An Examination of the Potential of Critical Media Literacy-based Sex Education Programming for Quebec High Schools

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is based on an extensive review of the literature on sex education in the aftermath of the 2001 curriculum reform in Quebec. The study examines some key challenges faced by Quebec educators in terms of addressing sex education in the high school classroom. The issues emerging from this examination of the literature are: negative attitudes towards the Quebec Education Program, insufficient training and resources available to teachers, time constraints, conflicts during collaborative efforts between stakeholders, inconsistent delivery of sex education, communication issues, and a lack of clarity on the roles of stakeholders.

An analysis of the relevant works of Foucault, Giroux, Weeks, Kammeyer, Baudrillard and Kellner reveals that media culture, defined as the combination of popular culture and technology, exerts a powerful hold over adolescents' understandings of their sexuality and their sexual behaviours. The advantages of critical media literacy-based sex education (CMLSE) programs for youth are explored in depth. A revised version of the CMLSE program *Media Relate* is suggested as a possible framework for a sex education program for Quebec high schools. In light of challenges faced by sex educators in Quebec, and of the influential power of the media on young people's sexual behaviours, this study proposes the adoption of a CMLSE approach based on *Media Relate* as a pedagogical opportunity to teach students to think critically about the media and to make healthy choices in general and in their sexual lives in particular.

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Acronyms

ACCM: AIDS Community Care Montreal

AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

AOUM: Abstinence Only Until Marriage

CALACS: Centre d'Aide et de Lutte Contre les Agressions à Caractère Sexuel

CBC : Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

CLSC : Centre Local de Services Communautaires

CML : Critical media literacy

CMLSE : Critical media literacy-based sex education

FCC: Federal Communications Commission

FFF: Family Federation of Finland

GLBTQ: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning

HPV: Human Papilloma Virus

IMB: Information-Motivation-Behavioural

INSPQ : Institut National de Santé Publique du Québec

MELS: Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

MEQ: Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec

MIP : Message Interpretation Process model

MPM : Media Practice Model

MSSS : Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux

PHAC: Public Health Agency of Canada

PEP: Programme Express Protection

PPFC: Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada

PSD Program: Personal and Social Development Program

QEP: Quebec Education Program

QPAT: Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers

QPPF: Quebec's Planned Pregnancy Federation

QWF: Quebec Women's Federation

RCPS : *Rénover le Curriculum du Primaire et du Secondaire*

SCT : Social Cognitive Theory

SHARE: Safety, Honesty, Acceptance, Respect and Enjoyment

SIECCAN: Sex Information and Education Council of Canada

SPUSR: S'exprimer Pour une Sexualité Responsable

STIs: Sexually transmitted infections

TISSAM: Take it Seriously: Abstinence and the Media

USA: United States of America

WHO: World Health Organization

Chapter 1: Sex Education in Quebec and in the Context of Existing Discourses

In this chapter, I present the statement of the problem and the research questions I am examining in this thesis. I then present a literature review on the existing discourses and teaching approaches in sex education. Next, I explore the context of sex education in Quebec in greater depth, by examining the history of educational reforms that led to the most recent curriculum and analyzing the carefully selected documents pertaining to the Quebec Education Program (QEP) and sex education guidelines for Quebec schools. Finally, I review pertinent studies on the Quebec Education Program and current sex education in Quebec schools to develop a better understanding of the difficulties that educators have encountered in teaching sex education since the 2001 curriculum reform in Quebec.

Rationale

The idea for this thesis occurred to me when I began studying the impact of the media on youth during a course in my graduate program at Concordia University. Reading Henry Giroux's (1996, 2002, 2006, 2006b; Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Giroux & Simon, 1989) work enlightened me about the linkages of popular culture with social, political and economic spheres of modern society. My interest was focused in particular on media culture, which includes the images, texts, and sounds produced in radio, film, print media and on television (Kellner, 1995). Through my increased awareness of the powerful hold that the media exerts over its audience, I was inspired to pursue further research on related issues and their importance for sex education.

The impact of the media on teenagers' attitudes and behaviours towards sex captivated my attention in particular. I thought of my own adolescence, and the extent to which my beliefs about sex and behaviour in relationships were influenced by the ideologies reflected in popular culture texts like *Dawson's Creek* (1998-2003) and *One Tree Hill* (2003-2012), which focused on the relationships and sex in the lives of a group of teenagers. Furthermore, I realized that neither my schooling experiences, nor my parents provided me with a sex education that extended beyond an understanding of the biological aspects of sex.

After the initial research process, I discovered that the little information I was given in sex education class had been officially removed from the curriculum shortly after my graduation from high school, in 2002. The education reform in Quebec was gradually introduced in schools as of 2001, and it replaced sex education from a mandatory aspect of the Personal and Social Development (PSD) program to a component of the "broad areas of learning" entitled "Health and Well Being" (Duquet, 2003; Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec [MEQ], 2001). Broad areas of learning provide students with knowledge that would facilitate their integration into modern society. The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) (2007)[1] explains that "broad areas of learning deal with aspects of contemporary life young people must face; this clearly gives them an interdisciplinary dimension" (p.26). As a broad area of learning , sex education is to be included in all facets of school life, including the classroom, cross-curricular projects and extracurricular activities, through the

[1] Please note that the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) became the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in 2005 (MELS, 'History', n.d.).

collaborative efforts of teachers, community health organizations, school boards and administrative staff.

Statement of the Problem

The initial purpose behind the research undertaken for this thesis was to arrive at a method for teaching sex education in Quebec schools that would address key issues that have emerged since the 2001 reform, as well as understand the challenges faced by educators who are charged with providing sex education within the 'broad areas of learning' as specified by the reform. This thesis is an examination of the need for, and the benefits of, introducing a critical media literacy-based sex education program in Quebec high schools. Such a program would teach students the critical skills to analyse and be able to resist pervasive messages in the media and to produce meaningful media texts and messages while simultaneously providing them with a progressive form of sex education.

Definitions

In this section, I have provided the definitions that I adopted for the following terms: media, media literacy, critical media literacy, media culture, popular culture, sex, diversity, critical media literacy-based sex education, and sexual discourses.

Media

The term 'media' includes the means for mass communication that produce texts and images designed to inform and entertain large audiences: television, film, radio and print media.

Media literacy

Media literacy can be characterized by the ability to analyze and deconstruct texts, images and sounds produced by the media. Throughout the literature reviewed in this study, the term 'media literacy' often carries the same meaning as 'critical media literacy', which is defined next. Kellner and Share (2005) distinguish both terms, arguing that critical media literacy is a more complex and in-depth study of media texts.

Critical media literacy

According to Kellner and Share (2005), critical media literacy (CML) is grounded in media literacy, but it engages individuals further in questioning the relationships between media texts and the social, political, cultural and economical contexts in which they were created. Further, it includes a production component that teaches individuals how to use media to create their own political messages. CML, to my understanding, leads to a more profound grasp of media culture. This form of literacy also encourages youth to question and change the dynamics of power present in media culture.

The definitions for both media literacy and critical media literacy are expanded upon further in this study.

Media culture

I have adopted Kellner's (1995) definition of media culture in this study. He describes it as "industrial culture, organized on the model of mass production and […] produced for mass audience according to types (genres), following conventional formulas, codes, and rules" (p.1). Essentially, Kellner's discussion of 'media culture' describes what is known as 'popular culture'. It includes all forms of culture disseminated in movies, films, the radio and magazines. Generally, media culture is created to appeal to

large populations. However, in addition to providing entertainment, media culture also promotes consumerism through the visual and audio products it delivers to its audiences.

Popular culture

'Popular culture' and 'media culture' are similar terms. However, the distinction made by Kellner (1995) is that 'popular culture' is traditionally understood as culture created by the masses for the masses, whereas 'media culture' regards the media as a product created by both the masses and dominant social groups. Giroux and Simon (1989) consider popular culture as an essentially pleasure-oriented culture that is present in everyday life.

Sex

The meaning of 'sex' is subjective, shaped by factors such as ideology, morals, values and culture. A basic definition of sex is "the biological characteristics that define humans as female or male" (World Health Organization [WHO] website, "Defining sexual health", 2013, para. 2). WHO includes aspects such as relationships, feelings and gender identity in the definition of 'sexuality'. The use of both terms, 'sex' and 'sexuality', varies in the literature according to author and context.

According to Duquet (2003), the term 'sex' includes three facets: emotional, biological and behavioural. Duquet explains that individual's understanding of sex is profoundly impacted by internal and external factors, including personal relationships, peer pressure and the media. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)(2008) also considers the complexity of the relationships between the multiple facets of sex. It defines the latter as "a dynamic interplay between: personal desires and abilities; the needs and rights of others; and the requirements and expectations of society" (p.11),

which reflects the dualism of sex. The nature of the meaning of sex is essentially personal but it is increasingly regarded as a political, social and religious matter in the public sphere (Weeks, 1985). Thus, the understanding of sex in this study consists of a combination of the definitions provided by Duquet (2003) and the PHAC (2008). This understanding suggests that 'sex' is a deeply complex and political term, that encompasses sexuality, as well as biological, emotional, behavioural, and social elements.

Diversity

The terms 'diversity' and 'diverse classroom' are used in a broad sense in this study. Since this research is specific to the Quebec context, it was imperative to take into account the cultural and religious beliefs, and political ideologies of the population. The diverse backgrounds of youth and their families mean that schools are encountering a diversity in sexual cultures. Each individual in the classroom has an understanding of sex and sexual behaviour based on their personal histories and values. In this study, the term 'diversity' refers to the wide variety of cultural values, political views and religious beliefs that each stakeholder in sex education, including students, teachers and parents, brings to the classroom.

Critical media literacy-based sex education (CMLSE)

A critical media literacy-based sex education teaches youth about sex and sexual behaviours through the process of learning about critical media literacy. Examples of programs that have adopted this methodology include *Media Relate*, *Take it Seriously: Abstinence and the Media* and *Youth Talk Back.* These initiatives are explained in depth in Chapter 3. CMLSE distinguishes itself from other media literacy programs because its

goals focus on both teaching youth about media culture and providing them with sex education.

Sexual discourses

The understanding of 'sexual discourse' in this paper is inspired by Foucault's (1990) work. Foucault views sexual discourses as more than a matter of speech. Sexual discourses constitute the thoughts, ideas and knowledges belonging to particular groups of individuals and institutions. The knowledges and meanings promoted in sexual discourses can affect the power that individuals hold in society. This concept is explored further in the section on Foucault.

Research Questions and Methodology

The thesis is based on in-depth literature reviews related to the research questions stemming from the statement of the problem:

- What are the challenges faced by high school teachers addressing sex education in the classroom since the 2001 curriculum reform in Quebec schools?
- How does media culture contribute to spreading sexual discourses that affect the way youth understand sexuality and sexual behaviours?
- What are the context variables and issues that present obstacles to a smooth application of the guidelines of the reform and can a critical media literacy-based sex education program address these issues?

The Specificity of the Quebec Context

Quebec schools and the reform are grounded in an intercultural vision adopted by Quebec, within a multicultural Canada. There is an emerging literature on teaching sex-education in multicultural contexts (Almahbobi, 2012; Bartz, 2007; Coleman & Testa, 2007; Flores, 2012). The study is not going to examine in details the impact of multicultural classrooms (also referred to as diverse classrooms in the thesis) characterized with a diversity of ethinicities and religious backgrounds of students coming from different cultural communities and co-existing in classrooms, especially in urban settings in Quebec. But of course this reality is acknowledged and as the literature suggests, it is hoped that a critical media literacy-based sex education program will present some strengths for dealing with the diverse classroom as well.

Challenges and Limitations

Many challenges were encountered in conducting this research. For example, there were very few published studies related to the implementation of the QEP and sex education in Quebec schools. There is also a wide variety of teaching approaches and programs in the province, which makes it rather difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the current state of sex education and the issues with the QEP application that confront practicing teachers. There are some published dissertations on the topic but these are representative of a small portion of the population affected by the 2001 curriculum reform, and are potentially not generalizable.

My focus on the challenges faced by educators since the 2001 reform may suggest that the reform is ill-perceived or failing. This is not the focus or intention of this

study. Rather, this study aims to highlight concerns that have arisen in terms of implementing general changes and more specifically, the changes to the delivery of sex education within the province and in high schools in particular.This study has been simply designed to address problematic issues with sex education, which include problematic and dominant discourses, diversity within the classroom and some related challenges raised by the reform.

Finally, an additional challenge lies within the difficulty with some of the terminology included in the literature review. 'Media literacy' and 'critical media literacy' were used intermittently in the literature that was reviewed, though they were often understood to carry the same meaning, or a similar meaning. Similarly, 'popular culture' was perceived as that which the media produced, though Kellner (1995) made the distinction in his works between 'popular culture' and 'media culture'. In both cases, I believe the distinction should be noted; however, during my analysis of programs, studies and other literature, I often had to disregard the different meanings pertaining to 'popular culture' and 'media culture', as well as 'media literacy' and 'critical media literacy'. As this is an exploratory study, based on literature review, to gain a better understanding of a particular problem, I did not dwell in depth on nuances – the emphasis was to gain an understanding of the role of media in its different forms and the messages vehiculated through sexual discourses. The theories explored assumed linkages between these discourses and the quality of sex-education received by youth exposed to media and media culture found in popular culture contexts.

The Quebec Context

In spite of the the Quebec Education Program's (QEP) goal to provide students with a more expansive and interdisciplinary form of sex education, the changes made to sex education since the reform have received some criticism in the media.

Certain reports from the media indicate concern that sex education should be re-introduced in the curriculum, lest it disappear from schools altogether (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC] News, 2010, Sept. 1; Feldman, 2011, March 28; Routly, 2011, April 4). In Feldman's (2011, March 28) article "Sex at School: Sex Education in Quebec", a student remarked that he had not received any sex education in any of his classes since the reform. The Centre d'Aide et de Lutte Contre les Agressions à Caractère Sexuel (CALACS) has petitioned for the reinstatement of the program in the curriculum, stating that Quebec youth need to be informed about their health in a formal setting rather than only through the media. The AIDS Community Care Montreal (ACCM) has shared a similar concern, suggesting that sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are rampant in the province, especially amongst youth under 25 (Feldman, 2011, March 28). McGill Health Promotion Coordinator Amanda Unruh argued in 2011, that "youth are at the frontlines" in terms of facing sexual health problems (Routly, 2011, April 4, para. 5). The idea that youth are at the forefront of sexual health challenges is shared by women coalitions in Quebec, including the Quebec Women's Federation (QWF) and Quebec's Planned Pregnancy Federation (QPPF), who have stated that sex education needs to happen in schools, through a regulated program, in order to fight the rising STI statistics (CBC News, 2010, Sept. 1).

Arguments in support of the re-implementation of sex education in the Quebec curriculum have grown primarily from concerns over adolescents' health. A study from Maticka-Tyndale (2008) on Canadian youth reveals that while there is reason to be concerned over sexual health, the situation may not be as terrible as one might assume. Maticka-Tyndale's research demonstrates that adolescents are having sex later in life than their parents, and compared to their counterparts in the 1980s, have fewer sexual partners. Oral sex is still a popular trend, yet only occurring earlier than sexual intercourse in approximately a quarter of teenagers in the United States and Canada (p.86). Contraceptive methods and abortion are more frequently used than in past generations, which may be due to an easier access to information and resources on the Internet, in health clinics, etc. McKay (2004) argues that increased access to contraception, including abortion, has directly resulted in a decline of unwanted births. Despite these improvements in sexual health and behaviours, there are still some trends that cause concern and reinforce the argument that sex education is still needed in schools.

The presence of STIs is still a major problem. Chlamydia, gonorrhea, the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and herpes are either on the rise, or maintaining steady levels of infection (CBC News, Sept. 1 2010; Maticka-Tyndale, 2008; McKay, 2004; McKay, 2009). A study by Boyce, Doherty-Poirier, MacKinnon, Fortin, Saab, King and Gallupe (2006) on sexual behaviours and health in Canadian adolescents revealed that the prevalence of STIs could be explained by a tendency of youth to use birth control pills exclusively as their contraceptive method of choice rather than condoms. Further, their research revealed that adolescents become increasingly monogamous as they age; thus, they feel less of a need to protect themselves against STIs. This can have a significant

impact as the gap between the first occurrence of sexual activity and marriage is widening, which leaves a longer period where sexual health needs to be monitored than was the case for previous generations (Maticka-Tyndale, 2008).

I communicated with employees from the Lester B Pearson and Marguerite-Bourgeois school boards, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, and the Direction de la Santé Publique du Gaspé to get information on the guidelines to follow for sex education since the reform and on evaluations of the QEP and sex education in schools. I was referred to Duquet's (2003) *Sex Education in the Context of Education Reform*, M. Duquet's (2008) *L'éducation à la Sexualité en Milieu Scolaire: Oui, Mais Comment?*, and Palluy, Arcand, Choinière, Martin and Roberge's (2010) *Réussite Éducative, Santé et Bien-être: Agir Efficacement en Contexte Scolaire* for further information about sex education in schools. The expansive study by Otis, Gaudreau, Duquet, Michaud and Nonn (2012) is one of the most recent evaluations available that provides some insight on how schools are faring in terms of addressing sex in schools. The only ministerial study of the Quebec Education Program, by Charest, Lefebvre and Morel (2008) is still in progress at the time of this writing. Due to the lack of ministerial evaluations of the reform and sex education, I have relied on academic dissertations to provide some empirical evidence of issues prevalent in Quebec schools since the 2001 reform. To understand more popular concerns, I have identified some of the recurring issues in these studies.

Canada has multiple pockets of marginalized communities. For instance, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (GLBTQ) youth are still overwhelmingly underrepresented in the sex education programs that presently exist (Maticka-Tyndale,

2008). Health care resources are more limited in marginalized communities, which include socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, rural locations and areas with a large population of Aboriginals. “Geographical, social, and economic forces” (p.89) overwhelmingly affect the health of the adolescents in these communities. Maticka-Tyndale states that these marginalized youth are in urgent need of formal sex education that has been tailored to their needs, and relevant to the geographic, social and economic contexts in which they are living. Moreover, ethnic minorities are often excused from sex education classes, instead of school systems and educators “working out ideological disagreements about the delivery of sexuality education and sexual health services” (p.91). Maticka-Tyndale argues that this “reinforces divisions between groups and detracts from the weaving of a cohesive social fabric by creating two classes of adolescents [...]: those who have had education and access to care and those who did not” (p.91).

Technology and Media

The influence of technology has had a large impact on sexuality in teenagers. Through their use of the Internet and cell phones, youth are at risk of putting themselves in precarious situations involving sexual interactions through “sexting”, the act of sending sexual text messages and pictures by phone, or chat room meetings (Maticka-Tyndale, 2008). Further, the content that pervades media like televisions, magazines and the Internet is also increasingly sexual. A 2005 report from the Kaiser Family Foundation states that “77 percent of primetime television shows have some sexual content” (as cited in Kammeyer, 2008, p.171). The quantity of sexual content in televisions programs, as

well as other types of media, leads to the normalization of previously taboo subjects, including sexual behaviours and attitudes (Kammeyer, 2008; Kinnick, 2007). The bombardment of sex in media culture has also resulted in a large portion of adolescents referring to the media as a source of knowledge and emulating the sexual behaviours they see in shows or movies. As stated by Kinnick (2007), the media "has replaced the parents, peers and schools as the leading sex educator" (p.20). Unfortunately, as expressed by Giroux (2002), and Baudrillard (1993), media texts frequently offer an unrealistic portrayal of sexuality for marketing purposes or to promote the political and religious ideologies of the dominant societal groups including: corporations, political parties, and religious authorities. Therefore, the content of what is being transmitted to youth through the media becomes problematic.

Learning how to analyze media texts and create their own meaningful messages is essential for youth to be able to understand the powerful influence of films, television shows, radio and print media, and have their own voices heard through the media. Encouraging youth to question representations of sexuality, and dissect the messages projected in media culture are essential components of a new form of literacy that has emerged in the 20th century, critical media literacy.

The Center for Media Literacy identified five concepts that should be addressed to provide youth with a proper foundation for media literacy (Thoman & Jolis, 2003, 2005). First, educators must explore the role of the media in transmitting messages and then, the methods applied to do so explicitly with their students. Furthermore, educators should teach youth to inquire about the powerful nature of the media. They should also be able to identify the media as a site in which commercial values and ideologies are learned.

Finally, students should be made conscious about how media texts can be interpreted, and learn how movies or shows affect audiences differently.

Media Literacy and Critical Media Literacy

According to Kellner and Share (2005), the main difference between media literacy and critical media literacy is that critical media literacy teaches media consumers not only how to read texts, but also how to resist their messages by producing and using technology. It is also "concerned with developing skills that will help create good citizens and that will make individuals more motivated and competent participants in social life" (p.372). The literature in this study often mentions 'media literacy', including the Quebec Education Program (MELS, 2007) and Giroux and Pollock's (2010) work. However, it should be noted that their understanding of 'media literacy' coincides with Kellner and Share's (2005) definition of 'critical media literacy'. For instance, the QEP includes elements of production in its description of media literacy as a broad area of learning, as well as the development of critical faculties (MELS, 2007). Thus, I think that in most instances, both terms have the same meaning. In this thesis, the term used is 'critical media literacy' instead of 'media literacy', because I believe that a distinction should be made between learning how to read media messages and learning how to be critical of these media messages.

As a result of the prevalence of sexuality in the media and in the lives of youth, Quebec educators and policy makers should re-evaluate the lack of emphasis on teaching about sex and media culture in schools. In my research, I found three initiatives, *Youth Talk Back* (Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada, 2000, 2000a), *Media Relate*

(Grahame, Bragg, Oliver, Oliver, Buckingham, Simons & Webster, 2005) and *Take it Seriously: Abstinence and the Media* (Teen Futures Media Network, 2011) that embrace critical media literacy as an approach to teaching sex education. While both media literacy and sex education are currently included in the QEP's discussion of broad areas of learning, I will demonstrate in my research the benefits of introducing a program in high schools that adopts a critical media literacy-based approach to sex education.

Literature Review on Sex Education: Discourses and Approaches

The lack of a universal definition for 'sex' has resulted in multiple understandings as to what sex education should encompass in schools and how it should be taught. The longstanding debate about sex education between scholars, school boards, health officials, parents and religious figures is still happening today, leading to a wide variety of school-based sex education programs that reflect the different views on approaches and content.

The study of sex has become increasingly popular in many disciplines, including history, sociology, psychology and sexology (Boucher, 2003). The disagreements that occur between researchers and writers in these fields usually surround the goals of sex education programs, the methodologies used to teach sex education, the content and the terminology employed in defining the different programs. Barragan (1997) claims that the framework of a program is often reflected in its name, whether it is "Population Education" or "Education for Family Life" (p.20). There are several ways in which sex education programs are categorized in the academic literature on the subject (Jones, 2011). Some researchers study the sexual discourses that they promote, such as progressive or pro-abstinence. In other instances, the focus is on the approaches that are

used, such as peer-led interventions or community-based programs. I will explore both discourses and approaches in sex education.

In her earlier work, Fine (1988) notes that there are three types of sexual discourses permeated in United States school-based programs. First, sexual discourses can be viewed through a lens of violence, in which sexuality and sex are portrayed as negative. Disease, rape, and incest are likely to be discussed by proponents of this discourse, leading to negative feelings about sex. These negative discourses are fostered in the hopes of discouraging sexual activity and promoting abstinence. Second, schools may choose to focus on ways of saying "no" to sexual behaviours, and teaching girls how to refuse advances and protect themselves from sex. Teaching sexuality as a form of victimization fosters the idea that females are prey, and are without agency. Third, educators can target sex education as a 'morality' issue. In this case, they would encourage abstinence and qualities like modesty and self control. The deterrent to sexual activity would be the harmful impact it would have on the community, the family and the individual. Harm could occur to the individual as well as the community because of the potential negative consequences of sexual activity, including the spread of sexually transmitted infections, and the shame resulting from pregnancy outside of marriage. In this case, sexual activity is also considered as a social phenomenon. Fine suggests that schools tend to ignore and repress the missing discourse of sexual desire and fulfillment, which she argues plays a large part in the development of youths' sexualities. Schools should acknowledge and teach sexual education with the understanding that sex often occurs between two consenting individuals or consenting young adults for the purpose of pleasure.

In a review of the situation surrounding sex education in schools, Fine and McClelland (2006) note that while the discourse of desire is more prevalent in society, through the spread of media and easy access to information through the Internet, the situation in schools still reflects a need for society to change its approach to sex education. Fine and McClelland's study focuses on the United States of America (USA), where the government exercises a strong influence on the sex education curriculum in schools by investing millions of dollars in "abstinence only until marriage (AOUM)" programs (p.305). While the content of these programs can vary, AOUM education typically adopts a strongly conservative stance towards sex. In order to become an AOUM program in the USA, and therefore to be eligible to receive governmental funding, sex education must follow a strict series of guidelines outlined in the Social Security Act. These guidelines promote sex as a violent act by offering an image of premarital sex as precursor to disease, illegitimate children and in some cases, death (Fine, 1988; Fine & McClelland, 2006). Conversations about sex also have a strong moral component. Fine and McClelland (2006) argue that such AOUM programs not only vilify youth that are sexually active and perpetuate a harmful image of unwed teenage mothers, but also actively exclude Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (GLBTQ) individuals from conversations about sex in the classroom by encouraging heteronormativity. AOUM education also omits information about birth control and abortion, which inhibits sexually active individuals from protecting themselves from pregnancy or disease. According to research by Haignere, Gold and McDanel (1999) which "stud [ied] teens that abstained for a long period of time (…), abstinence education had a user-failure rate between 26 percent and 86 percent" (as cited in Fine &

McClelland, 2006, p.312). Youth break their vows of abstinence without having benefited from sex education, which furthers their exposure to risky behaviour.

Pro-abstinence programs are also present in Canada, such as *True Love Waits*. Created in the United States in 1993, the program has been adopted primarily within religious institutions in Canada, including the Evangelical Covenant Church and the Mennonite Church (Lifeway Students Ministry, 2013). *True Love Waits* equates love and happiness to sexual purity and unwavering religious beliefs. Youth are encouraged to take vows of abstinence until marriage. In schools, certain pro-abstinent programs are still present in some Canadian rural settings (Benoit, Dragon, Boudreau, & Muhimpundu, 2003). Rural communities also tend to suffer from higher rates of STIs and teenage pregnancy. According to the 2012 report by the Ministère de la Santé, des Services Sociaux (MSSS) on STIs in Quebec, Aboriginal communities in Northern Quebec have a much higher rate of gonorrhea and chlamydia than the provincial average. In spite of certain beliefs from proponents of abstinence-only sex education, there is a lack of evidence that these programs reduce sexual activity in youth and a growing body of research outlining the benefits of more comprehensive programs (Benoit et al., 2003; Fine & McClelland, 2006; Garneau, Guilbert & Michaud, 2006).

Fine's (1988) analysis of sexual discourses in schools is limited by her focus on sex education programs in the United States, and not wholly representative of the situation in Canada. A recent study by Garneau, Guilbert, and Michaud (2006) provides an evaluation of 28 sex education programs from 1986 to 2005 aimed at reducing STIs and pregnancies in Canadian and American communities. Garneau et al.'s study gives a better indication of the types of programs that are popular in Quebec. The researchers

categorize the selection of programs by generation and approach. The first generation of sex education programs, in the 1960s and 1970s, was preventative and based on learning the biological aspects of sex. However, the second generation of sex education built upon the biological component and focuses on informed decision making skills and values. In the third generation of sex education, sex was predominantly depicted as negative and immoral. It also portrayed girls as the 'victims' of the sexual behaviours of men. This third 'way' is still prevalent in the United States. The fourth generation of sex education programs is based on theoretical approaches, with a preventative focus. In the fifth generation of sex education, a positive outlook on sex is also incorporated as it is the most comprehensive type of program. Garneau et al. distinguish five approaches within these generations and the programs they evaluated, including *moral*, *clinical*, *global*, *volunteering*, and *developmental* (p.13). The *moral* approach is mostly pro-abstinence and focused on refusing to have sex, while the *clinical* type of sex education is oriented towards learning about contraception and includes the use of resources such as nurses and health-related organizations or clinics. The volunteering approach engages youth in learning through community work. For example, the *Teen Outreach Program* (1990) aimed to reduce unwanted pregnancies, as well as school drop-out rates, by encouraging youth to partake in at least 20 hours of volunteer work throughout the school year. Programs with a *global* approach consist of a mixture of pro-abstinence and preventative discourses. Global approaches to sex education discourage youth from sexual behaviours and teach them about birth control. The last type of sex education programming, *developmental*, helps youth set positive goals for themselves, through activities and

mentoring program, which helps steer them away from behaviours that would lead to unwanted outcomes, including pregnancies.

Amongst the 28 programs that Garneau et al. (2006) studied, eleven were established in schools in Quebec from 1986-2005. The majority, nine out of eleven, consisted of the 4th generation style of sex education programming; thus, they were built from empirically validated research. Amongst these programs, three used the *clinical* approach. An example of a 4th generation, *clinical*, program is *S'exprimer Pour une Sexualité Responsable* (SPUSR) (1994), which took place in schools before the 2001 curriculum reform, and involved a collaboration between the Centre Local de Services Communautaires (CLSC) and teachers in educating youth in grades 9 and 10 about sex, relationships, attitudes, and communication between peers and families. Its approaches included activities, discussion and role-playing, distributed in 15 courses over two years of schooling. Garneau et al. ranked SPUSR poorly in terms of its effectiveness, as it only possessed 7 out of the 15 characteristics they established for effective sex education programming. According to Garneau et al., this program did not address: training for peer educators, teacher training, evaluation of students' needs, content specifically addressing possible health repercussions of risky sexual behaviours and peer pressure, a global approach, use of diverse teaching approaches and use of incentives (p.14, 23).

The rest of the 4th generation programs in Quebec that were evaluated in the study used the *global* approach (Garneau et al., 2006). The *Programme Express Protection* (PEP) (1999) consisted of 25 hours of class, and 3 dedicated to student presentations. The program incorporated peer led interventions in its global approach, as grade 10 students were asked to lead presentations, discussions and group projects within younger high

school classes. In a study of the PEP program done by Caron, Godin, Otis and Lambert (2002), it received positive results in terms of efficiency (as cited in Garneau et al., 2006). Questionnaires answered by 945 student participants revealed a high level of satisfaction and interest in the content presented and the peer educators. Also, these students demonstrated a significant difference in terms of attitudes towards sex and condom use.

Two programs in the Garneau et al. (2006) study met the criteria for a 5th generation program, including the Personal and Social Development (PSD) program that prevailed in Quebec schools before the 2001 curriculum reform. I will be expanding on the sex education aspect of this program in the next section. While the majority of the programs in this study that were evaluated reflected a focus on preventative aspects of sex, based on publications I will review shortly regarding sex education in the province, Quebec has been steering towards a more comprehensive, health-promoting and holistic form of sex education (Duquet, 2003; M. Duquet, 2008; Palluy, Arcand, Choiniere, Martin & Roberge, 2010). A popular program in Montreal that embraces comprehensive, health promoting and positive sexual behavioural values is the *Sense* project (Trimble, 2012).

In Quebec, the Montreal community organization Heads and Hands adopts a progressive approach to sex education that is also grounded on harm reduction practice, which "seeks to create awareness of safer sex strategies and relationship choices that are available to people to minimize physical or emotional harms" (Trimble, 2012, p.92). Their innovative *Sense* project, a series of sex education workshops led by peer educators under 25, promotes "person-centered ethics (…) a philosophy of caring that respects diversity and the individual lived experiences and context of a person" (p.87). The

organization Heads and Hands operates with the mindset that youth are sexual beings capable of making responsible decisions in terms of their health, and actively engages them in openly discussing about pleasure and sex in addition to encouraging a dialogue on safe sexual practices.

The Head and Hands program adopts an open-minded outlook on sex education, similar to that which is present in Scandinavian countries, where the sexual discourses in schools offer a more open and inclusive form of sex education that incorporates conversations about sexual pleasure and acceptance towards non-heterosexual relationships (Boucher, 2003). In these places, "attitudes towards the sexuality of young people are relaxed, based on individual choice for both men and women regarding sexuality and sexual health" (Parker, Wellings & Lazarus, p. 233). The framework for sex education is based on the assumption that youth will have sex regardless of any attempts to prevent them from engaging in sexual behaviours (Maticka-Tyndale, 2008). An example of a similar program to Heads and Hands was adopted in Finland schools in 2004, for children aged 7 to 15 years old (Loeber, Reuter, Apter, van der Doef, Lazdane & Pinter, 2010) A 2006 study by the Family Federation of Finland (FFF) revealed that sex education taught in Finish schools, centered on health promotion and "human relations, sexuality, behaviour, values and norms", was deemed successful in terms of reducing pregnancy rates and occurrences of unprotected sex (p. 173). Loeber et al. concluded that "when adolescent sexuality was not condemned but sexuality education and sexual health services provided instead, it was possible to improve adolescent sexual health" (p.174).

In a multicultural, intercultural and diversity espousing society such as in Canada and Quebec, a comprehensive education program like the *Sense* project may appeal to some, but it can also be seen as going against cultural norms of certain groups and individuals and their and religious or political views. This diversity in people's views about sex can influence the understanding of how sex education should be offered in schools and the classroom (if at all). The multiple discourses present in sex education programs reflect as well how dominant political ideologies can have an impact on the type of sex education present in schools, or the absence of sex education altogether. This is evident in the case of the USA, where the abstinence discourse in schools was fueled during the George W. Bush era by conservative policies (Fine and McClelland, 2006).

McKay (1997) argues, "no amount of discourse between competing sexual ideologies will result in a general consensus about which ideology is more valid and ought to be promoted in sexuality education" (p.291). Therefore, sex education, if perceived as a matter of ideology, will never please the whole of a diverse society. However, McKay suggests that a democratic approach to sex education should be, "deeply committed to promoting democratic values (…) [and] to the affirmation of moral pluralism and freedom of belief" (p.293-294). Democratic approaches to sex education embrace a wide variety of ideologies, while promoting "basic fundamental values and principles of a democratic society" (McKay, 2009, p.50). This approach is also suggested by the PHAC (2008). As Ramsay (2005) states,

> sex education targeting a multiethnic clientele requires skills that go beyond simple adaptation such as using words or expressions common to a particular culture or altering the discourse according to that culture's values. (p.9)

The person-centered ethics approach that has been adopted in the *Sense* project, for instance, has focused on adolescents' subjectivity and encourages them to look at sex through one's own values and experiences (Trimble, 2012). It does not discard their cultural outlook, or seek to mould their opinions to coincide with the discourses promoted in the program. Instead, the approach encourages students to look at their own emotions and ideals surrounding sexuality. A program like the *Sense* project takes into account that its audience is not only multicultural, but also politically and sexually diverse. For instance, their outlook on sexual relationships is based on the model S.H.A.R.E., "safety, honesty, acceptance, respect and enjoyment" (p.91). The peer educators in the program do not seek to influence youth to abstain from sexual behaviours, or to dissuade youth from sex before marriage, but rather to adopt the plural values shared in democratic society. This is consistent with a postmodern pedagogical approach to sex education as it views adolescents as capable of learning about sex and encourages their input and questions based on their experiences (Trimble, 2012).

Teaching methods have become more varied as studies on sex education programs increasingly validate certain approaches for teaching sex education effectively in the classroom. For instance, role-playing can help youth relate to, situate and practice interpersonal skills needed for the promotion of a healthy relationship. (Kirby, 2001). Fine and McClelland (2006) also reflect that a discussion about social aspects of sex, gender and sexual diversity can contribute to building "skills to express political and sexual agency" (p.327). This approach would teach youth to be critical of the prevalent sexual discourses in society and develop an acceptance of their own sexual identities. An evaluation of an Ontario program, offered to 240 grade nine students in the Windsor-

Essex region concluded that "discussions, games, videos and other activities" (p.43) also contributed to youth engagement in sex education (Smylie Maticka-Tyndale, Boyd, & the Adolescent Sexual Health Planning Committee, 2008).

The *Sense* project combines multiple strategies for teaching sex education that include adopting a student-centered and peer-led approach, as well as relying on a community and school partnership to efficiently provide sex education to a large number of youth (Trimble, 2012). As studies on sex education have been expanding, so too have the range of teaching approaches. Peer-led interventions, for instance, have been growing in popularity, as "many professionals in the field believe that programs may be more effective if the adolescents play a major role in the field and accept some responsibility for the effectiveness of the programs" (Kirby, 2001, p.170). The Sense project and the PEP were deemed successful, in terms of student satisfaction (Garneau et al., 2006; Trimble, 2012). A study by Sriranganathan, Jaworsky, Larkin, Flicker, Campbell, Flynn, Jansen and Erlich (2010) on peer-led programs in Canada also revealed that these were considerably beneficial to the young educators, who "gain an increased knowledge of sexual health, learn valuable skills, entertain more positive opinions and attitudes about sexual health matters and report a decreased frequency of high risk behaviour" (p. 65).

Community involvement is also an aspect of sex education programs that can have positive effects in the classroom. This occurred in the program in Ontario high schools, which included visits from "a public health nurse (…) and a health promoter from the local AIDS Committee" as well as local youth who spoke to students of their experiences (Smylie, et al., 2008, p.29). The program was also the result of the collaborative work between community organizations and Public Health Units located in

the Windsor and Essex County. The study of this program revealed the positive impact of community involvement, in its creation and in the classroom.

As stated in the literature, there is no "one size fits all" approach to be applied in regards to sex education in all school systems. Factors such as prevailing ideologies and community and school resources affect the ways in which sex education is taught. Discourses are also becoming more complex than those explored by Fine (1988) and Barragan (1997). Jones (2011) offers "a new Sexuality Education Discourse Exemplar with a more international breadth" (p.134) in her study where she identifies and describes 28 types of discourses within 4 broad categories, depending on their orientation: conservative, liberal, critical and postmodern (See Appendix A). A variety of ideologies pertaining to sex education, ranging from moralistic and biological to feminist and queer, reflect the impossibility to establish a universally accepted sex education program in schools. However, there have been attempts to open the discourses in classrooms and diversify teaching methods in order to provide youth with more interesting and innovative learning experiences. In the following section, I offer an overview of the history of sex education in Quebec, which provides some insight on the discourses in the province.

The History of Sex Education in Quebec

My evaluation of the curriculum in Quebec will begin in the 1960s, as it is a period in which both Quebec society and the school system went through enormous changes. In the 1960s, the province was amidst the Quiet Revolution, which led to the secularization of society and schooling (Boucher, 2003). In 1964, the government created the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ), which proceeded into revamping the

schooling system. That same year, the Parent Commission report would essentially proceed to democratize education and make it universally accessible to Quebec citizens (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport [MELS], 2007).

At the same time, in a larger context, the 1960s brought about the sexual revolution, pushing sex into the spotlight of the government, feminists and scholars (Boucher, 2003). Studies showed a rise of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies in the province. The law restricting the use of contraception or the dissemination of information in its regards was abolished by 1969. These factors led to the desire to create a branch of study called sexology in the newly opened l'Université du Québec à Montréal in 1969. One of the rationales behind the new program included the idea that sexology would eventually be taught in schools; thus requiring that educators be available.

By 1972, the MEQ had an experimental sex education program set in place, which led to conflicts between scholars, parents and members of religious groups (Boucher, 2003). The ensuing pilot projects garnered the same type of negative publicity, as stakeholders blamed the MEQ for giving in to one party, followed by the other. However, after years of public debate, a program which included suggestions from both moral and academic stakeholders in sex education was implemented within the Personal and Social Development (PSD) course in 1986.

According to Garneau, Guilbert and Michaud (2006), the PSD program falls into the category of 5th generation, with a comprehensive and positive curriculum. Its 'global' approach focused on the prevention of sexuality transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies, while decreeing that abstinence is the most efficient method of

safe sex, and avoiding the negative consequences of unsafe sexual behaviours. Information about other means of birth control, such as condoms, was also provided to youth. Students from secondary 3 to 5 in Quebec were given up to 25 hours of instruction a year for the entire program, but the amount of sex education covered within this time varied. The PSD program also included the following themes in its curriculum: health education, interpersonal relations, life in society, and consumer education. The sex education component included the study of sexual attitudes and behaviour, pleasure, stereotypes, STIs and contraception. Teaching methods varied from games, role-playing and diaries, to reading informative pamphlets and inviting guest speakers to discuss sex education.

In a study on the PSD program in Laval schools, Arcand and Venne (1998), revealed that all of the components of the sex education curriculum were not always taught in classrooms, and the discourse employed in teaching the PSD program predominantly focused on the biological aspects of sex (as cited in Garneau, et al., 2006). In this approach, the focus was on providing knowledge on contraceptive methods and STIs, rather than developing personal skills and attitudes towards sex. Arcand and Venne also criticized the teachers' lack of organization, and the lack of time for cooperative work and classroom preparation. However, the enthusiasm of educators and their attitudes towards the program were viewed as positive assets in the application of the PSD program.

The 1997 report from the Task Force on Curriculum Reform, also known as the *Inchauspé* report, recommended that several subjects should no longer be mandatory for students, including the PSD program. Instead, they suggested that "their content be

integrated into other subjects, that they be replaced with activities, or that they be eliminated from the curriculum" (p.53). This suggestion would later have an impact on the educational system in the 2001 reform and on sex education itself.

Overview of curriculum changes from the late 1970s-2001

Before reviewing the 2001 curriculum reform in Quebec, it is also essential to understand the historical background that led to the decisions to change the practices and curriculum in schools. The end of the 1970s until the mid 1980s was a period in which the school system was thoroughly evaluated, thus explaining the various sex education program changes. The reform which resulted from the Parent Commission report in the 1960s left a series of issues to deal with, including insufficient programs, problems with evaluation, and scheduling (Gourd, 2001; MELS, 2007).

In 1979, the document *Schools of Quebec: Policy Statement and Plan of Action* (also called the *Orange Paper*) was published with suggestions for a reform in schools, following an analysis of the situation in elementary and high schools (Task Force on Curriculum Reform, 1997). The *Orange Paper* strongly advocated for an orientation towards the personal growth and overall development of youth; thus, distancing itself from the previous focus on modernizing the school system. This led to the 1981 *Basic School Regulations* that governed the Quebec education system until the 2001 curriculum reform. The document would "prescribe compulsory and optional subjects, subject time allocation and the format of the current programs of study" (p.16). In essence, high schools would have 25 hours a week of in-class learning, as well as a set of objectives to reach to obtain the credits allocated per course (Gourd, 2001).

There were several objections to the 1981 reform. The Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation pursued an evaluation of the regulations, curriculum and educational practice in Quebec as of 1982, and published a series of recommendations for change (Task Force on Curriculum Reform, 1997). In 1986, the Estates General on the Quality of Education brought together over 6000 people to discuss issues regarding the curriculum, the goals of schools, and school responsibility in regards to access to education. The discourses present during this curriculum change exemplified the shift during this period towards looking at the more cognitive aspects of education, including knowledge of mathematics, languages and sciences, rather than the personal development of youth.

The government called for a reform as well in its document entitled *Joining Forces* (1992), which highlighted the need to find a new form of evaluation for students that would be more flexible and adaptable to their needs within society (Task Force on Curriculum Reform, 1997). The idea that evaluation could be flexible permeated the document published by the Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation, *Rénover le Curriculum du Primaire et du Secondaire* (RCPS) (1994). The RCPS urged for a reform highlighted by three major changes, one of which was building exit profiles as a means to evaluate a students' education. They would be evaluated per cycle; in each of the latter, sets of skills and knowledge would be established as goals. The second reform aim consisted of reaffirming the goals of education, and using the idea of "training the mind (...) as the cornerstone" (p.17). Finally, diversity in teaching methodologies and a variety of subjects offered to second cycle high school students were also recommended by the RCPS report.

It was in 1994 as well that the Corbo Task Force convened in a response to the need to establish exit profiles which was highlighted by the government's reform

document called *Moving Ahead-Elementary and Secondary School Education in Quebec: Orientations, Proposals and Issues* (1993) (Task Force on Curriculum Reform, 1997). The Corbo Task Force set out to clarify the role of the school and establish profiles based on the major areas of learning. By 1997, the proposals for the reform were submitted, including the report *Reaffirming the Mission of our schools,* produced by the Task Force on Curriculum Reform (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec [MEQ], 2001). The latter would consist of several recommendations that would become key elements of the 2001 reform, including promoting interdisciplinary learning instead of creating new course topics and integrating relevant topics to today's societal framework, such as media literacy and environmental learning (Task Force on Curriculum Reform, 1997). It also "laid the foundations for the educational policy statement *Quebec Schools on Course* (1997)" (MEQ, 2001, p.2). The policy statement *Quebec Schools on Course* provided the framework for the reform, which was intended to be implemented in schools gradually. This meant that elementary schools would start to shift to the new curriculum in the 2000-2001[2] school year, and high schools would start to change in the 2005-2006 school year (Charest, Lefebvre & Morel, 2008).

In recent years, there has been speculation that certain aspects of the Quebec Education Program would be revised, including sex education (CBC News, Sept. 1 2010; Craine, 2010; Feldman, 2011). However, this speculation has not been confirmed. The following segment of my literature review will explore aspects of the Quebec Education Program created by the MELS, as well as the sex education reform.

[2] It is intermittently referred to as the 2000 reform and the 2001 reform. I address it as the 2001 reform as that is when the revised version was finalized and applied (Saltarelli, 2007).

The Quebec Education Program

As the Quebec Education Program (QEP) is extensive, I have provided a brief overview to outline the main aspects pertaining to the two cycles at the high school level[3].

First, the mission outlined for the reform is "to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications" (MELS, 2007, Chapter 1, p.5). This short statement reflects the government's increased focus on essential knowledge and preparation for the students to be working citizens. In the second cycle, students are provided with three paths of education, each with a different form of curriculum adapted to their career and education goals: the general education path, the applied general education path and the work-oriented training path. The overall framework of the QEP, which is essentially the same for both high school cycles, attempts to address the changing needs of students in a society increasingly affected by globalization and technology.

The QEP also attempts to reconcile the contradictions between society, and the school system (MELS, 2007). Youth in the 21st century require guidance, but they desire autonomy. They must all be provided with a similar education; however, there is an increasing demand for different choice courses in the curriculum. Teachers are required to instruct students on the course material indicated in the curriculum, yet growing trends reflect that they are also expected to integrate cross-curricular learning. The competencies acquired during school years should be evaluated by cycle, except that it is done yearly. It is these contradictions that have made it difficult for the MELS to determine a framework that would address them.

The 2001 reform addresses the need for more diverse paths to learning by dividing learning itself into three facets, including "subject areas, cross-curricular

[3] The first cycle is two years (grade 7-8), the second is three years (grade 9 to 11). (Guimont, 2009)

competencies and broad areas of learning" (MELS, 2007, Chapter 1, p.29) (See Appendix B for a diagram in which they are all reflected). As mentioned in the historical overview of education in Quebec, the subjects included in the curriculum represent the knowledge deemed essential for cognitive development, such as languages and social sciences. The pedagogical activities and discussions in classrooms are expected to aid in the improvement of "intellectual […], methodological […], communication-related […], personal and social competencies […]" (Chapter 1, p.29). In the development of competencies, students are engaged in learning how to contextualize situations, recognize resources and reflect about their actions. Competencies must be regarded as complementary knowledge to the basic curriculum. The broad areas of learning consist of topics necessary for students' integration into society, and deemed relevant within all core subjects.

With this wide array of information to be conveyed, teachers are encouraged to develop cross-curricular approaches, where they address broad areas of learning during their class time in projects, and within the school extracurricular activities (MELS, 2007). Collaboration between teachers, and with staff and administration, is an important facet of this approach; therefore, the broad areas of learning become a shared responsibility within the school. This form of integrated learning is characterized as important in the QEP because it shows youth how "to construct knowledge by solving multidimensional problems and making connections among different fields" (Chapter 1, p.13). Integrated learning creates a closer connection between the school and the community, in addition to exemplifying how formal learning can be practical in situations outside of the formal classroom.

The role of educational practitioners in light of the reform becomes that of a guide, where teachers are meant to direct students towards the proper paths and provide knowledge (MELS, 2007). Teachers, steered away from the more rigid approach to the curriculum and assessment methods that characterized the previous reforms, are urged to adopt a socioconstructivist approach, which "stresses the social character of thought and learning, and views concepts as social tools that support the exchange of viewpoints and the negotiation of meaning" (Chapter 1, p.16). As a pedagogical practice, socioconstructivism engages students in becoming participants in their own learning, by practicing competencies through problematic situations created by the teachers (MEQ, 2004). Educators are also encouraged to provide differentiated instruction, which means "tak [ing] into account the students' heterogeneity in terms of their prior learning, interests and learning styles" (Chapter 1, p.23). Teachers are urged to call on the students to express their opinions and be critical, thus drawing them into an active role in the classroom.

Evaluation methods, redefined since 2003, are now aimed to focus more on the act of learning, including lifelong learning, and recognizing competencies (MELS, 2007). Teachers are required to practice judgment in assessing how the students adapt in the learning situations that they are given, and subsequently push students towards learning. Teachers are given a scale by the government and based on this scale they are required to attribute a "grade for the discipline based on established weighting" (Guimont, 2009, p.2). The first cycle requires an end-of-year assessment to determine whether the student can move forwards, while the second is divided per subject.

Through the variety of changes in the curriculum, the school system and the roles of various stakeholders in education, the QEP has opened up the possibility for a new system that embraces changes in both pedagogical practices and in society.

General Issues That Have Emerged Since the Education Reform

The implementation of the Quebec Education Program (QEP) in schools was met with mixed reactions. The following studies provide insight on the challenges that have risen since the reform, and the feelings that these have inspired.

In a study on the way in which Quebec high school educators execute the given curriculum, Havard (2010) examines curriculum changes as theory is put into practice. Her observations on teachers' reactions to the Quebec Education Program provide insight into the possible challenges the government faces in regards to the reform's reception in schools and school boards. A positive outcome, which also happens to be the focal point of Havard's research, is the "teachers' knowledge community" (p.13), which has been defined by Craig (2007) "as the safe places within which teachers negotiate meaning for their stories of experience on their professional knowledge landscapes" (as cited in Havard, 2010, p. 9). Havard (2010) notes that teachers' cooperation with one another is a valuable resource for the application of the reform; however, it is also partially a result of a lack of information on procedures and evaluation situations from the school board and MELS. As an educator herself, Havard argues that schools often receive instructions in increments and in an untimely fashion, therefore making it difficult for educators to plan ahead. Havard states that the participants in her study felt disempowered when "their work of interpretation, implementation and adaption was being cut out of the equation, as

assessment activities arrived at the last minute and their use was mandated" (p.35). Havard suggests that the interpretative part of the reform is a challenging, and often confusing aspect for educators to contend with, in spite of the training received that they have received on the implementation of the aspects of the reform. Her participants did not always interpret instructions in the same way; hence, "assessment activities" (p.36), to evaluate competencies, were often modified according to their understanding and the classroom needs. Havard also notes in her study that these activities could be time consuming, and interfere with the instruction of curriculum material. Finally, her research reveals that teachers felt constrained by the lack of resources to implement new ideas, and they relied on each other to overcome this financial impasse.

Poirel (2009) focuses on the level of stress experienced by principals in the context of the reform in schools and observes similar findings to Havard (2010) on the issue of communication between schools, school boards and the MELS. A source of stress amongst his participants was that they felt there was insufficient information in regards to the reform that created a barrier to the successful implementation of the ministerial guidelines. Poirel remarks that a lack of communication in the education community affects the power that principals hold in the schools, as they have become mediators of the reform (between their school and the outside world) and the main resource to whom teachers can address their concerns and questions. Principals have acquired more responsibilities since "Bill 180" (p.6), which came into effect in 1998 and gave more decision-making powers to schools in regards to materials and educational services. However, principals are also often constrained by their obligation under the same law to report to school boards and parents before implementing changes or having

access to the budget. Poirel suggests that this shared responsibility limits the resources at the disposal of the school, and principals find it difficult to have all of the decision-making parties agree in a timely manner, which also leads to feelings of disempowerment and impedes in their agency to promote elements of the reform in their school.

Saltarelli's (2008) in-depth research on the theoretical and philosophical aspects of the QEP projects offers an altogether positive review of the new orientations and approaches promoted by the government; however, this thesis focuses on the portion of Saltarelli's research aimed at identifying issues that have risen from the reform by "draw(ing) mainly from the perspectives of teachers and parents, as they have been presented in local publications and the media" (p.76). In this, Saltarelli argues that negative views from teachers and parents pose a threat to the QEP's success in schools. Saltarelli claims that the teachers she spoke to "don't really understand the philosophical background of the QEP, and they are feeling overwhelmed and need help to make this shift and to implement these new theories" (p.83). While her study pertains to elementary school, these feelings echo those imparted by teachers in high schools (Havard, 2010). This response to the measures taken by the reform to promote change in schools indicates "a lack of shared vision for schools" (Saltarelli, 2008, p.88), which acts as an obstacle to the achievement of the goals set out by the QEP, since disagreements on approaches and values ultimately lead to different understandings of success in terms of educational reform. Saltarelli demonstrates the tension between stakeholders by comparing the "Table de pilotage (the provincial body responsible for curriculum reform) [which are the] twelve recommendations to be put into action" (p.90) that were published in a response to the 2006 MELS survey on the reform, with a newsletter by the Quebec

Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT). While both documents consisted of recommendations for change, the documents differ in how the QEP should be undertaken. While the Table de pilotage included suggestions on reviewing how competencies are evaluated and on the "relevance of applying the broad areas of learning" (as cited in Saltarelli, 2008, p.90), the QPAT (2006) argues that "evaluation of cross-curricular competencies be suspended altogether" (par. 3) and requests that the reform and its outcomes on youth be studied by a neutral party. The association also calls into question whether the reform guidelines are realistic and relevant, based on its belief that youth are not benefitting cognitively from the changes in the educational system.[4] Saltarelli (2008) foresees a challenge for educators measuring the success that the QEP aims to achieve, in terms of social skills, critical thinking and values, using "end of cycle and/or provincial examinations" (p.96). Finally, the QPAT (2006) claims that the government did not provide adequate training for teachers to appropriately address reforms. This conflicted relationship between the government and teachers over the reform was also evident in Havard's (2010) study, where the "disconnect" between these stakeholders was largely grounded in miscommunications and in confusion over the initiatives.

Saltarelli (2008), QPAT (2006), Poirel (2009) and Havard (2010) have shed some light on issues that challenge the success of the reform. MELS has also begun an evaluation of the QEP, which has been in progress since 2008 (Charest et al., 2008). Its aims are to address broad issues such as the effect of the reform on students, school staff involvement in implementing aspects of the QEP, the distribution of resources, and the success rate of the learning paths. According to the evaluation framework, the broad

[4] Saltarelli (2008) argues that this assumption is based on a study that is flawed because 1) the results were compilated from a standardized exam and 2) this was done in 2003, in the beginning years of the reform.

areas of learning in the QEP will be broadly addressed, not by specific individual components (such as sex education for instance). However, due to possible adjustments to the framework for the evaluation, this can only be confirmed once the results are published, at the end of 2013.

Sex Education in Context of the Reform

The 2001 curriculum reform placed sex education into a broad area of learning entitled "Health and Well-Being" (MEQ, 2004, p.23; MELS, 2007, Chapter 2, p.5) rather than as a standalone class. With the implementation of the QEP, MELS sought to outline how sex education would be taught under the new curriculum, by joining members from both the education and Health and Social Services sectors to work together in assembling comprehensive guidelines for teachers, school staff and school boards. Duquet (2003), a sexologist at the Université du Québec à Montréal, compiled a document entitled *Sex Education in the Context of Education Reform* (2003). This document provides stakeholders in sex education with a broad view of the direction in which the MELS is heading in terms of sex education in schools. First, Duquet offers an overview of the importance of sex education and definitions of sexuality and sex education. Duquet is explicit in suggesting that educating youth on sexuality is ultimately a school's responsibility, however no concrete approach to sex education is offered. It is recommended that educational practitioners move beyond the outlook of prevention (of STIs and pregnancy), and expand on helping students connect with their sexual identities and acquire healthy interpersonal skills.

Duquet (2003) also broaches the way that sex education is to be integrated in the new educational system. The Ministry of Education has incorporated the school's mandate to provide health resources within its *Education Act.* For instance, the mission for high schools outlines the importance of helping students' development, "the purpose of secondary instructional services is to further the overall development of students, to foster their social integration and to help them determine personal and career goals" (MELS, December 1 2012, Div.1.2).

The school's responsibility in terms of providing health education and resources is covered under the umbrella of student services, or more precisely, the "promotion and prevention services" which they are required to provide (MELS, *Education Act,* December 1 2012, Div. 2.4). These include health resources like nurses, and initiatives towards a healthy environment taken by the school.

However, the integration of sex education as a broad area of learning does not only fall strictly under the school's mandate, but that of the teachers, the nurses, the principal, the community and even the students (Duquet, 2003). These stakeholders, according to the government, must work together by cooperating on cross-curricular projects, and offering activities between or after classes. Duquet suggests that topics like 'body image' could be broached in science class, physical education, and in the moral and religious classroom. Members of the school and the community, including spiritual care animators and psychologists, could help organize activities and debates pertaining to the students' feelings about body image. Though there are multiple stakeholders in sex education, educators are generally viewed to be the primary agents responsible for sex education. Duquet states that:

> Teachers stand in the forefront of any implementation of sex education in the schools as they are well positioned to make connections among the situations they witness in the classroom and in the school, the subject-specific learning and the sociosexual and biological realities to which the students are exposed. (p.34)

Teachers' fears are recognized, and the strategies that have been suggested include: honesty, diversifying classroom activities and adopting a socio-constructivist as well as an interdisciplinary approach (Duquet, 2003). Themes pertaining to sex education and a few examples of activities are provided to demonstrate good topics, learning situations and effective exercises, such as debates, photo exhibits, and analyzing graffiti and sexual jokes permeating school grounds. However, Duquet also states that teachers need to be offered some form of training, by the schools or school boards, in order for the government's approach to sex education to be effective. In this, teachers should also pursue independent research and access the pertinent literature and resources at their disposal, in order to be able to provide students with necessary knowledge and to help themselves become more comfortable with their delivery of sex education.

L'éducation à la Sexualité en Milieu Scolaire: Oui, Mais Comment? offers a more elaborate explanation on the implementation procedures for sex education in schools, including a 5-step approach which entails: evaluating need and resources, selecting themes, organizing the interventions (involving stakeholders, setting time/date, choosing activity), preparing the planned intervention and assessing the latter (M. Duquet, 2008, p.6). The community as a whole working together (students, teachers, and staff) should select themes, share responsibilities and ensure the continuance of sex education initiatives. While this publication contains a large amount of resources for educators, it

refers to the previous study by Duquet (2003), the overall objectives of the QEP, and the broad area of learning "Health and Well-Being" as pillars on which to base sex education in schools.

The publication *Réussite Éducative, Santé, Bien-être: Agir Efficacement en Contexte Scolaire* (2010), which consists of a series of recommendations for the education community compiled by the Institut National de Santé Publique du Quebec (INSPQ), provides similar guidelines as those indicated in *Sex Education in the Context of Education Reform*. However, the INSPQ provides a more in-depth look at the roles that teachers, the school, parents and the community should adopt in light of the new framework for sex education, based on a review of studies, the evaluations of current sex education programs worldwide and academic literature (Palluy, Arcand, Choiniere, Martin & Roberge, 2010). The INSPQ recommends that teachers should provide students with a holistic sex education that expands beyond the biological aspects to the understanding of the psychological, social, emotional, ethical and moral facets, and one that supports a positive outlook on sex. Educators are encouraged to teach skills and support the students through the process of learning about sexuality. The suggested role of the school is to ensure that sex education occurs regularly throughout the school years, and to give teachers and students opportunities to learn about sex outside the classroom, through events and community work. Furthermore, schools should adopt strategies to help educators broach the topic of sex and to encourage students to feel comfortable asking questions within the sex education classroom. While maintaining a positive approach, educators and staff should promote an environment that accepts diversity and encourages gender equality, by creating an atmosphere for discussion where students feel

included, and encouraging discussions on social inequalities. In addition, schools should provide services (counseling, nurses) and resources (condoms they could request for in the nurses office, for instance). A complete list of recommended topics for teachers to approach, in their selected cycle, also addresses competencies and skills they should be acquiring (Palluy et al., 2010). Suggestions for the community and parents are provided to support youth and schools in learning and teaching about sex.

There is no doubt that the new sex education framework under the QEP has merits. The QEP is leading educators towards adopting a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach to learning, which is positive in terms of showing students how sexuality is embedded in all facets of our lives and learning. Since the reform, some schools have been able to implement successful sex education initiatives inspired by the guidelines I have just covered. In many cases, this was done by delegating of the task to an organization or person outside the school, by having a specific member of the staff (such as a nurse) made responsible for providing sex education, by creating a program within a core subject or by integrating discussions and activities spontaneously within the existing curriculum (Otis, Gaudreau, Duquet, Michaud and Nonn, 2012, p.iv).

As schools are responsible for developing their own programs, the sex education landscape in Quebec is varied. Three out of the nine programs of sex education in Quebec, evaluated by Otis et al. (2012), were incorporated within the existing curriculum. In one school, students received sex education at least once per cycle of nine days, during their entire grade 9 year, and had the option to take sex education the following year. This initiative, which followed a thematic approach to sex education, aimed at developing positive skills for healthy sexual behaviour. Otis et al. (2012) state the success of this sex

education initiative can be attributed to the spirit of cooperation amongst the staff and their motivation to provide effective sex education. In a second school, the Ethics and Religious Culture Program was expanded to include an extra class per cycle so that students in the first cycle could receive sex education. The two teachers responsible for the implementation of this initiative received extensive training on a new sex education program created by the local department of public health and their school board. The training was offered at the beginning of the trial period for this initiative, and was considered complementary to their previous experience teaching the PSD program. These two teachers were put in charge of the entire project, from its creation to its evaluation. Three out of the nine initiatives in the Otis et al. study pertained to sex education integrated in the classroom using an interdisciplinary approach. In all cases, the collaboration between stakeholders in sex education, including teachers, school staff, school boards, and community organizations, was a great asset to the initiatives.

In a different high school, sexual themes were divided within the two cycles, and projects were organized throughout the year (M. Duquet, 2008). With the cooperation of a nurse, psychologist, as well as Science, French and music teachers, activities were organized inside and outside of class to teach about sexual health, puberty, sexual violence and the emotional aspects of sex and relationships. This interdisciplinary approach was deemed successful when the stakeholders involved evaluated it as it consisted of using brochures to promote information, encouraging discussions in Science and French classes, organizing activities inside and outside the classroom as well as getting students to write scenarios or music on puberty.

The school Bois-Vivant de New Richmond, which caters to elementary and high school students, started a program from 2003 to 2006 that involved teacher training, a community approach to creating the curricula for sex education which involved educators, a sexologist, the school board and parents, and frequent evaluations of the progress made (Garcia, n.d.). The ultimate factor that hinged the success of the schools' strategies was the support network surrounding the program.

Schools are not the only stakeholders that have become involved in promoting sex education in the wake of the QEP. In certain cases, school boards have taken steps to facilitate the process of integrating sex education in schools. For instance, the Seigneurie-des-Mille-Iles school board hired a sexologist to supervise the implementation of initiatives in its schools and the cooperation of the stakeholders, provided schools with action plans and in addition, involved parents, educators and community organizations in the process by organizing meetings where ideas and concerns were exchanged (M. Duquet, 2008). As previously mentioned, community organizations in Quebec have also stepped up to help teach sex education, as exemplified by the Heads and Hands non profit organization in Montreal and its *Sense* project.

Sex Education Issues That Have Emerged Since the Education Reform

In spite of some successful steps made by certain schools, some research has revealed issues pertaining to sex education since the reform.

A qualitative study by Otis, Gaudreau, Duquet, Michaud and Nonn (2012), has identified some challenges with the current state of sex education in their evaluation of programs 9 schools across Quebec during the school year 2008-2009. Otis et al.'s

research consisted of an extensive review of the positive and negative factors that touched the organization and implementation of initiatives. In this review, I have focused on the main constraints faced by education institutions and teachers.

Otis et al. (2012) categorize their findings into three broad categories: practice, resources, and community collaboration. First, they argue that while their research reveals a flexibility of approaches adopted in schools, which allows for an individualized approach contingent on the needs of the students, ultimately the multiple interpretations of the content and teaching methods in sex education have left Quebec youth with an uneven distribution of sex education in schools. Thus, it is difficult to evaluate whether the objectives set by the MELS in terms of sexual health are being met due to the diversity of programs that students are exposed to. Otis et al. reported that several schools were unable to set time aside for activities surrounding sexual health, and none had succeeded in giving their students constant, thorough sex education throughout their school year.

Secondly, the study by Otis et al. (2012) reveals that the motivation of stakeholders, in particular the principals who are responsible for the coordination of the school teaching team and of the resources, play a great role in the implementation (or lack thereof) of sex education in schools. Problematically, uncomfortable teacher attitudes meant that students were often left without access to a sex education curriculum. Also, Otis et al. found that resources and the time attributed to organizing and coordinating projects are limited when there are differing and contrary priorities in schools. The lack of a workable budget and proper materials impede the quality of sex education that students received, except in the cases where schools with motivated

personnel succeeded in promoting interesting, and cost effective strategies. Furthermore, Otis et al. observed that teacher training and previous knowledge about teaching sex education varied from school to school. These are important factors and considerations in the development of successful and effective sex education programs and approaches.

Third, Otis et al. (2012) identify the complex bureaucracy of educational institutions, such as school boards, the MELS and schools, as an obstacle to the collaboration between stakeholders. Time allotment for sex education becomes problematic in this instance, as does the lack of consensus on approach and responsibilities, both of which are not clearly outlined by the MELS. In addition, communication often becomes difficult between different departments and within institutions, which further complicates the process of organizing projects. A lack of straightforward information by MELS on responsibilities has also caused confusion amongst stakeholders in the research as to their roles in the delivery of sex education. The study by Dowd (2010) reveals similar findings; in her interviews with high school teachers on the implementation of sex education since the reform, several participants did not know what they were supposed to do. Otis et al. (2012) claim that different values about the place of sex education between stakeholders prove to be problematic. Problematic stakeholder values are also stressed by Trimble (2012), who states in her study that she found a tension lay between the community organizations, school boards and schools in terms of approaches to adopt in sex education workshops.

In interviews of high school teachers conducted by Dowd (2010) regarding sex education since the curriculum reform, participants confirmed that they found that their schedules gave them little time to figure out and to apply the reform changes in the

classroom. These teachers knew the overall components of the 2001 curriculum reform, but some noted few real changes in the classroom since the implementation of the reform in schools. Other teachers complained that they saw a decrease in their students' basic academic literacy skills such as reading and writing. Their responsibility to integrate sex education in their classes was unknown to 5 out of the 6 teachers in the study, which Dowd claims "is hardly surprising taking into account no teachers had received any documentation concerning how the reform affected sexual health education" (p.54). The participants identified scheduling and practicality as two main issues they would have to contend with if they were to follow ministerial guidelines.

Another challenge that emerged throughout the interviews was the difference in understanding the meaning of what sex education entailed. While all teachers expressed "a unanimous belief that nothing should be excluded from a comprehensive secondary school sexual health curriculum" (Dowd, 2010, p.56), there was a disparity in the levels of knowledge about sexual health and healthy sexual behaviour held by each. Educators possessed limited knowledge about delivering sex education, and much of their knowledge was based on personal experiences. Dowd states her fear that "this could be dangerous that the educators base their sexual health education curriculum solely on their own personal values system" (p.67). Most teachers in the study were 'mildly comfortable' with dealing with the topic of sex, but within "limits in terms of disclosure"(p.58).

Trimble's research (2012) differs from Dowd (2010) and Otis et al. (2012) since it focuses on the role and impact of community organizations as the main providers of sex education recommended by the 2001 reform rather than focusing on teachers or

principals. Trimble centers her study on Montreal's Heads and Hands, which provides youth with access to resources that include legal advice, medical services and information about sex. Their *Sense* project, which I previously described, has been successfully embraced in several schools, attending to the sex education of 843 Montreal students in 2010 (p.86). However, the progressive views expressed in their workshops have garnered some criticism from school boards and teachers, thus affecting the harmony in the collaborative efforts between the community organization and educational institutions. Trimble states that

> one of the strategies that the facilitators of the Sense project now recognize, in hindsight, that may have made partnerships with some schools difficult to create initially was rooted in the essential philosophical differences inherent between activist perspectives and the typically more conservative school systems (p.128)

As Heads and Hands were strong voices against the 2001 curriculum reform and its impact on sex education, school boards were suspicious that their program was an "unwelcome political tactic" (Trimble, 2012, p.129). In addition, some teachers felt "othered" during the peer-led interventions, as they were required to leave the premises during the workshops, rather than complete workshops at school.

Trimble's (2012) study addresses some concerns over the *flash pedagogy*, by which she means "kind of short, intense and decontextualized teaching episodes" (p.190), that is assumed to be occurring in the classroom. She claims that this form of sex education is not conducive to transformative learning; hence, it does not inspire much change in behaviours and attitudes whereas continuous programs have a better chance at creating an impact in the lives of youth.

Analysis of Findings

In this section, I have analyzed the main conflicts found in schools that were revealed in the studies that I have reviewed. Some of the research that I have unpacked dealt specifically with the Quebec Education Program rather than sex education in general; however, I submit that the issues of the former affect the latter.

Emotions and attitudes

Saltarelli (2008) has argued that attitudes play a large role in the implementation of changes in schools. Otis et al. (2012) noted, based on the reactions to the sex education reform by multiple stakeholders, including teachers, school boards and nurses, that positive attitudes and motivations are paramount in the introduction of measures to provide effective sex education in schools. They argue that the success of the sex education programs suffered in schools where teachers did not feel comfortable with the approach adopted to sex education.

Training and motivation of teachers are essential for effective delivery of sex education (McKay, 2009). Kirby (2007) also defines efficient sex education as having trained professionals delivering the content of the program. Teachers in Dowd's (2010) study agreed with the sex education approach advocated by MELS, and were therefore enthusiastic about acquiring knowledge on the subject, despite the lack of training that was offered to them. Havard (2010) also observed the positive correlation between teachers who were excited about implementing the reform guidelines, and the innovative ideas they brought to the classroom. However, the 2001 curriculum reform has led to struggles with frustration in regards to the implementation of certain measures and feelings of disempowerment as stakeholders are faced with the difficulties of putting

effective sex education theory into practice with little information and support to rely on (Havard, 2010; Poirel, 2009).

Training and resources

In the studies examined, there are conflicting reports of teacher training. Some teachers received training for the implementation of the QEP (Havard, 2010); while others claim that there are "inadequacies of in-service" (Saltarelli, 2008, p.84). Saltarelli argues that teachers complaints about the existing sex education training could be fueled by negative viewpoints of the 2001 reform, and more generally a reluctant attitude towards change. Nonetheless, many teachers have expressed a desire for more training on the QEP (Gourd, 2001; QPAT, 2006).

As previously mentioned, training is essential to an effective sex education program. In spite of this, Otis et al. (2012) noted a wide diversity of knowledge and training present in schools impacted the implementation of the QEP negatively, which was an observation also made by Dowd (2010). Trimble (2012) explains how effective teacher training affects comfort,

> Without training, resources, time on the curriculum to engage with these conversations, most of us would feel ill prepared to wade into such contentious and politically murky educational waters. (p.22)

Quebec's *Sex Education in the Context of Education Reform* provides some context for teachers to work with, but as Duquet (2003) states, they are encouraged to pursue their own sex education by researching it individually. Other publications, including PHAC's *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*, the Quebec magazine *Sexpressions,* and the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada

(SIECCAN) articles posted on their websites, are online resources available to teachers to review in their efforts to address the QEP reform. The publications in this study, *Réussite Éducative, Santé, Bien-être: Agir Efficacement en Contexte Scolaire* and *L'éducation à la Sexualité en Milieu Scolaire: Oui, Mais Comment?,* are also informative. However, effectively training sex education teachers extends beyond simple content, as it should address issues of discomfort, ethical problems, bias, personal values, and provide educators with tools they can use in the classroom (PHAC, 2008). Topics such as sexual diversity, healthy sexual behaviours within marginalized members of the community, including Aboriginals, students with disabilities and students originating from the lower socio-economic strata of society, need to be addressed to promote an inclusive sex education curriculum. Teachers should receive appropriate education and training for effective delivery and implementation of sex-education programs, if we expect schools to provide quality sex education to their students.

The Quebec Education Program has given schools more independence and control; however, principals and teachers are still required to go through a process to obtain financial resources and support from school boards to teach sex education. Potential barriers to sex education include disagreement over the choice of materials, and lack of budget funds allocated to these programs (Havard, 2010; Otis et al., 2012; Poirel, 2009). School boards are faced with the challenge of distributing resources based on the schools' individual needs (Poirel, 2009). The allocation of resources is further complicated by the dynamics between both schools and school boards, as each are organized differently and each have different priorities (Otis et al., 2012). Thus, the motivation to teach sex education becomes an essential factor towards receiving the funds

to organize a program. Otis et al. (2012) suggest that some programs can receive money by participating in initiatives that offer funding. The "Healthy School Program" (translated from 'Ecole en Santé', p.33), a collaborative effort between the MELS and the MSSS to promote strategies for healthy living in schools, allows participating educational institutions to have access to additional financial resources. Furthermore, in the five cases where Otis et al. observed that schools were using this approach, it facilitated the integration of sex education.

Time

Whether it is to organize meetings to exchange divergent interpretations of QEP guidelines and new ideas or implementing learning situations and broad areas of learning in the classroom, time is a concern for stakeholders. Certain teachers question the "feasibility of certain elements of the reform in the reality of today's classroom" (QPAT, 2006, par.5), and argue that the inclusion of reform elements means the exclusion of certain components of the curriculum during classroom time (Havard, 2010). This could discourage teachers from engaging into a topic like sex education, which is primarily supposed to be infused within classroom discussions and activities, as it may impede in the learning of curriculum content that is required to be evaluated through examinations. Teachers are inclined to focus on what is in the curriculum for the core subject they are teaching, and for what the students will be graded for in examinations (Charest et al., 2008; Gourd, 2001). In the school year 2003-2004, a study conducted in 15 high schools revealed that "teachers give priority to subject-specific competencies", followed by cross-curricular competencies, and finally broad areas of learning (Charest et al., 2008, p.20).

Frequent, short classes are also part of the problem, as they are not conducive to integrating knowledge other than that of the core subject in such a short span of time.

The Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation foresaw the schedule format for high schools as a challenge to the implementation of the reform (Gourd, 2001). While the government has increased the number of hours teachers are in school from "27 to 32 hours a week, favouring cooperative work among teachers" (Charest et al., 2008, p.5), it is difficult for teachers to coordinate schedules and make time to meet to discuss cross-curricular learning (Gourd, 2001; Dowd, 2010). Otis et al. (2012) state that time set aside to plan sex education initiatives played an important part in the organization process and the success of the programs. Teacher time is clearly a concern that needs adressing.

Delivery of sex education

As demonstrated in my review of sex education programs, there are many approaches teachers can adopt to deliver sex education. However, as stated by McKay, Fisher, Maticka-Tyndale, & Barrett (2001), it is important to "apply existing knowledge to (…) programs" (p.131). Kirby (2007) affirms this statement in his list of 17 requirements for effective programming, as he notes that sex education should be based on recognized, empirically validated approaches. An example of an effective sex education programming approach would be the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), based on learning by "observation, imitation and modelling" (PHAC, 2008, p.35), that was deemed efficient in a programme that involved fathers' roles in teaching sex education to their sons. However, it is the Information-Motivation-Behavioural Skills (IMB) model that is advocated by the PHAC (2008). It is based on providing individuals with the knowledge of sex that is needed for safe practices and positive relationships and then motivating

youth to apply what they know and have learned. It is expected that such an approach will equip them with the life skills to adopt positive sexual attitudes and behaviours. It is difficult to see how sex education that is integrated in regular classes through discussions, projects or activities, can follow these theoretical models, especially if teachers are not provided extensive guidelines or training in sex education. The *flash pedagogy* approach is not conducive to radical change of behaviour, as the IMB model has been validated to be (PHAC, 2008; Trimble, 2012).

Further, with sex education left at the discretion of schools, it is difficult to tell whether the topic is being taught effectively to students. Though numerous schools have adopted programs, there is no way to evaluate how sex education is being delivered, or whether it is being taught at all.

Communication, collaboration and roles

Havard (2010) and Poirel (2009) both note that stakeholders in schools felt that their communication issues with school boards and with MELS impeded the integration of the reform in schools. Teachers and principals felt the impact of receiving information late or not at all. In Havard's research, she notes this often resulted in teachers appropriating the material and developing feelings of resistance, which affects teachers' attitudes. However, in terms of sex education, the impact of the lack of communication could be felt through Dowd's (2010) observation that teachers in the high school selected for her research were not even aware of their roles as sex educators.

Furthermore, Trimble (2012) observes that a lack of communication can be an obstacle to a smooth on-going collaboration between community organizations and schools. A lack of a similar understanding and agreement on approaches to sex education

serves as a barrier to these partnerships (Otis et al., 2012; Trimble, 2012). In addition, some community organizations, such as Montreal's Heads and Hands, have felt that the main responsibility for teacher training and sex education has fallen on their laps since the reform (Feldman, 2011, March 28; O'Hanley, 2003, Nov. 6; Routly, 2011, April 4). Otis et al. (2012) state that following the 2001 curriculum reform in Quebec, teachers of Ethics and Religious Culture are often entrusted with the main responsibility of taking charge of sex education in high schools.

Miscommunication between stakeholders and a lack of understanding of roles can be attributed to the absence of concise instructions from the MELS as to how sex education should take place in schools (Otis et al., 2012). Problematically, there are no specific sets of responsibilities assigned to each stakeholder. Sex education under the reform is dependent on the roles that are assumed by teachers, school boards and principals, but the roles are contingent on factors such as resources, attitudes, motivation, collaboration, time, etc. This situation explains the variety of forms that sex education programs have taken (integrated programs, spontaneous activities and discussions, and delegation to stakholders outside the school or within it) and reflects the reason that sex education can become the primary responsibility of different stakeholders (nurses, teachers, community organizations). Smylie et al. (2008), in their discussion on sex education programs and the Ontario curriculum, explain that this situation can be problematic by arguing that "sexual health education is left to the discretion of the individual school boards, school administrations and/or teachers- resulting in inconsistency and variation in the topics covered and time allocated to instruction" (p.28). This same difference in quality and quantity of sex education received in Quebec schools

was also observed by Otis et al. (2012) in their study of Quebec programs.

Summary

With the multiple understandings of sex, the variety of discourses in sex education and the diverse approaches validated in studies, it is not surprising to note that a universally accepted sex education program has yet to be introduced in Quebec Schools. Moreover, ideological conflicts among stakeholders create a problematic situation in sex education delivery, although some progess has been made in sex education programs that support the promotion of democratic values and a person-centered ethics approach. Further, school-based sex education varies depending on available resources, and the initiatives and motivation of stakeholders involved.

The 2001 reform, where Quebec sought to modernize its curriculum, teaching approaches and means of evaluation, also changed the way sex education was delivered to youth. Sex education has become interdisciplinary, and the responsibility of multiple individuals like teachers, principals, nurses and community organizations.

This chapter aimed to identify the main concerns felt by teachers, community organizations and principals with regards to the 2001 curriculum reform. The difficulties caused by a lack of communication, and of miscommunication between stakeholders, confusion over the reform, and missing or untimely guidelines have led teachers and principals to feel disempowered and frustrated. Sex education programs and efforts for teachers are often uneven and resources are difficult to obtain due to conflicts between institutions, and differential budget allocation. Educators are challenged by a lack of time to include reform changes, including sex education in their existing delivery, and their

often busy schedules impede collaborative work. The lack of a province-wide sex education program based on a theoretical framework and an empirically validated approach, has resulted in uneven development of knowledge about sex for Quebec youth.

In the next chapter, the relationships between sexual discourses, sexual behaviours and the media are discussed, preparing the ground for the importance of a school based, pedagogically sound sex education program to be developed in the third chapter.

Chapter 2: An Examination of the Linkages Between Sexual Discourses, the Media and Pedagogy

The first chapter provided some insight on sexual discourses in schools. The following literature review will explore sexual discourses in society and the media. The first section of this chapter focuses on Foucault's (1990) theory on the relationship between power, knowledge and sexuality. He argues ideological conflicts occur when different dominant groups, such as religious or academic authorities, seek to control perceptions of gender, sexual identity and homosexuality. I then relate Foucault's theory to the media and its influence on sex education. Furthermore, I briefly explore Weeks' (1985) research, who supports Foucault's theory on the web, connecting power, knowledge and sexuality, while further exploring how dominant discourses manipulate society into adopting certain perceptions. He argues that in order to resist this influence, it must be recognized. This discussion leads into a more extensive overview of Giroux's work (1996, 2002, 2006, 2006b; Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Giroux & Simon, 1989). First, his views of popular culture as a site for both dominance and resistance are explored, after which I focus on the influence it has on youth and their views on sexuality.

Baudrillard's (1968, 1970, 1970b, 1976, 1979, 1983, 1985, 1993, 1994, 2002) work on signs, hyperreality and hypersexuality supports Giroux on his argument of media control, and further expands on how this control happens. Weeks provides some insight as to how dominant discourses come to influence ideology; however, Baudrillard explores in greater depth how it happens in the media, and how the medium plays an important role in the transmission of meaning.

Finally, I conclude this second chapter by addressing the importance of teaching critical media literacy and practicing critical pedagogy in schools.

Foucault

Foucault (1990) offers a tremendous body of knowledge on the origins of society's perceptions of sexuality, on the prevalent discourses that have affected sexualities, and on power. For the purpose of this study, I look at his theory on repression, the relationship between power, knowledge and sexuality, and sexual discourses.

According to Foucault (1990), modern society in the 20th century believed that freedom of speech on sexual matters means that it has achieved a non-repressed state, and exerts a harsh judgment on itself for its previous outlooks on the matter. He argues that while discourse has progressed and become more liberal in outlook, it is not necessarily free from repression. Thus, in his work *The History of Sexuality*, he proceeds to investigate whether sexual discourses were indeed repressed in the past, who was responsible for this repression, and whether the open, critical discourse present today has ended this repression, or is continuing similar repression in different terms. In his attempt to address these questions, Foucault has explored the links between power, knowledge, and sexuality throughout history.

Power, knowledge and sexuality

During the Victorian era, the public conversation about sex expanded; thus, there were multiple discourses emerging in "demography, biology, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, ethics, pedagogy, and political criticism" (Foucault, 1990, p.33). Different groups in society sought to understand and control sexuality. Examples of the types of discourses included the study of sexuality and the creation of "sexual illnesses" like homosexuality in the medical field; in the realm of government it was based on interest in birth rates for labor purposes and in the realm of legal concerns and the courts these

discourses gave rise to new laws against certain sexual acts. Thus, sexual discourses were not repressed in this period, but they were heavily regulated. However,

> Those who were committed to concealing, obscuring, and censoring all discussions of sexual matter […] were in fact "inciting" sexual discourse, both by the public statements of their own positions and the opposing views they inspired. (Kammeyer, 2008, p.20)

In other words, the interests that these fields had in sexual health and control of sexual behaviours created individual sexual discourses that would ultimately come into conflict.

Foucault (1990) speculates that sexuality came to be understood as a social responsibility because of capitalism. As capitalism grew in popularity, so did the interest in maintaining a certain population number to do the labor. This, he reflects, might have been the motive for the attempts by multiple discourses to promote "a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative" (p.37). Thus, the duty of families to procreate was reinforced in these early capitalist sexual discourses. Religious and medical authorities established a norm, which meant that those who did not practice within the norms came to be known as sexual "delinquants". The individuals in this category, including "homosexuals" and those designated as "perverts", were studied as if they had a sickness to be cured. The determination to understand sexuality in children and in homosexuals, as well "othering" of non-normative sexualities, led to the creation of a social order for sexuality in which norms and status were established. While the discourses emanated from institutions (religious, academic, political), they were reinforced in the home and in the schools, with "the polarity established between the

parents' bedroom and that of the children, (…) the relative segregation of boys and girls" (p.46). Knowledge about sex circulated from parents to children, from doctor to patients, and this ultimately led to a hierarchical structure of sexuality in society.

The "specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex" (Foucault, 1990, p.103) created by the dominant discourses not only demeaned homosexuals, but females and children. Women, through the study of hysteria and sexuality, became objects of identification, as sexual wives, reproducing citizens, erratic women and responsible mothers. Children were desexualized, and any sexual conduct was prevented through "inexhaustible and corrective discourses" (p.42) or reprimanded.

Sex and power: A negative union

Foucault (1990) identifies five different relationships between power and sexuality. These are detrimental to individuals with sexual identities, preferences, attitudes or behaviours that fall outside of the hegemonic ideals of sexuality.

1) "The negative relation" (p.83): Power removes the pleasure from sex, by seeking control via social norms, etc.
2) "The insistence of the rule" (p.83): The process of setting boundaries leads to the creations of laws established by those in power.
3) "The cycle of prohibition" (p.84): The groups in power suppress sexual acts, behaviours and identities.
4) "The logic of censorship" (p.84): This is done by "affirming that such a thing is not permitted, preventing it from being said, denying that it exists" (p.84). Thus, it annihilates certain discourses.
5) "The uniformity of the apparatus" (p.84): A hierarchy of information is established to create a sexual uniformity by perpetuating taboos, whether it be from the influence of an institutions on families, or from adults to children.

Plurality of resistances in the modern world

Foucault (1990) understands power as "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontation, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them" (p.93). Thus, there is not one source of dominance that pervades over sexual discourses, but multiple forms continuously acting in motion against one another. As there are institutions that define sexualities, there are also institutions that will oppose them, resulting in what Foucault calls "the plurality of resistances" (p.96). Sexuality is a field that comprises multiple factors that provoke these struggles, such as class relations, understanding of gender or sexual preferences, and age. Kammeyer (2008) states that, "at any given historical-societal moment, one or the other of these forms of discourse is likely to have hegemony" (p.23). He argues that there are three major sexual discourses that can be discerned in the media. The first sexual discourse that occurs in the media is the "political-legal", which is "most openly and deliberately associated with power" (p.21). It involves social actors establishing rules, boundaries and censorship on sex, and implies similar actions to those noted in Foucault's (1990) five relations between power and sex. Kammeyer (2008) provides the example of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for this discourse. The FCC has the mandate to censor materials and establish standards for sexual content broadcasted in the media. Second, he points out the "rational-intellectual" discourses, which are based on understanding, exploring and defining sex. This can be seen in educational films and on television. Finally, a common discourse today is the "pleasure hedonistic", that Kammeyer claims "emphasizes the naturalness and the pleasure of sex,

even the types of sex that differ from the predominant cultural standards" (p.23). These discourses are present everywhere in society and the media. All three possess some power, and are constantly in conflict with each other to control understandings, perpetuate ideals and influence behaviours. For instance, the pleasure hedonistic and political-legal discourses promote opposite attitudes towards sex; the former supports openness on sexual matters, while the latter encourages silence. In the media, these two discourses come into conflict due to their opposing interests. The pleasure hedonistic discourse is popular amongst youth, and it is frequently emphasized in the media for marketing purposes. As demonstrated in the previous example of the FCC, the political-legal discourse is mainly focused on controlling and repressing sexual discourses. As a result, youth are faced with divergent understandings of sexuality in the media.

In schools, multiple sexual discourses also prevail, as reviewed in Chapter 1. The example of the United States and the promotion of abstinence-only sex education programs, which promote heteronormative values, reinforce Foucault's arguments that repression still exists. Between schools and the media, both influential agents of socialization, youth are caught in the center of the web of sexual discourses in society. In addition, as Foucault argues, families also play an important role in monitoring sexual behaviours and reproducing hegemonic ideals. The question therefore arises: how do we prepare youth to deal with these sexual discourses? The section on "Health and Well-Being" in the Quebec Education Program does not provide detailed information on the role of the school in teaching students ways to be aware of or critical of these existing sexual discourses (MELS, 2007). The QEP states only that educators need to be "making connections between the lifestyle of a population and its health and well-being, [and

providing] knowledge of the political issues related to health and well-being" (Chapter 2, p.6). However, Duquet (2003) acknowledges the importance of adults (educators or other stakeholders including nurses, staff and parents) in effectively addressing the multiple sexual discourses in society. Accepting these discourses without being critical of them can lead to "stereotyped, idealized and fragmented views of sexuality" (p.7). An effective school-based sex education program should therefore help youth recognize and question the myriad of sexual discourses in the media.

Weeks

Like Foucault, Weeks (1985) makes a connection between capitalism in society and sexual discourses. He notes that "the articulation between sexual mores and capitalism occurs through complex mediations- through moral agencies, political interventions, diverse social practices" (p.22). As consumerism grew in the 20th century, so did the capability to buy sex in different media formats, through pornographic movies, magazines, books, etc. Sexual discourses continued to grow, further engaging into a plurality of resistances that emerged on the political stage, in the media and in schools. The opinions shared by groups like politicians, activists and religious organizations, often shaped by history, beliefs and hegemonic traditions, has ultimately led to sex becoming a matter of public debate.

Unlike Foucault, Weeks (1985) does not identify a period in which sex became politicized, but claims that the onset of the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) disease and the sexual revolution both had a great impact on bringing sexuality to the forefront of political debate. He argues that health concerns, fear and a quest for

power have led to increasingly rigid social regulations revolving around sex, as well as the need to identify and categorize sexualities other than heterosexual couples. Weeks theorizes that the "commodification of sex" (p.21) that has occurred since the sexual revolution has also had a profound influence on sexual discourses. For instance, corporations have not failed to observe the marketing potential that rose from selling pleasure to a population with increasing disposable income. Industries such as the Playboy magazine removed some of the stigma behind sexual discourse. By the 1970s, sexual discourses were present in all forms of mediums from television to film. Thus, the commodification of sex also played a role in bringing sexual discourses related to pleasure to the public sphere.

Discourse: moral vs. desire

According to Weeks (1985), while the conversation about sex became more progressive, it was the conservative groups that took advantage of the sexual discourses becoming a more public affair. Many of these groups adopted a moralistic discourse that viewed "sexual anarchy [as] the explanation of social ill" (p.34). These conservative groups preyed upon the fear of the end of the traditional family (through rising promiscuity), and of disease (AIDS), to promote certain religious morals and impose social regulations on sexual behaviours. And within these conservative discourses, desire was repressed. He argues that this repression does not only occur in political and social spheres, but in the study of sexuality as well, where desire is rarely considered. The paradox remains that, while sex is often regarded as a matter of social concern, its very essence is of a personal nature. Thus, desire should not be ignored, due to its role in inspiring sexual behaviour. In spite of this, this aspect is often omitted from sex education

programs, especially in the USA, in favor for strictly biological or moralistic content (Fine, 1988; Weeks, 1985). To Weeks (1985), desire should be acknowledged and included in sexual discourses, because it is that which both power and knowledge seek to understand and control, in order to regulate sexuality in society. Foucault (1990) provides five manners in which desire is suppressed and controlled by dominant discourses and Weeks (1985), in my opinion, adds the 6th: the manipulation of desire as a marketing ploy by corporations.

Power

The omission of desire in sexual discourses is not the only challenge that Weeks (1985) identifies in the social understanding of sex. He also claims that while sex is a fluid notion constantly subjected to change, society has established traditional notions of sexuality that defeat its very nature. Despite it being multifaceted and ever changing, individuals frequently constrict their understanding of their own sexual identities to terminology based on binaries and absolutes (for example: male versus female, heterosexual versus homosexual, a pleasurable experience versus an immoral act). Neither the dynamics nor the grey area in between sexual discourses are acknowledged in these binaries, which ultimately affects how individuals perceive themselves. These false binaries allow for dominant discourses to control how the masses understand their sexual identity, in opposition to an "other". They establish meaning through the definitions they assign, the terms they use, the language they do not create. Individuals are accepted, or segregated by the social constructions of their identity created by institutions or the groups of people in different fields (sociologists, historians, etc). The media is a site in

which individuals struggle to legitimatize the meaning they assign to sexuality, and sexual identity.

Weeks (1985) suggests that in order to battle the dominance of certain discourses, society needs to recognize these discourses and seek to rework narrow definitions and practices. He identifies moralistic discourses and consumerism as symbiotic forces dominating society's perceptions of sexuality, through the manipulations of fears and desires. Both Giroux (1996, 2002, 2006, 2006b; Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Giroux & Simon, 1989) and Baudrillard (1968, 1970, 1970b, 1976, 1979, 1983, 1985, 1993, 1994, 2002) will support and expand on his theory. Further, Giroux explains how society can resist these influences that occur through popular culture by recognizing them in the process of learning critical media literacy in schools.

Giroux

The works of Giroux (1996, 2002, 2006, 2006b) and his collaborations with Simon (1989) and Pollock (2010) explore the profound impact of popular culture on society, from understanding individual identities to perpetuating hegemonic ideologies. He has established popular culture as both a political and pedagogical site, which he urges educators to embrace in order to provide youth with the tools to understand the underlying structural forces behind what they know as popular culture through media literacy (Giroux, 2002; Giroux & Simon, 1989). Media literacy, according to Giroux and Pollock (2010), "means teaching methods of interpretation [of popular culture] and providing tools useful for social transformation" (p.215).

An overview of culture and power

Giroux (1996) includes media literacy under the umbrella of a larger field, cultural studies. Cultural studies as a field of study is constituted of the elements of culture that, unlike high art, represent a subordinate discourse in our society (Giroux & Simon, 1989). Popular culture can form an alternative to traditional hegemonic messages that occur in the media, through alternative discourses that resist those of the dominant groups (Giroux, 2006b). Nevertheless, popular culture can also pertain to elements intended for the consumer masses, thus yielded by dominant groups. I believe that it is especially important to note this dichotomous nature of popular culture, as both a subordinate discourse and a means of transmitting dominant values. This understanding of the dual use of popular culture is especially releavant in order to study its effects and impacts.

Site for dominance

Popular culture according to Giroux (2002) is a political site where power is negotiated, and the interests of dominant groups are perpetuated in a manner barely noticeable to its audiences, thus providing it with a great deal of unchallenged power. The discourses present in the media have the capacity to influence audiences over issues such as identity, representation of a culture, history, sexuality, etc. Thus, there is both a pedagogical and a marketing opportunity within popular culture (Giroux, 2002; Giroux & Pollock, 2010). As corporations are largely in control of the means to disseminate popular culture, whether through Hollywood films or magazines, they also have the power to instill messages and values within the images and texts they produce that engage their audiences to embark into consumerist trends (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). On a

broader scale, corporations participate in forming a society in which certain hegemonic ideologies are reproduced, whether they are political or moral.

Giroux & Pollock (2010) claim that large industries that wield power over the media have the ability to control meaning and desires for their own purposes. He uses the Disney Corporation as an example to demonstrate how the representations offered in certain forms of popular culture create a reality laden with subliminal political messages. For instance, *Aladdin* (1992) suggests some underlying racist concepts, while movies like *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) contribute to reproducing gender stereotypes. Even in more recent films like *Enchanted* (2007), the male chooses the beautiful, naïve princess rather than the business woman he was previously engaged to, who herself only achieves happiness when she relinquishes her job and follows a man into his world. In addition to affecting gender roles and perceptions of cultures, Disney has also made it clear its views on homosexuality, by promising the Southern Baptist Convention in 2005 that its content would be geared towards family values, after the religious group had boycotted the corporation for eight years due to homosexual content in a show on ABC (Giroux & Pollock, 2010, p.205). Nevertheless, popular culture can also become a site where these values are debated.

Site of resistance

Popular culture, as a site of resistance to dominant ideologies, can become a medium in which subordinate cultures can have their voices heard (Giroux, 2006b). Amidst the corporations that have taken hold of much of mass culture production, it has become increasingly difficult for public spheres outside their influence to remain untouched by the globalization of culture (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). However, there is

still an opportunity for popular culture to become a site of resistance, through the production of countercultures. This is made possible through the various means of technology available, for instance the user-driven content in the video-sharing site Youtube, but it is essential that youth be taught how to produce in order to ensure that they are able to promulgate their ideas in different spheres of popular culture outside the dominant structure (Giroux, 2006). This is part of the process which Giroux calls democratizing the media, and allowing for voices outside the dominant discourse to be heard, as well as illuminating possibilities for challenging dominant Western hegemonic values.

Another form of resistance pertains to recognizing the media, and the corporations in control, as pedagogical sites responsible for molding the minds of their audiences (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). Giroux and Pollock suggest making them accountable for what they show. A method of doing so would be to motivate scholars and activists to be critical of content marketed as popular culture. While some monitoring is currently in effect through means of organizations like the Federal Communications Commission, which regulates degrees of violence and sexuality in television and radio in the United States, I believe that Giroux is looking for a deeper involvement from educators and citizens in ensuring that the media uses its potential as a positive pedagogical tool. An example would be to encourage the promotion of values such as acceptance and respect of others.

While challenging the media is a necessary step into democratizing the sphere of popular culture, Giroux and Pollock (2010) also encourage using popular culture to promote notions of citizenship. They claim that adolescents' disinterest in their civic

responsibility might be due to the absence of a sense of agency, and neglect in teaching them how to be involved in democratic society (Giroux, 2002). By establishing a connection between the texts they are exposed to in their daily lives with larger social issues, they can be inspired to embrace their democratic rights to act and change flaws in society perceived through popular culture.

Youth

Audiences, through media texts, are subjected to a plurality of discourses affecting representations of certain populations. Giroux (2002; Giroux & Pollock, 2010) argues that youth emerge as both a targeted consumer of popular culture as well as a targeted theme within it. Giroux and Pollock (2010) argue that corporations begin targeting children at an early age to become mass consumers, using the Disney Corporation as an example. Disney conducts extensive research on youth, through the use of child therapists and the production of marketing reports. The *Walt Disney Company 2007 Annual Report*, for instance, determined that in 2013, the period of time spent sleeping would be equivalent to the time spent in front of television (as cited in Giroux & Pollock, 2010, p.2). The corporation has understood that while the parents wield economic power, it is young people's desires that must be controlled. Nevertheless, that hasn't stopped Disney from extending its appeal to adults, engaging them to return to their childlike state by summoning them to Disney World or on a Disney Cruise.

Youth, surrounded by a commercial culture geared towards homogenizing their identities, in spite of difference of nationality or sexuality, have little opportunity to resist the overwhelming presence of dominant ideologies in popular culture (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). In addition, their capacity to change the status quo is affected by the

representations of their own generation, and the notions of agency, of possibility and of hope that they are provided.

In movies and television, modern youth are increasingly portrayed as lazy, incapable of deep thought, highly sexual beings, or violent and unstable (Giroux, 2002). Kellner (1995) provides 1990s popular films like *Slacker* (1991) and *Dazed and Confused* (1993), to exemplify this "plight of the twenty-something post-1960s generation of disaffected youth, bombarded with media culture and alienated from the conservative hegemony of "straight" middle-class society" (p.139). They show youth as obsessed with media culture, without long-term goals and disconnected from the society they live in. Movies such as *American Pie* (1999) and its sequels, on the other hand, portray youth as predominantly focused on sex (Kammeyer, 2008).

Giroux (2002) argues that the representation of youth in society is dichotomous, with the media painting a troubling image of the generation on the one hand, and on the other, a variety of discourses suggesting youth are the hope for the future. Giroux claims that youth have been dismissed by the older generations as a lost cause, especially pockets of subordinate groups such as ethnic minorities, or lower socio-economic classes. And yet, society has failed to assume its responsibility in these representations, unwilling to take into account the context behind the trends of violence and sexuality that it claims have engulfed youth. Television, with "its fast-paced format, sound-bite worldview, information overload, and narrative organization- undermines the very possibility for children to engage in critical thinking" (Giroux, 2006, p.129). The media has played a role in creating a generation that has a sense of immediacy and consumerist tendencies. The sphere of politics has also contributed to the current state of youth, by reproducing

inequality in its policies, and leaving citizens to struggle with poverty, a lack of education or in violent communities (Giroux, 2002).

Youth sexualities are continuously an issue of debate, and yet through marketing ploys, sexual behaviour is reinforced in television, film, and advertising (Giroux, 2006). Young girls, for instance, are increasingly sexualized at a younger age in popular culture through representations of sexualized girlhood. In spite of the conservative views of sex in its policies, the USA is a site where child beauty pageants are a cultural phenomenon. Giroux argues that these child beauty pageants represent the loss of innocence of young girls, by pushing them to sexualize themselves at an early age for recognition, money or to escape the social status in which they were born into. Giroux suggests pageantry is promoted as a means to an end, that leads young girls from low socioeconomic background with little other opportunities to a life of modelling. The fashion culture that is resultantly sold to young girls teaches them the social and cultural importance of youth, and beauty.

In other instances, popular culture portrays sexual behaviours as acts that lead to violence (Giroux, 2002). Such is the case in the movie *Kids* (1995), where aspects of life such as drugs, rape, violence, and homophobia are portrayed as consequences of the sexual behaviours and attitudes youth embrace. A more recent example is *The Roommate* (2011), which is a film about a college girl developing an obsessive crush on her female roommate, leading to a series of violent attempts to isolate her from her friends. The movie *Savages* (2012) explores the relationship between two drug dealers and their mutual girlfriend amidst a drug cartel war. Sex, drugs and violence are all prominent, interconnected themes in the film.

Though certain media texts sell the fashion culture to young girls and connect sexuality with violence, popular culture should not be perceived solely through a negative lens (Giroux and Simon, 1989). Sex in the media has also led to youth becoming more tolerant and accepting of sexualities that deviate from hegemonic and heteronormative ideals. For many individuals, divergent sexual acts, identities and preferences have lost their shock value, since they are discussed and portrayed in mainstream media (Kammeyer, 2008). Popular culture has allowed for positive representations of non-normative sexualities through shows like *Will and Grace* (1998-2005), a comedy portraying the daily lives of two females and two gay males, and *The Fosters* (2013), a series that explores the joys and trials of a foster family led by a female couple. Hence, the media is playing a role in challenging the dominant, conservative, and repressive discourses. Further, it plays an important part in providing youth knowledge about sexuality (Bragg, 2006; Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; Kinnick, 2007; McKee, 2012). This is explored further in Chapter 3.

Sexuality in youth, whether portrayed positively or negatively, remains a constant in popular culture, and is policed and managed by dominant discourses most of the time. While social groups might oppose the propagation of views on sex in the media, it remains a constant theme because of its marketing value (Weeks, 1985; Giroux, 2002). Giroux (2002) notes that complaints are usually focused on the pornographic content on the Internet or the progressive content of sex education programs; however, he argues that what is needed is for "progressive and other radical cultural workers" (p.188) to focus on the portrayals of sex and the sexuality of youth in the media.

Giroux (2006) claims that this portrayal might be due to the potential that society is afflicted with a sense of "voyeurism", in which adults are attracted by the sexual and violent depictions of the adolescent world. Film and television reflect, "how youth become an empty category inhabited by the desires, fantasies and interests of the adult world" (Giroux, 2002, p.170). Depictions of youth in media often omit the social factors which might be afflicting youth, such as poverty, lack of sex education or inequality. Aside from impacting how youth think of themselves, these perceptions also affect social policy (Giroux, 2006). Giroux provides the example of the religious connotations behind political acts that have impacted Conservative measures on sex education in the United States during the George W. Bush era. Pro-abstinence programs were increasingly promoted in schools, and the country refused to sign the United Nations Declaration on Children Rights "unless it eliminate (d) sexual health services" (p.79).

Baudrillard

Baudrillard (1968, 1970, 1970b, 1976, 1979, 1983, 1985, 1993, 1994, 2002) generally has worked on several theories revolving around sexuality (or seduction), and the media, particularly in regards to advertising and meaning. I will concentrate on Baudrillard's theories about the media, hyperreality and sexuality. His theories will serve to illustrate how power is transmitted (through signs and meaning), and how this affects individuals' sexualities in society. Additionally, his ideas on hyperreality serve to show how society's understanding of sexuality is both inspired by, and reflected in, the popular culture experienced in mediums such as television and film.

Media, meaning and signs

In his work *Mass Media Culture*, Baudrillard (1970) expresses that popular culture signifies the demise of high forms of art; it appeals to the masses with the intent of promoting consumerism, and of providing a system of signs for society.

Signs, broadly defined, are established as the result of attributing meaning to objects (Baudrillard, 1993). Baudrillard believes that signs and meaning are intimately connected, and interdependent. Objects become meaningful when compared to one another, thus gaining meaning, and becoming signs. For example, a clothing store might carry a dozen, nearly identical black dresses from different fashion designers. However, to the eye of the consumer, these garments become distinguishable because of their brands. A consumer who wants to appear wealthy would choose the Versace dress as a 'sign' of their economic capital, rather than other similar pieces by mass-producing clothing chains with unrecognizable names. The dress by Versace, a popular and glamorous fashion company, is a recognized symbol of high fashion in society.

The meaning carried by signs can be created and reproduced through the media. . Producers of film and television create materials that appeal to general audiences; therefore, they arrange the media texts in such a way that viewers interpret them the same way. Then, by manipulating the realities in the media to simulate what the audience deems to be real, with tricks of lighting, dialogue, identifiable characters, or camera angles, viewers are tricked into believing this false reality (Baudrillard, 1970, 1994). In this simulated world, signs are incorporated in the texts and images. The meaning of objects that are embedded in films and shows, whether they relate to fashion, sex or body

image, teach their consumers about what is valuable. This leads to the perpetuation of messages carried through mass culture.

Baudrillard (1968) argues that value is often attributed to objects which are essentially similar yet somewhat distinguishable (for instance, the example of the black dress). Thus, while consumers seek to assume their individual identity through a selection of objects, they are instead contributing to perpetuating mass culture. Individuals can choose an object for its value; however, ultimately, consumers are relying on fashion to make their choice. Therefore, they are conforming to a collective idea of beauty, one that is promoted in mass culture. Baudrillard explains that consumers understand the meaning of objects based on a classification system designed to attract sets of people according to the value placed upon the object. For instance, different brands of clothing appeal to specific people, based on the images they want to show the world. Baudrillard refers to the power that objects have on individuals when he states, "objects are categories of objects which quite tyrannically induce categories of persons" (p.17).

This process of establishing meaning for objects can occur through "the discourse of advertising" (Baudrillard, 1968, p.18), which is present in the media. It is by advertising, blatantly through commercials or subliminally through signs in films and television, that desire is created and mass culture is reproduced.

Hyperreality

It is crucial to understand Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality to be able to grasp the magnitude of its role in giving meaning to signs and perpetuating the power of the media. In his work *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* Baudrillard (1976) states, "it is now a principle of simulation, and not of reality, that regulates social life" (p.120). To

summarize this idea briefly, he argues that individuals understand reality to be that which is represented in the media, rather than that which is real. As mentioned, television and film producers use strategies like lighting, settings, dialogue and high resolution cameras to create 'realistic' representations of reality that are so vivid, that audiences forget that they are watching a fictional program or a movie. Baudrillard calls this phenomenon of simulating or creating reality through the use of technology, "hyperreality". Hyperreality involves any representations of reality portrayed in the media, as they are all altered versions of what is considered real.

Baudrillard (1993) explains that with the availability of technology and media saturation in society, individuals are constantly faced with these simulations of reality. They are influenced by what they see through the media because they believe it to be reflective of the world. As a result, Baudrillard claims that the original form of reality is no longer present in society, because everything is simulated based on a concept of reality sold by the media, advertising, and movies. He states that reality dies when it is reproduced in the media, by becoming another type of reality, hyperreality, which can also be reproduced if it is represented in another medium. To exemplify this, I offer the example of *The Bachelor* (2002-ongoing), a reality show on television that features several women living in one house and competing for one man's hand in marriage. The audiences are led to believe that these competitors are falling in love with the 'bachelor', after a series of romantic dates and conversations. The image of love in this show can be considered hyperreal, as it is a manufactured representation of romance that is designed to appeal to the female audiences. If a relationship on the television show is discussed in a magazine, then it can be said that hyperreality was reproduced; one medium featured a

reality that originated from another. It is a simulation of a simulation. Therefore, Baudrillard (1976) argues that hyperreality is "not only that which can be reproduced, but that which is already reproduced" (p.146).

Hyperreality affects individuals because they are often unaware of differences between the real and the hyperreal (Baudrillard, 1993). Movies and television series often appear so real, that audiences forget about that the representations of reality come from a television set or a movie theater. The medium becomes lost to the viewers while they watch, listen or read media texts. Baudrillard (1976) claims that the media "attempts a kind of circular seduction in which one can easily mark the unconscious undertaking to become invisible" (p.145). An example of this phenomenon would be high definition television, which offers viewers a crystallized view of actors' features or events; through this technology, the audiences are drawn into forgetting that the characters are fictional, as they seem exceptionally lifelike through the screen.

Sexuality

Sexuality itself has become a sign (Baudrillard, 1993). In advertising, in the media, in popular culture, sexuality is represented through objects such as handcuffs, tattoos and tight fitting clothes. The body has become an aspect of consumer culture that must be improved through the purchase of objects which have been determined by the media, and advertising, to mean beauty, sexuality, or fashion. Thus, personal image is regulated, and commodified.

> You are responsible for your body and must invest in it and make it yield benefits- not in accordance with the order of enjoyment- but with the signs

> reflected and mediated by mass models, and in accordance with an organization chart of prestige. (Baudrillard, 1993, p.111) [5]

Sex also emerges in hyperreality, thus becoming hypersexuality (Baudrillard, 2002). Kammeyer (2008) states the term can also refer to "the level of sexual saturation in American society" (p.11). Hypersexuality is any form of sexuality represented in the media, whether it is a kiss on a television series or pornographic video representations of sexual acts. Using pornography as an example, Baurdrillard (2002) expresses that hypersexuality has led to the removal of seduction and mystery from sex. In pornography, there is nothing left to the imagination for its audience, where sexual acts, situations and fantasies are portrayed descriptively. He argues that in some cases, portrayals of sex seem more real through the medium than in reality, with "the colour, the sharp resolution, the sex in high fidelity, with bass and treble" (Baudrillard, 1979, p.147). Moreover, sex in the media can be romanticized with background music and exagerated, coordinated scenes of lovemaking. Hypersexuality is a product of the media; however, similar to the case of hyperreality, individuals are drawn to believing that the sexual behaviours, expectations and attitudes in the media mirror reality. This can be either because they are unable to "tell the difference between (…) "real" lives and (…) lives as readers, viewers, and consumers" (p.12), or "they prefer the beauty, energy, and excitement of the representation over that which it represents" (Kammeyer, 2008, p.12). Audiences are not necessarily oblivious to hypersexuality, but might be actively choosing to believe these representations of sex are real.

[5] This quote refers to the fashion and advertising industry. However, I think that television shows and films also encourage youth to adopt style trends through 'signs'.

The audiences

The threat of hyperreality is that it is manipulated by those who control the media. Baudrillard argues that the latter seeks to control individuals by instilling "notions of needs, perception, desire" (Baudrillard, 1993, p.71). The media is capable of influencing the masses without revealing the source of power; due to hyperreality, it can also distract audiences into thinking that there isn't one, since they are gazing at themselves through the medium (Baudrillard, 1994).

Furthermore, Baudrillard also warns of the impact of technology. Inspired by Marshall McLuhan's statement "the medium is the message" (as cited in Baudrillard, 1970, p.89), he argues that audiences are also affected by the means through which the media communicates, such as television sets. These have led to "profound structural change brought about in human relations in terms of scale, models and habits" (p.89). With the increasing availability of technology and the prominence of the media in society, individuals have come to expect information to be accessible and delivered quickly (Baudrillard, 1983).

However, with the rising expectation for speed (in transmission of information, and images) in the media and the quantity of information available to individuals, society has reacted by becoming increasingly non-responsive to media texts (Baudrillard, 1985). Baudrillard ponders that this state is possibly a mode of resistance assumed by the population. Mass audiences do not react to the overwhelming amount of media messages as a means of defying the will of the dominant social groups, which view them as unintelligent and seek to influence them through the media. Baudrillard observes, "I would no longer see in it a sign of passivity and of alienation, but to the contrary an

original strategy, an original response in the form of a challenge" (p.208). The media attempts to engage mass audiences, while they remain aware and silent.

Schools and the Media

Giroux and Pollock (2010) state that in order to resist the media and its pervasive influence on society's understanding of culture, gender, and identity, educators must teach youth about the effects of popular culture, as well as the way that popular culture is produced. The Quebec Education Program (QEP) has also recognized the responsibility of schools in equipping youth with the skills and ways of thinking to deal with globalization, and the increasing access to information through various new forms of technology (MELS, 2007). Media literacy (or critical media literacy) has been included in the QEP as a broad area of learning, to be integrated by teachers in classroom activities and discussions. However, in light of the challenges encountered in implementing the reform (as highlighted in Chapter 1), there should be further emphasis in placing a framework for critical media literacy in the curriculum to ensure that all Quebec youth are provided with the same foundation in the topic. This is a crucial step towards successfully reaching the QEP's aim of empowering students in Quebec.

Giroux (2006) states that if educators hope to empower youth, they need to engage students in reaching beyond the narratives they are exposed to ordinarily. Schools also have the opportunity to becoming a sphere in which the conversation about the "knowledge, values, and power produced and circulated through diverse technologies and public spaces" (Giroux & Pollock, 2010, p.215) becomes central in turning youth into critical citizens, who are capable of interpreting and understanding the mechanisms of

power at work behind popular culture. With the fundamental tools to resist the influence of the media, youth retain the agency to affect change in society, and break the barriers of inequality set by stereotypes and hegemonic values (Giroux, 2006; Giroux & Pollock, 2010). Giroux (2002) states that pedagogy and popular culture are interrelated; both produce meanings that are interpreted on an individual basis, and both act as sites where power struggles lead to the transmission of dominant values and ideologies. Further, pedagogy and popular culture share subordinate discourses in their respective fields of education and culture (Giroux & Simon, 1989). In this argument, pedagogy comes second to curricular content, while popular culture does not receive the same respect as high art in terms of the study of culture.

Giroux and Pollock (2010) place value upon the contributions of today's youth, urging educators to "recogniz(e) the pedagogical importance of what kids bring with them to the classroom(…) as crucial both to decentering power in the classroom and to expanding the possibility for teaching students multiple literacies" (p.127). This is an essential aspect of critical pedagogy, which encourages an understanding of education as a democratic space, in which students have the opportunity to voice their thoughts and experiences (Giroux, 2006). Critical pedagogy suggests expanding beyond the restrictions of the traditional curricular content, and promotes an understanding of education through the exploration of social issues and of divergent narratives. Pedagogy in this context, according to Giroux, extends beyond mere technique, to become about practice (Giroux, 2006b). It extends beyond the walls of institutionalized learning, towards grasping "how pedagogy operates outside of the schools in production of knowledge, values, subject positions, and social experiences" (Giroux, 2006, p.9).

Summary

Educators need to acknowledge the power of the existing discourses in the media and employ them in the classroom to contribute to the creation of critical individuals with the capability of recognizing media culture as a political site and appropriating it as a means to resist negative dominant discourses.

According to Giroux (2002; Giroux & Pollock, 2010), dominant discourses are embedded in the multiple facets of popular culture, often offering distorted representations of youth, gender, sexualities and sexual behaviours. While the media can give voice to subordinate discourses, it is largely controlled by corporations that seek to achieve political, social and economic aims. Foucault's (1990) work demonstrates how society seeks to repress and control sexual discourses. Foucault suggests that non-normative sexual desires were perceived as a threat to heteronormativity and therefore, to reproduction; both individual and social. Studying sexuality and creating meanings also served to create a hierarchy in society that reinforced the existing beliefs about the perceived superiority of men and of heterosexuals. Foucault examines how discourses could repress sexuality, through laws, silence and the transmission of knowledge through the family as a site of learning. Kammeyer (2008), inspired by Foucault (1990), shows the prevalent, powerful sexual discourses that exist in the media. Weeks (1985) exemplifies the political and economic impact of sexual discourses in modern society, by examining how sex became commodified in 20th century America, and how sex was manipulated in politics to exclude homosexuals. He observes that desire is often omitted from discourses which is problematic, since it is often manipulated by the media for marketing purposes. Weeks also refers to the media as a site where sexual discourses

establish their power, through the creation of meaning. Baudrillard's work contributes to explain how sexual discourses can impact audiences' understandings of sex. Through signs, the media is able to control meaning that is attributed to objects and manipulate audiences' desires. This is accomplished by simulations of reality that lead to the creation of a hyperreality based on the constructs of those that control the media. Hypersexuality is grounded on the same theory; it is a simulation of sexuality that becomes real to the audiences through the media, either because they want it to be or because they are unable to tell the difference between reality and fiction.

The concept of signs and hyperreality are essential in understanding how the media perpetuates meaning and traditional understandings about sexuality. Through simulations of reality and a complex coding system for signs, dominant discourses reinforce hegemonic ideals about beauty, sex, and youth, not to mention femininity, masculinity and normativity. Corporations serving their own agenda mostly exert the control over media culture, thus representations of sexuality are oriented to fulfilling economic or political purposes. Giroux and Pollock (2010) argue that schools need to step forward and teach youth to recognize the dominant discourses in media culture. I believe this to be important for sex education as well.

In Chapter 1, multiple discourses in sex education programs were reviewed; in this chapter, I examined the works of Foucault, Weeks, Giroux, Baudrillard, Kellner and Kammeyer on multiple discourses existing in media culture. These influential forces affect the way youth understand their sexual identities (and that of others) and the way they create their perceptions of healthy sexual behaviours. However, these existing discourses are also sites in which ideologies conflict and control over meanings of sex

occurs. Thus, youth are caught in the middle of a struggle for power between multiple discourses that are often contradictory. Therefore, it is important to present youth with a sex education program and content that extend beyond the promotion of abstinence, prevention of health threats such as STIs, and brief conversations about relationships.

The third and last chapter of this thesis attempts to explains the way a critical media literacy-based sex education program can contribute to teaching Quebec youth about the complexities surrounding sexual discourses and to better decipher media culture, and help educate youth to develop into critical and sexually healthy individuals.

Chapter 3: A Proposal for the Adoption of a Critical Media Literacy-based Sex Education Program for High Schools in Quebec

The authors whose works were reviewed in Chapter 2, suggest that the sexual discourses that are present in society affect individuals' perceptions of sex, and that media culture is influential in the formation and shifting of these perceptions. Therefore, it seems that the adoption of a critical media-literacy based sex education program would be beneficial for high school students in Quebec, as it would teach young people about sex while analyzing, questioning and producing media texts in the process. After further examination of the pedagogical connections between critical media literacy and sex education in the literature, I explore three programs that have tested the CMLSE approach, in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. I proceed by selecting the program that appears most comprehensive in terms of sex education and media information, *Media Relate* (Grahame, Bragg, Oliver, Buckingham, Simons & Webster, 2005), and outline the potential benefits it would have for Quebec youth. I suggest that following Kirby's (2007) essential characteristics for effective sex education programming may further improve the program proposed for adoption and possibly address a number of issues in sex education that have emerged since the adoption of the reform as identified in Chapter 1. I recommend certain adjustments to the *Media Relate* program bearing in mind the challenges in sex education under the Quebec context, including: negative emotions and attitudes towards changes in the curriculum, a lack of training and resources, a tight schedule in the classroom, challenges implementing guidelines, conflicts during collaborative efforts, miscommunications, and a lack of clarity on stakeholders' roles.

Specific details about the content, activities and materials are not provided in the list of recommendations for the existing *Media Relate* program. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to identify the potential benefits of this program so that it may be considered as an option for sex education programming now or when a future curriculum reform is enacted in Quebec. Kirby (2007) warns that, in order for sex education to be effective, it must be adapted to the community in which it is taking place. With this in mind, the *Media Relate* program and the recommendations based on Kirby's criteria for effective sex education programming should be considered as a basic framework that should be tailored to the needs of Quebec youth.

Finally, I suggest that some of the current challenges with sex education facing educators in Quebec school may have a better chance at being addressed if sex education is re-introduced as a distinct subject matter in the curriculum.

Critical Media Literacy and Sex Education

Giroux (1996) explains that cultural studies consist of "a critical interrogation of the relationship between knowledge and authority, and the historical and social contexts that deliberately shape students' understanding of representations of the past, present and future" (p.45), and the study of social issues like gender, popular culture and sexuality (Giroux, 2006b). Critical media literacy is part of the field of cultural studies, and demands that individuals question the impact that dominant influences have on their lives and on the society in which they live. Kellner (2009b) also believes that cultural studies and media studies should be understood as complementary to one another. He argues that critical media literacy "combines analysis of the production and political economy of

media and the emergence of new forms of digital and consumer culture within textual and contextual analysis of a wide range of artifacts" (p. ix). Thus, in order to understand the power and influence of the media culture, individuals must study a variety of media texts, the way that these texts are produced, and the society in which the media operate.

As a broad, interdisciplinary, and complex field, a multitude of approaches and bodies of literature are recognized within critical media literacy. However, unlike traditional core subjects such as mathematics and languages, a framework outlining key figures to study, essential readings, and theories to approach has not yet been established (Kellner, 2009b). Hence, there is no agreed upon methodology for teaching critical media literacy to students (Kellner, 2009b; Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen, & Fitzgerald, 2008). Kellner and Share (2005) build the aspects of a media literacy program as defined by the Center of Media Literacy to explain the essential concepts that critical media literacy should address: representations in the media, the language/techniques used, the different understandings of messages by the audiences, the discourses present in the messages and the background of media texts (political, economic, or otherwise). Youth empowerment and their critical abilities are honed through exercises of interpretation of media texts, teaching them to question messages, and understand media culture as a product of the time, economic situation, and political context in which it is taking place. By teaching adolescents how to use the media to create their own messages, educators can provide the real tools for resistance to dominant discourses (Giroux, 2006b). In most critical media literacy programs, a common goal is to ensure that youth become active questioners rather than passive audiences (Pinkleton et al., 2008).

Other benefits of critical media literacy-based sex education approaches are that "they attempt to address young people (as do 'their' media texts), as knowledgeable and 'savvy', without predetermining outcomes or preaching to them" (Bragg, 2006, p.322). Bragg argues that similar to sex education programs, critical media literacy should not be taught as being solely preventative, but should promote positive and holistic outcomes as well. Effective critical media literacy programs should also extend beyond the accumulation of knowledge, to the development of skills that enable youth to create their own media products and texts.

Pinkleton et al. (2008) argue that "because sexual imagery is such a common part of media messages, there seems to be an almost intuitive link between sex and media" (p.470). Studies show that youth are increasingly turning to the media as a source of information about sexual matters (Bragg, 2006; Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; Kinnick, 2007; McKee, 2012), which can lead youth to diverse interpretations and understandings of sex. The literature reviewed in this study demonstrated that media culture is a site where sexual discourses seek to control meaning and reproduce hegemonic ideals that can negatively affect non-dominant sexualities such as homosexuals (Foucault, 1990; Kammeyer, 2008; Weeks, 1985). Sex is often manipulated and commercialized in media culture, with sexual behaviours often amounting to unrealistic portrayals and orienting towards advertising 'signs' (Baudrillard, 1993 ; Giroux, 2010). However, for many youth, media culture assumes a pedagogical role as they seek out information about sex anonymously, without judgement from parents, peers or teachers (Bragg, 2006).

According to Bragg (2006), another factor that explains why youth turn to media for sex education is that they are not treated as "innocent" in media culture, as they may

be in the classroom or with their parents. Rather, in the media, they are deemed knowledgeable, and capable of partaking in and consuming sexual discourses. The media culture also broaches the discourse of desire that is lacking in sex education programs (Ashcraft, 2006; Bragg, 2006). Youth can relate to what they see in the media, rather than the traditional way that sexual information is delivered in sex education classrooms (McKee, 2012). Therefore, media texts are able to reach youth where educators often are not, due to limits in their programs, potential fears about offending students or parents, and because they act as figures of authority to their students. Media culture speaks to young people in such a way that they don't feel as though the sexual messages and content they are consuming were produced by adults.

This connection between media and youth represents an opportunity for educators who wish to address sexuality using an approach that varies from the traditional forms of sex education. Ashcraft (2006) explains that the goal of circumventing the rise of STIs and unwanted pregnancies can be achieved as well through this type of program. She states,

> it is the same power-laden aspects of masculinity, femininity, race, class, and sexual orientation that so often prevent teens from making health decisions even when they have the biological and clinical information they need. (p.2148)

Thus, discussing sex education through critical media literacy can open students to more critical, and impactful conversation. Ashcraft explains that, "carefully incorporating these popular texts could also foster the development of critical multicultural sex education that engages students in critique of dominant discourses and power relations around sexuality" (p.2147).

According to Pinkleton et al. (2008) media literacy programs appeal to the diverse classroom (Pinkleton et al., 2008). The format and content of these programs are amenable to adjustments to the needs of the students. Moreover, parents are likely to be more receptive to a critical media literacy and sex education curriculum as the sexual messages within media culture often cause concern for them. Ashcraft (2006) argues that parents will be more receptive to a critical media-literacy based sex education approach because of their worries about the influence that the media has on their kids.

> Some of these parents might be reassured by explanations that teachers are helping youth critically examine the texts they encounter every day, that multiple points of view are entertained, and that these classroom discussions might stimulate opportunities for parents to express their own views as they extend these discussions at home. (Ashcraft, 2006, p.2172)

The Media Practice Model (MPM), by Steele and Brown (1995), exemplifies how behaviour and attitudes can be affected by media culture. The MPM implies that youth are not simply passive recipients that ingest information from the media. In fact, these young people select the materials that entertain them and create meaning based on their individual thinking processes, to finally "apply those meanings in their everyday lives, sometimes actively, but at other times unconsciously" (p.572). The MPM reflects how behaviours can be affected by both logic and emotions, depending on the individual (Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen & Fitzgerald, 2008). By teaching youth to be critical of media texts and encouraging them to reflect on how these texts make meaning, educators have the potential to affect sexual attitudes and behaviours.

Teaching critical media literacy could potentially produce certain drawbacks, which practitioners should be aware of. Some cautionary notes are in order. For instance, Giroux (2002) warns against being overly analytical of popular culture texts, which are primarily means of pleasure for youth. Moreover, while media culture should be explored with students, educators must be wary of changing what these media texts represent to youth (Giroux & Simon, 1989). Media culture is a field that youth consider to be their own; therefore, it is important to avoid appropriating it as a means to reinforce a given ideology, or "colonizing" (Giroux, 2002, p.92) the material. It is important that students not be "othered", by becoming the actual objects of study through popular culture (Giroux & Simon, 1989). Finally, there is also the matter of emotions that may be brought up in the study of popular culture. Emotions can rise up through the experience of "lived difference" (p.243), where meanings can conflict as students share their diverse feelings and experiences over one text. Further, youth might encounter feelings of hopelessness, as they realize that what was familiar and comfortable may have larger social implications than they previously thought.

Critical Media Literacy-based Sex Education Programs

Three CMLSE programs are presented and examined in the the following pages. Only two of these programs have been evaluated and the evaluations are made accessible to readers through publications: *Media Relate* and *Take it Seriously: Abstinence and the Media.* These three programs were selected because they specifically adopted a critical media literacy-based type of sex education.

Media Relate

The United Kingdom's *Media Relate* program was created after an extensive qualitative study by Buckingham and Bragg (2004) revealed that youth in the UK value the media as source of information for sexual matters. They evaluated how children understood sex in media texts, and the factors that affected their interpretations (morals, age, gender, etc.). The study demonstrated that youth are far from being passive audiences; instead, they are often critical of the various, and sometimes conflicting sexual messages that they see in the media.

Inspired by the results of the study, the *Media Relate* program used media education as a means to address the sexuality in the classroom (Bragg, 2006). Four modules, "*Researching Media Images, Magazine Messages, TV Drama,* and *Selling messages* (on advertising) (p.322), were taught in various schools in England to adolescents between 12 and 14 years old. Educators, using the instructional DVD and accompanying information book, spent between 3 to 12 hours teaching the materials to youth. The manual *Media Relate: Teaching Resources about the Media, Sex and Relationships for KS3* is intended for United Kingdom schools, and adapted to the Personal, Social, and Health Education, and Citizenship curriculum (Grahame, Bragg, Oliver, Buckingham, Simons & Webster, 2005). The objectives of each module and each lesson plan were made explicit, and provided details about each activity, extra resources (such as cue cards and scenarios), a time frame and a list of materials needed.

The first module in the program engages students in a project to analyze both media images, and their own reactions to them (Grahame, et al., 2005). After creating a scrapbook that reflects their views of the media, students shared their work and discussed

it on a radio show that explored the question, "are the media teaching young people the right things about love, sex and relationships? What should they do differently?" (Bragg, 2006, p.323). The second module involved role-playing. Students were given cards featuring the opinions of different characters, like parents or editors, collected from magazine publications. Students also created a collage with the content of magazines to illustrate the perspectives they reenacted. An excerpt of the British show *Grange Hill* (1978-2008) showing the effects of a negative sexual experience on a female character, was discussed in the third module. After watching this excerpt, the students followed by, "creat[ing] their own storyline, related to teen pregnancy, for a soap opera"(p.328). The last module engaged students in research, as they adopted the position of marketing agents who were promoting an ad to audiences their age, using a fictional budget.

The results of the *Media Relate* program were overwhelmingly positive. Teachers enjoyed the change from the traditional sex education delivery material, which generally aimed to provide youth with "open-ended activities, in which there was no particular 'right line' to take" (Bragg, 2006, p.323). The *Media Relate* exercises allowed educators to gain insight on the texts that influenced their students and on the thinking processes of the youth that made up their classroom. The discussions and scrapbooks produced reflected the critical capabilities of these youth. Teachers also noticed the benefits of the media as a 'distancing device', as "talking about media characters helped students to express their feelings without embarrassing them by making them admit to a lack of experience" (p.328). Exploring sex through the study of media texts made it both less and more personal, which allowed students to feel less intimidated, and more willing to engage in discussion.

Youth in the study also felt motivated by the activities and were particularly happy to express themselves through the scrapbooks and role-playing (Bragg, 2006). The *Media Relate* program allowed the students to share thoughts and experience the views of others in a safe place for discussion. Looking at multiple perspectives nurtures the empathy within students, and provides the opportunity for each gender to learn about the other. Furthermore, the conversation expanded beyond the moralistic and biological focuses that dominate in the delivery of traditional sex education programs. Truly, youth were dissatisfied with traditional practice of sex education as cited in the Buckingham and Bragg (2004) study, and preferred engaging in discussions of views about homosexuality, relationships, communication, etc. A notable benefit of this program is that it took students' "levels of maturity, knowledge and their desire to learn about sex and relationships, more seriously than other lessons had" (p.330).

Take it Seriously: Abstinence and the Media

On the website "Let's Talk: Teens, Sexuality and Media", the University of Washington's Teen Futures Media Network (2011) presents six main lessons in its curriculum for a peer-led intervention entitled *Take it Seriously: Abstinence and the Media* (TISSAM). Similar to *Media Relate*, TISSAM was adjusted based on findings from a study of the initial pilot program. Most of TISSAM's content was drawn from suggestions and advice given by adolescents during its evaluation period. Its approach is based on the Message Interpretation Process model (MIP) that "focuses on how individuals' interpretations of messages can lead to their adoption or rejection of message content" (Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen & Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 465). Thus, TISSAM was created to circumvent the influence of the media on sexual behaviours of youth by

making them aware of its power and of their reactions to it. The program uses peer educators to teach the material, as they are deemed effective providers of sex education.

The TISSAM program embraces a pro-abstinence discourse, which is typical in the United States according to Pinkleton, et al. (2008) because of the way these programs are funded. However, unlike some more extreme abstinence programs, TISSAM discusses birth control methods other than abstinence in its main lessons. The first lesson, *Using Sex to Sell*, looks at how sexual images are constructed, and how they affect youth perceptions of sex, through discussions about ads (Teen Futures Media Network, 2011). In *Fantasy and Reality*, educators are encouraged to make comparisons between the portrayals of teen parents in the media with the reality of parenting at a young age. A simulation activity ensues, during which students create a budget as teen parents to illustrate the financial burdens of having a child during adolescence. The third lesson *Want to be a Statistic?* involves a Powerpoint presentation, posters and videos on sexually transmitted infections, followed by a game. Furthermore, students are encouraged to continue comparing particular texts produced by the media with their world to develop a better understanding of the misrepresentations of sexual activity that occur in popular media texts. Lesson four, *Reducing the* Risk, involves an adult educator who demonstrates and discusses methods for birth control. The fifth lesson *It's Your Choice* is intended to primarily promote abstinence. Discussions are oriented towards the challenges and benefits of choosing to remain abstinent, and in addition, youth are taught the specific skills to resist peer pressure. Finally, the 6th lesson *Make a Media Message* provides youth with the opportunity to create their own media messages on the

prevention of STIs. Students are exposed to a similar project offered by guest speakers, and directed to research health promotion ads, posters and pamphlets.

The TISSAM program was evaluated in a study,

> To determine if a teen-led, media literacy curriculum focused on sexual portrayals in the media would increase adolescents' awareness of media myths concerning sex, decrease the allure if sexualized portrayals, and decrease positive expectancies for sexual activity. (Pinkleton, et al., 2008, p.462)

The methodology used by Pinkleton et al. (2008) in their research involved a 7 point scale measuring teenagers' awareness of media and sexual myths on television, the desirability of sexual portrayals, their own capabilities in terms of controlling their sexual behaviours, what they expected from becoming sexually active, what they considered to be the norms for sexual activity in teenagers, how they felt about abstinence, and what they thought of TISSAM. Eighty-five percent of participants indicated they enjoyed TISSAM more than other programs they had experienced (p.469). The peer education aspect of the program was well-appreciated, and considered to be strong asset of TISSAM. Researchers concluded that the program would be particularly effective with males, as some studies have shown that boys are not as prepared to criticize sex in the media as girls are. Further, TISSAM had a positive effect on both genders in terms of their attitudes towards sexual activity and portrayals of sexuality in the media. Furthermore, male and female students were less inclined to believe that they would reap benefits from engaging in sexual behaviours, and more prone to delaying their first sexual experiences. In light of their research, Pinkleton et al. argue media literacy "to have a positive influence on adolescents' decision making regarding sexual behaviour" (p.469),

by equipping them with the critical media literacy skills to resist prevalent messages found in the media and use the media to promote their own messages. The materials dealing with sex education became more relevant with the use of media texts. Finally, students were not the only beneficiaries of the program. The training sessions and teaching experiences of the peer educators also helped build upon their previous knowledge of sexual health.

Youth Talk Back

In 2000, Health Canada and Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada collaborated together in creating the program *Youth Talk Back: Sex, Sexuality, and Media Literacy* (Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada [PPFC], 2000). Consisting of 6 modules, it offered teachers, community organizations or other interested stakeholders the flexibility to address many issues in regards to sex education. Reflecting the PPFC's positive outlook on sexuality, the curriculum in the program was adapted to the language of adolescents and features a humoristic, non-judgmental approach to the media and sex. The program focuses on providing youth with the abilities to become "active media consumers" (p.3), by exploring the relationships between the media and their perceptions of sex.

The six modules were based on learning outcomes established by the PPFC (2000a), such as developing an understanding of media operations, recognizing who controls media messages, and creating media messages and texts, among others activities. The student guide is youth-friendly, and has a series of proposed activities for each module to be incorporated in different classrooms, subjects studied, or in separate workshops. Module 1 consists of the foundation for media literacy, where the importance

of media literacy is explained, and key terms are defined. In Module 2, youth explore how the media perpetuates hegemonic ideals about social status, sexual identities, stereotypes, etc. The third module focuses on gender roles and images of gender, encouraging youth to be critical of the existing portrayals of female beauty and representations of boys as insensitive, or aggressive. Module 4 engages students in looking at how sex is used in advertising, while the 5th module compares media portrayals of sex with the reality of sexual behaviour and health. It pushes youth to question whether the images of sex on television, or in the movies, are representative of their sexual lives. Module 6 gives youth the opportunity to learn how to resist the messages transmitted by media, by writing letters to magazine editors, talking on a radio show, or expressing their thoughts on the Internet.

According to the PPFC (2000), "twenty-eight youth (between 13 and 25 years of age) from across Canada pilot tested the kit and their feedback ensured that the content was relevant, helpful, meaningful and interesting" (p.2). Unfortunately, after corresponding with Health Canada, the Canadian Federation for Sexual Health and the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada, I was unable to obtain more information on the outcome 10 years after this study was initially undertaken. Knowing more about the longer term effects of the study would be beneficial to teachers and sex educators in Canada.

Additional programs

I focused my research on *Media Relate*, *Take it Seriously: Abstinence and the Media,* and *Youth Talk Back*, as these programs were designed to deal specifically with sex education through media literacy. However, this does not mean that they are the only

initiatives in which youth are encouraged to study sex as it is portrayed in the media. Incorporating the media in sex education programs is a technique used by teachers and peer educators to make material relevant to students (Ashcraft, 2006). In the sex education program *Esperanza* provided to inner-city youth (the city was not specified), Ashcraft identified the use of film references as an effective method for peer educators to connect with their audiences and to get their attention. As Giroux (2002) states, popular culture has the power to connect students' lives to what they learn in schools and "pleasure to meaning" (p.2).

Furthermore, in media literacy programs, analyzing sexual content in the media can be useful to achieve social or political aims. In the media literacy workshops provided by *Girls Inc.*, a non-profit organization in Canada and the USA, girls from 6 to 18 are encouraged to explore portrayals of females in the media through age-appropriate activities (Girls Incorporated, 2013). The program centers on gender rather than explicitly on sexuality. In this program, girls explore topics ranging from violence in media, to female stereotypes, to images of beauty. *Girls Inc. Media Literacy* nurtures the development of agency in young girls by encouraging them to use the media to promote positive female images, and challenge the unhelpful status quo in the marketing industry.

In a Swedish media literacy initiative that involved high school youth studying the movie *Lilya 4-ever* (2002), which deals with sex trafficking, the Swedish government hoped to "promote gender equality and decrease the sex trade" (Sparrman, 2006, p.168). Sparrman observed three classes to examine how youth understand sex trafficking through film and analyzed their discussion about the portrayal of males in the film. This media literacy program served the dual purpose of reducing social issues pertaining to the

sex trade and teaching about a number of aspects of sexuality, including gender, consent and male sexuality.

A Program for Quebec

I choose *Media Relate* as a potential program suitable for Quebec for numerous reasons. The *Youth Talk Back* program offered a diverse number of activities in the student guide designed to attain several, positive learning goals; however, I found the lack of information about the program's successes and challenges were problematic (PPFC, 2000, 2000a). Kirby (2007) encourages that sex education programs should be based on those that have been previously tested, evaluated and synthesized. *TISSAM* "uses media literacy to communicate information regarding abstinence and sexual health to young people" (Pinkleton et al., 2008, p.463); however, according to Giroux and Simon (1989), educators should avoid using popular culture (in this case, media culture) solely to support dominant discourses. Critical media literacy should also encourage students to discuss the positive aspects of the media, and engage them in exploring the diversity of the messages that permeate media culture texts (Bragg, 2006). Though the *TISSAM* curriculum offers activities outside its core curriculum that engage students in speaking about broad topics, including "sexting", non-heterosexual relationships and dating violence, I believe these discussions would be limited by its pro-abstinence discourse (Pinkleton et al., 2008; Teen Futures Media Network, 2011).

In addition to the benefits of critical media literacy and *Media Relate* that were previously enumerated, this program also has the potential to appeal to Quebec schools and youth. Though this thesis does not cover the literature on the current state of media

literacy as a broad area of learning in Quebec high schools, *Media Relate* would effectively address the goals determined by the MELS. According to the Quebec Education Program,

> school is called upon to play a major role in enabling students to become familiar with the functions of the different media, to master the different modes of communication employed, to develop the critical judgment necessary to take full advantage of the possibilities they offer and to recognize their potential effects. (MELS, 2007, Chapter 2, p.11)

The *Media Relate* program would fulfill these goals, in addition to introducing young adolescents to an innovative form of sex education. Further, *Media Relate* complies with one of the overall goals of the QEP by addressing the needs of students in the context of modern society (MELS, 2007). As this critical media literacy initiative involves active student participation in discussions and activities and encourages educators to regard youth as producers of knowledge about the media and sex, the program also conforms to the outlook of the MELS on the roles of teachers as guides (Grahame, et al., 2005; MELS, 2007). Furthermore, as the *Media Relate* program bases itself on the views shared by students, the classroom adopts a socioconstructivist approach, which is promoted by the QEP (MELS, 2007). The diverse activities, which range from arts-based methods, to role-playing, to discussions, also create the opportunity for educators to appeal to the different learning styles and interests of students. The objectives for each module, currently corresponding to requirements of the curriculum in United Kingdom schools, can be modified to reflect the competencies encouraged by the Quebec Education Program.

Media Relate was also effective in making the material relevant to youth through diverse activities and by appealing to their interest in media culture. McKee (2012) states that the problem with school-based sex education is often that youth are unable to relate to the content of the program and their attitudes towards sex and sexuality conflict with how it is portrayed in schools. The positive response in the evaluation by Bragg (2006) suggests that Quebec youth and teachers might be responsive to a similar program.

Similar to the Montreal organization Heads and Hands *Sense* project, *Media Relate* is non-discriminatory (Grahame, et al., 2005). The decentralized conversations about sex and the media allows for students to express themselves without making the subject overly personal, and the open-ended activities can help prevent the fixed intent of a program to impart perceptions of sex, such as pro-abstinence beliefs or views on sex as 'violent' or 'wrong'. Students explore their own perceptions about the media and sexuality, and throughout the program, they also have the opportunity to hear what others have to say in a non-judgmental atmosphere. The *Media Relate* guide suggests that before lessons begin, educators establish rules with students that include respecting others and avoid providing details that could be considered as too personal. Media as a distancing device allows for discussions and questions about sex to occur without students incurring judgment over their relationships, views or existing sexual practices.

Providing sex education through critical media literacy also opens up discussions that go beyond the biological aspects of sex, to look into how power dynamics and the commercialization of sex affect youth perceptions of sex and their behaviours. Linking sex education and critical media literacy also allows students to examine how the media plays a role in reproducing hegemonic ideals of gender and sexual identity. This form of

sex education promotes a postmodern version of pedagogy, which Jones (2009) describes as "analysis of concepts of truth, authority, and reality" (as cited in Jones, 2011, p.159). This approach allows for a wide variety of texts to be explored, and questioned. Educators can "explore the experiences and voices of minority and oppressed groups"; therefore, it may have potential benefits for adoption in diverse and multicultural classrooms (Kellner & Share, 2005, p.372). While *Media Relate* does not specifically target media texts from different cultures, if the program were to be adjusted for Quebec youth, this should be taken into consideration, as Quebec is a diverse and multicultural society with diverse and multicultural media texts and views on sex. The program was also tested in different school settings in England by Bragg (2006). She suggested that there might be some backlash about the program in the future, this is likely considering there is no universally approved form or standard of sex education. A critical media literacy-based sex education has the potential to appeal to marginalized parents of different ethnicities or religious beliefs other than the dominant social group. Pinkleton et al. (2008) argue that parents from marginalized social groups might be receptive to critical media literacy-based sex education because of their concerns about the impact of the media on their children, through their engagement with television, film, on the Internet, and in magazines and the news media. As mentioned previously, engaging into broader conversations about sex could foster acceptance for school-based sex education from conservative parents, rather than strictly focusing on sexually transmitted infections or condom use (Ashcraft, 2006). This is not to say that these conversations would disappear, but they would seem less controversial if they were integrated within the activities and dimensions of a critical media literacy program. Ashcraft also suggests that

the schools actively involve all parents, and explain the objectives of the sex education program in place. She claims that parental concerns should be taken into account when delivering sex education, but if parents receive the appropriate information about the approach to sex education used by the schools and are asked to become engaged in their child's learning about sex, it is more likely that marginalized parents will accept the program. If successful, integrating marginalized parents in the delivery of critical media literacy-based sex education programs could reduce the ideological differences interfering with the sex education of youth.

As Kirby (2007) noted in his study on sex education programs, "comprehensive programs were effective in different communities, in different settings, and with different groups of young people (e.g. different sex or different racial and ethnic groups)" (p.102). Presumably, not all Quebec parents would be accepting of *Media Relate*, and while the program was successful in England, there might be different results in the province. First, the needs of Quebec youth should to be evaluated and *Media Relate* should be adjusted to the requirements of MELS. Second, the program should be tested. Pilot projects in small settings will ultimately decide whether this form of sex education would conflict with ideological differences and the beliefs and values of various marginalizedreligious and cultural communities.

Suggested Modifications

The following section is intended to highlight some possible adjustments to *Media Relate* if the program were to be adopted for use in Quebec schools. I refer to Kirby's (2007) criteria for effective sex education programming, based on his extensive

study of 19 successful abstinence and comprehensive sex education programs in the USA. He identified the 17 common qualities in existing, effective sex education programs, and divided them in three categories (see Appendix C). The next section of this chapter addresses these categories and is organized under these subtitles. Within these categories, I also discuss the issues with sex education since the reform, including negative emotions and attitudes, insufficient training, time and resources, inconsistent delivery of sex education in schools and collaboration difficulties, lack of communication, and the unspecified roles of stakeholders.

1-The process of developing the curriculum

As previously stated, any sex education program under consideration for adoption by Quebec's schools should be based on peer-reviewed research, methods that have been evaluated and professional advice (Kirby, 2007). The current guidelines in *Sex Education in the Context of Education Reform*, are the result of the collaboration of a multitude of experts from the health and education sectors (Duquet, 2003). However, there is an inconsistent delivery of sex education programs across the province, making it difficult to understand whether schools base their delivery of sex education on effective methodologies (Otis et al., 2012). *Media Relate* is empirically validated, and was developed based on extensive research (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004; Bragg, 2006). While the latter yielded generic results pertaining to the relationship between youth and the media, it is recommended that research be conducted in the province to confirm similar results to ensure that the program would be reconfigured based on the needs of Quebec's youth.

Another concern in examining policy reform in regards to sex education is the availability of resources (Kirby, 2007). This study has revealed that resources in schools have been difficult to access since the reform, due to administrative problems and lack of financing. Thus, attention must be paid to the existing budget and resources accessible to educators if this program is to be offered in schools. Kirby states that the "designed activities [should be] consistent with community values]" (p.131), and that a new sex education should program should be tested in schools before it is implemented in the classroom. *Media Relate* is designed to be non-discriminatory and was tested in schools with diverse populations (Grahame, et al., 2005). However, I reiterate that pilot studies should be conducted in multiple settings, including rural and urban, as well as multicultural classrooms. The Quebec context is unique, in terms of language and culture, and the program should be mindful of the cultural values and beliefs of youth and parents.

Kirby (2007) also recommends that sex education programs should be based on a theoretical approach that establishes health goals, identifies sexual behaviours that encompass risky sexual activity, and suggests activities that could make these behaviours safer. The *flash pedagogy* approach suggested in Quebec's reform guidelines is not considered to be conducive to behaviour change and does not offer students a sex education that is based on tested approaches (Kirby, 2007; McKay et al., 2001; Trimble, 2012). Kirby's study on effective programming (2007) reinforces the importance to base sex education programs on existing , proven theories, such as the Information-Motivation-Behavioural Skills (IMB) model that was previously discussed in Chapter 1. The IMB model is based on providing information to youth that would ultimately lead to adolescents adopting positive sexual behaviours (PHAC, 2008). It should be "practical,

adaptable, culturally competent and socially inclusive" (p.38). To complement the knowledge, the IMB model suggests that emotional, personal, social and motivational factors be addressed so that students understand what affects their behaviours. Finally, there needs to be some practice of skills beneficial to behaviour change, including negotiation skills, and practical skills including condom instruction. There was no information provided in the literature indicating if *Media Relate* is based on a theoretical approach for sex education. However, as the program is grounded in research that assumes youth are presently "actively seeking information from several potential sources, and making judgments about a range of potential conflicting messages" (Bragg, 2006, p.320), *Media Relate* can be understood as operating according to Steele and Brown's (1995) Media Practice Model. The MPM model is based on the understanding that behaviour is influenced by the selected media texts that are most often chosen by adolescents. Both the Media Practice Model and the IMB model are based on this potential of influencing youth's sexual behaviours by providing knowledge and skills. Therefore it can be assumed that these two theoretical frameworks may be somewhat compatible. However, a challenge with using the IMB model included in *Media Relate* is the potential conflict between seeking to achieve behavioural outcomes and exploring media and sex through open-ended activities.

2(a)-The contents of the curriculum itself: curriculum goals and objectives

Kirby (2007) suggests that health goals should be established in effective sex education programs, which is an integral piece of the IMB model. In order not to limit *Media Relate* to a preventative outlook that would transpire through discussions and activities, and to keep the program free of an established discourse, I propose that the

aims of the program also include understanding the social, political, economic and cultural issues pertaining to sex, sexual identity, the sometimes conflicting discourses of desire and gender, in addition to the development of critical media literacy skills. *Media Relate* was effective in allowing adolescents to speak about topics such as the portrayals of homosexuality and sexual behaviors within the media; however, the program is based on a curriculum fit for 12-14 year olds, and the content should be adjusted to include further material for older youth in high schools to reflect upon (Bragg, 2006). In addition, any progressive sex education program based in critical media literacy must necessarily reflect the goals and intended outcomes suggested in the Quebec Education Program.

In order to meet the requirements for explicit information on the factors that affect behavior, as well as understand the types of behaviour that lead to specific outcomes, any version of *Media Relate* provided to Quebec students should include information on sexually transmitted infections, and methods of contraception typically included in more traditional programs (Kirby, 2007). There are opportunities within the existing activities to integrate this biologically-based content without portraying sex as necessarily negative. For instance, Module six is based on a research activity in which students are asked to seek out information on a range of facts or issues concerning sex, contraception, stereotypes, and sexually transmitted infections, which they publish in a fictional campaign and present to their classmates (Grahame et al., 2005). This activity explicitly encourages students to produce their own media texts, and offers them the opportunity to become peer educators for a session within the classeoom. In order to cover the range of sexual content that would need to be addressed, the teacher could suggest the topics to

research, or provide alternate opportunities for students to examine the range of topics that may not have been covered.

2(b) - The contents of the curriculum itself: activities and teaching methodologies

Kirby (2007) also recommends that the classroom should be a safe space in which open discussions can take place. In Bragg's (2006) study of *Media Relate,* there were no reported conflicts; however, further evaluations should be conducted in Quebec as the population differs from the one in Bragg's study. The existing *Media Relate* program reflects an effective methodology, activities that are age-appropriate, as well as including topics "in [a] logical sequence" (Kirby, 2007, p. 131). The study by Bragg (2006) did not measure the impact of the curriculum on students' reactions to the media texts provided within the program, or their interactions with media following the program. It would be useful to gauge whether the activities contributed to changing perceptions of the media and increasing youth's critical capabilities, rather than simply focusing on whether the program appealed to stakeholders and addressed specific content.

3-The process of implementing the curriculum

Kirby (2007) emphasizes "the ability of the educators to relate to young people is what makes a difference" (p.134) and this is important to ensure the successful delivery of sex education. Motivation and belief in the necessity of an effective sex education program are conducive to positive results within the shift of students' behaviours and attitudes towards sex (Otis et al., 2012). This was a significant challenge to the delivery of sex education in Quebec since the 2001 reform and to the implementation of the QEP. However, *Media Relate* obtained encouraging feedback from teachers in the Bragg

(2006) study, who felt that the approach was refreshing and appreciated the student participation and interest in the program.

Some dissatisfaction with the 2001 curriculum reform in Quebec has stemmed from a lack of communication between stakeholders. Therefore, information about implementation of learning situations to evaluate competencies have been shared too late or not at all (Havard, 2010; Poirel, 2009). However, the *Media Relate* guide offers step-by-step instructions for each activity, in each module, along with notes on the subject, curriculum objectives compliant to the United Kingdom schools, and the order in which activities should be held (Grahame et al., 2005). Maintaining this format for the guide could help Quebec teachers feel prepared for the material and less discouraged by lack of information. Successful initiatives for sex education in Quebec in the recent study by Otis et al. (2012) were dependent on explicit guidelines and support. These explicit guidelines should include support in terms of curriculum and goals, resources and appropriate teacher training (Kirby, 2007). The issue of support was a recurring theme in my research, as several studies revealed that stakeholders in the reform and in sex education did not feel as though they were supported by their colleagues, community organizations, school boards, or the MELS (Havard, 2010; Otis et al., 2012; Poirel, 2009). Resources, both financial and material, were difficult to access, and teacher training for sex education varied across the province (Otis et al., 2012). The program *Media Relate* does not guarantee that resources and training will be provided. While the booklet is informative and possesses a good amount of resources within it, the needs of teachers should be assessed before considering implementing such a program in schools. As Kirby (2007) states, "virtually all the [effective sex education] programs trained their educators in the

implementation of the curriculum" (p.15). Being explicit to teachers and others involved in the program about their roles as sex educators and the content they are addressing would also possibly diminish conflicts between stakeholders. *Media Relate* is a program that does not require collaborative effort from school staff or outside sources (Bragg, 2006); however, if it is adjusted to include their involvement, a clear outline of responsibilities should be established in order to avoid miscommunications and conflict (Otis et al., 2012).

Furthermore, Kirby (2007) states that educators should address as many elements of the sex education curriculum as possible. As discussed in Chapter 1, shortage of time available to incorporate aspects of the reform outside the core curriculum of Quebec schools is a problem. I believe that it is essential for a program like *Media Relate* to be given space within the explicit curriculum in order to ensure that teachers have sufficient time to conduct the activities and that they do not assign priority to other topics (Havard, 2010; QPAT, 2006). A number of successful sex education initiatives in the Otis et al. (2012) study were given specific time allotments. Kirby (2007) suggests that program evaluations are also influential factors in regards to fulfilling the objectives of the curriculum.

Finally, the last characteristic suggested by Kirby (2007) for effective programming pertains to peer educators. He recommends that they be provided with the resources, support and incentives to participate in sex education programs. The literature I examined throughout this thesis suggests that peer-led interventions are an effective strategy in sex education and critical media literacy classrooms (Ashcraft, 2006; Garneau et al., 2006; Pinkleton et al., 2008; Sriranganathan et al., 2010; Trimble, 2012). Though

Media Relate actively involves teacher supervision, it also includes a peer education component in its 6th module, where groups are asked to present their work on a health-related campaign to the rest of the class (Grahame et al., 2005).

According to the criteria established by Kirby (2007) for effective sex education programming, there is still considerable improvement that could be made to *Media Relate*. However, based on the merits of the program and critical media literacy, *Media Relate* has the potential to be a solid framework upon which a critical media literacy-based sex education program can be built. The program suggested by Bragg (2006) and Grahame et al. (2005) possesses several positive qualities that could benefit Quebec educators and schools. It can appeal to the diverse classroom, with its flexible content and non-discriminatory approach. Also, the media as a distancing device directs students towards more objective and non-judgemental conversations, and helps prevent feelings of discomfort and embarassment. The program does not limit itself by promoting a specific outlook on sex or values pertaining to sexuality. It offers a progressive form of sex education, that promotes open conversation about sex through the discussion of the media.

The program itself is not a solution to the number of challenges that have emerged in sex education since Quebec. For this reason, I propose that Kirby's (2007) criteria be considered as guidelines to adapt *Media Relate* to the Quebec context. The current issues in sex education in Quebec are complex and numerous. This study identified some of the larger challenges, including teachers attitudes, insufficient time, training and resources, difficulties caused by collaborative efforts and miscommunications, inconsistent delivery of sex education and lack of clarity on the roles of stakeholders. There is no easy or rapid way to resolve these issues in sex education. However, I suggest that using criteria for

curriculum programming such as those offered by Kirby (2007) might potentially reduce the number of problems in Quebec's sex education.

Ultimately, I believe that there is a need to re-evaluate the current form of sex education suggested by the QEP. Whether or not *Media Relate* is used as a framework, re-introducing a sex education program in the curriculum and aiming to address Kirby's criteria could help reduce the number of issues in sex education since the reform. Understanding and mitigating the multitude of problematic factors in sex education is essential for the health and well-being of Quebec youth.

Conclusion

Two of the principal objectives of this research were 1) to study whether a critical media literacy-based sex education would be beneficial for Quebec youth, and 2) to address the issues in Quebec's school-based sex education since the 2001 curriculum reform. A revised version of *Media Relate* would provide the dual ability to inform youth about the power of media culture and introduce youth to a progressive, effective type of sex education. In addition, it would inspire teachers to use media texts as "sources of learning in their own right" (Grahame et al., 2005, p.5).

The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 indicated that sex education is often challenged by the limits established by the discourses prevailing in programs and ideological conflicts derived from different views on the roles of sex education and divergent religious beliefs. The critical media literacy-based sex education as prompted in the program *Media Relate*, attempts to break these boundaries by promoting open-ended activities and discussions of sex through the analysis of media culture and providing

youth the opportunity to produce their own meaningful media texts about sexuality (Bragg, 2006). It provides educators with the opportunity to address material that is relevant to youth and affect their sexual behaviour (Bragg, 2006; Steele and Brown, 1995). *Media Relate* does not eliminate sexual discourses, nor does it ignore cultural or religious beliefs. Rather, it encourages non-judgmental discussions, and steers away from subjective and problematic personal histories shared through the use of the media as a distancing device. Evidently, it will not solve problems that emerge from the diverse classroom, but it might prove to be a step forward in dealing with divergent ideologies and beliefs.

Media texts have the potential to be informative in regards to sexual matters (Bragg, 2006), and they can simultaneously reproduce negative stereotypes (Giroux, 2002), commodify sex (Baudrillard, 1993; Weeks, 1985), and reproduce hegemonic ideals of sexuality through the influence of dominant discourses (Foucault, 1990). A program based on *Media Relate* would be an effective way to prepare youth to become critical citizens and fulfill the objectives of the QEP to provide students with multiple sets of skills and knowledge, that assist them to enter both the work force and society (MELS, 2007). While I do not disagree that sex and media literacy are broad areas of learning, I argue that in light of the challenges in implementing aspects of the reform outside the core curriculum, *Media Relate* could be a complementary program introduced in the curriculum. Its inclusion in the curriculum would ensure that youth receive a foundation of information and skills pertaining to sex and media culture in addition to an interdisciplinary approach. This study has revealed that issues like teachers' emotions and attitudes, insufficient training and resources, lack of time, inconsistent delivery of sex

education, miscommunication, conflicts arising in collaborative efforts and a lack of clarity on stakeholders' roles negatively affect the delivery of sex education in Quebec. However, as STIs and unwanted pregnancies are still prevalent in the province, and the media has assumed an unmediated role in youth sex education, the adolescent population in Quebec should be provided with an effective and comprehensive sex education program. Kirby (2007) has stated that "about two-thirds of the curriculum-based sex and STD/HIV education programs studies have had positive effects on teen sexual behaviour" (p.14).

This study on the benefits of critical media literacy, as a stand-alone subject and as an approach to sex education, supports the initial assumption that it would be beneficial to use it as a means to provide sex education. Though each of the three programs analyzed, *Media Relate, Youth Talk Back* and *TISSAM,* had individual merits, *Media Relate* stands out as holding the best potential for Quebec schools. This assertion is based on the program's content, approach and the peer-reviewed evaluation of the program. Kirby's (2007) criteria for effective sex education programming was employed to evaluate where some potential modifications will need to be made for Quebec youth. One recommendation of this study is that the challenges that have been confronted in sex education since the reform must be necessarily addressed to comply with Kirby's criteria for effective sex education programming. While there is merit to Duquet (2003)'s assertion that sex education should be explored through different subjects and be the responsibility of the community at large, sex education needs to be given a specific space within the curriculum to ensure that effective sex education is provided in all schools. Otis et al. (2012) argued that the most successful initiatives were those integrated as

programs within the curriculum, or introduced through interdisciplinary activities. If Quebec's educational policy makers should reconsider sex education as a specific subject within the curriculum, this thesis hopefully highlighted the merits of a CMLSE framework, and the potential for the adoption of the revised *Media Relate* program, that holds the promise to prepare educated, empowered and media literate youth who can decipher the sex-related discourses prevalent in different media cultures.

Suggestions for Further Study

Throughout this thesis I tried to illustrate the need for further evaluation studies to be undertaken on current sex education programs in Quebec, and the challenges faced by educators delivering sex education in schools following the implementation of the reform. Furthermore, before schools attempt to integrate a critical media literacy-based sex education program, whether it is a modified version of *Media Relate* or another framework, I suggest further studies and evaluations be done in order to measure the reactions and needs of Quebec youth, educators and parents to the program. The literature on critical media literacy reveals that it has pedagogical possibilities that extend beyond providing sex education. It is recommended that education researchers and education policy makers be encouraged to pursue research in this field of cultural studies as it pertains to curricular reform in education in general, and to teaching difficult and sensitive subject matter in particular, in intercultural and multicultural contexts.

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Appendix A

Sexuality Education Discourse Exemplar

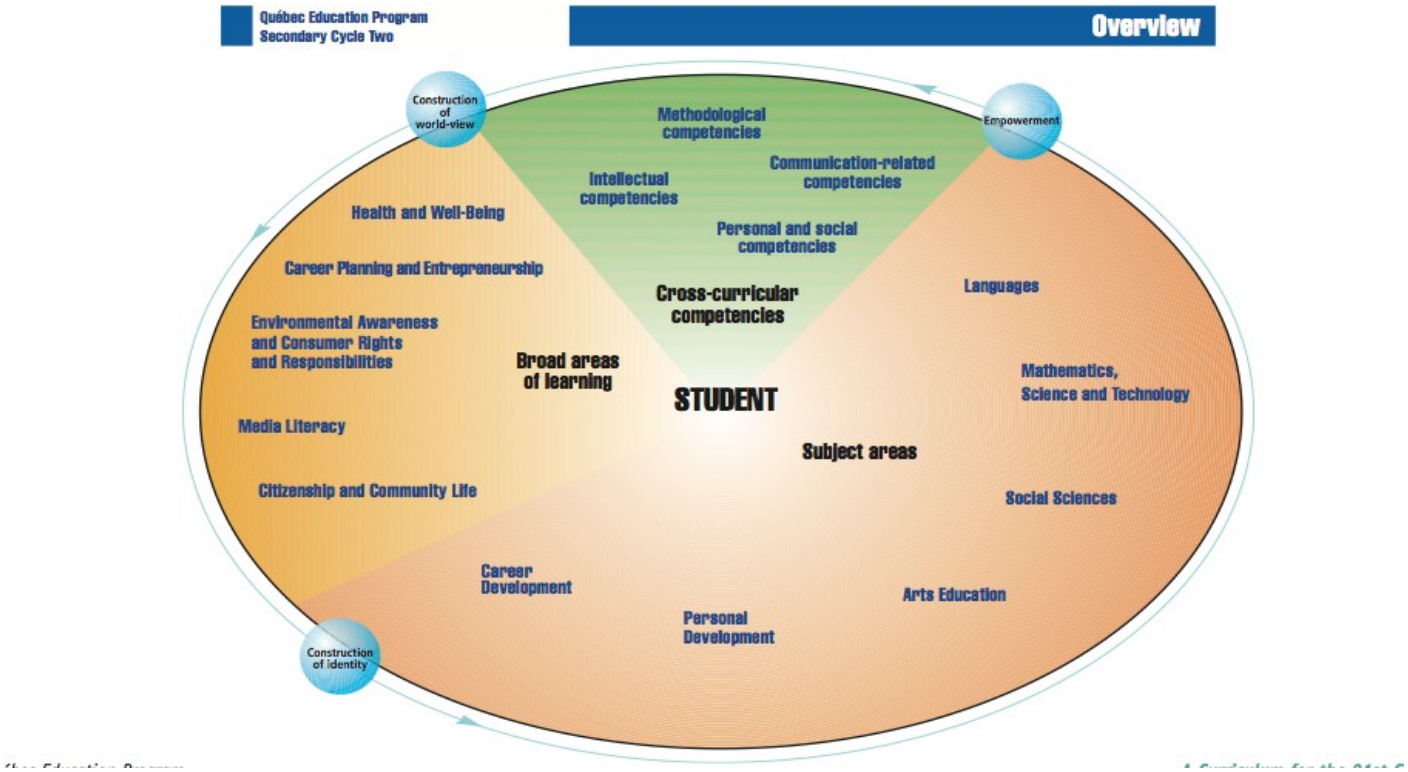
TABLE 1 Sexuality Education Discourse Exemplar

Orientation	Sexuality Education Discourses
Conservative	1. Storks and Fairies
Transmitting dominant sexualities	2. None/Nonapproach
	3. Physical Hygiene
	4. Sexual Morality
	5. Birds and Bees
	6. Biological Science/Biological Essentialism
	7. Abstinence-only-until-marriage Education
	8. Christian/Ex-gay Redemption
Liberal	9. Sexual Liberationist
Teaching sexuality skills and knowledge for personal choice/development	10. Comprehensive Sex Education
	11. Sexual Risk
	12. Sexual Readiness
	13. Effective Relationships/Relationships Ed
	14. Controversial Issues/Values Clarification
	15. Liberal Feminist
Critical	16. State Socialist/Sexual-Politics
Facilitating integrated student action based on alternative sexuality principles. Redressing marginalized sexualities	17. Sexual Revolutionary Socialist/Radical Freudian
	18. Radical Feminist
	19. Anti-discrimination/Anti-harassment
	20. Inclusive/Social Justice
	21. Safe and Supportive Spaces/Caring Communities
	22. Gay Liberationist
	23. Postcolonial
Postmodern	24. Poststructuralist
Theoretically exploring sex, gender and sexuality frameworks and positions	25. Postidentity Feminist
	26. Multicultural Education
	27. Diversity Education
	28. Queer

(Jones, 2011, p.135)

Appendix B

Quebec Education Program Overview



(MELS, 2007, p.25)

Appendix C

Characteristics of Effective Curriculum-based Programs

Table 7-1: Characteristics of Effective Curriculum-Based Programs

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE CURRICULUM	THE CONTENTS OF THE CURRICULUM ITSELF	THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM
1. Involved multiple people with expertise in theory, research, and sex and STD/HIV education to develop the curriculum	**CURRICULUM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**	14. Secured at least minimal support from appropriate authorities, such as departments of health, school districts, or community organizations
2. Assessed relevant needs and assets of the target group	6. Focused on clear health goals—the prevention of STD/HIV, pregnancy, or both	15. Selected educators with desired characteristics (whenever possible), trained them, and provided monitoring, supervision, and support
3. Used a logic model approach that specified the health goals, the types of behavior affecting those goals, the risk and protective factors affecting those types of behavior, and activities to change those risk and protective factors	7. Focused narrowly on specific types of behavior leading to these health goals (e.g., abstaining from sex or using condoms or other contraceptives), gave clear messages about these types of behavior, and addressed situations that might lead to them and how to avoid them	16. If needed, implemented activities to recruit and retain teens and overcome barriers to their involvement (e.g., publicized the program, offered food or obtained consent)
4. Designed activities consistent with community values and available resources (e.g., staff time, staff skills, facility space and supplies)	8. Addressed sexual psychosocial risk and protective factors that affect sexual behavior (e.g., knowledge, perceived risks, values, attitudes, perceived norms, and self-efficacy) and changed them	17. Implemented virtually all activities with reasonable fidelity
5. Pilot-tested the program	**ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES**	
	9. Created a safe social environment for young people to participate	
	10. Included multiple activities to change each of the targeted risk and protective factors	
	11. Employed instructionally sound teaching methods that actively involved participants, that helped them personalize the information, and that were designed to change the targeted risk and protective factors	
	12. Employed activities, instructional methods, and behavioral messages that were appropriate to the teens' culture, developmental age, and sexual experience	
	13. Covered topics in a logical sequence	

(Kirby, 2007, p.131)

Appendix D

List of Media Texts Discussed in This Study

In film:

Aladdin (1992). Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker. (p.71)

American Pie (1999). Directed by Paul Weitz. (p.74)

Beauty and the Beast (1991). Directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise. (p.71)

Dazed and Confused (1993). Directed by Richard Linklater. (p.74)

Enchanted (2007). Directed by Kevin Lima. (p.71)

Kids (1995). Directed by Larry Clark. (p.75)

Lilya 4-ever (2002). Directed by Lukas Moodysson. (p.103)

Savages (2012). Directed by Oliver Stone. (p.75)

Slacker (1991). Directed by Richard Linklater. (p.74)

The Roommate (2011). Directed by Christian E. Christiansen. (p.75)

In television:

Dawson's Creek (1998-2003). Created by Kevin Williamson. (p.2)

Grange Hill (1978-2008). Created by Phil Redmond. (p.97)

One Tree Hill (2003-2012). Created by Mark Schwahn. (p.2)

The Bachelor (2002-ongoing). Created by Mike Fleiss. (p.80)

The Fosters (2013). Created by Bradley Bredeweg and Peter Paige. (p.76)

Will and Grace (1998-2005). Created by David Kohan and Mac Mutchnick. (p.76)

In magazines:

Playboy (p.67)

Appendix E

List of Programs Discussed in This Study

Sex education:

Bois-Vivant de New Richmond school-based program (p.46)

Esperanza (p.103)

Ontario school-based program in the Windsor and Essex County (p.25)

Personal and Social Development (PSD) program (p.28)

Programme Express Protection (PEP) (p.21)

Quebec school-based programs (there were no names provided in the studies) (p.44-45)

S'exprimer Pour une Sexualité Responsable (SPUSR) (p.21)

Teen Outreach Program (p.20)

The Sense project (p.22)

True Love Waits (p.19)

Critical media literacy:

Girls Inc. (p.103)

Lilya 4-ever program (p.103)

Critical media literacy-based sex education:

Media Relate (p.95)

Youth Talk Back (p. 101)

Take it Seriously: Abstinence and the Media (TISSAM) (p.98)