

We Are Family:
Sexual Diversity Issues and the Elementary Curriculum in Quebec

Franco Di Salvio

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ABSTRACT

We Are Family:

Sexual Diversity Issues and the Elementary Curriculum in Quebec

Franco Di Salvio

The new reform of Quebec's education system claims that it will enhance and strengthen students' worldview and reinforce attitudes and values such as tolerance and respect for differences. The *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec* lists sexual orientation as an example of difference in the Quebec Education Program for elementary school. However, gay and lesbian issues are silenced and censored. By silencing and censoring gay and lesbian issues in elementary schools, children miss an opportunity to fully realize the objectives set out by the *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec*.

The main question this study asked was to what extent teacher attitudes towards the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues in their teaching support the persistence of homophobic attitudes within society. This study offered an indication of teachers' attitudes regarding the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues into cycle I, cycle II and cycle III Moral Education, Geography, History and Citizenship Education, and English Language Arts curriculum in Quebec. Findings from the study suggested that generally teachers realize the benefits of including gay and lesbian issues in elementary school curriculum and are willing to incorporate them into their teachings, however many teachers also display homophobic attitudes.

This study was comprised of a questionnaire and a one-on-one interview with ten elementary school teachers. The teachers taught Moral Education, Geography, History and Citizenship Education, or English Language Arts at the same elementary school. This project is based on the ideas of Paulo Freire to build a learning community, which encourages the personal growth of each member of the community while nurturing harmony and dialogue among members.

This thesis is dedicated to my family

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“We must always remember that separate but equal is not equal” said Prime Minister of Canada Paul Martin in a speech presented in the House of Commons during second reading debate on Bill C-38, the Civil Marriage Act (Martin, 2005). The objective of this thesis is to attempt to advance our knowledge about teachers’ perceptions, insights, opinions, willingness and understandings regarding the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues into cycle one, cycle two and cycle three Moral Education, Geography, History and Citizenship Education, and English Language Arts curriculum. The desire for this undertaking hailed from the current issues that surround same-sex marriage in Canada and the prevailing disapproval, discrimination, and censorship gays and lesbians confront in elementary school curricula. Chapter I.1 section 10 of the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms states:

Every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap... Discrimination exists where such a distinction, exclusion or preference has the effect of nullifying or impairing such right (2002, p. 3).

Multicultural and intercultural education argues that it will allow students to operate within a diverse society where a range of differences is respected and prejudice and discrimination are eliminated. However, issues of sexual diversity are hardly ever discussed or confronted in elementary schools. The inattention and disregard to such issues is attributable to narrow-mindedness or the taboo

that surrounds gay and lesbian matters. This inattention echoes the ignorance many possess when it comes to inequalities that do not impact the dominant group in our society. Consequently, schools maintain homophobic and heterosexist attitudes by censoring gay and lesbian content.

Multicultural and intercultural education has achieved a lot in creating inclusive, respectful and accepting environments for minorities from different ethnic groups, religions and gender. However, gay and lesbian content is nevertheless hidden, ignored, excluded, censored, silenced, denied, vilified and overlooked in our elementary schools. Even though homosexuality is more open in our society, the silence around homosexuality in elementary school is a indication that gays, lesbians, perceived to be gay individuals, individuals who have experiences with gay and lesbian friends and family, and individuals experiencing a growing awareness of their same-sex feelings is made invisible or insignificant. Children do learn about homosexuality through their peers, television shows, public figures and so forth. However, as it is not discussed overtly it is open to inaccuracy and bigotry (Bickmore, 1999).

The *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec* (2001) claims that the new reform will help students understand and put into practice values such as *understanding, openness, receptiveness, commitment, solidarity, equality, dignity, and respect* for themselves and others. They claim it will enhance and strengthen students' worldview and reinforce attitudes and values such as tolerance and respect for differences. The *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec* lists sexual orientation as

an example of difference in the Quebec Education Program for elementary school.

However gay and lesbian issues are silenced and censored in teaching material. In my opinion by silencing and censoring gay and lesbian issues in elementary schools, children miss an opportunity to fully realize the objectives set out by the *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec*. They would not be able to put into practice values such as understanding, openness, equality, dignity, and respect if an aspect of society, individuals with different sexual orientations, is omitted. In my opinion including gay and lesbian content in the curriculum will make children more aware, accepting, and respectful of individual differences, while increasing their understanding of diversity. As a result, it will lessen prejudices and make them more conscious, more complete and healthy humans.

Studies show that homosexuality is not a choice (Carson, Butcher, & Mineka, 2000). Provincial governments and the federal government in Canada have enacted laws granting equality to same-sex couples, and declared sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination. In addition, the *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec* lists sexual orientation as an example of difference in the Quebec Education Program for elementary school. For this reason I wish to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions, insight, opinions, and willingness to include gay and lesbian content in their curriculum.

This study is important for many reasons. It develops a better understanding of elementary teachers' perceptions, insight, opinions, and willingness to include gay and lesbian issues in their curriculum. Also, this study develops a better

understanding of how elementary teachers are prepared to include gay and lesbian issues in their lessons. This study, I hope, assists educators, parents, administrators, and teacher training institutions to accept and realize that the formal and informal curriculum is not inclusive of everyone if gays and lesbians are excluded. And finally, this study adds knowledge to the body of literature on this topic as well as serves as a foundation for further research.

The paper is organized in six sections. Chapter II reviews the Quebec Education Program. The social dimension of the Geography, History and Citizenship Education, Moral Education, and Language Arts curriculum will be described. Chapter II also discusses sexual orientation and developments in gay civil rights in Quebec and Canada. Chapter III reviews heteronormativity, heterosexism, heterocentrism and homophobia as well as the theory the project is based on. Chapter IV presents the methodology used to gather the data. Chapter V, the main part of the paper, describes the findings. The conclusion in Chapter VI discusses the findings.

CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND

The Quebec Education Program for Elementary Education

This section reviews the Quebec Education Program for Elementary Education. In the subsequent pages, I will give a general view of the social dimension of the Quebec Education Program for Elementary Education, specifically the social objectives set out for Moral Education, Geography, History and Citizenship Education, and English Language Arts curriculum. These subjects are sought for this research project because they are most open to incorporating into the curriculum the kinds of issues that this study addresses. The information in this section was obtained from the *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec* (2001).

In 2001, the Minister of State for Education and Youth, Francois Legault, presented the final version of the Quebec Education Program for preschool and elementary education. This program would reform the current education system. In the 1960s, following the Parent Commission, Quebec went through its last reform of the education system. The 1960s reform concentrated first and foremost on making education accessible to all. The new reform of Quebec's education system concentrates on best "preparing the citizens of tomorrow to meet the challenges of a pluralistic society that welcomes diversity, a knowledge-based job market that is constantly evolving, and economic globalization" (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2001, p. 2).

In the Introduction of the Quebec Education Program the task of the school in the education process is described. It declares that the schools' central tasks are

to provide instruction, to socialize and to ensure that success in school is achievable for all students. For the purpose of this study I will simply go over the social dimension of the Quebec Education Program. Quebec schools' mission is to prepare students to play a role in a more equal, democratic and just society. According to the Quebec Education Program by making students aware of society and the values of society, schools will assist students to take their place in society. Furthermore, schools will provide children with the instruments they will need to participate constructively in society. In essence, schools have to prepare students to live with others in peace, understanding, and respect.

In a pluralistic society such as ours, schools must act as agents of social cohesion by fostering a feeling of belonging to the community and teaching students how to live together. This means that they must transmit the heritage of shared knowledge, promote the fundamental values of democracy and prepare young people to become responsible citizens. They must likewise prevent exclusion, which jeopardizes the future of too many young people (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2001, p. 3).

Furthermore, the Quebec Education Program claims that the focus of all student knowledge and education is putting together and constructing a worldview. A worldview according to the Quebec Education Program is "the way we see ourselves and our surroundings" (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2001, p. 6). It maintains that one's origins and family background have an enormous effect on one's worldview. It also recognizes that children bring to school their biases and preconceptions and interpret the world accordingly, but worldviews can be modified by what children are exposed to. Therefore, the Quebec Education Program argues that elementary school can have a most important impact on children's worldview, because they spend a great deal of

time in school and it is a period in their lives when their beliefs, judgments, and ways of thinking are most malleable. An educational institution can play a significant role in the way students choose to put together and develop their worldview. For that reason, the school should be looking for opportunities to support students in their process of developing a worldview that will allow them to operate in a just society and live with others in peace, understanding, and respect.

Geography, History and Citizenship Education

The Geography, History and Citizenship Education Program commences by explaining that these subjects play an important role in assisting children to get hold of the tools they need to be familiar with and understand the world they live in. The tools acquired in the social sciences, the Quebec Education Program claims, will allow students to adapt and adjust harmoniously into society. Social Science subjects provide children with the groundwork for understanding how to live in a pluralistic society. The program states the general objective of the social sciences or the Geography, History and Citizenship Education is to prepare students to act as responsible, well-informed, and knowledgeable citizens.

The Quebec Education Program argues that the study of history assists students to recognize, appreciate and accept others that are different. Thus, the study of history adds to the formation of an identity and the development of tolerance.

The third competency in the Geography, History and Citizenship Education Program involves a social aspect of education. The Geography, History and

Citizenship Education Program maintains students will accomplish an openness to the diversity of societies. The program claims that contact with diversity encourages acceptance of others, and is indispensable to cooperation.

Discovering the existence of a variety of cultures, ways of life, religions and types of territorial encourages understanding, openness, receptiveness and respect for others, while reinforcing individual and social identity. This openness to values and beliefs different from their own enriches and consolidates the students' world-view and reinforces attitudes and values such as tolerance and respect for difference, which are essential for harmonious social life (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2001, p.192).

By the end of cycle three, students are expected to be knowledgeable about the democratic and undemocratic society of Quebec in the 1980s, and expected to be informed about the characteristics of political decision-making, the vote, and rights and freedoms.

Moral Education

“The aim is to help students understand and put into practice values such as commitment, solidarity, equality, dignity, and respect for themselves, others and the environment” (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2001, p. 268). The moral education program claims that there are certain skills students need to learn in order to live with others as a group in society. One of the skills is to be able to resolve difficulties in relationships with people who are different. The program mentions gender, race, sexual orientation, preferences, and social condition as differences that are sometimes sources of difficulties. Students must know how to recognize similarities in people in spite of differences, and to treat people equally and responsibly.

Furthermore, by promoting equality in the treatment of people who are different they will be able to call into question people's comments, and identify those comments that are prejudiced, disrespectful, and that reflect generalizations. Students will take a critical look at discrimination and will be able to recognize prejudices and generalizations and understand their impact on the persons under attack.

English Language Arts

The Quebec Education Program claims language is an efficient way to create, strengthen and transmit behaviors, lifestyles, and practices, thus helping foster an open mind. The rationale behind selecting Language Arts as a subject that can include the issues that this study addresses is twofold. It is a subject that students spend a lot of time in and is part of the cross-curricular competency that the Quebec Education Program strongly encourages. If the cross-curricular competency is to be successful, then the issues addressed in Moral Education and Geography, History and Citizenship Education must cross over into Language Arts.

Sexual Orientation

The rationale to include this section in my research study was to demonstrate that individuals do not choose their sexual orientation, individuals do not prefer to be gay or lesbian, but it is something that happens. Sexual orientation is an unchangeable characteristic (Shaffer, 1999). In the following section the definition of sexual orientation as defined by the American Psychological Association (2005) will be outlined, and a broad overview of evidence that suggests biology, genetics, hormones or environmental factors play a role in a person's sexuality will be presented. No one factor necessarily causes an individual to become exclusively homosexual; it is most likely the result of complex interactions. It is not known what exactly contributes to exclusive homosexual orientation (American Psychological Association, 2005).

According to the American Psychological Association (2005) sexual orientation

is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction to another person. Sexual orientation exists along a continuum that ranges from exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality and includes various forms of bisexuality (see section What is Sexual Orientation?).

Men and women with a homosexual orientation are often referred to as gay and women only are referred to as lesbian. Homosexual persons, gay or lesbian, experience sexual, emotional, romantic or affectional attraction to persons of the same sex. Heterosexual persons experience sexual, emotional, romantic, or affectional attraction to persons of the opposite sex. And bisexual persons experience sexual, emotional, romantic, or affectional attraction to persons of the

same sex and the opposite sex. Sexual orientation and sexual behaviour are not the same. Sexual orientation involves emotions and self-concept. Persons may possibly, but not necessarily, express their sexual orientation in their behaviours (American Psychological Association, 2005).

Etymology

The term heterosexual and homosexual have their origins from Greek and Latin. The word *heterosexual* comes from the fusion of the Greek word *heteros*, meaning "different", and the Latin root *sex* meaning "sex". The word *heterosexual* translates literally as "of different sex". The word *homosexual* comes from the fusion of the Greek word *homo* meaning "same" and the Latin root *sex* meaning "sex." The word *homosexual* translates literally as "of the same sex" (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2005).

Prevalence of Homosexuality

Alfred Charles Kinsey and his researchers found that 37% of males and 13% of females had at least some sort of homosexual experience in their life. Moreover, 4% of males and 2% of females had been exclusively homosexual after adolescence (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953). Many studies propose that the proportion of same-sex sexual behaviour in adulthood is between 2% and 6%, while the rate of exclusive male homosexuality is around 1%-2% and 0.5%-1% for female homosexuality (Carson, Butcher, & Mineka, 2000).

However, Gonsiorek, Sell, and Weinrich (1995) suggest that because of the risks involved in "coming out", it is likely that the persistent findings of prevalence

of homosexuality are inaccurate. They suggest that the true prevalence of homosexuality is between 4% and 17%.

Anatomical Differences

Evidence suggests there are differences in brain anatomy of heterosexual males and homosexual males. The differences between heterosexual males and homosexual males may possibly suggest a biological influence on homosexuality. As the following studies suggest, different parts of the hypothalamus, the part of the brain that helps control sexual behaviour, vary in size in homosexual and heterosexual individuals. Firstly, the anterior commissure, which connects the anterior parts of the cerebral cortex, is normally larger in heterosexual women than in heterosexual men (Kalat, 1998). According to Gorski and Allen's (1992) study on sexual orientation and the size of the anterior commissure in the human brain, the anterior commissure of homosexual men is as big as, and in some cases larger than in heterosexual women. Also, another area in the hypothalamic area of the brain, the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SNC), which controls circadian rhythms and not sexual behaviour (Kalat, 1998), was found to be larger and contained twice as many cells in homosexual males than in heterosexual males (Swabb & Hofman, 1990). And finally, in a study conducted by LeVay (1991) the interstitial nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus (INAH 3), a region of the hypothalamus that affects sexual behaviour, was two times larger in heterosexual men than in women and homosexual men. What these results imply is unclear, but might imply that sexual orientation is influenced by, or at least exhibited in anatomy.

Hormonal Factors

Studies have found that hormonal factors may explain homosexuality. It is established that most homosexual men have testosterone and oestrogen levels very similar to testosterone and oestrogen levels of heterosexual men. In addition the majority of homosexual women also have hormone levels very similar to heterosexual women (Kalat, 1998). A number of studies suggest that an exposure to certain hormones during the prenatal stage affects sexual orientation. For example women exposed to diethylstilbestrol (DES), an ingredient in a drug used for preventing miscarriages (Shaffer, 1999), during their prenatal stage reported displaying more male like behaviours and same-sex attractions later on in life (Kalat, 1998; Conger & Galambos, 1997). But the most likely theory that hormonal factors may explain homosexuality is that hormone levels during a sensitive period of brain development in the womb have an effect on sexual orientation (Ellis & Ames, 1987).

Genetics

Many studies show that genes may possibly influence sexual orientation in both males and females. Bailey and Pillard (1991) found that the probability that both male monozygotic twins (identical) were homosexual was 52%, the probability in male dizygotic twins (non-identical) was 22%, and the probability in adopted brothers was 11%. Similar findings were reported in female twin studies. The probability that both female monozygotic twins (identical) were homosexual was 48%, the probability in female dizygotic twins (non-identical) was 16%, and the probability in adoptive sisters was 6% (Bailey, Pillard, Neale, & Agyei, 1993).

In addition, a study that looked at family members outside the immediate family found a higher prevalence of male homosexuality among relatives from the mother's side of the family than among the father's side of the family. Researchers hypothesize that a gene on the X chromosome, which a man receives from his mother, may increase the possibility he will develop an exclusive homosexual orientation, thus indicating sexual orientation is genetically influenced for a number of men (Hamer, Hu, Magnuson, Hu, & Pattatucci, 1993). These studies illustrate that heredity may play an important role in influencing sexual orientation.

Environmental

Although some findings suggest that environmental factors, under certain circumstances, can play a role in the development of sexual orientation, there is no evidence to support that environmental factors solely determines one's sexual orientation. What is certain is that one does not become homosexual by being lured, seduced, or recruited (Shaffer, 1999; Carson, Butcher, & Mineka, 2000). Some studies indicate that environmental factors can play a role, for example Bell, Weinberg, and Hammersmith (as cited in Conger & Galambos, 1997) found the relationship between parent and child was different in homosexuals and heterosexuals. Homosexual males had more negative feelings towards their fathers and as a result had more detached relationships with their fathers compared to heterosexual males. As a result, homosexual males had stronger relationships with their mothers and felt more attached with their mothers.

In sum, these studies show that biology, genetics, hormones or environmental factors play a role in a person's sexual orientation. No one factor necessarily causes an individual to become homosexual; it is most likely the result of complex interactions. It is not known what exactly contributes to exclusive homosexual orientation (American Psychological Association, 2005). The role of one's environment and whether biological factors interact with one's environment, although important, is uncertain (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Carson, Butcher, & Mineka, 2000).

Gay Civil Rights in Canada

This section reviews major issues and developments affecting the legal rights of lesbians and gay men at the federal level as well as at the provincial level. I obtained the information for this section from The Parliamentary Information and Research Service (PIRS) of the Library of Parliament of Canada (Hurley, 2005). This section is concerned only with gay civil rights legal matters.

In 1967, Justice Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau proposed amendments to the Criminal Code. These amendments would ease the laws against homosexuality. In 1969 the Parliament of Canada amended the Criminal Code and decriminalized homosexual activity between consenting adults over the age of 18. Furthermore, in 1976 under a new immigration act, homosexuals were taken off from the list of inadmissible classes.

In 1980, Member of Parliament Pat Carney introduced Bill C-242. The Bill would include sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act as a prohibited ground of discrimination. The Bill did not pass. In addition, Member of Parliament Svend Robinson introduced similar Bills in 1983, 1985, 1986, 1989, and 1991; all Bills were defeated.

In 1992, Minister of Justice at that time, Kim Campbell, introduced Bill C-108. This bill again proposed to include sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act as a prohibited ground of discrimination. The bill died in September 1993. In April 1996, Justice Minister at that time, Alan Rock, introduced a similar Bill in the House of Commons; Bill C-33, an Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act. At last the amendment to include sexual orientation to the Canadian

Human Rights Act was adopted. Bill C-33 was adopted in the House of Commons by a 153 to 76 margin. The Bill was passed by the Senate and came into force in June 1996. The amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act also brought the federal act into line with existing provincial and territorial laws.

In 1992 the Canadian Armed Forces announced that Canada was lifting its ban on homosexuals in the military, allowing soldiers and military personnel to serve openly and live on the base with their partners.

In 1993, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that gays and lesbians could apply for refugee status based on their sexual orientation. The Supreme Court of Canada

ruled that membership in a "particular social group" as a basis of persecution under the Convention refugee definition includes groups defined by an "innate, unchangeable characteristic," such as sexual orientation (Hurley, 2005, Other Legal Issues section, para. 8).

In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that gay and lesbian couples should have the same rights as heterosexual common-law couples. This forced the Liberal government of Canada in 2000 to pass Bill C-23, an Act to modernize the Statutes of Canada with respect to benefits and obligations. This Bill gave benefits and obligations until that time limited to married couples to both opposite-sex and same-sex common-law couples.

In November 2002, then Minister of Justice Martin Cauchon, asked the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to study whether Parliament should move toward recognizing same-sex unions.

On June 3, 2003, a ruling of the Ontario Court of Appeal gave immediate recognition of same-sex marriage in Ontario. Subsequently, the House of

Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights adopted a motion to support the Ontario Court of Appeal's decision.

...the recent Ontario Court of Appeal decision which redefines the common-law definition of 'marriage' as 'the voluntary union for life of two persons, to the exclusion of all others', while fully respecting freedom of religion, as guaranteed under the Charter of Rights (Hurley, 2005, Parliamentary Action: Government Initiatives section, para.11).

In April 2004, Member of Parliament Svend Robinson introduced Bill C-250, a private Member's bill. This Bill amended Criminal Code hate propaganda conditions. The definition of "identifiable group" now included sexual orientation. On February 1, 2005, Bill C-38, "an Act respecting certain aspects of legal capacity for marriage for civil purposes", the Civil Marriage Act, was introduced in the House of Commons. The bill would define marriage in Canada. The definition would broaden the accepted common-law understanding of marriage as a solely heterosexual institution to include "the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others."

On May 5, 2005, the government's same-sex marriage bill passed a second reading. The legislation came to a vote on June 28, 2005. Bill C-38 passed by a 158-133 margin, with support from most Liberals, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois. The bill became law less than a month later, on July 20, 2005. After being passed by the Senate, the same-sex marriage legislation received royal assent. Canada became the fourth country to recognize gay marriage, after the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.

Gay Civil Rights in Quebec

In 1977 Quebec amended the province's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (*Charte des droits et libertés de la personne*). Quebec included sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination. In doing so the province of Quebec became the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass a gay civil rights law.

In 1998 Quebec Superior Court ruled that the definition of spouse in Quebec's pension legislation goes against the province's *Charte des droits et libertés de la personne* on the basis of sexual orientation.

In June 1999, the National Assembly of Quebec adopted the *Loi modifiant diverses dispositions législatives concernant les conjoints de fait* (Bill 32). This decision altered the definition of *de facto* spouse [*conjoint de fait*] in 28 laws and 11 regulations to include same-sex couples. This gave same-sex couples the same status, rights and obligations as unmarried heterosexual couples. Amended laws included those relating to workers' compensation, occupational health and safety, labour standards, insurance, tax, trust and savings companies, pension benefits, public-sector retirement plans, social assistance and so forth. This bill did not make changes to the *Code civil du Québec*, which presides over family-related issues such as spousal support and adoption. Under the *Code civil du Québec* spousal status was limited to married couples.

In June 2002, the National Assembly of Quebec adopted the *Loi instituant l'union civile et établissant de nouvelles règles de filiation* (Bill 84). The Code now allowed adult partners, opposite-sex and same-sex couples, to enter into a formal "civil union" contract. The same rights and obligations of marriage and

subject to termination rules govern this civil union. Bill 84 also amended the *Loi d'interprétation* to ensure that under Quebec law,

“spouse” means “a married or civil union spouse” and “includes a de facto spouse unless the context indicates otherwise.” That is, same-sex or unmarried heterosexual partners may remain de facto spouses [“conjoints de fait”] (Hurley, 2005, Developments Following M. v. H.: Legislation section, para.11).

Bill 84 amended over 50 additional provincial statutes to incorporate the civil union regime and make related consequential changes.

In March 2004, the Quebec Court of Appeal ruled that same-sex couples have the right to marry, and that the traditional definition of marriage is discriminatory and unjustified. The ruling upheld a lower-court decision and followed similar decisions in Ontario and British Columbia.

CHAPTER III: CHALLENGING HETERONORMATIVITY

Heteronormativity, Heterosexism, Heterocentrism & Homophobia

The purpose of this chapter is to display heterosexism, heteronormativity, heterocentrism and homophobia and how these concepts manifest themselves in educational institutions. It will also demonstrate how heterosexism and homophobia has an effect on gays, lesbians, perceived to be gay individuals, individuals who have experiences with gay and lesbian friends and family, and individuals experiencing a growing awareness of their same-sex feelings. As well this chapter will illustrate how heterosexism, heteronormativity, heterocentrism and homophobia can be challenged, confronted and dealt with at the elementary school level through the process of *conscientization* and dialogue (Freire, 1970).

Individuals who stray from heterosexuality are perhaps the most ostracized group of people in many societies. Harassing or singling out persons because of their ethnicity, religion, and gender is taboo behaviour, but individuals are rarely confronted or defied when harassing people because of their sexuality. It is uncommon and unusual to hear words such as “nigger” or “wop”. Nevertheless “faggot” and “dyke” are heard repeatedly without being challenged or confronted (Unks, 1999).

Heteronormativity is the conviction that heterosexuality is the standard, understood, presumed and required. Whatever deviates from heterosexuality is believed to be different and considered abnormal (Epstein & Johnson as cited in Letts IV, 1999). This assumption encourages individuals to suppose, believe and presume that everyone around them is heterosexual (Friend, 1998). Moreover,

heterosexism is the belief in the superiority of heterosexuality. This arrogance is apparent in the absence of non-heterosexual individuals in policy, documents, verbal communication, activities, textbooks, and curriculum (Sears, 1997). Heterosexism privileges and favours heterosexuality over homosexuality. As a result this causes individuals who are not heterosexual to be ignored (Friend, 1998). This hegemonic norm conveys a worldview that everyone is heterosexual: all female students have boyfriends and all male students have girlfriends, all students are raised in heterosexual families and have heterosexual family members and friends (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002). Lots of teachers mould children into cookie-cutter identities, heterosexual and boy or girl (Sears, 1999). When children enter middle school, they have already understood that their gender identity is characterized by heterosexual behaviour and heterosexual expectations (Bickmore, 1999).

In addition, Gregory Herek (1990) makes a distinction between two expressions of heterosexism. Firstly, he identifies *cultural heterosexism* as the denial or vilification of non-heterosexuality in cultural institutions, such as schools. Secondly, he identifies *psychological heterosexism* as a person's internalization of this worldview, which sets in motion and produces anti-gay attitudes.

Friend (1998) identifies two ways in which heterosexism is maintained in schools: *systematic exclusion* and *systematic inclusion*. Systematic exclusion is the manner in which homosexual role models, messages and any representation of homosexuals is silenced in schools. Systematic inclusion on the other hand is

when the issue of homosexuality is discussed in school but in a negative context. Homosexuality is often associated with sexual behaviour, and deviance.

Systematic exclusion of homosexuality and systematic inclusion of homosexuality upholds heterosexism. These heterosexist attitudes can possibly erupt into homophobia, which is defined as the prejudice, discrimination, harassment, or acts of violence towards non-heterosexual individuals. This behaviour is supported by deep-rooted fear or extreme hatred of individuals who have different sexual orientations, or are perceived to have a different sexual orientation (Sears, 1997). Internalized homophobia in contrast is the fear or uneasiness, distress or embarrassment of one's own homosexuality (Friend, 1998).

Furthermore, Nugent (1997) refers to heterocentrism as the belief that heterosexuality is normative for human sexuality both theologically and philosophically. In spite of their acceptance of homosexuality, heterocentrists still place disapproving thoughts and views on homosexuality.

Homophobic attitudes are frequently held regarding individuals who go against society's idea of proper and suitable gender-role behaviour. Homophobic acts are frequently aimed at individuals who stray from heteronormative behaviour (Friend, 1998). Sears maintains that children whose sexual/gender identity does not fit the heteronormative standard deal on a regular basis with acts of homophobia (1999).

Verbal abuse, psychological pestering and physical violence against gays, lesbians or individuals who are perceived to be gay, is a big part of school

culture. Homophobic insults such as “fag” or “dyke” are some of the most frequent words used to injure, put down, and intimidate others. The word “gay” is often employed as a common critical remark, for example “those shoes are so gay” (Friend, 1998). Homophobia affects children who grow up to be homosexual or heterosexual. This attitude results in subtle and obvious discrimination. Homophobia, according to Cahill and Theilheimer (1999), limits relations among men, among women, and among men and women.

In a recent study 76% of student teachers assigned to middle schools reported hearing homophobic remarks frequently or sometimes in the school (Page & Liston, 2002). Furthermore, The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN, 2004), reported that 89.5% of the youth surveyed testified hearing expressions like “that’s so gay” frequently or often in their school. The survey also reported that 77.9% of students surveyed stated hearing other homophobic remarks, such as “faggot” or “dyke” frequently or often. When asked about both types of homophobic remarks, 91.5% of youth reported having heard them frequently or often. Moreover, this survey reported that most heterosexual students and various officials maintain that the phrase or the saying “that’s so gay” does not explicitly put down gays or lesbians and for that reason should not be seen as upsetting or insulting.

Nairn and Smith’s (2003) study showed how heteronormativity illustrated itself in educational institutions. The study showed that intimidating and threatening behaviour is an inevitable consequence when one’s gender-role behaviour does not fit the heteronormative standard. In addition the behaviour is

often ignored or hidden. Bedford (2002) claims that schools either maintain homophobia and heterosexism or make every effort to put an end to intolerance, injustice, and hate. Neglecting to end homophobic name calling quietly plays a role in defending and encouraging heterosexism and homophobia (Friend, 1998). Even though the school is not the only institution that can undertake and tackle homophobia, it is however an institution where teachers have some control and effect on children's ways of behaving (Page & Liston, 2002).

Straut and Sapon-Shevin (2002) claim there is not enough being done in teacher preparation programs that train teachers to deal with issues concerning sexual identities. In a recent study student teachers were invited to express whether they were provided with information or trained in their teacher education courses about strategies for coping with homophobia in school. According to the study just 11.9% answer in a positive way. Moreover, 66.1% of teachers responded that teacher education programs ought to increase and improve knowledge of and preparation for homophobia in the schools (Page & Liston, 2002). Prospective teachers must recognize the importance of preventing or confronting homophobia. Teachers need the courage to take action and respond skilfully when they witness any acts of intolerance or hurtful acts. Teachers need to be prepared to respond to acts of violence, prejudice, and disrespect when they take place (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002).

Teachers' unwillingness to intervene when children hurt one another with homophobic slurs can stem from discomfort and not knowing what to do (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). It was found that teachers prefer to wait for the topic of

homosexuality to come up in the classroom rather than create opportunities to talk about it because, Colleary (1999) claims teachers are afraid and uncertain and they lack the knowledge concerning homosexuality. A number of teachers express being uncomfortable with the idea of teaching about homosexuality, and a lot of teachers express a lack of support as being the main reason for them not discussing the issue of homosexuality (Buston & Hart, 2001).

Teachers feel more comfortable with discussing homosexuality if it arises as part of the implicit curriculum, but are cautious about integrating gays and lesbians into the lessons, the explicit curriculum (Colleary, 1999). Often teachers feel if they decide to raise the issues of homosexuality in school they will be presumed to be homosexual and at risk of losing their jobs (Bickmore, 1999). Nevertheless, children learn about homosexuality from what teachers do in school and what they do not do. Also the knowledge or the ignorance a teacher demonstrates will have an effect on children's views of homosexuality (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999).

All educational institutions must work towards challenging and confronting homophobia. Teacher education programs can play a most important role in addressing homophobia by presenting future teachers with activities that increase awareness and understanding (Page & Liston, 2002). Teachers have a duty to make certain that the curriculum is inclusive of everybody, whether children bring up questions about issues of homosexuality or not (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). All teachers should arrange and structure secure and

fostering classrooms in which characteristics of students' identity stop being bait for jokes or harassment (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002).

Teachers act as agents for the social reproduction of heteronormativity (Bedford, 2002). Through its silence surrounding homosexuality a school does not attempt to drive out society's prejudices within the curriculum and encourages that prejudice (Colleary, 1999). Elementary school educators can assist children to realize how to share with people who are the same and different from themselves (Bickmore, 1999). The years spent in elementary school provide the basis for children's future understandings of themselves and others (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). The school and education present a milieu where students' identities are constructed and changed. Therefore, teachers must take notice how certain subjects provide "resources for, or erect barriers to, students' constructions of subjectivities, or identities" (Letts IV, 1999, p. 106). Children's identities are shaped, as individuals and as citizens, in elementary schools (Bickmore, 1999).

Sexuality, and more specifically homosexuality, is in general considered to be a risky subject matter for young children. This notion takes too lightly what children already know about themselves and their world. It also fails to recognize what contributes to a child's development into a healthy and successful citizen (Bickmore, 1999). Associating homosexuality with sex promotes and fosters heterosexism and homophobia. Many believe sex is personal and private. In education, this belief is important because if homosexuality is associated with sex, any dialogue or reference to homosexuality is referred to as private,

unacceptable and improper for children and requires parental permission (Friend, 1998). We should recognize that most stories do “quietly include sexuality in the form of normalized nuclear family characters and heterosexual relationships” (Bickmore, 1999, p. 19). Teaching about gays and lesbians is not teaching about sex. It symbolizes and represents openness, respect, authenticity, and equality. Teaching about gays and lesbians is not an attempt to promote homosexuality. It is producing a classroom that “challenges categorical thinking, encourage interpersonal intelligence, and promotes critical consciousness” (Sears, 1999, p. 5).

Children create their own understanding of sexual orientation from the perspective of their environment. The messages they grasp and gather from parents, teachers, other children, the media and their surroundings play a role in their thinking. Children require eager and prepared listeners to assist them in their thinking and talk with them about what they know (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999).

The most important reason for talking about sexuality in elementary school is that is present in children’s lives. Notions and beliefs about children’s innocence concerning sexuality are out-of-date. One just has to think about the amount of misinformation about gender relations and sexuality that are displayed and available now days in public spaces, media, and peer groups. Teachers and parents cannot prevent children from acquiring information about sex (Bickmore, 1999). Childhood innocence is an appearance that adults stress onto children, allowing adults to silence sexuality (Sears, 1999). Children do gain knowledge of

about homosexuality in elementary school, through their peers, if not subtly through their teachers. And because this information is imparted in secret rather than in lessons, it is susceptible to misinformation and narrow-mindedness (Bickmore, 1999).

Heteronormativity is powerful at the informal or hidden curriculum level. Teachers refer to children's families and relationships and assume heterosexuality and nuclear families (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002). A lot of teachers act as if they do regard children as sexual beings; teachers act as if all children are heterosexual. A teacher is making an assumption of heterosexuality and is ultimately bringing sexuality into the classroom when referring to a girl as "your girlfriend" when talking to a boy, or a boy as "your boyfriend" when talking to a girl (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). Language can communicate both clear and hidden meaning. Teachers must be more conscious and attentive to what they say or do not say, and what it communicates to students (Letts IV, 1999). Even the most informal remarks become part of the heteronormative background (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002). Gender role socialization, including the subtle vilification of homosexuality, is an inevitable part of the ways children are directed to behave in school (Bickmore, 1999).

The educational materials teachers choose may communicate a message of heteronormativity. What teachers do not impart and express presents a powerful message to children too. In many classrooms, books, videos, and other materials depict people in heterosexual pairings. Yet with no specific sexual images, heteronormativity is apparent and noticeable in numerous educational materials

(Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). Curriculum materials and teaching approaches make use of loaded images. These images portray heterosexuality as normal. Gender identity and sexuality are to a certain extent unavoidable in literature, because the characters in stories have gender identities and relationships (Bickmore, 1999). Texts deliver messages by what is displayed or not displayed or depicted. Texts that refer to a heterosexual nuclear family with opposite-sex parents, grandparents, and 2.5 children present a message of heteronormativity. Such texts standardize a particular type of family (Letts IV, 1999), avoiding explicit mention of homosexuality (Bickmore, 1999). The reason people do not remark sexuality in these images is because most individuals assume as logical that the normal way is to live as a heterosexual (Bickmore, 1999). Friend (1998) claims if teachers do not need parents' permission to discuss families in elementary school curriculum, should it be required if same-sex families are discussed?

Bickmore (1999) claims questions of sex and gender, and the issue of sexual difference is appropriate in the elementary curriculum and it can fit in countless situations. Teachers can be attentive to the idea that not everyone is heterosexual, for example, in math and science story problems. Story problems do not need to present or publicize one sexuality, heterosexuality, or heterosexual nuclear families. Instead, teachers can turn away from hints that suggest heteronormativity and can actively confront and question persistent stereotypes (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002). Providing children with notions, vocabulary, and strategies for dealing with questions regarding gender and

homosexuality will possibly assist them to refuse to give in to homophobia and to handle themselves and others with respect (Rofes as cited in Bickmore, 1999).

Including a multitude of family configurations, including gay and lesbian parents, into school material resists a persistent message of heteronormativity (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). Furthermore, Colleary (1999) claims that including or incorporating gays and lesbians into the elementary curriculum would give children experiencing a growing awareness of their same-sex feelings a sense of self-worth. Most gays and lesbians recall their first same-sex feelings and attraction a little before their tenth birthday (Herdt & Boxer, 1993). Removing same-sex families, gay and lesbian issues, from the curriculum for the good of the child does not remove them from a children's world (Sears, 1999).

Martino (1999) claims that interrupting heteronormativity in text will provide children with more than just acceptance and tolerance of those that are different, but place children in a position to question what is normal. While many believe children do not have the developmental skills to handle gay and lesbian issues, children are able of understanding "difference" (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). The suppression of homosexuality in elementary school has an effect on not only those children who have gay and lesbian friends and family, but also on other children. The stories children are exposed to acquaint them with what their world will resemble. Denying and taking away a wide range of ideas from children restricts their capacity to envision their social world (Bickmore, 1999).

The books with gay and lesbian characters create a space for discussion, and provide students with the opportunity to disrupt stereotypical ways of thinking

about same-sex relationships (Martino, 1999). Allowing a child to recognize that gays and lesbians are part of society will help them understand their present and later experiences with their families and people in general (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999).

Letts IV (1999) suggests that teachers help students destabilize these dualities, heterosexuality and homosexuality, and think about them critically. Teachers cannot change a child's sexual development. But teachers can have an effect on a child's sense of identity and how they feel about themselves and others (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). We need to expose children to such issues if we hope that future generations will build a social world that includes less homophobia and bigotry (Bickmore, 1999).

When a teacher uses a gay character in a novel to raise the issue of homosexuality and expresses that being gay is just like having different likes and dislikes or mentions individuals he or she knows who are gay it will shift children's stereotypes of gay people as deviant or abnormal (Martino, 1999). Books with gay and lesbian characters can initiate discussion about sexual orientation. Tales or anecdotes about relationships between people with different sexual orientations starts a dialogue of how individuals form a relationship and develop feelings for one another (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002).

Teaching queerly is a refusal to participate in the great sexual sorting machine called schooling wherein diminutive GI Joes and Barbies become star quarterbacks and prom queens, while Linuses and Tinky Winky become wallflowers and human doormats (Sears, 1999, p. 5).

This project is based on the ideas of Paulo Freire. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Paulo Freire's (1970) aim is to build a learning community which encourages the personal growth of each member of the community while nurturing harmony and dialogue among members. In my opinion, this approach can combat heterosexism and homophobia. The aim of Freire's model is to reconstruct the individual through the process of *conscientization* and dialogue. This model creates critical thinking and raises an examination of how our ways of thinking and mindsets are developed and constructed. His method can address inequality, injustice and discrimination by deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices, and it can lead to further awareness and expose hidden systems of privilege.

Freire suggests that teachers and students tend to consider the curriculum as set and to be transmitted. This produces compliant, silent, socially ignorant and uninformed citizens. A culture of silence guarantees support to the existing power structure and, therefore, reinforces heterosexism and heteronormativity. The more teachers and students challenge the dominant view, the easier it becomes to engage in critical thinking. When students become conscious of their situation, they can begin to question it and thus become more open-minded and free thinking (Freire, 1970).

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

Design

This study's aim was to explore teachers' perspectives regarding the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues into cycle one, cycle two and cycle three Moral Education; Geography, History and Citizenship Education; and the English Language Arts curriculum. As such, this was a study of the ways in which a social issue may be dealt with in a school setting.

The study was primarily qualitative in its approach, with data gathered on teachers' perceptions, insight, opinions, and willingness to include gay and lesbian content in their teaching.

Setting

Saint John's Elementary School is similar to many elementary schools that are located in middle-class neighborhoods in the Montreal-Laval region. The school offers instruction to children between the ages of five to twelve. The school is situated in a tranquil residential area and its student population is housed in two buildings; each building is two stories high. Kindergarten through grade two are housed in building A and grades three through grade six are housed in building B. There are 633 students at Saint John's Elementary School. The student population of Saint John's is however, made up of a very homogeneous group; approximately 90% of the students are of Italian descent. The faculty at Saint John's Elementary School consists of mostly female teachers; 39 female teachers and 3 male teachers. The teachers at Saint John's Elementary School come from different ethnic backgrounds. There is a dress

code. Children are required to wear blue pants and white tops. Uniforms are offered to parents who wish to purchase them.

Under the jurisdiction of the Mackenzie King School Board, which comprises the administrative regions of Laval, Lanaudière and Laurentides in the province of Quebec, Saint John's Elementary School is an English school that offers approximately 30% of its program in French. Saint John's Elementary School offers Catholic Religious and Moral Education, Moral Instruction or Protestant Moral and Religious Instruction program. Saint John's Elementary School follows the Ministry of Education programs.

Participants

Ten teachers out of 42 took part in the study. The participants were all female, taught at the same elementary school and came from various ethnic backgrounds. The reason for selecting all the participants from the same school was convenience and easy access, since I am familiar with the administration at this school. Limitations of time also prevented the inclusion of more than one school.

The main criterion for choosing participants was that they were currently teaching Geography, History, and Citizenship Education; Moral Education or English Language Arts at the elementary level. Teachers of these subjects were sought because these were the subjects most amenable to incorporating into the curriculum the kinds of issues that this study addressed. The principal of the school provided me with a list of teachers. I approached the teachers during recess, lunch hour and spare blocks and presented myself as a graduate student

interested in learning about their perspectives regarding the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum. I explained the study and what was required of them. Teachers interested in participating were then asked to sign the consent form (Appendix B). In the end, three teachers were recruited from Geography, History and Citizenship Education, two teachers from Moral Education, and five teachers from English Language Arts. Participants' level of teaching experience varied from a few months to over twenty-five years of teaching experience. All but one participant possessed teacher certification to teach in Quebec. Participants were all female, and their backgrounds varied. One teacher identified herself as Jewish, one as Greek, three as Italian, and five as Canadian with Scottish, Irish, or French origins. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study to ensure the anonymity of the teachers. The teachers were Gina, Sofia, Catherine, Judi, Maggie, Brigitte, Maria, Jeanne, Marguerite, and Theresa.

Procedures

I gathered the data for this study through questionnaires and individual interviews. The questionnaire was intended to gather views about the inclusion of gay and lesbian content in school, with special regard to its pertinence for children at the elementary school level. The questionnaire (Appendix A) was anonymous and was distributed during the second week of May 2005. It consisted of thirty-two Likert-type Scale items and one section for comments. The questions had a 4-point response scale: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree, and an option to not respond. The participants were asked to answer the statements as best they could.

Participants were told that their input was valuable to the success of the research project, and that the information, as mentioned in the informed consent, was completely confidential. The participants were informed that they may choose not to respond to any questions that made them feel uncomfortable, and their non-response would not be interpreted in any way, i.e., no judgment would be passed on their choice not to respond. Large envelopes containing the questionnaire were provided to the teachers. I asked the teachers to return the questionnaire in the envelope provided to the school's office once completed. A deadline to complete the questionnaire was not imposed on the participants.

In addition to the questionnaire, one interview was conducted with each participant. The interviews were conducted in May 2005. The topics explored during the interview with the teachers stemmed from the responses to the questionnaire. The discussions were intended to bring clarity and depth of understanding to the issues under consideration in ways that questionnaires could not provide. The interviews comprised of semistructured/open-ended questions. I interviewed the participants for the most part in their classrooms. The library and staff room was also used for some interviews. The interviews occurred during the teachers' lunch hour, spare block, or after school. I interviewed all the participants once for thirty minutes to one hour. Two interviews were conducted in French and eight interviews were conducted in English.

Research Questions

The main research question that guided this study asked to what extent teacher attitudes towards the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues in their teaching support the persistence of homophobic attitudes within society. Since the intention of the new Quebec reform is to help students understand and put into practice values such as “understanding”, “openness”, “receptiveness”, “commitment”, “solidarity”, “equality”, “dignity”, and “respect” for themselves and others. As well it claims it will enhance and strengthen students’ world-view and reinforce attitudes and values such as tolerance and respect for differences. In order to explore this issue the study gathered data on the following specific questions.

1. What are the teachers’ attitudes towards gay and lesbian issues; or queer issues?
2. How do the teachers react and respond when they hear misinformation regarding gays and lesbians from the children?
3. What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding heterosexism in school?
4. How important do the teachers think it is to include sexual diversity as part of their curriculum?
5. How willing are the teachers to include queer issues in their curriculum?

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data collected from the questionnaires utilized descriptive statistics, which included the frequency of scores. The frequency was then converted into percentages. This provided an indication of the typical attitudes of

the teachers. Microsoft Excel was used for data analysis. During the interviews I took notes of statements the teachers made. In addition, to analyze the responses obtained during the interview, I examined my notes and looked for patterns that arose. I then developed a color-coding system in order to mark the themes that stood out such as anti-gay harassment, parents' objections, level of preparedness of teachers, curricular material and general feelings.

Limitations

The study was limited in several ways. Firstly, the respondents were all female. There is no way one can know what the results would have been if the respondents had been a mixed group or all male. Secondly, the study was carried out in one school which in many ways was typical of elementary schools in suburban Montreal, but in one way was not so: the vast majority of children were of Italian, Roman Catholic heritage. It must be pointed out however that the teachers were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and to that extent quite typical of any elementary school teacher group in Montreal. Finally, it was not the intention of this study to generalize to a larger population but to provide a 'snapshot' of teacher attitudes in one elementary school in Montreal. There is however, nothing to suggest that similar attitudes would not be found elsewhere.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

Questionnaire Findings

The results of this study are presented according to the themes that arose. Since the questionnaire was anonymous, the results obtained from the questionnaire could not be linked to the data gathered from the interviews.

The opening question in the questionnaire asked if teachers thought it was important that the Quebec diversity curriculum include concrete information about The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Question # 1 of the Teacher Questionnaire). All teachers were in agreement with this item; three out of ten teachers strongly agreed and seven out of ten teachers somewhat agreed. The remainder of the findings were divided into six major themes: the importance of providing definitions pertaining to sexuality to elementary school children, the importance of acquainting children with same-sex legislation, the importance of focusing on prejudice and harassment, the importance of an all-inclusive curriculum, the importance of addressing the development of children's sexuality, and the importance of having made available assistance and support to deal with certain issues.

The Importance of Providing Definitions Pertaining to Sexuality

Questions 3 through 7 addressed the importance of providing definitions pertaining to sexuality to children in elementary school. Teachers were asked on the importance that the curriculum explain sexual orientation (# 3), heterosexuality (# 4), homosexuality (# 5), lesbian (# 6), and gay (# 7).

Three out of ten teachers strongly agreed, four teachers somewhat agreed, and three teachers somewhat disagreed that it was important that the elementary curriculum clarify the meaning of sexual orientation (# 3).

Teachers were then asked if they felt it is important that the curriculum include the definition of heterosexuality, homosexuality, lesbian and gay. Six out of ten teachers strongly agreed and one teacher somewhat agreed that it was important to include the definition of heterosexuality (# 4) and homosexuality (# 5), and three teachers somewhat disagreed.

As for the definition of lesbian (# 6), half of the teachers strongly agreed, one teacher somewhat agreed, and four teachers somewhat disagreed. With regards to including the definition of gay (# 7), the findings changed slightly: four out of ten teachers strongly agreed, one teacher somewhat agreed, four teachers somewhat disagreed and one teacher strongly disagreed.

The Importance of Acquainting Children with Same-sex Legislation

When invited to give their opinions about the importance of providing information about the laws in the various provinces governing same-sex marriage in the curriculum (# 14), one out of ten teachers strongly agreed, four teachers somewhat agreed, two teachers somewhat disagreed, two teachers strongly disagreed, and one teacher preferred not to answer. Regarding the importance that the curriculum provide information about the debates surrounding same sex marriage in Canada and elsewhere (# 15), half of the teachers somewhat agreed, two teachers somewhat disagreed, two teachers strongly disagreed, and one teacher preferred not to answer.

The Importance of Focusing on Prejudice and Harassment

With regards to prejudice, discrimination, and harassment, seven questions were presented to the teachers. Asked if it was important that the new curriculum take an active stand against all forms of prejudice as outlined in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (# 25), eight out of ten teachers strongly agreed, one teacher somewhat agreed, and one teacher somewhat disagreed.

Furthermore, all of the teachers strongly agreed that it was important that the curriculum define the nature of bullying (# 11) and the effects of bullying (# 12). However, when asked about the importance of specifically addressing the effects of anti-gay bullying in the curriculum (# 13), six out of ten teachers strongly agreed, two teachers somewhat agreed, one teacher somewhat disagreed, and one teacher strongly disagreed.

In addition, teachers were asked if it was important that the curriculum include the definition of homophobia (# 8). Results showed that four out of ten teachers strongly agreed, one teacher somewhat agreed, three teachers somewhat disagreed, one teacher strongly disagreed, and one teacher preferred not to answer. Following this question, teachers were asked if it was important that the curriculum help children to understand the real meaning of pejorative words such as, "queer", "sissy", "gay", "dyke", and "faggot" (# 9). Four out of ten teachers strongly agreed, three teachers somewhat agreed, one teacher somewhat disagreed, two teachers strongly disagreed that it was important that the curriculum help children to understand the real meaning of pejorative words directed towards gays and lesbians. However, when asked if it was important

that the curriculum help children to understand that “queer”, “sissy”, “gay”, “dyke”, and “faggot”, are hurtful (# 10), seven out of ten teachers strongly agreed, and three teachers somewhat agreed.

The Importance of an All-Inclusive Curriculum

Teachers were asked if it was important that school textbooks and other text materials reflect the tenets of the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms with regard to such matters as race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, and ability (# 22); three out of ten teachers strongly agreed, six teachers somewhat agreed, and one teacher somewhat disagreed. In addition if it was important that the classroom material be inclusive of all diversity such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, civil status, age, religion, ethnic or national origin, social condition, and disabled individuals (# 28), half of the teachers strongly agreed and half of the teachers somewhat agreed.

However, when asked if it was important that school textbooks and other text materials reflect aspects of this diverse society with particular regard to sexual orientation (homosexuality, lesbianism, same-sex marriage, etc) (# 23), two out of ten teachers strongly agreed, three teachers somewhat agreed, three teachers somewhat disagreed, one teacher strongly disagreed, and one teacher preferred not to answer.

Furthermore, asked if it was important that every classroom have reading material available to students that includes lesbian or gay characters as part of the plot (# 24), two out of ten teachers strongly agreed, three teachers somewhat

agreed, two teachers somewhat disagreed, two teachers strongly disagreed, and one teacher preferred not to answer.

When asked if it was important that the curriculum provide information about the different family structures such as same-sex headed families, blended families and single parent families (# 16) or if it was important that the curriculum include alternative family structures such as same-sex headed families, blended families and single parent families in the curriculum (# 2), teachers agreed: four out of ten teachers strongly agreed and six teachers somewhat agreed.

Teachers were asked when they feel it is important that the curriculum introduce the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues. One out of ten teachers strongly agreed, three teachers somewhat agreed, two teachers somewhat disagreed, and four teachers strongly disagreed that it should be introduced in cycle I (# 30). That it be introduced in cycle II (# 31), two out of ten teachers strongly agreed, five teachers somewhat agreed, one teacher somewhat disagreed, and two teachers strongly disagreed. And, six out of ten teachers strongly agreed, two teachers somewhat agreed, one teacher somewhat disagreed, and one teacher strongly disagreed that it be introduced in cycle III (# 32).

The Importance of Addressing Children's Developing Sexuality

When asked if it was important that the curriculum address the development of sexual orientation (# 26), one out of ten teachers strongly agreed, six teachers somewhat agreed, two teachers somewhat disagreed, and one teacher strongly disagreed. Further, when asked if it was important that the curriculum address

the kinds of inner conflict that young people can have while developing their sexuality, whether heterosexual or not, (# 27) four out of ten teacher strongly agreed, four teachers somewhat agreed, one teacher somewhat disagreed, and one teacher strongly disagreed.

The Importance of Having Assistance and Support Made Available

Teachers were asked if it was important that the teacher's guide for the curriculum provide teachers with strategies for dealing with name calling when they hear it in the classroom or within the school (# 17), nine out of ten teachers strongly agreed and one teacher somewhat agreed. Asked if it was important that the teacher's guide for the curriculum provide teachers with strategies for dealing with bullying when they witness it in the classroom or within the school (# 18), all the teachers strongly agreed.

Teachers were also asked if they feel it was important that teachers have easy access to lesson plans, curriculum units, or other resources developed for children that address matters such as families with gay and lesbian parents, homophobia, gender-related name-calling, stereotyping, anti-gay bullying, sexual orientation discrimination, prejudices, or the oppression of gay and lesbian individuals (# 29). Seven out of ten teachers strongly agreed, two teachers somewhat agreed, and one teacher somewhat disagreed. Teachers also felt that it was important that the teacher's guide provide teachers with strategies for dealing with parents who object to any aspect of the approved curriculum (# 20); eight out of ten teachers strongly agreed and two teachers somewhat agreed.

When asked if it was important that the teacher's guide for the curriculum provide teachers with strategies for dealing with evidence of a child's disturbance about sexual matters (# 19), nine out of ten teachers strongly agree, and one teacher somewhat agree. Also, eight out of ten teachers strongly agree, one teacher somewhat agree, and one teacher preferred not to answer that it is important that each school have a resource person to assist teachers with troublesome matters relating to children's feelings, attitudes or behaviour as these concern sexuality (# 21).

Interview Findings

The following sections discuss the themes that emerged from the interviews and discussions with the teachers at Saint John. Six common themes surfaced from the data: views, attitudes, and feelings; anti-gay occurrences; including queer issues in cycles I versus cycle II versus cycle III; parental reactions; administration/parental permission; and classroom material, tools and suggestions. Overall the discussions with the teachers reflected very well the questionnaire findings. However, given that the questionnaire was anonymous, specific associations could not be made with the discussions.

Theme 1: Initial Views, Attitudes and Feelings

The initial question in the interviews was teachers' feelings, attitudes or views concerning the idea of including gay and lesbian content in the elementary curriculum. Many teachers agreed that including gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum would be beneficial for the children, however not all agreed. Here are their responses.

Jeanne, a Geography, History and Citizenship Education teacher, was invited to give her feelings about including gay and lesbian issues in the elementary curriculum.

I think it would be good for the kids. I think they need to be a little bit more open. In this school they are very...they have their blinders on. And they only know what their parents have exposed them to. And they do not know very much and I think it would be good that we start at this age.

Jeanne acknowledged that boys and girls who begin having same-sex feelings in elementary school must feel totally alone and totally lost when these issues are censored.

A lot of the kids would benefit from it. I think it would definitely help the kids that are in grade 4 and starting to have same-sex feelings and feeling alone. I think it would definitely help their confidence and help their development, help them feel more comfortable with themselves and their personality.

She considers introducing these issues to children in elementary school would be beneficial for all children. She believes that it would give them an opening to the diversity of society. She maintained that many children at Saint John live in their “bubble”. She argued that when these children reach adulthood they would realize that there is a whole other world out there. She mentioned that even though children in elementary school do not come face to face with a lot of issues, they would eventually come across different people in high school, in cegeg, and in university. Therefore, she maintained there is a lot to be gained from introducing these issues in elementary school.

However, Jeanne found it difficult as a teacher to incorporate or talk about issues of sexuality because she claimed teachers could only do so much.

The parents need to be educated, the communities need to be educated, because there is only so much you can do within the classroom when you have them for eight months of the year and then they go home to another environment.

She maintained that what teachers try to instill at school can conflict with what parents are teaching at home. The home environment, she claims, will negate what is being done at school.

We can help the kids understand it here, but if they go home and they have a homophobic parent they won't get as much out of it I think, because they have their parents attitudes that are a big influence too.

Maggie, a grade 3 Language Arts teacher, believes acceptance of difference also has to come from the home. She claims it cannot just be an aspect of school. "If you are teaching one thing and the parent is ah...teaching the opposite...it's hard". She states that as a teacher you teach the same student for one or maybe two years, and you might cross paths in another classrooms, and for that reason teachers do have some impact on the attitudes of students and the way they see the world. But to have a greater impact she claims, "we need to have the parents!"

Maggie claims including gay and lesbian issues in the elementary curriculum might make a difference or it might not. Maggie argued that if children go home and their parents object to what is being taught at school, is that telling them that there is something wrong with being gay or lesbian? Before learning about and accepting gays and lesbians, children should learn to accept and respect each other as humans. She sees the introduction of gay and lesbian issues more appropriate in high school.

Theresa, a Moral Education teacher, acknowledged that teachers spend more time with the children than their parents do. Consequently, the teacher has a big influence on the children's thoughts and mindset. The manner in which a teacher gets something done, the way in which the teacher behaves and the vocabulary the teacher uses makes a big difference on how children will view homosexuality.

"I think it is fantastic" responded Theresa. She believes it would give children a different way of thinking. It would just make children more accepting and respecting and eliminate prejudices.

I think it would give them a more open mindset and at least open some windows. To have a...I do not know how to explain it. Like basically just to be more accepting and not have to be so prejudice about how to exclude any one group.

Maria, a grade 5 Language Arts teacher, believes it is an issue that is not being dealt with properly in the schools and it is something that teachers have to address. It is something that education has to work towards and it is something that teachers have to be prepared to work with. She insisted that a child cannot achieve the goals set out by the curriculum to be accepting and respecting of difference if sexual diversity is excluded. She strongly believes it is something that would be worthwhile. She trusts a lot of children would benefit and gain from the inclusion of gay and lesbian topics in the elementary curriculum.

I think it can be a really positive experience, I think they can learn a lot about what is out there and realize that there are different types of people. The world is getting more and more open and if they stay in this little box they are in trouble.

She also stated that stereotypes and prejudices are learned. If the school does not expose children in an open way to gays and lesbians in elementary school then they are going maintain those attitudes.

I think it is something that is learned behaviour, it is an attitude that they learn. If they are not exposed in an open way to homosexuality then they are going to have certain prejudices the same as with racism if they are not exposed early on or if they are told specifically that it is not ok.

Judi, a grade 5 Language Arts teacher, had very similar response to Maria's. She claims children have a very stereotypical idea of how a gay person lives. She maintains these attitudes are instilled in children. She believes it is important for them to be aware of homosexuality. She believes it is a very important issue.

Children need to be aware of that. Children are not necessarily prejudice, that is instilled in them and it is inversed behaviour. We have to train the children to be a little bit more open-minded. I think it is a very important issue.

In addition, Judi affirmed that it is quite common to sense or pick out the sexual orientation of certain children. And she believes it is important that children in elementary school be aware of sexual orientation and their own sexuality. However, Judi did acknowledge that the topic of homosexuality should come from the home. But she claims even if it is not taught in the home, teachers still have a responsibility.

Catherine, a grade 3 Language Arts teacher, considers the idea of including gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum wonderful. However, she stated as long as it is age appropriate. She declared that you do not want to shock or scare the children. It is something that should be "tastefully done".

Homosexuality is one aspect of life. I think all aspects of life should be taught but tastefully done. And incorporate it so that it is normal. If you are going to make it be a red flag the way you are teaching it. It is almost advertising to them well you live with a mom and dad we do not have to talk about that, it is normal.

She understands that in the beginning children would ask questions, which she considers good. She also stated that as the years progress and children get accustomed to the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues it will become the norm. They would not even consider it different or strange.

Catherine argued that she is a fifty-year-old woman who grew up with very stereotypical commercials where women clean the house and men did the outdoor chores. Today, she claims, we see women doing stereotypical male tasks and men doing stereotypical female tasks.

It is refreshing, because it is no longer women clean toilets and men wash cars. And that is how I feel life should be. The same way I feel about this.

Brigitte, a Geography, History, and Citizenship Education teacher, claims children have to know that gays and lesbians exist, and that it is normal. However, she feels it is a delicate subject to incorporate in elementary school, and it should be taught at home.

Marguerite, a Geography, History, and Citizenship Education teacher, had a similar response. She stated that it is good; children need to know. She argues that gays and lesbians are part of society, and children need to learn to respect all sorts of different people. And in order to respect, they have to learn and talk about it. She also mentioned that children experiencing same-sex feeling must feel lost and uneasy in their sexuality because the norm in schools is a man and

a woman. However, Marguerite insisted that homosexuality is a topic that should be discussed within the home.

However, not all teachers shared positive feelings like Brigitte, Jeanne, Judi, Maria, Catherine, Theresa, Maggie and Marguerite have. Similar to the questionnaire many teachers shared the same feelings with regards to the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues in the elementary school curriculum.

Gina, a grade 6 Language Arts teacher, felt the topic of gays and lesbians was too mature for elementary school. She did not think 11 and 12 year old children are ready for such an idea. I asked her if she would be fine with making it inclusive in the curriculum, and she replied: "Not at all. No!"

I am sure they would they have seen it on TV so it is not something surprising for them, but to actually sit there and say "Ok, well today we are going to talk about... I do not think."

Gina felt the children can still achieve the goals set out by the Quebec Education Program to be respecting and accepting of difference if sexual orientation is excluded in the curriculum. I asked Gina if any negative could come out of introducing such issues to elementary aged children. She responded "...they would take it as a game and go out there and use it in the wrong way and start calling each other names."

In line with Gina is Sofia, a grade six Language Arts teacher. She was in shock at the idea of incorporating such issues into the elementary curriculum, in shock that someone would even consider including gay and lesbian issues in elementary school curriculum. She stated that perhaps including gay and lesbian issues in high school with adolescents would be acceptable.

I would have no reservations, but not at this age. There is a fine line, what is acceptable where do you draw the line. Today we are talking about two men having sex, two women having sex...the next generation... sex with animals, you know. What is the norm?

Sofia claims that this is an issue to be discussed in the home and not in the school. She believes there should be open communication in the school about homosexuality, not to censor it, but it should be a topic to be discussed at home.

Theme 2: Anti-Gay Occurrences

During discussions with the teachers, a theme that frequently surfaced was anti-gay occurrences. The occurrences included anti-gay name-calling, homophobic remarks, and derogatory words that refer to gays and lesbians. In the subsequent section I will describe their accounts and how they conducted themselves with regards to such behaviour. All but one teacher claimed overhearing anti-gay name-calling, homophobic remarks, derogatory words that refer to gays and lesbians or the use of such terms pejoratively by students in her school.

Jeanne claimed that she had witnessed or heard anti-gay name-calling, homophobic remarks in the school or in the schoolyard. She claims that she hears the children using terms such as "gay" or "that's gay," but she maintains that children do not understand what they are saying.

April Fools Day in grade six we had an incident with someone writing "he's gay" and putting it on a kids back. And the little boy was so upset, you know. And because it was mean but you just I think well it is not a bad thing to be...you know but it was used in a derogatory way.

I asked her how she tackled such behaviour and she replied that she usually goes about it the same way she would with name-calling or bullying in general.

She uses the same technique. She claimed that she takes the bully out of the classroom and lectures him or her alone.

As for like the kid who had it on his back should be more open to saying these are people who are being derogatory and discriminating and not taking it too personally and the kid [the victim] should realize that this is not a derogatory term. So I think both the victim per se as well as the bully need to be educated, but it is not they need to be more open for stuff like that that it shouldn't be an issue.

Marguerite exclaimed "Oh yes!" when asked if she observed anti-gay behaviour in the school. She informed me of an incident that had occurred not too long ago. The parents of a student in the school had gotten divorced. The boy's father was now living with a man, and the boy was living with his father and his father's boyfriend. The other children learned about the uncommon living arrangement and would cry out: "Yuck, your dad is gay!" In addition to that incident she claims children often approach her declaring: "Ah! Mrs., he told me I was gay, I do not like it, it is not true!" Or "they say I am gay, they are calling me gay... I do not like it!"

I asked the child how he felt because of it. I told him that in the end he knows that he is not gay, the other kids say things to you, I know that it hurts your feelings, that you are not gay, but in the end for you what is important is that you are not.

Theresa maintained she had definitely heard the expression "that's so gay" in the schoolyard, but never in the classroom. She realizes that she has not done the best job at confronting such behaviour, but she maintains she has done more than a lot of teachers or staff has done at Saint John. She declared that she does not put the incidents aside. She asks the children why they say such things, but she admits she does not confront it the way she should.

When I ask them what it means, they have no clue. "Oh it just means you know..." and they sort of you know... they have an answer for it, but they know that it means you are trying to single out that person and say that's "uncool". So their equivalent to "that's so gay" is "uncool". So when you actually ask them what gay means some of them might know what it means, some of them have no clue what they are talking about. They've just heard someone else use it and they latch on to it.

Judi considers that there are a lot of derogatory comments made against the gay and lesbian community at Saint John. It surprises her to hear a lot of gay bashing going on between the children. She claimed this academic year in particular comments like "you are so gay" have come up repeatedly. In addition to these comments, Judi claims that when she circulates material that is pink in colour to the children, the children shout: "Oh no... it's a gay colour". She claims that she stops whatever it is they were doing and they discuss the comment.

Judi stated that if it comes up in the classroom she addresses the issue with the children without delay.

You can't ignore it. You must not ignore something like that. That is why you have to be very flexible when you are in the classroom, in the elementary classroom, because when an issue comes up like that you have to be able to stop and address that issue. Put everything aside and that issue has to be addressed. You can't say "we will talk about this later".

In addition, Judi informed me that last year there was a boy in the school who was very effeminate and she thought his sexual orientation might be inclined towards homosexuality. Many, including the children, became aware of it too.

And I felt so sorry for the child because I don't think he had come to terms with who he is. And the other kids were very condescending, they picked on him, they ridiculed him, they made fun of him, and it was very difficult. But even amongst my colleagues there were a few derogatory remarks that were made towards the child in the staff room. And when you hear that kind of

thing you sort of say: "Ok, you know we've got a problem". No one challenges the teacher, everyone kept quiet!...by virtue of omission we are just encouraging it.

Sofia also stated that during this academic year, more than any other year, children are using anti-gay comments and derogatory words that refer to gays and lesbians. However, how she address or confronts the issue was not discussed during the interview.

This year for some reason I don't know why, and it could be because of exposure to a lot more tv, video games,...This year more than any other year calling each other gays and lesbians and you know two girls may be holding hands because they are best friends and they are walking in the field and they are labelled lesbians.

Gina claimed she witnessed or overheard anti-gay name-calling, homophobic remarks, or derogatory words in the classroom or in the schoolyard.

One of my students called somebody a "FAG". I have had students you know come up to me and say "Ah! they called me gay" or whatever you know. I mean sometimes it's common for kids to call each other gay, because...my daughters get called lesbians because they are twins.

She maintains the children do not know what the terminology means. She believes that they think it is something that is bad, but they do not really understand it. Their reaction is "Oh my God! it is something bad." She maintains that if she explains it to class as a whole they will use the information to harass each other. She claims they are just not mature enough to say: "Ok, well you know, now that we learned it let's not misuse the terminology." So she just discusses it with the individual child. "I just tell them...does it bother you? Do you think it...it is true. They do not know if it's true."

Catherine claims she overhears such comments in the school but does not suspect the children know what they are saying. She said that she has not confronted any of the children, because it has not happened in her classroom. But if it did happen she would ask the children what they believed the words they were saying meant.

The only teacher who stated that she never witnessed or overheard anti-gay name-calling, homophobic remarks, derogatory words that refer to gay and lesbian individuals in school or in your classroom was Maggie.

Theme 3: Inclusion in Cycle I versus Cycle II versus Cycle III?

Throughout each conversation, teachers repeatedly raised the question of which cycle they believed would be best to begin talking about gay and lesbian issues. The majority of teachers agreed that starting in the earlier cycles would be the best for all. However, certain teachers did not share the same opinion.

Jeanne claims that if you implement or incorporate gay and lesbian issues in grade one, or cycle I, children would be more open to the topic. She explains by arguing that children's attitudes towards gays and lesbians are not fully formed at this age. She claims children in cycle I will understand it more, they will have questions and a teacher can explain it in simpler terms with the younger children. Including gay and lesbian issues in cycle two or cycle three would not have the same impact.

She believes if children are exposed to gay and lesbian issues as of grade one it would be much easier for them to be accepting and respecting of gays and lesbians in grade six; she claims it would not be an issue anymore.

I think it would be good to implement in the younger grades because they are already a lot of their attitudes, they are not fully formed. If you are introducing this in cycle one it would be an advantage. Because right now what is happening in grade six is that they have a feeling that it is not normal, that is their attitude towards it. So if when they are young you include it then they will be more open to it.

She trusts that talking about same-sex families or reading books with same-sex couples as of cycle one will allow children to learn that it is fine to have two dads or two moms or a dad and a mom.

Marguerite agrees that incorporating these issues in cycle I would be good, but should not be done in an in-depth manner. She believes it might be good because children start to change by cycle three, they begin searching for their identity, they become adolescents and sexuality plays a part in their life. She believes that the children experiencing same-sex feelings must feel lost and uneasy in their sexuality because the norm and standard in schools is to be heterosexual.

Theresa has no objections to include gay and lesbian issues in cycle I because she believes that story time in kindergarten is going to reflect how they are going to think and their worldview from grade one to grade eleven.

Judi thinks it is important to include this topic in the earlier cycles. She thinks it is very important to start when the children are young, because when the children get to cycle three, grades five and six, if they have not been open to the idea, they will be very narrow-minded. She claims it will be very difficult for them to be accepting in cycle three, because they are uncomfortable with the issue. They will giggle and laugh, they will make jokes, and they will not focus on the

issue. She believes that is a way of covering up the fact that they feel uncomfortable. Therefore, she strongly believes it is important that including gay and lesbian issues should begin from a very young age. But she believes if you are going to include gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum the entire school has to be on board; not just a few teachers but it has to be across the board from kindergarten to grade six.

Maggie thinks she would definitely include this topic in cycle one, but would not go out in depth for a lot of the topics as she would in cycle three. She claims children in cycle three have more of an understanding and more contact with gays and lesbians whether it be in the media or in society in general.

Maria and Sofia had similar responses. They claimed that if it is going to be addressed it needs to be in all the cycles. However, Sofia added that if gay and lesbian issues are to be included in the elementary school curriculum it should be done in a gradual way; it should begin in kindergarten and extend it to grade one the following year. She does not suggest presenting it at once in cycle three, without them seeing it before.

Catherine states if it is tastefully done, and age appropriate, then the younger the better.

Because that is when they ask all their questions. Little kids have no prejudices yet, no biases. Anything they are getting is what they are getting in their environment. They have no preset conceived ideas. So, if you give them all the different flavors to taste, they can choose afterwards. And they may change their minds as they grow.

In contrast, Gina, exclaimed "Oh my God no! At this point no! Uh... if I had to decide I wouldn't... I wouldn't...if it was up to me," when asked if she would

include gay and lesbian issues in the cycle one curriculum. Towards the conclusion of the interview she changed her view.

Yah I think it would be ok. It is really like a gradual thing. You have to start in cycle one and then...because if you just throw at them in grade six then it is going to turn into a giggle fest. But I think if you start it gently with stuff like that I could see it happening.

In addition, Brigitte stated that for elementary school she would have a hard time introducing the topic especially in cycle one. In cycle one and cycle two it is a delicate topic to bring into the classroom. Children in elementary school are too young to understand, she stated. She feels that children in elementary school are too young and that perhaps introducing a little information in cycle three and more as students get into high school would be better.

Theme 4: Parental Reactions

One theme that emerged throughout all the discussions was the reaction parents at Saint John would have when they were to discover that the topic of same-sex couples was included in the curriculum. Most teachers were conscious of the potential turbulence that including gay and lesbian topics might cause, but other teachers were not certain how the parents might react.

Jeanne was not quite sure how the parents would react to the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum. Her explanation was that she was not that familiar with the parents yet. She has only been teaching for six months. She stated that she did not want to generalize without really knowing the children's parents. Yet she was confident that if the teacher incorporates gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum it would not cause friction between the teacher and the

parents. "Ah no... it might, but if it is part of the curriculum, it is part of the curriculum, right."

Marguerite was also not quite sure how the parents would react. However, she did foresee parents calling the school and shouting "Ah! What did you say to my kid?" She admitted the parents' reaction is her biggest fear regarding the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues or talking about homosexuality.

Theresa predicted receiving several letters from parents objecting to what is being discussed in the classroom or what is being depicted in the books. She claimed that there are parents that are going to be very accepting and encouraging and there are parents that will disapprove. She foresees how some parents will react. As a teacher she does not want to be in conflict with parents but at the same time she wants to go with what the school accepts and what the Quebec Education Program proclaims.

Maria believes discussing sexual diversity in the classroom could bring up a lot of issues at home because some parents are not ready to deal with gay and lesbian issues in the elementary school curriculum. But she thinks we need to open things up if we want to have open-minded people. She indicates that parents in this school have to understand that their family composition is not the only one in this world. She recognizes that she will have to answer to the parents, and that they will have some questions. She also realizes that she would have to support why she is doing it but she claimed this happens all the time. She believes that she would be ready to justify why she was doing it.

Judi admitted she expects problems with the parents. She claims in this particular community a lot of parents would object to having children's books that would include lesbian or gay characters either as their major plot or as a side plot, or discussing sexual diversity in the classroom.

Maggie declared she does not know how the parents would react. She had a bad experience a short time ago concerning the inclusion of different religions in the curriculum. She did not get a lot of negative feedback, but some parents objected to exposing their children to different religions of the world. Therefore, the fact that she got some unenthusiastic reactions leads her to expect anything.

I do not know, because I did not think they would object about learning about different religions, because I am very open to that. I did not get all kinds of negative feedback. But the fact that I did, I was very taken...

She does not know how they would respond, being a mostly Catholic and Italian community. She claims, that she would have to try and see what happens. She claims ever since that incident she is not sure how parents will react, but she believes some parents would raise objections.

Catherine had one concern that children could go home and may have misinterpreted what was taught, and just like anything you might have parents act in response.

Gina states she would definitely get letters from parents. The reason is that the majority of the students are from Italian backgrounds, and Italians have a stereotypical idea of what a man and a woman are, what a family consists of. If she would use books with gay and lesbian characters she would be hearing from the parents.

The parents might just think that we are trying to manipulate the kids, or I do not know. These parents are very bizarre. The children are very immature and the parents are no geniuses either.

Parents expose their children to satellite television and the children are showered with all sorts of things, and nobody discusses these issues with them. But if we, the school, attempt to discuss a controversial topic “we would be hearing from them”, said Gina.

Brigitte quickly replied to my question. She claimed there would be consequences. She said if she would present such an issue in this particular school the phone would ring uncontrollably.

Finally, Sofia did not believe introducing gay and lesbian issues in the elementary curriculum with the predominately Italian population would be suitable. She revealed: “You would be walking on thin ice. You never know the type of parents you are dealing with. These particular parents can make you lose your job.”

Theme 5: Suggestions

All teachers interviewed at Saint John had suggestions regarding the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum. Teachers proposed in-service training, conferences, access to material, workshops, resource teachers, and more.

Jeanne thinks that teachers need to have better resources to help them deal issues of sexual diversity. She strongly believes teachers need to have better resources to help them deal with these issues. She insisted parent workshops should be offered specifically for these issues. She declared that Saint John has

had parent workshops at night with the behaviour technician concerning bullying, but none that addressed sexuality.

I feel like I just do not know how to deal with anti-gay name-calling, anti-gay bullying. There are some instances where I feel as a teacher I am not prepared to deal with.

Jeanne acknowledged that there is no mention of same-sex families, homophobia, or homophobic bullying in the curriculum. She did not know of any age appropriate lesson plans that address same-sex families or any issues of diverse sexuality and confessed that she had never come across children's books that have gay and lesbian characters.

I presented Jeanne with a few children's books, which include lesbian or gay characters either as their major plot or as a side plot. She agreed that it would be nice to be able to have access to such books and present them as early as kindergarten and read them during story time.

Marguerite admitted she is scared, because she is not prepared. She does not know how to incorporate or include gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum and she does not know how to answer the potential questions children might have. She would like to be trained on how to teach or incorporate sexual diversity issues. She claims teachers need access to material and be provided with textbooks that are inclusive of sexual diversity. And finally she believes workshops on sexuality for the parents should be offered.

I want to be able to express myself to the children the right way, because it is a delicate subject, even just introducing. You want to introduce or incorporate without scaring the children, without any worries.

Theresa thinks it would be absolutely fantastic if workshops were to be offered. She would love to have someone at the school board she could contact to ask questions about these issues, also allow parents to join the workshops in order for them to voice their concerns.

But I haven't really seen very many resources on how to incorporate it. Like as a teacher I do not see how to help students with issues they are having with it... No one talks about it. Like the school board does not mention it. I have not been to many workshops that say lets talk about it.

She just feels she is not prepared. She stated that teachers are going to be giving children maybe their very first answers to question about gays and lesbians. As a teacher she does not want to give a response or say something that is going to affect the way they think about gay and lesbians.

That scares me. I want to say something where they are not going to feel like...you know I remember my teacher saying that. First impressions make a difference. So I would want to know a good way to talk about it. Bring it up and make them feel like you know what it is ok.

Maria would love to have workshops for teachers and for parents. She suggested having programs available for the teachers and making material more accessible. She would like to have more courses, or workshops.

I think that could make it easier. I think it is also important that the staff should get together and have a workshop on this type of issue. Because if you are isolated, if you are the only person doing it, then it is not as effective. I would need a workshop to introduce certain things and then I think I would feel ok.

Judi said first and foremost she would like to be able to have a list of books that she could access. She really thinks it is necessary for teachers to be trained on how to address the issue. She would like to have in-service training.

...as a human being you try to be open, but I think all of us have a little bit of bias. So it is important to make sure that you do not communicate those biases to the children. We need to be in-serviced.

In addition to those comments Judi stated that a lot of issues in the reform are not dealt as they should. She stated that many years ago there was a lot more opportunity to be able to address such issues. When she had her own classroom, and taught all subjects, she was doing cross-curriculum. "Whatever theme we were doing we carried it over from language art to..." She stated that she does not have that opinion anymore. If she is doing a theme on gay rights in Language Arts, the Geography, History, and Citizenship Education teacher might not want to address that issue.

Catherine claimed it would be nice if someone came in and presented ideas, materials, lesson plans, and books. And Brigitte suggested workshops with the parents and in service training.

Gina stated that the school board or the school should provide the teacher with the proper resources. But she said that would require money; "and they never provide anything that cost money." Therefore, if she had to include or incorporate gay and lesbian issues she would have to look for it herself.

Sofia mentioned teachers should attend conferences, attend courses, provided with in-service training to "open up our minds and our eyes." Offering parent workshops, and inviting the parents to come to the school and have an open forum with the teachers is also important, in her opinion.

Theme 6: Administration/Parental Permission

During my discussion with the teachers I asked them if they would obtain consent from the principal or the parents before talking about issues of sexuality at Saint John.

Jeanne affirmed that if anti-gay bullying, anti-gay name-calling, or questions surrounding gay and lesbian issues came up in class she would address it right away. But she would definitely go speak to the principal about the issue after it had been discussed. She affirmed that you must address it in the moment because that is when you have the kids' attention.

...in the moment I think you do have to address it. And it is when you have their attention. You can't like send a letter home get responses like the logistics of it just doesn't work. It takes too long I think in the moment you have to address it. Then I would definitely speak to the principal later like afterwards to say this is what happened this is how I addressed it in case parents do call. To say what the situation was.

She insisted she would bring it to the principal's attention later on in case he or she needed to field any questions from parents.

Marguerite affirmed she would not feel comfortable talking about gay and lesbian issues without talking to the principal about it first, even if it is part of the Quebec Education Program. Maria affirmed she would go see her administrator with whatever she was thinking of bringing into the classroom, and go over it with them. Theresa admitted she was not sure. She would ask the principal anyways as a backup. But stated she did not feel that she needed parents' permission to talk about gay and lesbian issues in her classroom.

Judi admitted she would probably run it by the principal first just to make him/her aware of what she was doing, because she argued there would be telephone calls from upset parents. In addition, she declared she would make the parents aware of what was going on in the classroom, so that parents could prepare their children at home. But she did not see the need to get permission or consent from the parents. "Whether they were for or against it...it is part of the curriculum and I am responsible for teaching it and I will teach it."

Maggie was the only one who exclaimed "No!, No! I do not think so". She claims if it is part of the program and if it is done appropriately and she can support her reasoning, she did not believe she had to pass it by administration.

Sofia was unsure about whether she feels she would need consent from the principal and parents. "The parents are very special here...the mentality, the culture [Italian], a man is a man is a man."

Not consent necessarily, but just bring it to their attention. Like what they think, if they think it is a good idea. Mind you there is nothing wrong. I can see myself reading a story without even approaching administration about it. And if they have a problem they come see me. We do not have the administration's support because they just want to appease the parents, make them happy at whatever cost and I have been here a long enough time to see that.

Catherine was also unsure. She stated that it was an interesting question and that she would have to think deeply. She did not want to give a definite answer but she said that it would depend on the group of students she had and the ethnic backgrounds of the students. Some classes can be difficult especially if the majority are Italian and Catholic.

Gina affirmed she would need parents' consent, the school's governing board and the school board. She stated if a teacher did it without their permission that "we would not have a job."

Brigitte said she would only do it if she had permission from the parents. "We can't just start teaching it without the support of the parents," she revealed.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study offered an indication of the perceptions, insights, opinions, willingness and understandings of ten teachers in one school regarding the inclusion of gay and lesbian issues into cycle one, cycle two and cycle three Moral Education, Geography, History and Citizenship Education, and English Language Arts curriculum in Quebec. The findings that emerged from the teacher questionnaire and from the discussions with the teachers suggested that generally teachers realized the benefits of including gay and lesbian issues in the elementary school curriculum and were willing to incorporate gay and lesbian issues into their teachings, however many teachers also displayed heterosexist and homophobic attitudes. This study was conducted with only female participants, therefore perhaps with male participants similar findings would not be obtained. This study was important given that the Quebec Education reform's mandate is to help students understand and put into practice values such as "understanding", "openness", "receptiveness", "commitment", "solidarity", "equality", "dignity", and "respect" for themselves and others. This study, I believe, will serve as a foundation for further research. The subsequent section will discuss the main findings in the context of the literature on the topic.

When discussing the benefits of including gay and lesbian issues in the elementary school curriculum the findings were consistent with findings in the review of literature. The discussions with the teachers revealed that teachers were aware of the benefits of including gay and lesbian issues in the elementary school curriculum. A good number of teachers stated that there is a lot to be

gained from including gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum. The children would grow to be more open to diversity, more accepting and respecting. Teachers also stated that introducing gay and lesbian issues would eliminate prejudices and it would give children a different way of thinking.

Teaching about gays and lesbians produces a classroom that “challenges categorical thinking, encourages interpersonal intelligence, and promotes critical consciousness” (Sears, 1999, p. 5). Providing children with notions, vocabulary, and strategies for dealing with questions regarding gender and homosexuality will possibly assist them to refuse to give in to homophobia and to handle themselves and others with respect (Rofes as cited in Bickmore, 1999). Books with gay and lesbian characters create a space for discussion, and provide students with the opportunity to disrupt stereotypical ways of thinking about same-sex relationships (Martino, 1999).

With regards to children becoming aware of their own same-sex feelings the findings were also consistent with the findings of previous studies. Three teachers were aware of this likelihood and mentioned that children experiencing same-sex feelings in elementary school must feel alone and uneasy in their sexuality, because the norm in schools is heterosexual. Also, they acknowledged that boys and girls who begin having same-sex feelings in elementary school must feel entirely isolated when the topic of sexual diversity is censored. A teacher affirmed that it was quite common to sense or pick out the sexual orientation of certain children, and believed it is important that children in elementary school be aware of sexual orientation and their own sexuality.

The statements made by these teachers illustrated their understanding that including or incorporating gay and lesbian issues into the elementary school curriculum would give children experiencing a growing awareness of their same-sex feelings a sense of self-worth, confirming the findings of Colleary (1999). Elsewhere it was found that most gays and lesbians recall their first same-sex feelings and attraction a little before their tenth birthday (Herdt & Boxer, 1993). In my opinion including gay and lesbian issues in the elementary curriculum will permit children experiencing same-sex feelings to accept and understand that what they are feeling is normal and natural and it is acceptable to have emotional, romantic or affectional attraction for someone of the same-sex.

Previous studies have also found that individuals who stray from heterosexuality are perhaps the most ostracized group of people in many societies. It is now uncommon and unusual to hear words such as “nigger” or “wop”. Nevertheless “faggot” and “dyke” are heard repeatedly without being challenged or confronted (Unks, 1999). Thus, the findings in my study regarding homophobic attitudes and behaviours in school were consistent with the findings in other studies. All but one teacher interviewed reported hearing homophobic comments in school. Comments like “that’s so gay”, “you are gay”, “you are a lesbian”, and so forth, were reported by teachers to be heard frequently at Saint John’s Elementary School. Friend (1998) claims the word gay is often employed as a common critical remark, for example “those shoes are so gay”.

These findings were in line with a recent study where 76% of teachers reported hearing homophobic remarks or derogatory comments directed at gays

and lesbians frequently or sometimes in middle school (Page & Liston, 2002). I would agree with Friend (1998) that verbal abuse, psychological pestering and physical violence against gays, lesbians or individuals who are perceived to be gay, is a big part of school culture.

Moreover, some teachers claimed they did not suspect the children know what they were saying, they do not understand what they are saying or that the children do not know what the words mean. The teachers believed that because the children did not know the meaning of the comments or sayings they should not be considered as insulting. These statements were in line with the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network's finding where it was mentioned that various school officials maintain that the phrase or the saying "that's so gay" does not explicitly put down gays or lesbians and for that reason should not be seen as upsetting or insulting (GLSEN, 2004). In my opinion, this is evidence of society's "official" denial regarding heterosexism and homophobia, because if a child were to say "nigger" or "wop" the comment would be considered insulting and the child would be reprimanded. I believe children do understand the meaning of these words. I agree with Sears (1999) who stated that childhood innocence is an appearance that adults stress onto children, allowing adults to silence sexuality or issues they wish to ignore. Children use these words to hurt, put down or make other children feel victimized. I asked elementary children for myself if they knew the meaning of pejorative words such as, "queer", "sissy", "gay", or "faggot". The children provided me with clear explanations. Children do understand the meaning and children are not as innocent as adults imagine.

It was mentioned that derogatory remarks were made towards a child in the staff room at Saint John and no one challenged the comments. Often teachers do not address or confront homophobic behaviour witnessed in the school. Judi agreed that by virtue of omission teachers encourage homophobic behaviour. Neglecting to end homophobic name calling quietly plays a role in defending and encouraging heterosexism and homophobia (Friend, 1998).

Findings from the teacher questionnaire and discussions with the teachers revealed that teachers are not ready or prepared to handle issues that concern gays and lesbians. Teachers claim they need to be given in-service training, provided with resources, in order to properly address issues of sexual diversity. These statements were in line with findings from a recent study where only 11.9% of teachers claimed they were educated on how to cope issues that concern gays and lesbians in school (Page & Liston, 2002). In my opinion if the *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec* lists sexual orientation as an example of difference in the Quebec Education Program for Elementary School they should provide teacher with the proper resources to tackle the issues.

There was evidence that teachers do not confront homophobic behaviour specifically. Their unwillingness to intervene when children hurt one another with homophobic slurs can stem from discomfort (Cahill & Theilheimer, 1999). A number of teachers gave the impression of being uncomfortable, because they did not know how to approach gay and lesbian issues. Studies found that teachers believe if they decide to raise the issues of homosexuality in school they will be presumed to be homosexual and at risk of losing their jobs (Bickmore,

1999). Once more, the *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec* must understand that most teachers are not at ease discussion gay and lesbian issues, and therefore must provide teachers with training or a guide on how to undertake this challenge.

The issue of being presumed homosexual if they decide to raise the issue of gays and lesbian was not stated by any of the teachers in this study, but perhaps gender was a factor; all the respondents were female. Maybe the issue would have emerged if the respondents had been a mixed group or all male. A small number of teachers did however state they feared losing their job if they introduced gay and lesbian issues into their teachings.

Five statements by teachers claimed that the issue of homosexuality should be discussed in the home. In my opinion this response reflected discomfort from the teachers with the issue of gays and lesbians. The teachers were equating homosexuality with sex and ultimately demonstrating homophobic attitudes. Associating homosexuality with sex promotes and fosters heterosexism and homophobia (Friend, 1998). In my opinion, teachers were hiding their feelings about gays and lesbians from view and holding parents responsible for educating about these issues. I believe if gay and lesbian issues are discussed in school the discussion in the home will follow. If we are to create a more accepting and understanding society we must start somewhere.

In this study it was found that homosexuality was equated directly with sex rather than with an individual's identity and sexual orientation. Such homophobic attitudes were conveyed clearly but sometimes unintentionally and with apparent

good intentions. For example, it will be recalled that Marguerite (p. 55) told a child that in the end what was important when someone calls him gay is that he is not. And Sofia (p. 53) seemed to see homosexuality as deviant and disgusting, leading eventually to including sex with animals in the curriculum. Gina (p. 57) couched her discomfort with the topic by claiming that children in elementary school are not mature enough to be exposed to gay and lesbian issues. And Catherine (p. 51) said more than once “you do not want to scare the children” and used the words “tastefully done” when asked about including gay and lesbian issues into her teaching. If gay and lesbian issues are discussed and addressed in elementary school perhaps these notions will fade away with time.

The Quebec Education Program claims schools have a mandate to socialize children and help them develop a worldview that will allow them to operate in a just society and live with others in peace, understanding, and respect (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001). Teachers understand that they are given this responsibility; however, when it comes to gay and lesbian issues, some teachers are claiming it should be the parents' job. Even though the school setting is not the only institution that can undertake and tackle homophobia, it is an institution where teachers have some control and effect on children's ways of behaving (Page & Liston, 2002). In particular, when the student population comes mainly from a conservative and traditionally catholic community, as was the case in this study, it is even more critical that the school assume an active role in socializing its future citizens to societal norms that favour open-mindedness.

After careful analysis of my findings I concluded that half of the teachers that participated in this study are willing to include gay and lesbian issues into their teachings. These teachers truly and genuinely believed sexual diversity in elementary school is an important issue, because it will assist students understand and put into practice values such as understanding, openness, equality, dignity, and respect. These teachers understand that sexual orientation is a difference that children need to be aware of in order to accept and respect themselves and others. These teachers are willing to incorporate these issues despite resistance from parents.

The remainder of the teachers, except for one, were more guarded in their willingness to include gay and lesbian issues into their teachings. They believe there was some benefit from incorporating gay and lesbian issues in the elementary school curriculum; however, they would only do so because they were required by the Quebec Education Program. These teachers hold to a certain extent heterosexist, heterocentrist, and homophobic attitudes. The teachers did not openly state their feelings but in my opinion the truth came out in their subtle comments, choice of words, and hesitation when responding.

Including gay and lesbian issues in the elementary school curriculum is not introducing sex or an attempt to promote homosexuality. It symbolizes and represents openness, respect, authenticity, and equality (Sears, 1999). Homosexuality is not a lifestyle or a choice. It is something that happens. Being gay is just another kind of way to express sexual, emotional, romantic or affectional attraction. The world is made up of people with different

characteristics and attributes like skin colour, sex, sexual orientation, civil status, religion, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, and abilities. The school's task is to "prepare the citizens of tomorrow to meet the challenges of a pluralistic society that welcomes diversity" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001; p. 2). Gays and lesbians are part of that diversity. Sexual orientation is just another way of being different. People are like snowflakes; every person is special and unique. But being different is what makes us Canadian and *Québécois*. It's what makes us a family.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher Questionnaire

The Quebec Education Program requires that the education curriculum help students understand and practice values such as “understanding”, “openness”, “receptiveness”, “commitment”, “solidarity”, “equality”, “dignity”, and “respect” for themselves and others. The program claims it will enhance and strengthen students’ world-view and reinforce attitudes and values such as tolerance and respect for difference. Furthermore, it maintains that it will assist students to settle difficulties in relationships with people who are racially, ethnically, religiously, sexually, or otherwise different.

Such a curriculum unit would thus include diversity issues relating to sexuality such as: alternative family structures, the definition of homosexuality, the effects of homophobia, gender-related name-calling, stereotyping, bullying, and the like.

While this study is of course interested in more general issues of diversity such as multiculturalism, there is a wealth of research on that and related topics both in Quebec and elsewhere. The focus of this study is thus important, as is your participation, because so little is known about the problems and prospects of including sexuality issues in the elementary curriculum, even while such issues are mandated to be included by the New Quebec Reform.

The questionnaire below is intended to gather your views about the particular just-mentioned aspects of the proposed curriculum, with special regard to its pertinence for children at the elementary school level.

The following questionnaire consists of 33 questions. Please answer the following questions and statements as best you can. Your input is valuable to the success of the research project. This information, as mentioned in the informed consent, is completely confidential. You may choose to **NOT** respond to any questions that make you feel uncomfortable, and your non-response will not be interpreted in any way, i.e., no judgment will be passed on your choice to not respond.

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS CAREFULLY AND SELECT YOUR LEVEL OF AGREEMENT TO EACH STATEMENT

1. The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms which says: *Every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap... Discrimination exists where such a distinction, exclusion or preference has the effect of nullifying or impairing such right.*

It is important that the diversity curriculum include concrete information about The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms as just outlined.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

2. It is important that the curriculum include information about alternative family structures such as same-sex headed families, blended families and single parent families.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

3. It is important that the curriculum clarify the meaning of sexual orientation.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

4. It is important that the curriculum include the definition of heterosexuality.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

5. It is important that the curriculum include the definition of homosexuality.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

6. It is important that the curriculum include the definition of lesbian.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

7. It is important that the curriculum include the definition of gay.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

8. It is important that the curriculum include the definition of homophobia.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

9. It is important that the curriculum help children to understand the real meaning of pejorative words such as, "queer", "sissy", "gay", "dyke", and "faggot".

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

10. It is important that the curriculum help children to understand that such terms (as mentioned in question 9) are hurtful.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

11. It is important that the curriculum define the nature of bullying.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

12. It is important that the curriculum address the effects of bullying.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

13. It is important that the curriculum address the effects of anti-gay bullying.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

14. It is important that the curriculum provide information about the laws in the various provinces governing same sex marriage.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

15. It is important that the curriculum provide information about the debates surrounding same sex marriage in Canada and elsewhere.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

16. It is important that the curriculum provide information about the different family structures such as same-sex headed families, blended families and single parent families.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

17. It is important that the teacher's guide for the curriculum provide teachers with strategies for dealing with name calling when they hear it in the classroom or within the school.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

18. It is important that the teacher's guide for the curriculum provide teachers with strategies for dealing with bullying when they witness it in the classroom or within the school.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

19. It is important that the teacher's guide for the curriculum provide teachers with strategies for dealing with evidence of a child's disturbance about sexual matters.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

20. It is important that the teacher's guide provide teachers with strategies for dealing with parents who object to any aspect of the approved curriculum.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

21. It is important that each school have a resource person to assist teachers with troublesome matters relating to children's feelings, attitudes or behaviour as these concern sexuality.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

22. It is important that school textbooks and other text materials reflect the tenets of the Quebec Charter with regard to such matters as race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, and ability.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

23. It is important that school textbooks and other text materials reflect aspects of this diverse society with particular regard to sexual orientation (homosexuality, lesbianism, same sex marriage).

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

24. It is important that every classroom have reading material available to students that includes lesbian or gay characters as part of the plot.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

25. It is important that the new curriculum take an active stand against all forms of prejudice as outlined in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

26. It is important that the curriculum address the development of sexual orientation.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

27. It is important that the curriculum address the kinds of inner conflict that young people can have while developing their sexuality, whether heterosexual or not.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

28. It is important that the classroom material be inclusive of all diversity such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, civil status, age, religion, ethnic or national origin, social condition, and disabled individuals.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

29. It is important that teachers have easy access to lesson plans, curriculum units, or other resources developed for children that address such matters as families with gay and lesbian parents, homophobia, gender-related name-calling, stereotyping, anti-gay bullying, sexual orientation discrimination, prejudice, or the oppression of gay and lesbian individuals.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Prefer Not To Answer

APPENDIX B

Consent Form to Participate in Research

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Franco Di Salvio of the Education Department of Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore the implementation of a curriculum unit that supports all forms of diversity for inclusion in elementary education. The Quebec Education Program requires that the education curriculum help students understand and put into practice values such as “understanding”, “openness”, “receptiveness”, “commitment”, “solidarity”, “equality”, “dignity”, and “respect” for themselves and others. The program claims it will enhance and strengthen students’ world-view and reinforce attitudes and values such as tolerance and respect for difference. Furthermore, it maintains it will assist students settle difficulties in relationships with people who are different. The differences include gender, race, sexual orientation, preferences, social condition and the like.

The curriculum unit that is of interest in this study deals with issues such as diverse family structures, the definition of homosexuality, the effects of homophobia, gender-related name-calling, stereotyping, bullying, discrimination, prejudice, and the oppression of gay and lesbian individuals. In the literature these are referred to as queer issues. The curriculum unit introducing queer issues will be presented to teachers of moral education; geography, history and citizenship education; and language arts. The researcher will invite educators to complete a questionnaire and will interview them and engage them in conversation about their perceptions, insight, opinions, and willingness to include such a unit in their curriculum.

B. PROCEDURES

The participants in this study will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Soon after, the participants will be interviewed individually. In the case of the time, timing, and location, the interview process will be kept to a maximum of 1 1/2 hours and will be held at the convenience of the participants on school grounds. The participants will give written consent.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that only the researcher will have access to the notes.
- I understand that my participation in this study is not to be disclosed (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.

I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

WITNESS SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at 514.848.2424, x.7481 or by email at Adela.Reid@Concordia.ca.

APPENDIX C

Resources

Books with Gay and Lesbian Characters

- Abramchik, L. (1996). *Is your family like mine?* Brooklyn, NY: Open Heart, Open Mind Books.
- Bosche, S. (1983). *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Brown, F. (1991). *Generous Jefferson Bartleby Jones*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- de Paola, T. (1990). *Oliver Button is a sissy*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Drescher, J. (1981). *Your Family, My Family*. New York, NY: Walker Publishing Company.
- Eichler, M. (1977). *Martin's father*. Chapel Hill, NC: Lollipop Power
- Elwin, R., & Paulse, M. (1990). *Asha's Mums*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press.
- Gordon, S. (2000). *All families are different*. New York, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Heron, A., & Maran, M. (1991). *How would you feel if your dad was gay?* Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Jenness, A. (1990). *Families: A celebration of diversity, commitment, and love*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Johnsen-Calvo, S. (1993). *A beach party with Alexis: A coloring book*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Kennedy, J. (1998). *Lucy goes to the country*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publication.
- Newman, L. (1991). *Belinda's bouquet*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications
- Newman, L. (1991). *Gloria goes to gay pride*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Newman, L. (1993). *Saturday is pattyday*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press.
- Newman, L. (2000). *Heather Has Two Mommies*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Skutch, R. (1997). *Who's in a family?* Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.

- Valentine, J. (1993). *Two moms, the zark and me*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Valentine, J. (2004). *One dad, two dads, brown dad, blue dads*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Valentine, J. (2004). *The daddy machine*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Valentine, J. (2004). *The duke who outlawed jellybeans and other stories*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Vigna, J. (1995). *My two uncles*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.
- Willhoite, M. (1991). *Daddy's roommate*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Willhoite, M. (1996). *Daddy's wedding*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Willhoite, M. (1993). *Uncle what-is-it is coming to visit*. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.

Websites that Address Gay and Lesbian Issues

Understanding Prejudice

<http://www.understandingprejudice.org>

Gay, Lesbian, Straight and Education Network

www.glsen.org

Gay and Lesbian Educators of B.C. (& their Friends and Supporters)

www.balebc.org

Project 10

www.p10.qc.ca

HelpingOut

www.helpingout.ca

The Safe School Coalition

www.safeschoolscoalition.org

Alterheros

www.alterheros.com

Egale Canada

<http://www.egale.ca>

A How-To Guide for Ending Name-Calling in Schools
http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/189-1.pdf

Lesson Plan: What Do “Faggot” and “Dyke” Mean?
http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/188-1.pdf

Understanding Family Diversity with Gay and Lesbian Parents
<http://www.kqed.org/w/mosaic/gaylesbian/index.html>

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights: A Human Rights Perspective
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/TB3/toc.html>

Amnesty International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Network
<http://www.ai-lgbt.org/>

Matthew Shepard Foundation
<http://www.matthewshepard.org>

No Name-Calling
www.nonamecallingweek.org

Committee for Children
<http://www.cfchildren.org/>

Women’s Educational Media: Creating Social Change Through Films and
Community Organizing
<http://www.womedia.org>

Films that Address Gay and Lesbian Issues for Young Children

Apples and Oranges (2003)
Directed by Lynne Fernie and Produced by Tamara Lynch
A National Film Board of Canada production

It’s Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School (1999)
Directed by Debra Chasnoff and Produced by Helen S. Cohen and Debra
Chasnoff

That’s a Family: A Film for Kids about Family Diversity
by Debra Chasnoff, Helen S. Cohen