabling process has a common definition among scholars: “how to create a feasible timetable given a set of constraints or rules (i.e., any factor that limits when or where any course can be scheduled)” (Hill, 2008, p.1). I learned the ruling relation of timetabling controlled the activities of people in different locations. Research on the school timetabling process recognizes that there are various constraints timetabling is based on, such as juggling between the number of course sessions, available teachers and rooms, number of lessons to be taught by teachers and specific classes, and adhering to the regulations specific to each school’s labour requirements

(Pillay, 2014). One of the constraints posed by school timetables is the rigidity they present if a request is made for changes in decisions. Scholars categorize constraints for the school timetabling problem into three groups, namely, basic scheduling constraints, event constraints, and resource constraints (Post et al., 2010). In the current study, the ruling relation of timetabling presented boundaries within which teachers operated, indirectly shaping the experiences of youth and subjugating some of their interests related to learning about healthy living. I learned about some of the impacts of the process of timetabling when an educator informant shared the process through which they are selected to teach a course:

So that's actually um, a, a contractual issue and a board issue. So what happens, it's all based on seniority and qualifications. And so if I'm qualified to teach something, I can be asked or expected to teach that at any time. Um, and so what they, I can express every year, they collect from all the teachers, their interests, and what they would like to teach. And so we send out in a form saying "I'm, these are the courses I would like to teach," and then they have to go through a whole staffing process, which involves um, the union as well as the admin. And we are staffed based on the numbers of our students, and so every year the board gives us, "you may have these, this is your predicted, predicted enrollment for next fall. So you may have this many teachers for next year." So let's say the board says we can have 100 teachers, but right now we have 110 on staff. What they have to do is, they have to unfortunately declare surplus to the school, the 10 teachers with the least amount of seniority. Then they build a timetable for everybody else. So I actually have no control. (Educator Informant #4)

In the account above, the reference to the administrative processes of seniority and qualifications is one example of the activation of the institutional discourse of efficiency. Following timetable

processes is one of the ways an institution abides by obligations to efficiently run the workplace. While the DH makes decisions based on aspects such as seniority and qualifications, the impact of these decisions is far reaching and ultimately influences youths' learning experiences. For example, someone with higher seniority could get assigned to teach an H&PE course versus a teacher who has lower seniority, but who perhaps has more interest and skill in teaching the subject. An educator informant further explained the impact of the timetabling process:

Great question. Um, I believe, I believe, um. It works a little differently at every school.

At this school, um, the principal tells uh, the head of phys ed, or the head of any department, "these are how many sections of uh, courses you have. You allot them to your phys ed staff. These are who your phys ed staff are." Um, and you know, every year it changes, I'm at the bottom of seniority um, in terms of um, um, being permanent. So, if there's not enough students or the number of students um, have gone down inside the school, I'm the first one to get booted out. Um, so I've, I've bounced around quite a bit um, at around uh, different schools in the TDSB. And where at other, other schools. I know that the staffing committee uh, decides who teaches phys ed, or the principal, or the admin. Yeah, so it's a little different. (Educator Informant #5)

The accounts above show the influence of the timetabling process on teacher selection. However, the impact of timetabling extends beyond the general expected goal of teacher selection, it seems to also impact youth experience, explained below.

7.2 How Timetabling Rules Over Youth Experience and Enables the Disjuncture of Skimming of Healthy Living

Learning about intimate relationships from the school curriculum is one of the most effective ways to enable all students to learn about healthy and respectful relationships (Wekerle & Wolfe,

1999; Safe Schools Action Team, 2008). This would be a system-based approach through the education sector. Healthy living commonly gets taught within a ‘health classroom’, which is the physical room where healthy living topics are discussed. Teachers are required to spend 30% of their course time in teaching the healthy living component of the H&PE curriculum (H&PE Curriculum, 2015). In determining how to utilize this 30% allocation, the H&PE curriculum specifically states that gymnasium availability should not be a factor in how health instruction is planned:

High-quality instruction in health and physical education is integrated in such a way that students have opportunities to make connections between concepts and skills in all three strands of the curriculum and in the living skill expectations. Planning of the health education component of the Healthy Active Living Education courses requires careful consideration of when material should be taught explicitly and when topics and concepts can be integrated with learning in physical education and linked to learning in other subjects. Teaching health sporadically or when gymnasium facilities are being used for other purposes will not provide adequate opportunities for learning. Thirty per cent of instructional time should be allocated to health education. Ways of managing instruction will vary from school to school, depending on student needs, timetabling, and available facilities (Health & Physical Education Curriculum, 2015, Revised, p.58).

However, school administration often satisfies this need by compressing healthy living into a two-to-three-week period, which influences how teachers’ pedagogical decisions. My conversations with educator informants revealed that one of the main organizing factors is this limited time in which teachers have to teach healthy living. For example, an educator informant explained how they felt that the common setup of H&PE wherein a school will usually dedicate a

two-to-three-week block to healthy living out of a semester, was detrimental to their teaching experience:

So I've been at schools where we only really dedicate three weeks in a whole semester to health. And it's always rushed and we don't ever cover everything. So I would say that's another shortfall I found, that we actually should be spending more time on the health units and they shouldn't just be blocked off, like you do phys-ed all semester and do two weeks of health (ones) and then one week here. It should be spread out more, so maybe you're doing activity Monday to Thursday and then every Friday is health, so it's continuous throughout the semester. Um, so that would just be some of my observations of the course. (High School Educator Informant #6)

In the account above, the educator informant shared their belief that healthy living should be a topic which is regularly covered throughout the semester instead of something discussed for a short period of time. However, the educator informant found it difficult to organize the teaching design in that way due to the constraints of the timetabling process. As such, through timetabling, room availability becomes influential on how teachers plan their lessons. Due to classroom/subject rotations, educator informants indicated that students may not receive adequate learning opportunities if teaching decisions are made based on space availability. The limited time in the classroom thus organizes a disjuncture of skimming over or rushing discussions of Human Development and Sexual Health (HDSH) (the topic in healthy living which discusses intimacy, something already considered taboo). For instance, an educator informant explained the logistical planning challenges experienced when rotating students through the gymnasium and classroom spaces as required based on the topic being taught:

I think one of the primary reasons is actually a logistical reason, because what happens is we have to rotate all the classes through all the different facilities. So for example, we have a health room, we have two gyms, we have a pool, and a fitness center. So when we're planning the units, we have to rotate it so every kid can get a certain amount of time in each of those rooms. So if we needed to make 6 weeks in the health room, we can't have one class in the pool for 6 weeks, because they also need to be in the gym and the fitness center. So it ends up being a logistical thing a little bit, I think? Um, like making sure that every class gets to rotate through and do all the different things they need to.

(Educator Informant #6)

Discussions about intimacy are already at a disadvantage in the institution of education due to the prevalence of a biomedical and employability discourse. Exacerbating this disadvantage further is the rotational structure of the H&PE class through timetabling. As per the timetable, the activities of teachers are re-organized to take advantage of the amount of time assigned in the health classroom, which can result in the experience of various topics being skimmed over, as explained by Educator Informant #8 (p.138). It can thus be inferred that compressing the topics of healthy living into a two-to-three-week period places discussions about intimacy at a further risk of being skimmed over.

If a teacher is, however, interested in spending more time within a certain room or facility, educator informants indicated that they do have the ability to request a longer period. They explained that if a teacher wanted to spend more time in the health room to discuss healthy living, this would be a welcomed request by the DH as it would enable them to give other teachers a longer period of time in the physical activity spaces, which is often coveted. This can be seen in the educator informant accounts, “The kids usually don't enjoy healthy living. They

dislike being behind desks and are eager to be moving” (Educator Informant #8). Another educator informant expanded on one of the reasons behind this preference:

Um, and then I think it's also because, it could be because it's [healthy living strand] not seen as, as being as important as getting the kids to be moving daily. 'Cause a lot of the kids, when they're not in um, phys ed, they're not moving all day. And if they don't have phys ed the next semester, a lot of them are literally inactive. So it could be the thought that, we want the kids sweating every day, moving every day, getting that physical activity. We don't want them sitting um, at a desk for months at a time. (Educator Informant #6)

Similarly, the DH explained that teachers focus on the physical education component in order to keep the youth engaged so that they will want to return again to take the class the next year, which helps them meet the requirement for future class enrollment sizes. This reiterates the importance of timetabling:

We try to do a lot more application-heavily, application base, and that's why we choose to do more phys ed as opposed to health activities where its kinda more sit down. I know they can be interactive, but we also have to consider present courses or elective courses. They're not mandatory other than grade 9. So keeping that in mind, we have to kind of keep the course interesting but also inviting for students to want to come back the following year. So if we were to let's say theoretically only have just held the opposite way, when you do two, two weeks of physical health, we would be putting ourselves in the detriment for the following year...at least that's what I've seen right, kids appreciate the phys ed portion as opposed to the health portion, we're kinda catering to that. But it's the need of the- the ability of the staff as well...we have limited resources definitely

limited facility resources so because of that we need to schedule everything by department, there's no program for that so we just sit down using a timetable kinda spreadsheet and you kinda work that out. (Educator Informant #3)

The limitation of physically active spaces rendered gymnasium facilities as valuable and classroom instruction as redundant, leaving limited room to learn about healthy intimate relationships. I argue that youth are influenced by the behaviour required of them as students as they take part in a system designed for administrative efficiency. As youth consistently fulfil the requirements placed upon them by frameworks such as the OS (2016), their ability to view spaces such as classrooms wherein they can discuss issues relevant to their health and wellbeing is attenuated. The value of the learning platform of the health classroom appears to be minimized through the power institutional structures have in organizing the activities that take place there. The impact of the ruling relation of timetabling became clear as numerous student informants expressed feeling the lack of adequate learning opportunities in health class due to time limitations, feeling that teachings about health were rushed through:

I feel, yeah. I feel like the health class was too condensed and um, no one really took it seriously. So, um, I feel like that's a major hole in our understanding of developing healthy relationships. Because our, I remember um, I went to a semestered school, so we would take gym class like every single day. And um, our health class was like compacted into a whole week of the semester. So, they were pretty much, uh, rushed through the whole health curriculum. (University Student Informant #10)

Several student informants expressed a yearning for learning about healthy intimacy in more depth, as well as recognized that discussion about intimate relationships felt rushed or skimmed (e.g. Student Informant #6, p. 98). Thus, it appears that one of the ways timetabling seems to

impact youth experiences is through the way it becomes invisible in their day-to-day school life, and is a taken-for-granted structure.

To explicate the disjuncture of skimming over healthy living that youth experience, I draw upon Smith's (1987) concept of *bifurcated consciousness* to highlight the separation of two modes. These two modes include youth as students who participate in an academic environment which dominates their existence in school, and youth as beings who move nimbly through the spaces of learning and socializing in school. For youth who are in class, things may not be so clearly demarcated as they observe and learn about intimate relationships. In class they are immersed in the academic world where they are required to fulfil a set of expectations placed upon them by the institution of school, which includes learning about safe sex and STI/pregnancy prevention when they choose to be intimate with someone. While they engage in this environment, they are also translating their social experiences into their understanding of intimate relationships. In other words, they are moving from the local realm of the classroom into the extra-local realm of their social circles, splitting their consciousness based on what they need to learn for class, and what they are gleaning from their circles.

To appreciate the depth of this bifurcation, the location of students within the school structure must be understood. From the first time a student is enrolled into any public school in Ontario, they enter into a space that is governed by an Ontario Code of Conduct which applies to students, and everyone involved in the publicly-funded school system (The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct, 2019). School boards are directed by the Ministry of Education to work with a variety of stakeholders including parents, staff, and students to establish board-specific policies to set out how their schools will implement the provincial code and develop any relevant rules. For example, student codes of conduct often state expectations

such as “Students are expected to respect and follow the direction of teachers, supply teachers, and support staff” (Student Code of Conduct, 2007).

As such, youth today are primarily at the receiving-end of an education policy that is provincially designed by leaders, education officials, schooling professionals and other members of the policy community (Robson, 2019; Wallner, 2014). Doing so often risks the removal of youth’s perspectives and their experiences from the design of the content being delivered. The Ontario Schools (2016) policy and program requirements from Kindergarten to Grade 12, for example, reads “The Ontario curriculum outlines the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop and demonstrate in their class work, on tests, and in various other activities through which achievement is assessed and evaluated (p.24)”.

My analysis revealed that the bifurcation of consciousness was prevalent in the way student informants adapted to the need of the institution: most of them expressed a yearning to have learned more from health class, but at the same time they were concomitant to the administrative processes that rushed their experience and appeared to limit their learning about healthy living. In the account below, for example, a student informant expressed their desire to have learned more from school about healthy intimate relationships, recognizing how critical this is to a person’s life. At the same time, however, they alluded to the administrative structures in place that organize their experience:

I hope, I wish that I learned about these things more in school, and that I just didn't learn about it in a single class that I had in grade 9 four years ago. I wish this was a recurring thing because, there are certain things I wish were taught in school that never were. So I wish, so my wish would be that, youth were to be like taught about these every so often, every year or so maybe, just a dedicated assembly or whatnot to learn about healthy

relationships. Because no matter what sex, no matter what orientation you are attracted to, relationships are going to be an aspect in everybody's lives, and so it's important to know what is a healthy one, and I wish that we were taught about this more in school.

(High School Student Informant #12)

The bifurcation of consciousness that takes place in relation to the healthy living strand seems to align students to operate within the requirements of the school, even if that may not meet their wishes of understanding the healthy intimacy. The discourse of the insignificance of H&PE appears to get traversed into the student mindset as educators are often forced to skim over content related to it or merge it with other topics when required by timing restrictions.

7.3 Teacher's Work of Gathering Resources

A key work process teachers engaged in is the work of *gathering teaching resources*, which I define as the work teachers do to determine what topics they will teach, using which content, and for what period of time. Scholars have reported that teachers engage in a process of picking and choosing which materials to deliver based on what they feel well-equipped to teach (Greenan, 2019; Rose et al., 2019). My goal, however, is to show that the work processes of teachers gathering resources to teach their students does not occur in a linear way where a teacher can simply identify a student need and deliver the relevant education and learnings to that student.

While Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA 2021/22) consists of resources teachers can utilize for building their lessons plans, teacher's work of gathering teaching resources appeared to be influenced by the ruling relation of timetabling. My review of documents showed that the H&PE curriculum (2015) does not identify specific resources or teaching materials teachers must utilize. Such has been the approach to H&PE since it was mandated, where lesson planning decisions have been driven by teachers, as discussed in Chapter 2. While other courses

may have textbooks that determine lesson plans, H&PE is driven predominantly by a curriculum whereby the learning goals and expectations are provided by the Ministry of Education to be met by teachers. The ability for teachers to determine their own lesson plans is a design of the H&PE curriculum, and some educator informants expressed appreciation for the ability to use their discretion when designing lesson plans. For example, an educator informant expressed how their ability to choose topics due to the flexibility in the H&PE curriculum creates a more interesting experience for students:

I think education in Canada is really good in the sense there's a lot of, more freedom and leeway for people to pursue their interests. So I still feel having that freedom of choice for educators makes it more interesting to students. And it allows us, our, that opportunity um, to really focus on what's going on at our site. Um, what might be going on. So this is leading to my first point. What might be going on up in Sudbury, where it might be a mining town, will be completely different than what's going on here in Brampton.

(Educator Informant #3)

In a way, teachers build a roadmap or a boundary around the curricular expectations which include milestones that teachers believe will help them satisfy the mandatory overall expectations listed in the curriculum. The educator informants I spoke with shared different experiences, from having a departmental meeting to discuss overall expectations of an H&PE course, versus not being given any direction prior to teaching their H&PE courses. In both instances there was an underlying understanding that at minimum, the overall expectations must be met in the time they have. An educator informant explained how different teachers navigate these conditions:

For sure. Yes. I, I think that we all deliver the curriculum in different ways. Ultimately we are all expected to teach all the curriculum expectations. That's the ideal. Do we all get there? And I'll include myself in that, although I try my best. Does it. Do all teachers actually do it? No. For sure not. (Educator Informant #4)

Additionally, the role of comfort with subject matter was explained as an influence in selecting teaching resources: "I'm sure most begin with what they are comfortable with, and then go through the curriculum" (Educator Informant #4). Another educator informant explained some of the reasons behind such an approach:

People may choose topics that first reflect Ontario Curriculum guidelines, then their comfort delivering it to them. If they have more resources available to them, they may feel confident in teaching the lesson further. There's a lot of resources on anti-bullying and effects of marijuana on teenage bodies. With more resources to choose from, teachers may feel confident to deliver those lessons. (Educator Informant #2)

While a teacher's comfort level with the content on HDSH can be one of the factors that help determine their approach to content selection and delivery, (which has been found by other scholars (Rose et al, 2018) as well), there are additional factors at play. Due to timing restrictions, comfort levels, and institutional pressures discussed in previous chapters, sensitive topics such as healthy intimacy are at a higher risk of being skimmed. For example, an educator informant identified that time limitations imposed upon teachers can limit their ability to delve into topics in the detail that they may sometimes require, and that the "off-topic" conversations can sometimes offer the most value:

Yes. Because I find if that w-, were not to happen, we would be in a situation where I feel, "okay, we have X number of minutes, we must get this done. And then we must

move on to the next topic." Until we'll never be able to have true conversations. Um, I think when, like, I find a lot of times we're talking about relationships, and we go off topic, but that's, that's where the learning happens. If, if we have to follow exactly what the mission is, "you must do this," it's. We, we wouldn't be able to even answer questions I think, it would just be like "hey, this is what we have to do. We're gonna move on to the next one in, in, 20 minutes. (Educator Informant #3)

As explained by the account above, the work process of gathering teaching resources does not occur in a vacuum. It is also not limited to a teacher's comfort level alone. There is an ideological efficiency discourse in place that can be seen to be organized by the text of the timetable. Teachers have to navigate learning interests, time allocations, and institutional accountability circuits (as discussed in Chapter 6), amongst various other institutional pressures in order to create the student-centred space outlined in the H&PE curriculum. Through this, youth are placed in a position of being ruled by institutional discourses that can result in an oversight, organizing a disjuncture of healthy living discussions being skimmed over or rushed through.

7.4 Summary

In this chapter, I described how the administrative processes that teachers are required to participate in can lead to activation of an experience of subordination of the interests of youth regarding healthy intimate relationships taught through the H&PE course. Administrative processes are carried out by school staff to meet curriculum or organizational needs, and can be seen to be organized through an ideological discourse of efficiency. Influenced by space and time limitations, and the discourse discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the organization of H&PE discussions at an institutional level encounter the risk of being rushed through or skimmed over.

Through the ruling relation of timetabling, the inner workings of how healthy living discussions can often feel rushed is revealed, and it can also be seen that this day-to-day practice along with a focus on physical activity is organized by the ideological discourse of efficiency. Figure 9 below presents a summary of the findings in this chapter.

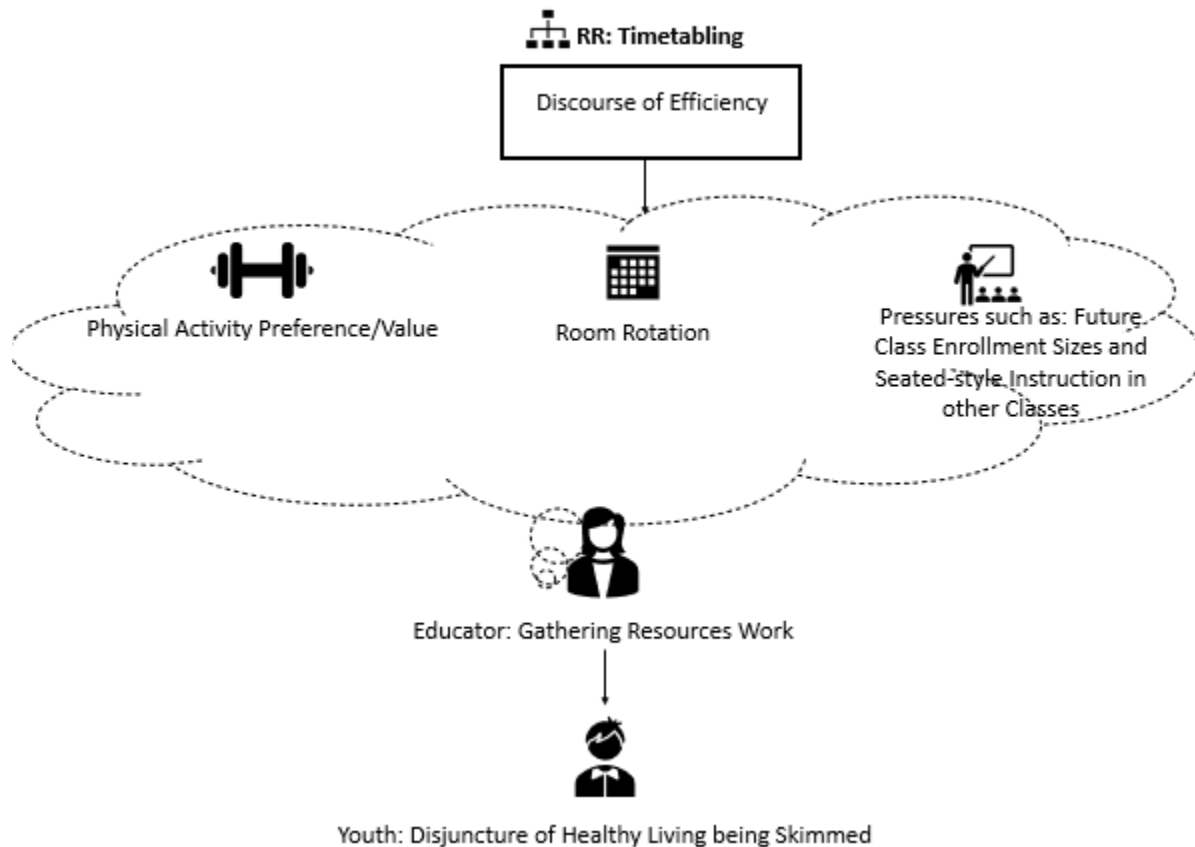


Figure 9: Organizing Factors Behind the Skimming of Healthy Living Discussions

Chapter 8: Discussion and Closing Remarks

My dissertation project using institutional ethnography (IE) examined the everyday practices of how youth learn about healthy intimate relationships through public high schools in Ontario. My research objective was to explore how ruling relations may influence the way youth learn to understand intimate relationships, and how their understandings may be socially organized vis-à-vis public high schools in Ontario. As a student-researcher who resonates with the Critical Social Theory (CST) worldview, my goal has been to uncover subjugated experiences of suffering, conflict, and collective struggle to challenge the status quo. The goals of CST align flawlessly with the IE way of investigation. I utilized an IE as a strategy for inquiry, making use of tools such as the *problematic* for paying attention to puzzles that remained latent in informants' experiences. Through speaking with student informants and through my own experiences as a student within the Ontario education sector, I had developed hunches regarding what was happening at the location of youth. As such, the accounts capturing student experiences of being taught about intimacy in a biomedical way, focusing on evaluation, and a general minimization of the importance of H&PE, guided me towards a larger tension to be explored.

To explore the problematic, I used the IE tools of talk, text, and mapping, and traced the ruling relations (the forms of structure that coordinate the experiences of people in multiple locations) that appeared to be organizing the experience of student informants. In this final chapter, my aims are three-fold. Firstly, I will summarize the discoveries that I reported in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Next, I will offer a discussion of how the overarching neoliberal discourse has influenced the tensions and disjuncture found in the work processes of educators and the work of students, and discuss policy implications for areas that my research has contributed to. Lastly, I will acknowledge the strengths and limitations of my dissertation, and conclude with

future directions for investigation related to youths' experience of learning about healthy intimate relationships.

8.1 Major Discoveries of Ruling Relations & Discourse:

Through my investigation, I discovered that the ruling relations of an institutional accountability circuit, performance and evaluation, and timetabling hooked themselves into the experiences of educator informants and student informants. This was made possible through the activation of texts such as the H&PE curriculum, required performance reports, and the school timetable itself. These texts appeared to coordinate an experience of subjugation for youth and reoriented the related work processes of educator informants as well. The discourses at play were those of a biomedical discourse, employability discourse, and an institutional efficiency discourse. Each of these areas of discourse hold within them disjuncture experienced by youth, as such, there are policy implications and recommendations that can help empower youth and teachers, as the identified ruling relations make invisible the tensions occurring within the everyday.

8.1.1 The Biomedical Discourse and Policy Implications

One of the major discoveries in my investigation was the way in which the discussion of healthy intimate relationships was socially and textually organized to remain biomedical. This finding appeared through the highly biomedical experience that majority of the student informants shared when it came to learning about healthy intimate relationships. In lieu of discussing the boundaries or characteristics of what makes a relationship healthy or unhealthy, instruction about the prevention of STIs, unplanned pregnancies, and issues of consent were instead offered as a substitute. Despite educator informants' attempts to gauge the interest and learning needs of students, they seemed to be ruled over by institutional powers that limited their ability to teach. Even though the written instruction in the H&PE curriculum (2015, Revised) cautioned against

distilling healthy living education down to simply safe-sex discussions, student informants largely provided accounts of a biomedical experience of learning. Educator informants' work seemed to be organized through texts such as the H&PE curriculum and OCT guidelines as they were challenged in empowering students to have discussions that could be of a sensitive nature, such as concerns related to dating, sex, infidelity, digital flirting, and other common experiences youth engage in today (Razi et al., 2020). Thus, it appeared that the needs of the institution guided the work of both educators and student informants in that it placed restrictions and limitations on the ways they could communicate with each other and engage in their work. The implementation of a student survey, or the offering of a question box for example, appeared to be processes that on the surface showed institutional malleability to be able to incorporate student interest into lesson design. However, there were institutional accountability circuits entrenched so deeply into the everyday practices of teachers that the biomedical discourse prevailed across sites. As expressed by some student informants (High School Student Informant #7, p. 115, High School Student Informant #12, p.142 for example), there was a yearning where they wished to have learned more about healthy intimacy in school, beyond just a biomedical perspective.

There is a societal comfort associated with addressing subjects of intimacy in a biomedical manner, as has been found in scholarly research (Garcia, 2015; Greenan, 2019), as well as in my own work. It is almost as if minimizing and separating the human emotions away from the physical acts of intimacy sterilizes the topic in a manner that is palatable to the broad masses (as expressed by Educator Informant #10, p.74). Through talking with informants, I learned that this may be because doing so also allows for the justification of addressing taboo topics through an objective lens; this objectivity, however, often minimizes or strips away life experiences from these discussions. The absence of dialogue associated with youth subjective

history is one way the impact of discussions of HDSH is limited in class. The inability to draw out these experiences seems to have been organized through institutional requirements which give precedence to institutional need.

In terms of policy implications, curriculum designers, policy makers, and school administration ought to recognize the institutional pressures that limit educators' choice to engage in discussions of humanness and healthy intimate relationships. These institutional pressures are a hallmark of an education model that is driven by a neoliberal philosophy. Policymakers ought to explore education models of countries like Finland (which is a Nordic welfare state as compared to the Canadian Liberal welfare state), which centre education on the principle of students learning by doing, where student need and interest is the main driver for education (Valimaa et al, 2007; Valimaa 2021). While the H&PE (2015) curriculum of Ontario states the importance of tailoring education to student need, due to institutional constraints, student interest and need are typically not drivers in the way healthy living is addressed.

One of the ways to identify youth experience is to engage with them using platforms such as youth caucuses, student-led focus groups, and granting youth a place at decision-makers' tables to give credence to their perspective. Using experience as data to uncover the authorities that rule over the experience of youth, which may often exist outside of the school's policy powers is critical, as it can help inform policies that are holistic and system based. The cusp of schooling within which sexual health discussions are located must be expanded beyond the restraints imposed by risks of parental complaints and breaches of professional guidelines. With the recognition of the importance of schools as a place to teach youth about healthy intimate relationships, and the knowledge of the various issues related to unhealthy relationships

prevalent amongst youth, policy makers must remove the barriers that organize a biomedical approach to teaching healthy intimate relationships.

A recommendation to remove this barrier is to implement a systematic mechanism to consistently extract student experience of learning related to healthy intimate relationships and use it to inform policy and practice, across all schoolboards in Ontario. Such a structure would require flexibility not only in the H&PE curriculum, but also in the institutional structures that continue to reproduce a similar experience for youth across multiple sites. Currently, the setup of the public high schools in Ontario does not offer such flexibility as a result of ruling relations such as the institutional accountability circuit, performance and evaluation requirements, and timetabling. Capturing student experiences about H&PE class discussions, through *large scale multisite studies* could be a first step in initiating the series of changes required to place H&PE in an arena that expands beyond a biomedical view. Capturing and understanding student experiences is key to be able to demonstrate the gap between the goals of the curriculum and the common student experience that can help drive positive change.

8.1.2 The Employability Discourse and Policy Implications

My main discovery in Chapter 6 was about the performance and evaluation focus that is enshrined into the way that work processes for H&PE are activated in schools. This focus on performance and evaluation influenced the education and organized student's experiences of learning about intimate relationships through an employability discourse. Remiss from this picture was the ways in which it could subjugate the needs of youth.

A focus on performance and evaluation built grounds for inequality and social polarization. As students participated in the H&PE class in order to fulfill the expectations of them as students, their local knowledge about the importance of the topic of healthy relationships

began to get restructured. Per the accounts of some student informants, the expectation of them as students promoted a barrier between the role of student and the role of teachers, at times causing H&PE educators to appear as individuals who are more concerned with their performance in class, than their wellbeing. In building such a perspective, they learnt to minimize the importance of healthy living discussions and focus on completing the required tasks at hand for success in the course.

Through my investigation into the experience of youth learning about healthy intimate relationships, I have been able to identify what is commonly critiqued in literature to be one of the downfalls of the education reform in Canada. A neoliberal philosophy can be seen to hook itself into the materiality of both educator and student informants, as well as the organization of the H&PE course. To demonstrate this point, one can look at the neoliberal philosophy that has gained dominance in Canada in recent years (Basu, 2004). The philosophy of neoliberalism views competition as the defining characteristic of human relations, it redefines citizens as consumers with a focus on economic prosperity and growth (Chernomas & Hudson, 2009). In education, neoliberal ideologies have led to a focus on promoting high stakes testing, accountability, and competitive markets (Hursh, 2007). Since the 1970s when Canada adopted a shift towards a market-based ideology due to rising public debt and high unemployment rates, schools saw a restructuring in the design of their system. Blamed for their poor preparation of students to succeed in the new economy, schools were restructured to produce more competitive workers (Davies & Guppy, 1997; MacLellan, 2009; Ungerleider & Levin, 2007).

Based on the findings of my IE study, the Canadian education sector is not remiss from this influence, as policies designed under the guise of efficiency, accountability, and distribution of resources built a disjuncture at the site in which they are implemented. For example, the onset

of the Common Sense Revolution (2003) in Ontario boasted a model to make schools more effective and efficient. Following a neoliberal philosophy, this revolution introduced a performance and evaluation-based approach to education which focused on producing results that could be measured, displayed, and presented to reveal performance, and thus justify tax spending. Such a system is not designed for student empowerment; while the language of empowerment is popular with policymakers, the action of compliance is what is practiced in schools. In working towards mandatory curriculum outcomes, it appears that educators have to draw upon the requirements and expectations of the institution, not the student, to deliver education.

While many student informants acknowledged the role school can play in helping youth build an understanding about healthy intimate relationships, they did not appear to be actively resisting against the status quo. Laughing off the curriculum, and not taking it seriously appear to have become forms of passive resistance to curriculum and engaging with the expectations of the institution ([High School Student Informant #10 and #8](#)). To clarify, it is not the implementation of a H&PE curriculum that is problematic, it is the focus on outcomes-based learning and the pressures of performance and evaluation that organize an experience of subjugation for youth to understand healthy intimacy.

A neoliberal ideology has influenced such a discourse for youth, wherein their own knowledge about the importance of learning about healthy intimate relationships has been restructured. There appears to be a leap towards what is deemed successful, towards performing well in school for the sake of prosperous employment. Issues of family, relationships, etc. often seem to take a backseat in the minds of student informants as there are many more pressing matters to be dealt with. This is not to say that youth are not dating or are not actively involved

in complex intimate relationships; their opinion of school as a place to learn about how to navigate relationships, however, has been influenced by a neoliberal ideology. Pressured by the administrative processes of evaluation and curtailed by interpretations of professional conduct, teachers are seldom able to delve into critical discussions at an age where youth are navigating the complexity of human relationships. Their ability to critically engage in discussions of boundaries, abusive behaviours, mannerisms for positive communication, challenges of the digital dating scene, etc. is circumvented through the needs of the institution.

Policymakers ought to recognize that a neoliberal agenda does not hold space for the complexities associated with intimate relationships and the paramount importance ought to be on helping youth establish healthy relationships well into their adulthood. Policymakers would benefit from exploring the institutional flexibility afforded to teachers and youth in holding space for discussions related to intimacy, and examining the lack of focus placed on promoting this important aspect of youth mental health. In examining this, they may be able to uncover how teachers' everyday practice is governed by institutional needs, in turn subjugating youth needs.

While there are numerous advisory groups and calls for proposals offered by the Canadian Federal Government, there continues to be a lack of focus on the way in which macro-level forces work with meso-level forces in the everyday, and how they socially organize the reality in which education takes place. A recommendation would be for policymakers to conduct an examination of how the H&PE curriculum is taught across various schoolboards in Ontario and to delineate and compare what youth learn against the curriculum. Through the involvement of youth in this work, practical implications can be uncovered that limit the implementation of practices that subjugate their need. Exploring what forces organize an employability focus is a complex task, especially because this focus is not limited to the education sector alone. However,

policymakers must identify how educational priorities can be expanded to make learning about intimate relationships a worthwhile focus for the entire school administration. While this can reconstitute the performance and evaluation focus, it may serve as a trigger for administration to have the discussions required for promoting the importance of this topic in school.

8.1.3 The Ideological Efficiency Discourse and Policy Implications

In Chapter 7, I explored the way in which learning about healthy intimate relationships through the H&PE course is organized to be undervalued and often skimmed through in high school. I explicated the ruling relation of timetabling and its activation through the work processes of gathering teaching resources. Additional findings of this chapter included discovering some of the ways that educators make the decisions that lead to the undervaluing of H&PE, and how institutional interests of efficiency, and the ruling relation of timetabling hinder teacher ability and attenuate youths' experiences of learning about healthy intimate relationships. I heard how educators often skim over certain H&PE discussions as the highly coveted space of the gymnasium dictated when and how these discussions could take place. Educators indicated that they often considered the requirement of discussing healthy intimate relationships to be complete as long as they briefly discussed safe sex.

The ideological discourse of efficiency is rooted into the everyday practice of school administration. It is not the fact that a timetabling process exists that is problematic. Implementing a form of structure to promote an equitable learning experience for students where they spend equal amounts of time invested in a variety of subjects appears justifiable for the implementation of a modernized school system. It is, however, the exacerbation of the undervaluing of H&PE when coupled with an administrative timetabling process, along with an

institutional discourse of accountability and a focus on biomedical learning that minimizes the learning opportunities available to youth.

In terms of policy implications, the practice of timetabling must be analyzed from an equity lens to identify which subjects it disadvantages due to larger social constructs that are in place. Policymakers must become aware of the purposeful division of healthy living topics across a two-to-three-week period and implement measures to ensure such a categorization is not implemented across schools as regular practice. A recommendation would be to allot semester-wide focus on healthy living, and to allow for each topic to have ample time for exploration by youth, based on their needs. Such a modification, if coupled with other recommendations that help alleviate institutional primacy and identify student experiences in learning about intimate relationships, can help diminish some of the power imbalances brought on by the ruling relations that organize youths' experiences. Another recommendation would be to explore how the additional qualifications component impacts the quality of education taught by teachers, if at all.

8.2 Contribution to Existing Research

An IE can also be used to help those who are in the place of ruling to see how the oppression they live is socially organized. This investigation into the actualities of the experience of student informants participating in the grade 9 H&PE course has shown tensions and disjuncture in their experience. What occurs in a classroom at the integral point of teaching youth about foundational concepts to their lives does not seem to be the experience outlined in the curriculum, nor does it contain the tenets of student engagement, inclusivity, and empowerment, as listed in documents such as the *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy & Program Requirements* (Ministry of Education, 2016) or the equity and inclusive education policies in Ontario Schools (Policy/Program Memorandum 119, 2013). Therefore, this study contributes to the development

of new knowledge in various ways, especially since it is the only one to my knowledge that employs an IE to explore the experience of both youth and educators in learning about healthy intimate relationships within the Ontario education system. The findings contribute to literature on research about intimate relationships and youth, the Ontario education sector, and the H&PE curriculum, and therefore contain policy implications that are valuable, as outlined above. As mentioned, the purpose of the knowledge discovered through an IE is to spark activism, incite social change, and shift the gaze to show how a group may be oppressed (Smith, 1987).

Firstly, research and literature on the field of adolescent/youth dating and intimate relationships is saturated with studies on intimate partner violence, its causes, predictors, outcomes, etc. (O’Leary et al., 1994; Shoveller & Johnson, 2006; Voith, 2017). Studies show the positive impact of interventions designed to expand education beyond what is currently offered in Canadian schools by adding after-school programming (see for example Kirby et al., 2004; Niolon et al., 2016; Pittman et al., 2000; Stöckl et al., 2013; Wolfe et al., 2004). With the exception of very recent research by Vanner (2021) where opportunities and obstacles in the Ontario secondary school curriculum were examined for the discussion of gender-based violence, the privileged place and impact that H&PE can have in teaching youth about healthy intimate relationships has not been critically explored. As the knowledge of the relationship between unhealthy adolescent intimate relationships and unhealthy adult intimate relationships has become better-established, researchers have focused on adolescent dating dynamics. Advocates have shed light on the value of prevention efforts in high school and as early as middle school, citing also the weakness or limitations of intervention programs due to projectism (a lack of system-based approach), poor implementation practices, and lack of consistency in evaluation and measurement (Bachar & Koss, 2001; Cohen et al., 2004; Garcia, 2015; Hilton et

al., 1998; Green, 2012). My analysis adds to this field of research by producing a system-based perspective through revealing ways to understand the hooks of institutional ruling relations that rule over what can and cannot take place in class. It adds to existing literature a valuable aspect of how the experience of learning unfolds in the grade 9 H&PE class. It diversifies the field by bringing to the forefront the conflicting interests at play, and the unintended negative impacts of the institution's well-intentioned policies and texts. By doing so, it illuminates some of the everyday barriers present in implementing a system-wide policy on implementing tried-and-tested programming in schools.

Secondly, I have contributed to research regarding the teaching of healthy intimate relationships in the Ontarian education sector by highlighting the perils of a neoliberal philosophical reform on education. Existing literature on how the education sector supports the health of students offers a wide variety of research critiquing life-style health promotion and social intervention project-based approaches (Clinton-Sherrod et al., 2009; J. N. Cohen et al., 2004; Sun et al., 2018; Temple-Smith et al., 2015; Wolfe et al., 2009). Research also offers comprehensive critical analyses of the health and physical education curriculum, its historical underpinnings, its evolution, and various social and political critiques (Bryce, 2017; Kennard, 2015; Kilborn et al., 2015, 2016). Researchers have also added to literature on what youth are interested in learning through education, their preferences, and needs. They have found the inundation of existing education towards the biomedical model and have called for change in policy and practice (Balter et al., 2016; M. M. Cohen & Maclean, 2004; Garcia, 2015). I have added to literature in this field by explicating the conditions that enable and prevent teachers to educate students about healthy intimate relationships. From administrative reporting requirements to the institutional accountability circuit that influences their ideological code, I

have highlighted the weaknesses of the bureaucracy of education. This can help build a common ground for policymakers, educators, and school administration to understand the vastly different experience of students and re-examine their understanding and notions about roles and power imbalances at play in schools.

Thirdly, a notable transition in the H&PE curriculum has been the shift from the 1998 H&PE curriculum to the 2015 H&PE curriculum, which also experienced revisions based on political changes. There is a plethora of research on curriculum design, lesson-planning techniques, teaching pedagogies, and critical reviews of the nature of education and the nature of learning in institutionalized settings (Aytac & Kaygisiz, 2021; Deneen & Hoo, 2021; Gauthier, 2016; Schaubert et al., 2015). The role of curriculum has been examined and critiqued for the way it can hinder growth and learning by quantifying or attempting to make measurable some aspect of knowledge and learning (Black, 2018; L. M. Johnson, 2019; Robinson & Melnychuk, 2009). These scholars have also critiqued the commodification of education, reflected in tight curriculum design practices that join forces to promote a neoliberal philosophy. I have enriched this field of research by highlighting the ways in which curriculum delivery does not operate in a vacuum, and how institutional accountability pressures and texts influence the way in which youths' experiences are organized. In addition, this project is the first to conduct an IE inquiry of the H&PE curriculum in Ontario, and offers analysis based on empirical evidence founded on student and educator informants' accounts and the examined texts. This way of looking at the curriculum through an IE has not been conducted in the past.

In order to disrupt the influence of institutional accountability circuits which create the limitation of an educator's ability to address critical topics related to intimacy in class with their students, it is imperative to firstly become aware of the role these texts play in coordinating their

experience. An important next step would be to begin to dismantle the power of these processes by exploring whose benefit they are designed for, and re-aligning policies and processes to cater to learning about youths' experiences and addressing their healthy intimacy learning needs based on these experiences. Such an exploration would naturally produce a shift away from the dominant biomedical discourse that can be seen to influence youths' learning experience today.

The amelioration of heavy institutionally beneficial policies is likely to uncover the complex within which youth find themselves building and navigating intimate relationships today. The identification of issues that are pervasive in their lives today such as building healthy boundaries with their partners, navigating online relationships, sexting, sharing of intimate media online, etc. should be allowed a safe and comprehensive place of discussion and exploration with a trusted adult, in a place youth participate in regularly. The location of the H&PE classroom, especially in the early years of just entering high school in grade nine, is one location for holding space for these discussions and allowing youth to explore their understandings of intimacy.

These findings build a stage upon which blocks of justification can be laid, calling for a shift in the way in which healthy intimate relationships are discussed in schools. The nature of intimate relationships held by youth is very different today than it was a few decades ago, due in part to the changes in technology and social networks available to youth today. Despite changes in curriculum, youth are challenged in seeing their realities represented in the discussions that take place. For policymakers, administrators, and teachers who are persuaded by my analysis, there is a critical task at hand. That task is to begin to identify which actions are conducted for the sake of students, versus which are conducted for the sake of the institution. In terms of overall policy implications, my research highlights the dire need for a policy focus on prioritizing educating youth about building healthy intimate relationships. There are recent calls

from funding agencies, such as the Canadian Federal Government (Government of Canada, 2020), for proposals from organizations regarding tackling gender-based violence amongst youth. These opportunities ought to be availed to examine the H&PE curriculum implementation and tensions across schools in all jurisdictions given variation in how school boards go about making decisions regarding the importance of education related to intimacy. For decades now, school boards have left discussions about intimate relationships to be substituted with discussions about safe-sex and have provided scarce support to educators to enable them to teach this information effectively.

While my research helps illuminate some of the consequences of such an approach to discussing intimacy, the interpretation of findings need to consider some of the study limitations as well. Through my analysis, policymakers can learn to look at the experiences and needs of youth differently from the pre-established way of taking for granted what happens behind the closed doors of a classroom. I have placed on the map the experience of youth who are at the location of being ruled, and the experience of teachers who are trying to discuss concepts that many know to be critical but are often bound by the institutional interests. It is important for policymakers to veer away from policy-planning frameworks that are not based on the experience of those in positions of being ruled, and to recognize the importance of texts and how they socially organize the everyday practice. Student programs must be designed with students, for students, and must be nimble enough to be modified based on the needs of each student. A focus on establishing targets and metrics is too quantitative to measure the success of student learning; learning cannot and should not be quantified to the extent that the ability to empower, teach, and co-create is taken away from classrooms.

8.3 Strengths and Limitations

The transferability of the knowledge generated by this study employing IE with a focus on *experience* as data warrants caution. The findings provide an explication of the way experiences of youth are coordinated across multiple sites through the social organization of texts, without claiming deterministic cause-effect relationship. For policymakers and other professionals intrigued by this research, I would highlight that a segment of this study's limitations has to do with the geographical boundaries of this research as the data was collected from the province of Ontario, and the informants were from different school boards. Nonetheless, the experiences collected are helpful in explicating how ruling relations take materialist forms in the informants' lives and coordinate their experiences, but caution is needed in transferability of findings.

Another limitation of the study is that I was unable to include observations as a source of information and obtain access to the technology or processes used to complete the timetabling, due to the COVID-19 pandemic context. This limitation also meant that the majority of interviews were conducted virtually, exposing the interviewees to the nuances of space and place, where they may have felt uncomfortable addressing certain topics, especially from the personal spaces of their homes. Additionally, there may be missed threads or insights that would have been obtained if I had the opportunity to be present during the unfolding of instruction related to healthy intimate relationships in a high school class. In limiting my data collection, I may have missed insights from other significant contributors from the school administration who may play a key role in organizing experiences for youth. The study did not include parents, which I recommend including when conducting future research with students and their families, especially as several student informants mentioned the role of families as an influence that helped them learn about intimate relationships, and since families impacted how educators

approached potentially sensitive or taboo subjects for fear of reprisal. Based on the boundaries established for this study, the findings are limited to the H&PE curriculum and are not transferable to other courses in school.

8.3.1 My Reflection

With the goal of learning to see the world in a new way, I uncovered various discourses and ways of seeing that were implicit in my approach. I learned that my own training and education as a quality improvement professional led me a tendency to see some efficiency-oriented practices as norms. Such inclination followed me into my research's early phases of analysis, where I found myself constantly trying to identify process and system flaws that could, in my view, be fixed, if only they could be standardized and improved to gain efficiency. My reflexive diary and feedback from my advisory committee allowed me to acknowledge and navigate this unconscious bias. The use of a reflexive diary helped me in many ways, such as in remaining focused on the experience as data and to revert to the accounts to identify ruling relations by self-questioning my assumptions again and again.

8.4 Future Directions for Investigation

Through the findings of my IE study I have identified future opportunities for research. As mentioned at the outset of my dissertation, student informants alluded to various forums which helped them build an understanding about healthy intimate relationships. These included social media, television, family, peers, religion, and culture, as just a few of the spheres that were influential to their experience. While each of these topics could fill hundreds of pages of a dissertation, a valuable thread to pursue further would be the exploration of experiences of youth who subscribe to certain cultural and/or religious values that may conflict with those outlined in the H&PE curriculum. Both educator and student informants alluded to instances in their

accounts where traces of a British colonial value system could be seen to influence the experience of youth. There were mentions of challenges with teaching in an environment where students belonged to diverse backgrounds, and students mentioned their own dissonance from the instruction due to their personal beliefs. An exploration of the mental health impact of such a dissonance among youth would be valuable, as it would show how equity and inclusion policies are perhaps serving as checkmarks for administration, without building an experience of equity at the location of youth. Additionally, a few student informants mentioned the role of guidance counsellors in schools, who had been of assistance in navigating personal issues. Investigation on the role of guidance counsellors as specialized resources for education on and support with intimate relationships may also be beneficial.

The dissertation findings explicate how the learning needs of youth related to healthy intimacy do not seem to be the primary determinant of what type of education they are able to participate in. For example, the design of the school system falters when it comes to discussing with youth what healthy intimate relationships mean to them, influenced by educational reforms fixated with the idea of measurement and reporting. When it comes to abstract concepts such as intimacy, this idea of measurement devalues that which is difficult to measure and leads to a culture that accepts compromises related to its delivery. Teachers are tethered to ruling relations that govern their work processes; while the design of the education sector has many benefits and has proven to produce remarkable learners, I suggest that the ruling relations discovered have been silently exercising unmonitored control over the experience of youth. As such, a future research recommendation would be to expand the IE approach to other curricula in school, focusing not just on healthy relationships but on the translation of knowledge from curriculum to students overall. Similarly, it would be beneficial to conduct an inquiry on H&PE teachers and

how they navigate the various institutional pressures and dilemmas they face as they enact their roles as teachers who are expected to address a commonly taboo topic in society. While studies have explored organizational and school level factors leading to an experience of stress and anxiety for teachers (Agyapong et al, 2022), to my knowledge there have been no studies conducted on how teachers in Ontario experience and navigate the institutional pressures related to teaching healthy living. The curriculum-based model of delivering education ought to be continually explored for its impacts. There is also a need for future research on strategies to open spaces for dialogue among students on topics which are intimate in nature. There are various efforts taking place across Ontario, although in a projectized manner, that seek to address youth needs related to intimacy. For example, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in York region recently rolled out a mobile walk-in clinic for youth which is affiliated with different schools in the area, to offer services related to youth mental health and medical needs. This program highlights its open and safe nature for youth to discuss their concerns (CMHA, 2022). The Government of Ontario (2021) also lists mental health services for children and youth, including links to free services that offer counselling, distress support, and safety/mental health supports. The implementation of such programs and services, however, continues to remain at a projectized level which limits a system-based response. Additionally, many such programs and services often target a biomedical need or offer support to youth once an issue has been identified. A system-based policy response that is youth-centred and focuses on building an educational foundation for healthy intimate relationships continues to be lacking.

8.5 Closing Remarks

Social ties are powerful predictors of late-life health and wellbeing. However, the way in which healthy living is organized to be taught in schools does not contain within it the institutional

capacity for the discussion of relationships, intimacy, social connections, and the importance of companionship to positive health and wellbeing. The influence of political ideologies has taken their toll on school governance and accountability (Brown, 2016). The role of the government requirements of performance and evaluation serve as a mediating factor for the experience that youth have in class. Local school boards place pressure upon school administration to meet benchmarks, and are concerned when the outcome measures do not appear satisfactory. There is often not enough time to delve deeply into topics related to healthy living. If there is time, there are professional expectations and institutional pressures filtering critical discussions. If time is used for discussions about healthy intimate relationships, there is nothing to show for it. Since H&PE is usually the only course where students are given the opportunity to be physically active and move around, both educators and students lean towards utilizing that opportunity as physical movement time is at a premium. Additional time spent discussing such topics might further open the “can of worms” or “kettle of fish” mentioned earlier. H&PE is organized, instead, to be a place for movement. Despite curricular instigation, institutional discourses do not allow for critical discussions on healthy intimacy.

To re-emphasize, positive intimate relationships based on love have been identified as one of the most important aspects of interpersonal strength (Viejo et al., 2015; Waldinger & Schulz, 2010). During adolescence, the main social contexts in relation to love are friendships and dating relationships. Fostering positive and healthy intimate relationships has been shown to impact the wellbeing of youth, promote feelings of self-efficacy, improve self-esteem, and reduce psychological distress (Brown & Amatea, 2000; Viejo et al., 2015; Waldinger & Schulz, 2010). In fact, research has shown that an individual who is happy, confident, and feels balanced emotionally is also more likely to make positive contribution to the workforce, and to the overall

well-being of the nation. Aristotle argued that the greatest human good is to live a good life. In a good society, all of its members flourish. “Happiness” is the modern word for this, used to describe the good life. It is accomplished by living well and doing well over time (Gavin & Mason, 2004; Oswald et al., 2015). In fact, there is a movement promoting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, derived through the motivation of producing better and more productive employees. Regardless of the financial contributions of a healthy and happy individual, the importance of well-balanced and healthy relationships forms the foundation of a fulfilling life. Despite this, there is little to no prioritization given to building system-wide policies to support intimate relationships in high school.

Relationships are foundational elements of a successful life. With youth engaging in intimate relationships from a younger age than ever before, the role of the education sector is critical in helping build strong foundations and healthy awareness of intimate behaviours. My investigation has shown that there are passionate, well-meaning educators who are privy to youths’ experiences and are interested in helping them navigate their challenges related to intimacy and relationships. The power of institutional discourses, however, influences these intentions and places priority on institutional accountability circuits. Policymakers, administrators, and teachers all act within spheres that are submerged with power imbalances. They are in positions that can critically question the status quo and move away from the traditionalist model of education wherein students are expected to learn from a pre-determined set of criteria and regurgitate information. If we fail to make changes to the current educational system, the precedence given to the needs of the institution and the glaring performance and evaluation focus, we risk failing successive generations as they will continue to miss out on learning valuable information during one of the most vulnerable time periods of their lives.

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Appendix A: Curriculum Review Process in Ontario

“In Ontario, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the development of curriculum policy documents. In 2003, the Ministry established an ongoing cycle of curriculum review.

- The review is not a development of a completely new curriculum, but is intended to ensure that the curriculum remains current and relevant and is developmentally appropriate from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in all subjects.
- A number of subject disciplines have entered the review process each year.
- The review supports students, teachers, schools and boards by identifying targeted areas in need of support and allows lead time for development or updating of related support materials as required.
- **Research**
The Curriculum Review process is a research-based and evidence-informed process that begins with third party research and benchmarking of the Ontario curriculum against curricula from across Canada and around the world.
- **Analysis and Synthesis**
Teams of experts in the subject discipline from across the province analyze the current curriculum against the desired state for the revised curriculum. All information gathered from experts, focus groups, consultations, research and benchmarking is synthesized and directions for revision writing are identified.
- **Revision and Feedback Consultation**
A draft, reflecting revised expectations and examples based on analysis and synthesis and that reflects current direction in the discipline, is developed. Sessions are held to gather input via a variety of opportunities, including face to face and web enabled sessions.
- **Editing and Publication**
Experts in the subject discipline review the manuscript to ensure academic accuracy. Final reviews for bias, equity and inclusive education, First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives, environmental education, and financial literacy occur to ensure that the manuscript is inclusive and reflects the direction of the Ministry of Education. Editing of the proposed draft revisions is done by professional editors. As needed, small targeted revision writing teams refine the proposed draft and focused consultation on final revisions may also be held.
- **Training and Implementation**
Once released, board teams and stakeholders are invited to implementation learning sessions about the revised curriculum. Resources are developed to support board training and implementation specific to the revised curriculum. These sessions ensure common understanding and consistent messages about curriculum revisions and expectations for implementation.” (Ministry of Education Website, 2022, para. 2)

Appendix B: Ethics Approval Certificate



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Certificate #:

Approval Period: 08/14/19-08/14/20

ETHICS APPROVAL

To: Anum Rafiq – Graduate Student
Faculty of Health

From: [Redacted], Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor, Research Ethics
(on behalf of Jenn Kuk, Chair, Human Participants Review Committee)

Date: Wednesday August 14, 2019

Title: The Canadian Educational Sector and Youth's Understanding of Health
Intimate Relationships- an Institutional Ethnography

Risk Level: ☒ Minimal Risk ☐ More than Minimal Risk

Level of Review: ☒ Delegated Review ☐ Full Committee Review

I am writing to inform you that this research project, "**The Canadian Educational Sector and Youth's Understanding of Health Intimate Relationships- an Institutional Ethnography**" has received ethics review and approval by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines.

Note that approval is granted for one year. Ongoing research – research that extends beyond one year – must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process by submission of an amendment application to the HPRC prior to its implementation.

Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research ethics ([Redacted]) as possible.

For further information on researcher responsibilities as it pertains to this approved research ethics protocol, please refer to the attached document, "**RESEARCH ETHICS: PROCEDURES to ENSURE ONGOING COMPLIANCE**".

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [Redacted] or via email at: [Redacted]

Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Guide for High School Student Informants

Logistics:

- Potential participants will contact the researcher via email provided on the flyer/poster.
- The researcher will then verify the eligibility of the participant followed by provision of study details by sending the written consent form to the participant via email.
- Next, the researcher will organize a date and time for the online interview.
- Prior to interview, participants will be:
 - made aware of her/his rights, her/his ability to refuse to answer questions, withdraw at any time and answer as openly or briefly as desired.
 - asked whether they allow follow-up contact for another interview. This is provided on the written consent form as an option to 'accept' or 'decline' and will be verbally confirmed prior to the interview.
 - made aware that the incentive of \$20 is offered to each consenting participant, the expected duration of the interview is 60-90 minutes, and the researcher will remind about any needed water/snack breaks during the interview. You can also choose to withdraw at anytime during the interview, without impact on your honorarium.
 - asked to provide verbal informed consent
 - participants will be asked to keep the Study Information sheet for their information. A photo of the researcher's signed page will be sent to them via email.
- Next, the participant will complete the demographic survey
- To start the interview, the following opening statement will be shared:

Opening statement: I am interested in learning about your understanding of intimate relationships, how you learned about what it looks like, and any reflections you may have of your learning process. Also, rest assured that all the information you provide will be de-identified, meaning your personal name will be removed from the collect data.

Interview Questions:

(Member check after each 2-3 questions)

Rapport building questions:

1. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself like what's your favourite subject? What are your hobbies? Do you participate in any extracurriculars?
2. What courses are you currently taking that are optional?
 - Probe: is student taking gym class?
 - If yes -> what are some of the topics they teach in that class? What does the semester look like?
 - If no -> when was the last time you took gym class? Can you share a little bit about what you learned in gym class? Why did you choose not to take it again this year?

Note: Thank informant for participating and state that I will now be posing a few questions about intimate relationships.

Introductory questions on the main topic:

3. How would you define a romantic/intimate relationship? Why, please elaborate?

Probes: what makes up an intimate relationship; how do you know when it's, good/poor quality, healthy/unhealthy? What are some things that effect a healthy or unhealthy relationship?

4. How would you describe a **healthy intimate** relationship? Why, please expand?

Probes: can you give an example, what does a healthy intimate relationship mean to you?

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

Specific questions on the main topic:

6. Let's talk about various type of **messages** that a young person like you may receive about intimate relationships. These messages can come from school, home or friends and can be conveyed directly or indirectly. Now, I am going to give you some examples to understand how can one get an indirect or direct message? So, one can learn indirectly by observing others in real life or in watching TV programs and movies or by reading books and newspapers or social media posts etc. One can also receive messages directly e.g. by having personal experiences or learning through topics in the curriculum or in class discussions or at home. These messages then shape our knowledge, attitudes and even behavior down the road.

So, my question is: What types of "**messages**" about healthy intimate relationships do you recall observing or hearing or reading in the high school years? Where did these messages or rules come from?

- Probes: Home, School, Friends or Peers, TV, Media
- Ontario health and sexual education curricula? Gym class? School teachers? Other school activities?

7. Who or what has **most influenced** your understanding of healthy intimate relationships? Why, please expand?

Probe: Peers/Friends? Parents? Intimate Relationships? Schools? Media?

Probe: how has your relationship been with your teachers? Meaning are you okay discussing such topics with them?

8. Is there **someone you could talk** to if you had questions or concerns about a relationship? Why this person(s)?

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

9. What are the most important things **youth should know** about healthy intimate relationships? Where should they learn it? Why, please elaborate?

Probe: what, if anything, is currently missing from the available education for youth?

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

10. Is there **anything else** you think I should know, or anything we may have missed?

Interview conclusion: thank the standpoint informant for their time, provide incentive, confirm follow-up opportunities, inform them I will be contacting them in the next two weeks to check in, and provide resource list.

Semi Structured Interview Guide for York University Student Informants

(Member check after each question)

1. Rapport building question: Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself like what do you study and where you do you see yourself after completing the current study program?

Note: Thank informant for participating and state that I will now be posing a few questions about intimate relationships.

2. What does an intimate i.e. Romantic relationship mean to you? Why, please elaborate? (Probes: what characterizes an intimate relationship; influencing factors, good/poor quality, healthy/un-healthy)

3. How would you describe a healthy intimate relationship? Why, please elaborate? (Probes: can you give an example, what does a healthy intimate relationship mean to you)

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

4. Thinking back to your experience in high school, what experiences or situations helped you reach your understanding of what a healthy intimate relationship looks like? Please elaborate? (Probes: Where did you learn this? Ontario health and sexual education curricula/schools/teachers/television/ media/ peers/ relationship examples from home life)

5. While you were in high school, what types of "messages" or "rules" about healthy intimate relationships do you recall hearing or reading? Where did these messages or rules come from? (Probe: how about indirect or implied messages? From where did they come?)

6. What was most influential to your understanding of healthy intimate relationships while you were in high school? Why, please elaborate? (Probe: Peers/Friends? Parents? Intimate Relationships? Schools? Media?)

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

7. Think about how you understood healthy intimate relationships in high school and how you understand them today. How do the two compare? Please explain.

8. If the respondent is able to describe that their understanding during the two timeframes differs, then ask: Given that your understanding has changed since high school, describe any situations or experiences that help to demonstrate this.

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

9. In your view, what should youth - i.e. individuals of your age - learn about healthy intimate relationships? Where should they learn about it? Why, please elaborate? (Probe: what, if anything, is currently missing from the available education for youth?)

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

10. Is there anything that we may have missed that you'd like to add regarding your experiences of building an understanding of intimate relationships?

Interview conclusion: thank the standpoint informant for their time, provide incentive, confirm follow-up opportunities, inform them I will be contacting them in the next two weeks to check in, and provide resource list.

Appendix D: Educator Informant Semi-structured Interview Guide

Logistics:

- Potential participants will contact the researcher via email provided on the flyer/poster.
- The researcher will then verify the eligibility of the participant followed by provision of study details by sending the written consent form to the participant via email.
- Next, the researcher will organize a date and time for the online interview.
- Prior to interview, participants will be:
 - made aware of her/his rights, her/his ability to refuse to answer questions, withdraw at any time and answer as openly or briefly as desired.
 - asked whether they allow follow-up contact for another interview. This is provided on the written consent form as an option to ‘accept’ or ‘decline’ and will be verbally confirmed prior to the interview.
 - made aware that the incentive of \$20 is offered to each consenting participant, the expected duration of the interview is 60-90 minutes, and the researcher will remind about any needed water/snack breaks during the interview. You can also choose to withdraw at anytime during the interview, without impact on your honorarium.
 - asked to provide verbal informed consent
 - participants will be asked to keep the Study Information sheet for their information. A photo of the researcher's signed page will be sent to them via email.
- Next, the participant will complete the demographic survey
- To start the interview, the following opening statement will be shared:

Opening statement: I am interested in learning about high school students’ understanding of intimate relationships, how they learned about what it could look like, and any reflections you may have about their learning process. I am also interested in learning about your thoughts on the Health and Physical Education Curriculum in Ontario. Please rest assured that all the information you provide will be de-identified, meaning your personal name will be removed from the collected data.

Interview Questions:

(Member check after each question)

1. Rapport building question: Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself? How did you become interested in becoming a teacher?

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if ‘I’m getting this right’.

2. How would you describe the experience of teaching the Health and Physical education classes? Probe: why is it so; please elaborate
3. Did you receive any training about Health and Physical education in teacher’s college? Probe: why is it so; please elaborate; what health topics are covered currently in this course?

4. Have you ever been involved in any consultations or working groups that drafted sections of the Health and Physical Education curriculum? If you were to revise this course, then what top three changes would you recommend?

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

5. In your experience, how does this course builds students' understanding about intimate relationships? Probe: why is it so; please elaborate; does it meet their needs?
6. In your view, do students generally grasp the meaning of healthy vs. unhealthy intimate relationships? Probe: why is it so; please elaborate
7. Can you share any other experiences you've had with students where students needed support in navigating their relations? How did you go about doing that?

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

8. Can you share any broad changes that you may have seen in students when it comes to dating and relationships over the past few years? What do you attribute these changes to? Probe: why is it so; please elaborate
9. In your view, what should youth learn about healthy intimate relationships? Where should they learn about it? Why, please elaborate? (Probe: what, if anything, is currently missing from the available education for youth?)

Understanding check: Summarize and ask informant if 'I'm getting this right'.

10. Is there anything else that you feel is important that I know?

Interview conclusion: thank the standpoint informant for their time, provide incentive, confirm follow-up opportunities, inform them I will be contacting them in the next two weeks to check in, and provide resource list.

Appendix E: Participant Profile

High School Informant #	Age	Gender	Visible Minority	Dating Experience	Interview Format
HS Student #1	18	F	Y	N	Virtual Interview
HS Student #2	17	F	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #3	18	F	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #4	18	M	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #5	18	F	N	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #6	17	F	N	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #7	17	F	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #8	17	M	Y	N	Virtual Interview
HS Student #9	18	M	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #10	18	M	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #11	18	M	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
HS Student #12	19	M	Y	N	Virtual Interview
University Informant #	Age	Gender	Visible Minority	Dating Experience	Interview Format
University Student #1	19	F	Y	N	In-person
University Student #2	20	F	Y	Y	In-person
University Student #3	20	M	Y	Y	In-person
University Student #4	20	M	Y	Y	In-person
University Student #5	19	M	Y	N	In-person
University Student #6	19	F	Y	N	In-person
University Student #7	19	M	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
University Student #8	19	M	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
University Student #9	19	M	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
University Student #10	19	M	Y	Y	Virtual Interview
Informant #	Age	Gender	Visible Minority	Teaching Experience	Interview Format
HS Teacher #1	30-35	F	N	3-5 years	Virtual Interview
HS Teacher #2	20-25	M	Y	1-3	Virtual Interview
HS Teacher #3	35-40	M	Y	10+	Virtual Interview
HS Teacher #4	35-40	F	N	10+	Virtual Interview
HS Teacher #5	35-40	F	Y	10+	Virtual Interview
HS Teacher #6	30-35	F	N	5-7	Virtual Interview
HS Teacher #7	60+	M	N	10+	Virtual Interview
HS Teacher #8	45-50	M	N	10+	Virtual Interview
University Teacher #9	30-35	F	N	10+	Virtual Interview
University Teacher #10	35-40	M	Y	10+	Virtual Interview

Appendix F: Details of Groups Contacted for Student Informant Recruitment and Flyers used

Group Name	Date Posted	Text Posted
Undergraduate Program Assistant- Faculty of Health, York University	September 9 th 2019	Hello X, Hope you're well. I am emailing to ask if you can assist me in recruiting participants for my doctoral dissertation. I am hoping you can help me by circulating the following flyer to your undergraduate student listserv? The study has been approved by ethics. Please advise. Thank you very much, Anum Rafiq
York University Recruitment:	September 20, 2019	“ Hello!
List Serv Circulation at York University	September 25, 2019	I am looking for first-year students for a research interview opportunity. You will be compensated \$20 for your time, please see attached flyer.”
High School Student Recruitment:	May 28, 2020	“Hello!
Canada’s Young Leaders and Innovators		I am looking for youth to participate in my research, please see the study poster below and message me if you meet the criteria!”

High School Students Recruitment Flyer:

Invitation to Join Research

Exploring Understandings about Intimate Friendships and Relationships

The aim of this research project is to understand how youth learn about intimate friendships and relationships during high school years. If you are interested in talking to me via virtual meeting or phone, please contact me!

Eligibility

- High School Students
- Must have attended high school in Ontario
- Age 16-20 years

Procedure

- Email for more details
- 100% confidential
- Individual interview online
- Duration approx. 60-90 minutes
- \$20 Honorarium, guaranteed!

The research is conducted by Anum Rafiq, a doctoral student in Health Policy and Equity, York University. If you are interested, please email anum.rafiq@yorku.ca or **phone:** [416-736-5731](tel:416-736-5731)

York University Student Recruitment Flyer



Invitation to Join Research

Exploring Understandings about Intimate Relationships

Eligibility

- First Year Undergraduate student at York University
- Must have attended school in Ontario (high school/elementary school)
- Age 18-20 years

Procedure

- One to one interview (approx. 60-90 minutes)
- On Keele Campus at a time that works for you
- \$20 Honorarium

The research is conducted by Anum Rafiq, a doctoral student in Health Policy and Equity, School of Health Policy and Management at the Faculty of Health. If you are interested, please contact Anum:

Phone:

@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca		@yorku.ca	

Appendix G: Student Informant Informed Consent Form



Informed Consent Form

Highschool Students

Date: May 19 2020

Study Name: Exploring Understandings about Intimate Friendships and Relationships

Researcher Name:

Anum Rafiq, MA, PhD Student (primary researcher), School of Health Policy and Management, York University Email: ku.ca

Prof. Farah Ahmad, MBBS, MPH, PhD (thesis supervisor), School of Health Policy and Management, York University Thesis Supervisor. Email: ku.ca

Purpose of the Research: The aim of this research project is to understand how youth learn about intimate friendships and relationships. The research will be conducted through a 60-90 minute confidential online interview using confidential virtual meeting tool or phone line. This research is part of a graduate research project for the fulfilment of a PhD in the Health Policy and Equity Program at York University.

What you will be asked to do in the Research: Participants will be asked to take part in an individual in-person interview, for which the time allocation may vary from 60 to 90 minutes. The researcher will also gather some demographic information using a brief survey. In the interview, you will be asked to speak about your **understanding** of intimate friendships and relationships. The interview will take place online, using an encrypted and secure application (Microsoft Teams). The researcher may ask you to allow follow-up contact for a shorter interview. A \$20 honorarium will be provided to you via interac e-transfer.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

By participating, you are granting permission to the interviewer to allow audio recordings and take written notes. The audio recorded data will be transcribed verbatim and audios will be destroyed immediately after transcription and accuracy check. All information collected from you will be kept highly confidential, and all identifying data (e.g. names) will be removed.

Risks and Discomforts: The researcher does not foresee any major risks from your participation in the research. However, there is a possibility that some respondents may feel uncomfortable when discussing the topic of intimate friendships and relationships. We would like to remind you that the focus of the study is about your understanding and **not personal experiences**. In case, you feel discomfort, the researcher would remind you that your participation is completely voluntary and you may decide to not answer any question or withdraw at any time from the interview and research study. A resource list will also be provided for your information purposes and in the case that you would like to gather more information or speak to a professional.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: Benefits of the research include an analysis of how youth in Ontario obtain an understanding of intimate friendships and relationships during high school years. The study aim is to develop written and visual maps identifying how factors may influence their understanding of the studied phenomenon. The generated knowledge would inform practice and policy for youth health and social wellbeing including healthy relationships.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future. This study has no conflicts of interests with any organizations. We are also able to conduct the interview in Urdu, if that is the preferred language.

Withdrawal from the Study: If you decide to stop participating, you may withdraw without penalty, financial or otherwise, and you will still receive the promised inducement. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality: Interviews will be recorded using an audio device; however, there will be no mention of names. Each participant will be assigned a study ID number. The paper file linking the names with study IDs will be kept during collection of data for follow-up and destroyed once this phase is complete. Only assigned study IDs will be used during analysis and development of reports. All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only the primary researcher and study supervisor will have access to this information. All electronic data will be stored in an encrypted and password-protected device. The transcribed data will be destroyed 5 years after the publication of major papers and reports, and consent forms will be destroyed 2 years after the completion of the study. The deidentified transcribed data will be kept for possible secondary analysis up to 10 years and destroyed after July 2029. Any such analysis would need ethics approval from York University. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Ms. Rafiq by e-mail ([redacted]@yorku.ca) or my thesis supervisor, Professor Farah Ahmad ([redacted]). This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participant Research Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board. It has sought to conform to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-[redacted]@yorku.ca).

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (e)

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I (_____), consent to participate in one-to-one interview (*Exploring Understandings of Intimate Relationships*) conducted by (*Anum Rafiq*). I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

I give permission to be contact for follow-up interview ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature

Participant

Date

Signature (Anum Rafiq)

Principal Investigator

Date

Please sign digitally by typing your name and date.

Additional consent (please check box)

1. Audio recording

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

Signature:

Date:

Exploring Understandings about Intimate Friendships and Relationships

Consent Page:

By signing this form, I agree that (please check box)

The study has been explained to me.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

All my questions were answered.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Possible harm and discomforts and possible benefits (if any) of this study have been explained to me.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

I understand that I have the right not to participate and the right to stop at any time.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

I understand that I may refuse to participate without consequence.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

I have a choice of not answering any specific questions.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

I am free now, and in the future, to ask any questions about the study.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

I have been told that my personal information will be kept confidential and will be destroyed after a certain point of time

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

I understand that no information that would identify me will be released or printed without asking me first.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

I have given permission to be contact for follow-up interview

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Participant Name

Date _____

Signature (Anum Rafiq)

Date _____

Principal Investigator

Appendix H: Student Informant Demographic Surveys (University Student/High School Student)

Exploring Understandings About Intimate Relationships

Please note that this information will remain private and confidential, and that the data will be collected anonymously.

Please select your age category

- ☐ 16 years (offered this option for high school student informants only)
- ☐ 17 years (offered this option for high school student informants only)
- ☐ 18 years
- ☐ 19 years
- ☐ 20 years

Which of these describe you? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Full-time employed
- ☐ Part-time employed
- ☐ Not employed for pay
- ☐ Caregiver (e.g., children, elderly)
- ☐ Homemaker
- ☐ Full-time student
- ☐ Part-time student
- ☐ Other

How would you describe your current relationship status? An intimate relationship is defined as emotional or sexual involvement with a partner

- ☐ Single
- ☐ In a causal relationship
- ☐ Cohabitating
- ☐ Common law
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Which option describes your gender?

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Do you consider yourself to be:

- ☐ Heterosexual or straight
- ☐ Homosexual
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Do you consider yourself a visible minority? (the Canadian Labour law defines non-Caucasians as visible minority; First Nations is a standalone category).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

If yes, please state the ethnicity you identify with:

Do you identify with a First Nations Group?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Were you born in Canada?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Are you a Canadian citizen?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Were your parents born in Canada?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

If yes, was it: ☐ Father ☐ Mother

Do your parents live together?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Do you follow a religion?

- ☐ Yes: _____
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Which of these describes your household income last year?

- ☐ \$0
- ☐ \$1 to \$9 999
- ☐ \$10 000 to \$24 999
- ☐ \$25 000 to 49 999
- ☐ \$50 000 to 74 999
- ☐ \$75 000 to 99 999
- ☐ \$100 000 to 149 999
- ☐ \$150 000 and greater
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Which of these describes your personal income during the last year?

- ☐ \$0
- ☐ \$1 to \$9 999
- ☐ \$10 000 to \$24 999
- ☐ \$25 000 to 49 999
- ☐ \$50 000 to 74 999
- ☐ \$75 000 to 99 999
- ☐ \$100 000 to 149 999
- ☐ \$150 000 and greater
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

What is your current university study program?

Have you obtained secondary education outside of Canada for any duration of time?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please specify where:

Appendix I: Study Information Sheet



Study Information Sheet

Study Title

Exploring Understandings about Intimate Relationships

This research is conducted by a doctoral student, Anum Rafiq, as part of her graduate training for the fulfilment of a PhD degree program in the Health Policy & Equity, York University.

Purpose of study:

The primary purpose of this qualitative research with youth is to explore how and where they learned about intimate relationships during the high school years, and what were the facilitators and/or barriers for them in building such understanding about relationships.

What you will be asked to do:

You will be invited to participate in at least one face-to-face qualitative interview (lasting approximately 60 minutes) in a mutually agreed upon place, date, and time. The interviews will be audio recorded for accuracy purposes and the interviewer may take field notes. It is anticipated that the interview process will start in the month of October, 2019. Each participant will be offered an honorarium of \$20.00 as a token of appreciation.

To be eligible to participate in this study you must be:

- A first year York University Undergraduate Student
- Must have attended a high school in Ontario
- At least 18 years of age

Your participation is completely voluntary!

Confidentiality:

The identity of all interview participants will remain anonymous and you will have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point in time. All information provided by you will be kept highly confidential. Ethics approval has been obtained from *York University's* Human Research Participant Committee.

If you have any questions related to the study, please contact the principal investigator at anumrafi@yorku.ca. The student supervisor, Prof. Farah Ahmad can also be reached at farahmad@yorku.ca. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anum Rafiq, Ph.D. Candidate,

School of Health Policy and Management, York University

Email: a [redacted] p; Phone: [redacted]

Appendix J: List of Counsellors and Helplines for Youth

Study Title

Exploring Understandings about Intimate Relationships

Students on campus who do not require medical attention and are in crisis or in serious distress can speak to a counsellor on campus at Student Counselling & Development (SCD). SCD is located in N110 Bennett Centre for Student Services, and can also be reached by phone at 416-
lace for York University Students only, removed for High School student Informants)

Need to talk to someone?

The following services are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- Good 2 Talk (for post-secondary students)
1-866-925-5454

- Toronto Distress Centres
416-408-4357 or 408-HELP
*hold times may be greater than 15 minutes

Ontario Mental Health Helpline
1-866-531-2600

Multilingual Distress Lines

If you need to talk to someone in a language other than English. Open Monday to Friday, 10 am – 10 pm. Offered through Spectra Community Support Services

- Mandarin & Cantonese: 416-920-0497
- Hindi, Urdu & Punjabi: 905-459-7777 ext. 2
- Spanish: 905-459-7777 ext. 3
- Portuguese: 905-459-7777 ext. 4

In addition, the following resources can be accessed:

AppleTree Medical Centre:

- Apple Tree Medical Centre offers a comprehensive list of medical services to the York University community.

- Location: York Lanes

Hours: Monday to Friday, 8:30am - 7pm; Saturday, 10am - 2pm; Sunday, closed

For appointments: 647-722-2370

www.appletreetoronto.com

Appendix K: Details of Organizations/Groups Contacted for Teacher Recruitment & Flyer

- **Note: Each Post included a copy of the Invitation to Join Research Flyer pictured below**

Group/Organization Name	Date Posted	Text Posted
Health Teacher Central	July 30, 2020	“Please reach out! Short interview, \$20 honorarium for your time. Would be happy to hear your experiences, 100% anonymous.”
	July 3, 2020	“Looking for High School Teachers from Ontario!”
Health and Physical Education Teachers of Ontario	June 26, 2020 July 30, 2020	“Hello! I am looking for 10 Phys Ed teachers for a short interview, for my doctoral research project. I would be very grateful if you can kindly share your opinions! Please reach out:)”
Ontario Health and Physical Education Teachers	September 8, 2020	“Looking to connect with high school teachers for a confidential interview, \$75 honorarium guaranteed!”
	July 30, 2020	“Please reach out! Short interview, \$20 honorarium for your time. Would be happy to hear your experiences, 100% anonymous.”
	July 3, 2020	“Hello, I’ve been posting my flyer but not getting any interest from HS physed teachers..any tips or ideas as to why?”
	June 26, 2020	“Hello! I am a PhD candidate looking to connect with High School Phys Ed teachers for a short virtual interview, in exchange for an honorarium. Please contact me if you are

		eligible and interested, I would love to hear from you!”
Ontario College of Teachers	July 5, 2020	“Looking for high school teachers for a virtual research interview, confidential! Please message for details”
OPHEA	August 4 th , 2020	“Hello I am a doctoral candidate at York University, enrolled in the health policy and equity program. I am looking to interview high school teachers who have taught the physical education course. This research is to help learn more about teacher's experiences in teaching youth about the Ontario health and physical education curriculum, it is approved by York University. Is it possible to share my research flyer with your distribution list? My email is x@yorku.ca Thank you Anum Rafiq PhD Candidate York University”
Individual e-mail messages to instructors from York University’s Faculty of Education Department who listed experience in teaching teacher’s how to deliver health and physical education	Sept. 9 th , 2020	“Hello Dr.X I am a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Health at YorkU, conducting research on youth and their experiences of learning about intimate relationships. I have interviewed high school students, but also felt the need to interview teachers. As such, I am interviewing high school teachers to learn about how they teach. However, I would like to make my research more well-rounded, and would like to ask if you

		would also be available for an interview, as I am interested in learning about how future-teachers are taught. Kindly advise if you would be available for a 60-minute confidential research interview. Please see attached flyer for details. Sincerely, Anum Rafiq PhD Candidate Health Policy and Equity York University”
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Invitation to Join Research

Exploring Understandings about Intimate Friendships and Relationships

The aim of this research project is to understand how youth learn about intimate friendships and relationships during high school years. If you are a **high school teacher**, then I am interested in hearing from you! We could talk confidentially via virtual meeting or phone. Please contact, if you are interested!

Eligibility:

- Good Standing status with the Ontario College of Teachers
- Experience of teaching in Ontario based high school(s)
- Experience of teaching the Physical Education course (gym)
- Physical Education Specialist Qualification preferred

Procedure

- Email for more details
- 100% confidential
- Individual interview online
- Duration approx. 60-90 minutes
- \$20 Honorarium, guaranteed!

The research is conducted by Anum Rafiq, a doctoral student in Health Policy and Equity, York University. If you are interested, please email

 prku.ca or phone: 

Appendix L: Educator Informant Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey: Teachers

Please note that this information will remain private and confidential, and that the data will be collected anonymously.

1. Please select your age category

- ☐ 20-25
- ☐ 25-30
- ☐ 30-35
- ☐ 35-40
- ☐ 40-45
- ☐ 45-50
- ☐ 50-55
- ☐ 55-60
- ☐ 60 or above
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

2. Which option describes your gender?

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

3. Which of these describe you? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Full-time employed
- ☐ Part-time employed
- ☐ Not employed for pay
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

4. Do you consider yourself a visible minority? (the Canadian Labour law defines non-Caucasians as visible minority; First Nations is a standalone category).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

If yes, please state the ethnicity you identify with: _____

5. Do you identify with an Indigenous Group?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

6. ***Were you born in Canada?***

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to answer

7. ***Are you a Canadian citizen?***

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to answer

8. ***How long have you been teaching high school?***

☐ 1 -3 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 5-7 years

☐ 7-9 years

☐ 10+ years

☐ Prefer not to answer

Appendix M: Educator Informant Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Highschool Teachers

Date: May 19 2020

Study Name: Exploring Understandings about Intimate Friendships and Relationships

Researcher Name:

Anum Rafiq, MA, PhD Student (primary researcher), School of Health Policy and Management, York University Email: [redacted]@u.ca;

Prof. Farah Ahmad, MBBS, MPH, PhD (thesis supervisor), School of Health Policy and Management, York University Thesis Supervisor. Email: [redacted]@u.ca;

Purpose of the Research: The aim of this research project is to understand how youth learn about intimate friendships and relationships. The research will be conducted through a 60-90 minute confidential online interview using confidential virtual meeting tool or phone line. This research is part of a graduate research project for the fulfilment of a PhD in the Health Policy and Equity Program at York University.

What you will be asked to do in the Research: Participants will be asked to take part in an individual in-person interview, for which the time allocation may vary from 60 to 90 minutes. The researcher will also gather some demographic information using a brief survey. In the interview, you will be asked to speak about high school students' understanding of intimate relationships, how they learned about what it could look like, and any reflections you may have about their learning process. The interview will take place online, using an encrypted and secure application (Microsoft Teams). The researcher may ask you to allow follow-up contact for a shorter interview. A \$20 honorarium will be provided to you via interac e-transfer.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

By participating, you are granting permission to the interviewer to allow audio recordings and take written notes. The audio recorded data will be transcribed verbatim and audios will be destroyed immediately after transcription and accuracy check. All information collected from you will be kept highly confidential, and all identifying data (e.g. names) will be removed.

Risks and Discomforts: The researcher does not foresee any major risks from your participation in the research. However, there is a possibility that some respondents may feel uncomfortable when reflecting on their teaching experiences. In such a scenario, the researcher would remind you that your participation is completely voluntary and you may decide to not answer any question or withdraw at any time from the interview and research study. A resource list will also be provided in the case that you would like to speak to a professional.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: Benefits of the research include an analysis of how youth in Ontario obtain an understanding of healthy relationships, as well as increased knowledge on the experience of Teachers. The study aim is to develop written and visual maps identifying how the lived experiences of youth are socially organized in terms of understanding relationships. The generated knowledge would inform practice and policy for youth health and social wellbeing including healthy relationships.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or

to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future. The primary researcher has no conflicts of interests with any School Boards in Ontario. The interview could be conducted in Urdu, if that is the preferred language.

Withdrawal from the Study: If you decide to stop participating, you may withdraw without penalty, financial or otherwise, and you will still receive the promised inducement. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality: Interviews will be recorded using an audio device; however, there will be no mention of names. Each participant will be assigned a study ID number. The paper file linking the names with study IDs will be kept during collection of data for follow-up and destroyed once this phase is complete. Only assigned study IDs will be used during analysis and development of reports. All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only the primary researcher and study supervisor will have access to this information. All electronic data will be stored in an encrypted and password-protected device. The transcribed data will be destroyed 5 years after the publication of major papers and reports, and consent forms will be destroyed 2 years after the completion of the study. The deidentified transcribed data will be kept for possible secondary analysis up to 10 years and destroyed after July 2029. Any such analysis would need ethics approval from York University. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Ms. Rafiq by e-mail [redacted]ku.ca) or my thesis supervisor, Professor Farah Ahmad ([redacted]ku.ca). This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participant Research Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board. It has sought to conform to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (e-mail [redacted])

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 4 [redacted] e-mail [redacted]).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I (_____), consent to participate in one-to-one interview (*Exploring Understandings of Intimate Relationships*) conducted by (*Anum Rafiq*). I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

I give permission to be contact for follow-up interview ☐ Yes ☐ No

Participant

Date

Signature (Anum Rafiq)
Principal Investigator

Date

Please sign digitally by typing your name and date.

Additional consent (please check box)**1. Audio recording**

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

Signature:

Date:

Exploring Understandings about Intimate Friendships and Relationships

Consent Page:

By signing this form, I agree that (please check box)

The study has been explained to me.

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

All my questions were answered.

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Possible harm and discomforts and possible benefits (if any) of this study have been explained to me.

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

I understand that I have the right not to participate and the right to stop at any time.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that I may refuse to participate without consequence.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I have a choice of not answering any specific questions.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I am free now, and in the future, to ask any questions about the study.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I have been told that my personal information will be kept confidential and will be destroyed after a certain point of time

☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that no information that would identify me will be released or printed without asking me first.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form

☐ Yes ☐ No

I have given permission to be contact for follow-up interview

☐ Yes ☐ No

Participant Name

Date

Signature (Anum Rafiq)
Principal Investigator

Date

Appendix N: Interview Diary Excerpts

“Interview 4

Date: October 16,

Time: 5:00 pm

Duration: 1 hour 16 minutes

Subjective

This informant was a second-year male student, in the history and concurrent teaching program at York university. He had experience with intimate relationships. He was of Jamaican descent and hailed from a two-parent household. Both the informant and I were dressed in casual clothes. It was quite a busy day for me at work and returning from work to conduct this interview was a little tiring for me, however I was still quite excited. The informant seemed a little quiet in the beginning of the interview but was able to open up a lot more throughout.

I am completing my reflection in this depth a few weeks after the interview has been completed. I have read over the transcript again, as well as listened to the audio recording. I am expanding upon the shorthand notes that I took on my personal phone after the interview, that I jotted down when the interview was complete, on my way home and when the informant had left.

Objective:

The interview took place in R202, in the evening. As the researcher, I did not sit directly across from the informant with any papers or computers in front of me, except for the interview guide, and the few papers exchanged with the informant prior to the interview. We spent a few minutes chatting about his academic choices and his major, after which I got into asking questions about intimate relationships. The informant seemed comfortable and confident.

Analysis:

A very interesting thread in this interview was the informants' experience with being a mentee, a mentor, coming from a two-parent household, and holding religious beliefs. This informant was very well-versed in his views on intimate relationships and was able to fluently and confidently state his opinions. The way in which he spoke showed experience, experience of teaching about dating, and of learning about dating. He had also taken an optional course in grade 12 in high school, which he mentioned learning about passion, intimacy, compassion, and families- beyond the biomedical nature of sex education provided to him in grade 9. He mentioned that students were starting to engage in sexual activity in high school, and were therefore taught about the risks associated with sex:

“but you know, our sex ed class never really talked much about relationships.

(Interviewer: Okay.) It was literally mostly focused on just sex because they knew that as we're getting older, some kids were starting to have more sex. (Interviewer: Mhm.) And then some kids already started having sex. So they focus a lot on just like preaching the ideas of like, safe sex and what can happen if you don't understand the full length of what sex really is.”

This informants experience of high school, and of building his understanding of healthy intimate relationships sounded very wholesome; he seemed to have a support system of mentors, family members, and community members, who were there to guide him throughout his journey and help him navigate the arena of dating, while he saw most of his friends enter into and break out

of short-lived relationships in high school. It seems that his experience was organized on many levels, of family, of community, and of high school and mentorship. These various ruling relations were instrumental to building what he considered to be an understanding worthy enough to be used to teach/mentor other young students, as he was a mentee for the 'success beyond limits' program after school. He was also able to recall assemblies in high school that focused on anti-bullying and anti-abuse, and how to help a friend if they saw someone in those situations.

Despite all of these various learning experiences, when I probed the informant to share which of these was the most influential in his learnings, he mentioned that the gr. 12 optional course that he simply happened to take to fill his course load, was the most influential:

“Um the most effective was probably that one class. I had it in my grade 12. Where we talked about families. Like as in what kind of family, what family types are nuclear, nuclear, single, mixed, all that type of stuff. (Interviewer: Mhm.) That was probably the most effective but that was only effective to like the people who were in the class.”

This to me was very interesting, as it blatantly shows how well a student's learnings can be organized if such a course was mandatory/standardized for everyone to take in high schools, across Canada. Especially because he later mentioned that whenever he was troubled in relationships, he would seek out older people to speak with, such as the supervisor at the program where he volunteered, because he felt that boys his age were immature and only concerned with things he would 'rather not say right now'. This shows a need for adolescents to learn from trusted sources and shows an inequity in the way students are being taught about something as critical as intimate relationships.

There is a plethora of literature on loneliness, on mental health, and the human need for companionship. Although society today follows the 'pick yourself up by the boots and get back to work' culture predominantly, it is the nascent human need for companionship and belonging that can often give rise to many other mental imbalances. The lack of community, partnerships, and trusted relationships, often brew and manifest themselves in different ways in youths' lives.

Plan

In this interview, issues of culture, religion, race, and ethnicity all came up. I am planning on probing a little bit more about these factors to understand the bigger picture. This informant also mentioned that societal norms get created discreetly through what we see around us, through social media such as Instagram, YouTube, etc. I plan on probing a little bit more about where people learn which videos to watch and which accounts to follow etc. Overall though, I believe I probed a good amount in this interview and do not plan on changing much for the next one.

Reflexivity

I feel that I can relate quite well to this informants' experiences, of hailing from a two parent, immigrant household, and having a religious and cultural heritage to carry with me and use to navigate my own dating experiences. Due to this, I ensured to inquire more and more about things such as race, where he learned different norms from, and what he thinks about the existing education curriculum. I also feel that I was perhaps a little more quieter during this interview because the informant seemed to know a lot about what he was talking about, did not require too much probing, and had very well formulated thoughts.

As a researcher, I was happy to hear about the course that did indeed teach students about healthy relationships and found myself wishing that it was something standardized across all

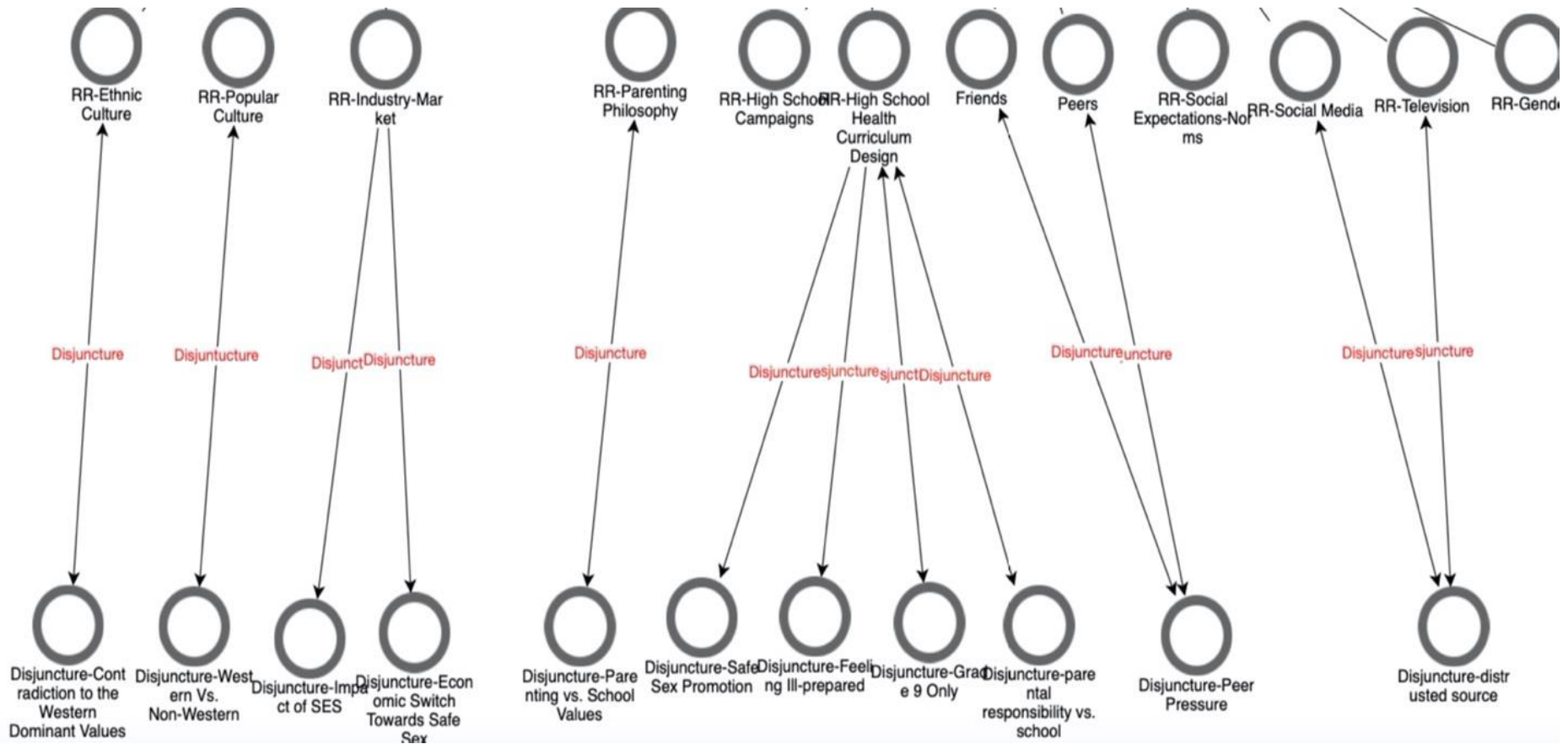
schools and made mandatory. I think of my own experiences in high school, and the fact that my understanding of healthy intimate relationships was largely influenced by television, Bollywood movies, and my culture and religion. I could see a lot of that in this informants' responses and hope to further explore how these experiences are organized. “

Interview Diary Excerpt (short hand) from teacher interview during interview:

“Int 8

- Male
- Dad was a teacher, sports focused
- 23 years of physed
- Physed has changed and evolved a lot, he started in late 90s
- Changes in curriculum
- Evolution of tech integration in courses thru out curriculum
- Decline of physical activity general health and physical fitness levels of students
- Healthy growth and sexuality, MH well being has taken off, nutrition
- Says current events impact what they teach
- Specific vs overall expectations; could do assignment or movie etc
- Sex is less imp to kids today, less dating
- Dept head chooses course
- Admins timetable the school
- Lots of right and wrong, right way to be in society, religion and culture can be unacceptable
- Cant be certified as a physed teacher anymore since 2015
- AQ course is just 3 weeks; pretty quick coverage of health, theres a lot of other stuff like equity, physical education, etc.”

Appendix O: First Draft of Capturing Ruling Relations



Appendix P: Survey for Students from a Teacher

Welcome Survey - Ms. X

Welcome to Grade 9 Healthy Active Living Education! Please complete this survey to help me get to know you better and how I can support your learning in this course.

* Required

Email*

Your email

What is your preferred first name?*

Your answer

What is your last name?*

Your answer

What is your preferred pronoun?*

he/him

she/her

they/them

Other:

What school did you go to in Grade 8?*

Your answer

Do you have any medical problems that may affect your ability to participate in physical activities? (e.g. asthma, heart problems, allergies, joint problems, previous injuries, etc.) Please explain briefly.*

Your answer

Parent/Guardian Contact #1 - What is their full name?*

Your answer

Parent/Guardian Contact #1 - What is their relationship to you?*

Your answer

Parent/Guardian Contact #1 - What is the best number to reach them at?*

Your answer

Parent/Guardian Contact #1 - What is their email address?*

Your answer

Parent/Guardian Contact #2 - What is their full name?

Your answer

Parent/Guardian Contact #2 - What is there relationship to you?

Your answer

Parent/Guardian Contact #2 - What is the best number to reach them at?

Your answer

Parent/Guardian Contact #2 - What is their email address?

Your answer

If I need to call your parent/guardian about your progress in this course, who would you like me to talk to and why? Please let me know if there is anything else that you think I should know about your family or calling home.*

Your answer

What country were you born in? Do you speak any languages other than English at home?*

Your answer

Do you have any special responsibilities at home or outside of school? For example, a job, babysit a sibling etc. Explain briefly.*

Your answer

What do you like most about school?*

Your answer

What do you like least about school?*

Your answer

How are you adjusting to being online again?*

Easy Peasy - I've got it under control!

Okay - Not too bad, but I'm still figuring it out

Ack! - I'm still having a bit of a hard time and hope this gets easier

Help! - I'm struggling a lot...this is too much and feels overwhelming

Other:

How do you like to spend your free time when you are not at school?*

Your answer

What are your strengths in Phys. Ed. class?*

Your answer

What could you improve on in Phys. Ed. class?*

Your answer

In fitness or sports activities, how would you describe yourself? Choose all that apply.*

Aggressive

Capable

Eager to learn

Shy

Uncertain

Uninterested

Other:

On a scale of 1 to 10, how active would you say you are?*

Not Active

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Very Active

What types of fitness activities and/or sports do you participate in most frequently outside of class?*

Your answer

Do you have any fitness equipment that you use at home?*

yoga mat

running shoes

stationary bike

treadmill

small weights (e.g. dumbbells, kettlebells, medicine balls, etc.)

Other:

What is a new skill, something you tried for the first time, or something you have done more of during the COVID-19 pandemic? (e.g. learned to juggle, read more books, etc.)*

Your answer

What about your life has changed most during the pandemic so far?*

Your answer

What are you most looking forward to when/if we return back to school?*

Your answer

What are two things you hope to learn during this course?*

Your answer

Do you have any questions or concerns about taking this course?*

Your answer

Do you have a wifi-enabled personal technology device to use from home every day? (e.g. cell phone, tablet, laptop)*

Yes

No

Other:

Do you have any concerns or issues about your access to technology and/or the internet for learning from home? Please explain briefly.*

Your answer

Do you have a preferred online learning platform?*

Brightspace

Google Classroom

Either is fine

Do you have a preferred video conferencing tool for live virtual learning?*

Google Meet

Zoom

Either is fine

What is something I can do as your teacher to make this course more enjoyable? Is there anything in particular that makes a teacher a great teacher that I can try to apply in our class?

Your answer

Do you have an IEP? If yes, please briefly explain your accommodations.*

Your answer

Is there anything else you would like me to know about you? What can I do as your teacher to help you be successful in this course?*

Your answer

Send me a copy of my responses.

Submit

Page 1 of 1

Clear form

Appendix Q: Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession (OCT, 2022)

INTRODUCTION

The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* represent a vision of professional practice. At the heart of a strong and effective teaching profession is a commitment to students and their learning.

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers, in their position of trust, demonstrate responsibility in their relationships with students, parents, guardians, colleagues, educational partners, other professionals, the environment and the public.

THE PURPOSES OF THE ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION ARE:

- to inspire members to reflect and uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession
- to identify the ethical responsibilities and commitments in the teaching profession
- to guide ethical decisions and actions in the teaching profession
- to promote public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.

THE ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION ARE:

CARE

The ethical standard of *Care* includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students' potential. Members express their commitment to students' well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.

RESPECT

Intrinsic to the ethical standard of *Respect* are trust and fair-mindedness. Members honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.

TRUST

The ethical standard of *Trust* embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.

INTEGRITY

Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of *Integrity*. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities”

Appendix R: Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession (OCT, 2022)

“INTRODUCTION

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provide a framework of principles that describes the knowledge, skills, and values inherent in Ontario's teaching profession. These standards articulate the goals and aspirations of the profession. These standards convey a collective vision of professionalism that guides the daily practices of members of the Ontario College of Teachers.

THE PURPOSES OF THE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION ARE:

- to inspire a shared vision for the teaching profession
- to identify the values, knowledge and skills that are distinctive to the teaching profession
- to guide the professional judgment and actions of the teaching profession
- to promote a common language that fosters an understanding of what it means to be a member of the teaching profession.

THE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION ARE:

Commitment to Students and Student Learning

Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Members strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Members apply professional knowledge and experience to promote student learning. They use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individual students and learning communities. Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection.

LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Members promote and participate in the creation of collaborative, safe and supportive learning communities. They recognize their shared responsibilities and their leadership roles in order to facilitate student success. Members maintain and uphold the principles of the ethical standards in these learning communities.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Members recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice and to student learning. Professional practice and self-directed learning are informed by experience, research, collaboration and knowledge.”

Appendix S: Ontario School Board Progress Indicators (Ministry of Education Website, 2022)

The Indicators

Twelve indicators have been selected to provide information about each board's progress.

Grade 6 Reading EQAO Results

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) annually assesses the reading, writing and math skills of Ontario's Grade 6 students. EQAO is an arm's-length agency of the provincial government and provides parents, teachers and the public with accurate and reliable information about student achievement.

In 2018-19, 81 per cent of English-language students and 93 per cent of French-language students met or exceeded the provincial standard (Level 3 on the scale of 1 to 4, or grade level B) on the EQAO Grade 6 reading assessment.

Ontario's target is for 75 per cent of Grade 6 students to be meeting or exceeding the provincial standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Progress in Grade 6 Reading EQAO Results

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) annually assesses the reading, writing and math skills of Ontario's Grade 6 students. EQAO is an arm's-length agency of the provincial government and provides parents, teachers and the public with accurate and reliable information about student achievement.

Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, EQAO reported that there was no change for English-language students and a 2 percentage point increase for French-language students who met or exceeded the provincial standard (Level 3 on the scale of 1 to 4, or grade level B) in the Grade 6 reading assessments.

Ontario's target is for 75 per cent of Grade 6 students to be meeting or exceeding the provincial standard in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2018-19, 81 per cent of English-language students and 93 per cent of French-language students met or exceeded the provincial standard.

Grade 10 Literacy Test

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) annually assesses the literacy skills of Ontario's Grade 10 students through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. EQAO is an arm's-length agency of the provincial government and provides parents, teachers and the public with accurate and reliable information about student achievement.

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test assesses reading and writing skills that students are expected to have learned in all subjects by the end of Grade 9. Students have the opportunity to rewrite the test if they fail; however, they must pass the test or enrol in and pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course to obtain the graduation literacy requirement.

In 2018-19, the percentage of Grade 10 students who were eligible to write the test for the first time and who fully participated in and passed the literacy test was 80 per cent for English-language students and 89 per cent for French-language students.

Progress in Grade 10 Literacy Test

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) annually assesses the literacy skills of Ontario's Grade 10 students through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. EQAO is an arm's-length agency of the provincial government and provides parents, teachers and the public with accurate and reliable information about student achievement.

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test assesses reading and writing skills that students are expected to have learned in all subjects by the end of Grade 9. Students have the opportunity to rewrite the test if they fail; however, they must pass the test or enrol in and pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course to obtain the graduation literacy requirement.

In 2018-19, the percentage of Grade 10 students who were eligible to write the test for the first time and who fully participated in and passed the literacy test was 80 per cent for English-language students and 89 per cent for French-language students.

Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, the percentage of Grade 10 students who were eligible to write the test for the first time and who fully participated in and passed the literacy test was a 1 percentage point decrease for English-language students and there was a 3 percentage point decrease for French-language students.

Credit Accumulation by the End of Grade 10

Credits are counted if they are part of the student's transcript at the end of June. Courses taken at summer school or concluding after June 30 are counted for the following year. Students learning English as a second language or with special needs are included.

Ontario students who have 16 or more credits at the end of Grade 10 are on track to graduate with their peers.

At the end of the 2019-20 school year, 81 per cent of Grade 10 students had 16 or more credits.

Progress in Credit Accumulation by the End of Grade 10

Credits are counted if they are part of the student's transcript at the end of June. Courses taken at summer school or concluding after June 30 are counted for the following year. Students learning English as a second language or with special needs are included.

Ontario students who have 16 or more credits at the end of Grade 10 are on track to graduate with their peers.

At the end of the 2019-20 school year, 81 per cent of Grade 10 students had 16 or more credits. There was a two percentage points increase compared to the end of 2017-2018 school year.

Credit Accumulation by the End of Grade 11

Credits are counted if they are part of the student's transcript at the end of June. Courses taken at summer school or concluding after June 30 are counted for the following year. Students learning English as a second language or with special needs are included.

Ontario students who have 23 or more credits at the end of Grade 11 are on track to graduate with their peers.

At the end of the 2019-20 school year, 84 per cent of Grade 11 students had 23 or more credits.

Progress in Credit Accumulation by the End of Grade 11

Credits are counted if they are part of the student's transcript at the end of June. Courses taken at summer school or concluding after June 30 are counted for the following year. Students learning English as a second language or with special needs are included.

Ontario students who have 23 or more credits at the end of Grade 11 are on track to graduate with their peers.

At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, 84 per cent of Grade 11 students had 23 or more credits. This is a two percentage point increase compared to the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

Four-Year Graduation Rate

A student is considered a four-year graduate if they receive an OSSD within four years of starting Grade 9.

As of August 31, 2020, 88.1 per cent of students were graduating in five years and 82.2 per cent in four years. The four-year and five-year graduation rate is calculated as the percentage of students who receive an OSSD within four or five years of starting Grade 9. Students who have transferred out of province, or died, are not included in calculating the graduation rate.

For students to earn an OSSD, they must:

- earn a minimum of 30 credits, including 18 compulsory credits and 12 optional credits
 - meet the provincial secondary school literacy requirement, and
 - complete 40 hours of community involvement activities.
-

Progress in the Four-Year Graduation Rate

Province wide, the students who graduated with an OSSD within four years of starting Grade 9 increased by 1.0 percentage point compared to 2018. A student is considered a four-year graduate if they receive an OSSD within four years of starting Grade 9.

Five-Year Graduation Rate

A student is considered a five-year graduate if they receive an OSSD within five years of starting Grade 9.

As of August 31, 2020, 88.1 per cent of students were graduating in five years and 82.2 per cent in four years. The four-year and five-year graduation rate is calculated as the percentage of students who receive an OSSD within four or five years of starting Grade 9. Students who have transferred out of province, or died, are not included in calculating the graduation rate.

For students to earn an OSSD, they must:

- earn a minimum of 30 credits, including 18 compulsory credits and 12 optional credits
- meet the provincial secondary school literacy requirement, and
- complete 40 hours of community involvement activities.

Progress in the Five-Year Graduation Rate

Province wide, the students who graduated with an OSSD within five years of starting Grade 9 increased by 1.0 percentage point compared to 2018. A student is considered a five-year graduate if they receive an OSSD within five years of starting Grade 9.