Analyzing Stakeholder Perceptions of Gaps in Public Sexuality Education: Curriculum, Context, and Community

Kasey Lee Richardson

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Brett D. Jones, Chair
Jennifer M. Bondy
Christine Labuski
Donna Fogelsong

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ABSTRACT

Sexuality education in public schools in the US is a set of curricula geared toward sexual health, sexual identities, sexual acts, associated values, as well as intimacy and relationships (Naz, 2014). Taught under the curricular umbrella of family life education in the present study, it is governed by state and federal legislation and shaped by community values. It is also uniquely controversial both politically and personally (Drazenovich, 2015; Giroux, 2011). In this study, I developed research questions grounded in Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT): a contemporary, comprehensive theory of sexual identities and behaviors (van Anders, 2015). I also used the theory of legitimate peripheral participation, which is a well-established theory of social interaction that can explain how learning occurs within and around a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). I analyzed the curriculum of two rural public school divisions in the southeastern US to identify salient categories of curricula relevant to the research questions. I also interviewed 29 school personnel and community partners involved in the curriculum development and guest lectures. I aimed to identify differences in their perceptions of the curriculum as well as how students may have learned about sexuality in out-of-class contexts (for example, the internet, pornography, peer-to-peer, in households, etc.) (Charmaraman, Lee, & Erkut, 2012; Tight, 2016). Results indicated that participants perceived adolescents engaging in informal learning about sexuality elsewhere. The participants reported trying to help adolescents bridge these gaps in instruction with community partnerships, guest lectures from health professionals, and referrals to resources inside and outside of the school. I conclude that curriculum, context, and

community are overarching principles in teaching and developing sexuality education. The evidence gathered and interpretations presented provide a rich description that drives implications for stakeholders interested in increasing curricular comprehensiveness.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Sexuality education (or sex ed, also sometimes called family life education) in US public schools is a course that teaches adolescents about sexual identities, sexual activities, values, and relationships. It is a controversial topic due to its history, the politics associated with it, and differing values surrounding it across communities. In this study, I looked at the sexuality education curriculum of two rural school divisions in the southeastern US. I also interviewed 29 school personnel and community health partners involved with the curriculum and guest lectures, paying special attention to different perspectives that were raised about the topic. Results showed that participants were perceived that adolescent students would search for information on sex (such as among their peers, at home, on their phones, and watching pornography) when not given the information they wanted in the classroom. Participants also perceived concern that adolescents would engage in sexual behaviors as a result of out-of-class learning, and they attempted to provide referrals to in-school and community resources to bridge the gap between what was taught in the classroom and what was learned out of class. The research also uncovered different views on opting out of sexuality education, abstinence, pregnancy, disease (STI) prevention, and use of technology and apps.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Dolores Flores-Silva, my undergraduate advisor and Professor of Latin American Languages, Literature, and Cultures at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, US.

Without the foundation in critical thought and analysis that Dolores shared with me through discerning instruction and rigorous assessment, I would lack the finesse and agency to make my writing come alive. Nearly two decades ago, she introduced me to the complex and cerebrally riveting constructs of sexuality, gender, and women's studies through art, cinema, linguistics, and culture. She cultivated my talent for language acquisition and qualitative inquiry and unveiled to me the power of written and spoken words at every occasion.

Dolores has held a light beside me in my most troubled times and esteemed my every accomplishment as if it were her own. She is tenacious and acutely caring of others. Her passion for knowledge is unparalleled. I am grateful that she galvanized me into studying abroad in Mexico, the most transformative decision of my life. I even have the indelible memory of her interrupting my presentation in a seminar 15 years ago to ask me, "Are you ready for graduate school?" She knew to challenge me at that moment, and I hope to lead others just as intuitively.

I also dedicate this work to Dolores' mother, Juve. Doña Juve's limitless generosity, compassionate spirit, personal sacrifices, and endearing smile are all sublime qualities that she passed on to her daughter, thereby influencing countless students, numerous generations of learners, and many emerging scholars—even though she may never meet them.

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A translation in Spanish is provided on the following page. Una traducción al español se proporciona en la siguiente página.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Many humans embody and express sexuality, both individually and with partners, through sexual acts for a variety of reasons. In fact, a study by Meston, Kilimnik, Freihart, and Buss (2019) documented nearly 240 distinct reasons for engaging in sexual activities such as conveying attraction, pursuing pleasure, experimenting, reproducing, establishing a social status, and relieving tension, sexual or otherwise. These reasons also include claiming personal and group identities, conveying attraction, seeking and fostering intimacy and relationships, having a family, boosting self-esteem, and exploring spirituality (Adam, 2000; Conroy-Beam, Goetz, & Buss, 2015; Lamb, Lustig, & Graling, 2012; Lehmiller, 2014; Meston & Buss, 2007). The assertion of power, aggression, violence, and revenge are also motivators (Meston, Kilimnik, Freihart, & Buss, 2019). Furthermore, some humans do not express aspects of sexuality for reasons such as identifying as asexual—that is, as “a person who experiences no sexual attraction” (Canning, 2015, p. 55)—or experiencing some form of sexual dysfunction (Bulmer & Izuma, 2018; Vares, 2017). In view of this, engagement in discourse (equivocal dialogue) on and learning about sexuality, behaviors, and concomitant themes, is pervasive (Carlson, 2011; Foucault, 1978; Hook, 2007).

Most individuals participate in some form of informational exchange on attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices surrounding sexuality in a given place and time in their lives as a result of the communities in which they are enmeshed (Greenberg, Bruess, & Oswalt, 2016). One of the ways in which this transmission of knowledge occurs is through education, whether formally in academic or broader community-grounded contexts like classrooms and public health campaigns, or informally passed on and acquired as a result of personal interest, exploration, and conversation (Charmaraman, Lee, & Erkut, 2012).

Sexuality education in public institutions of learning—or “sex education” as it is colloquially known— emerged in the US as a result of several factors: the progressivist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the social hygiene movement of the early to mid-20th century, and the AIDS scare of the 1980s and 1990s (Boyd, 2007; Jensen, 2010; Tupper, 2014). Contemporary public sexuality education is a polemic issue across the US with deeply entrenched stances in the minds of individuals and policies shaped by polarized governing groups (Strasburger & Brown, 2014). The curricula and pedagogies that comprise sexuality education vary from comprehensive and inclusive—that is, celebratory of individual differences, identities, and behaviors—to the normalization of heterosexuality, the emphasis of abstinence until marriage, the medicalization of reproductive biology, and the pathologization of non-heterosexual sexual acts and identities. There are also contexts in which little to no information is shared, such as schools relying entirely on a student’s family or guardian(s) for instruction (Carlson, 2011; Corngold, 2013; Drazenovich, 2015; Fields, 2008).

These dissimilar approaches to sexuality education largely arose as a result of volatile historical-political discourse on the theme, as well as from differing notions of the meaning of *being an adolescent*. The term adolescent comes from the Latin *adolescere*, meaning “to grow, to mature” and is defined as achieving identity, developing physically, and “[navigating] the sometimes turbulent course from childhood to adulthood” (Rupali, Chhina, Gupta, Grover, Shiva, & Chhabra, 2018, p. 43). This includes being socially constructed as an adolescent within one’s community tied to morals, values, and ideals, all the while potentially experiencing bodily, sexual, and relational changes and curiosities (Carlson, 2011; Corngold, 2013, Naisteter & Sitron, 2010). Indeed, the contested nature of the sexuality curriculum has attracted the attention of educators and scholars from a variety of disciplines for more than 50 years.

Some practitioners and researchers interested in sexuality have addressed specific behavioral patterns among adolescents like abstinence, pregnancy, and sexual violence in educational communities and elsewhere (Bobkowski, Shafer, & Ortiz, 2015). Others have attended to the way in which individuals, deeply entangled in their social milieus, come to learn about sexuality via peers, the media, emergent technology, and experimentation (Klass, 2018; van Oosten, Peter, & Vandenbosch, 2016). Nevertheless, an adolescent's sexual self can be shaped by these community pressures and associated activities (Carlson, 2012). This is a crucial point I expound upon in the next section.

What is significant or unique about learning about sex and sexualities? How does learning about sexual behaviors differ in varied learning contexts? Do attributes of a given context influence how information is presented, shaped, or received? The general goal of this study was to examine the public sexuality education curriculum and to gain insight into the learning of sexuality through interviews with community stakeholders, and I discuss the full purpose in a separate section to follow. I begin by exploring the background of public sexuality education and the nature of learning contexts to narrow the scope of the questions just raised.

Background

Globally, sex education within communities has an array of histories firmly seated respective in familial, cultural, religious, and societal beliefs. Although these world perspectives are outside the scope of this study, it is important to situate my inquiry into sexuality education as essentially comprised of context and community. That is, sexuality education is comprised of knowledge socially constructed within communities that are responsible for its transmission in various ways over time (Fivush, Habermas, Waters, & Zaman, 2011). Because of this, my approach to this topic is social constructivist: it is born from a worldview in which members of a community and, in related terminology, society, learn from one another and collectively construct their knowledge and their interpretations of reality in both formal learning contexts and by means of everyday cognition and informal exchanges (Rogoff, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1984, 1990).

Regarding formal sexuality education, some locales provide comprehensive and inclusive sex education, where instruction on the use of prophylactics and birth control are provided, and underrepresented identity groups like LGBTQQIAP2 (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, and Two Spirit; Rose, 2019; herein referred to as LGBTQ+) are discussed and validated. Others are more focused on family life education (FLE), a broader umbrella education in human development, personal hygiene, relationships, responsibilities, decisions, various sexual acts, abstinence, and much more (Robila & Taylor, 2019). Scholars and practitioners argue for a national reform of the public sex education curriculum in addition to the creation and furthering of awareness campaigns against sexual violence, assault, and sexuality-related bullying in schools (Klein, 2012). Given the prevalence of sexual abuse, violence, and victim shaming reported in recent headlines across the world, and social activism such as #metoo (Sini, 2017), such reform has rapidly become both an investigatory and pragmatic imperative. Despite these events, the critical spotlight has not entirely shifted to sex education as a tool for individual empowerment. The potential connections to classroom discussions, personal boundaries, enthusiastic consent, and the gradually evolving definition of appropriate behavior in the US has still not been visibly linked to its roots in sexuality education. Some individuals and families still find it uncomfortable or even taboo to discuss sex (Morini, 2017).

History

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the US, the progressivist movement, a sociopolitical movement grounded in Protestant values and morals (Tupper, 2014), was, on many levels, responsible for the implementation of an abstinence-based sex education curriculum and other initiatives with the goal of promoting purity in society. As a result of this movement's ideology, young people's—including adolescents in school and young adults—exploration of sexuality before marriage was linked to alcoholism, drug abuse, and other desires considered primarily physical at the time. These activities were promoted as highly destructive to the self and to the community at large. Therefore, abstinence-only sex education was born in parts of the US with strong associations with the aforementioned behaviors.

By the 1930s, the scientific discovery that diseases were transmitted between individuals began to eliminate the popular presumption that they instead had come as a form of divine retribution (Jensen, 2010; Tupper, 2014). The social hygiene movement of this time then pushed and campaigned to prevent, among other "vices" in the public eye, prostitution and the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among adults (Pivar, 2002). Later, adolescents, assumedly incapable of restraining themselves and prone to give in to any number of such vices, including sexual activity, became targets of this movement (Boyd, 2007). In response, the federal government introduced a nationwide standard for sex education that stressed abstinence, the vestiges of which still pervade curricula and pedagogy to some degree in school districts throughout the US. Furthermore, during this time of upheaval in regulation and in response to these governmental mandates, local and national debates between morality, purity, and the adoption of harm-reducing behaviors as an alternative to abstinence-only pedagogy began to emerge. This controversy still exists in many aspects of formal sex education and the communities that shape it (Kohler, Manhart, & Lafferty, 2008; Lindberg & Maddow-Zimet, 2011; Rubenstein, 2017).

Current Sexuality Education in Brief

Contemporary, comprehensive adolescent sexuality education in formal contexts is defined as a program comprised of instructional goals geared toward sexual health (Fields, 2008; Rubenstein, 2017). Education as a state of well-being and an awareness of identity, not just the prevention of disease, has emerged through the ability to understand and interpret others' behaviors and the adoption of values surrounding intimacy, relationships, and acts (Ismail, Shajahan, Sathyanarayana Rao, & Wiley, 2015; Naz, 2014). Academics define the scope of this education as the knowledge of one's own body, body image, affirmative consent, pleasure, dating, family planning, and other information that is appropriate for any age (Lamb, Lusting, Graling, 2012; Santelli, 2008). The next sections of this chapter serve as an impetus from which to approach research on comprehensive sex education beginning with a deep understanding of how it intersects with adolescents and their learning contexts. It is key to note here that the term *parents* in this discussion includes legal guardians when appropriate.

Learning Contexts

In the last decade, surveys showed that more than 80% of parents want their children involved in some form of sexuality instruction during middle school, and more than 90% want this instruction during high school (Carlson, 2011; SIECUS, 2009); Friedrichs (2018) and Kantor and Levitz (2017) note that these numbers may be on an upward trend despite the protests of some families and other individuals. Aside from that, given that parents sometimes do not have the proper training, resources, or desire to educate their children on sex—or their children are reticent to discuss the topic with them at all—families may depend on schools to do so for them in a *formal*, public classroom-based context (Corngold, 2013; Naz, 2014). It becomes problematic, though, when parental and community values collide with school policies. How and when children begin sex education, how much they are taught, and the abstinence-only standard are often fiercely debated, engendering mismatches between what students are required to learn in school and what they learn elsewhere (e.g., BBC Health, 2017), potentially generating what are referred to in this study as different *learning contexts*. This can impede or prevent the attainment of formal learning goals in sex education just as it can in any educational program (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Naz, 2014).

Recently, advocates for comprehensive and inclusive sex education have conducted ethnographic studies and other research in order to determine how sex education may be failing its students. In addition to evidence of the current reductionist approach to the science of human reproduction (Naz, 2014), formal educational practices may not recognize the power of *informal* sex education contexts that adolescents are exposed to in everyday life outside traditional classrooms (Carlson, 2012; Charmaraman et al., 2012). Researchers have examined sexuality quantitatively, collecting survey responses and sifting through immense amounts of epidemiological data. They have sometimes arrived at conclusions in contrast with one another regarding the efficacy of various levels of comprehensive education (Sethna, 2010; Sulak, Herbelin, Fix, & Kuehl, 2005). By and large, though, most scholars agree on a single matter: individuals learn about sex and sexuality from many places besides the classroom (Bobkowski et al., 2015; Clark, Brey, & Banter, 2003; Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, 2015). For the purposes of this study, these outside-of-the-traditional-classroom-spaces are named *informal learning contexts*, and they are a concept of primary interest in this study.

Given that the body, sex, and sexuality have been described among the central traits of self in psychological research for a century (Harter, 1999; Magnusson, 2003; Roeser, Peck, & Nasir, 2006), it is possible that there are powerful connections and contextualized knowledge that can be formed and/or found at the intersections between them, potentially in formal and informal contexts described earlier. However, the existence of stigmas surrounding sex and related political controversies can and do hinder sexual health and education programs, failing to address crucial facets of adolescence in the process (Ismail et al., 2015). A strong sociocultural theoretical framework for research can help consolidate the convoluted components of this phenomenon to conduct an analysis of the matter at hand.

Statement of the Problem

Because comprehensive sexuality education can reduce risky sexual acts among adolescents and promote their sexual health, gaps in curriculum can create informal learning spaces where adolescent students learn inaccurate information. This can be problematic for these adolescents and their communities with regard to personal protection and well-being as well as larger public health outcomes. As established, adolescents will often give in to sexual experimentation (Tolman & McClelland, 2011; Van Oosten, Peter, & Vandenbosch, 2016). They also engage in sexual acts for many of the same reasons adults do: a desire for intimacy, to boost positive or manage negative emotions, and for pleasure (Dawson, Shih, De Moor, & Shrier, 2008). Although comprehensive education could inform these students fully about potential outcomes of engaging in various sexual acts, the students often find themselves nearly voiceless in a classroom—that is, what is taught is not necessary what they want to know (Giroux, 2011). In point of fact, in a study by Allen (2008), high school students described their experiences with sexuality curriculum and instruction as "…clinical, de-eroticized, and didactic" (p. 573). In this study, they suggested including topics such as pleasure for all partners (i.e., bodies) involved, teenage parenthood and abortion, and the emotional challenges of relationships, all of which they reported being exposed to through informal contexts regularly.

Leading scholars in sexuality education research have indicated that comprehensive sex education must be (1) present in grades K-12 while still age appropriate, (2) scientifically validated, (3) positive and affirming in its approach to sexuality and pleasure, (4) informative regarding basic human rights, and (5) centered upon equality in gender and sexual identity (Ismail et al., 2015). Additionally, according to Corngold (2013), “Given that many [adolescents] will begin exploring, experiencing, and expressing their sexuality at a young age, there is good reason to believe that such preparation should begin gradually—in the early stages of formal schooling” (p. 477). As stated by Ismail and colleagues (2015), proper sexuality education can also result in the acquisition of fundamental social skills such as listening, decision-making, negotiating, utilizing community resources, and soliciting advice. This is above and beyond any expectation of developing a deepening understanding of anatomy, the biology of human reproduction, the family, and interpersonal relationships. It is also important to note that, according to several studies, early introduction of comprehensive sexuality education materials has largely discouraged more occurrences of sexual experimentation and associated risky behaviors; in fact, some researchers argue that it has instead delayed their onset, though the matter is still up for debate as I explain in Chapter 2 (Blake, Ledsky, Lehman, Goodenow, Sawyer, & Hack, 2001; Erkut, Grossman, Frye, Ceder, Charmaraman, & Tracy, 2013; Kirby & Coyle, 1997; Naz, 2014).

Framing the Research

Contemporary scholarship on communities assumes a socioecological model of human development-in-context, a model comprised of concentric circles extending outward from the individual that exert differing pressures and influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Christensen, 2016). Given that sexual behaviors are often social and interactive, they may be learned at some point through any number of the socially-driven learning contexts mentioned previously. One such context is a model of relationships based in learning among individuals and their communities of practice, or communities of shared interests, called legitimate peripheral participation, or LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2009). I provide more information on LPP in Chapter 2.

I chose LPP to theoretically frame this study on the teaching and learning of human sexuality in formal and informal learning contexts. This theory of human interaction and the sharing of information within communities has been used in the literature where the formality of learning relationships wavers from the traditional teacher to pupil model (Consalvo, Schallert, & Elias, 2015; Safran, 2010). The term *legitimate* is interpreted to mean approaching formality with an awareness of partial, probably non-traditional, and non-Westernized conceptualizations of pedagogy. This entails acknowledging learning that occurs in the absence of buildings, four-walled classrooms, desks, textbooks, exams, or contemporary learning technologies.

One of the outcomes of learning within any community is the production of artifacts; they are generated and shared through social interaction. Crucially, *knowledge* is interpreted as an artifact in a model of LPP, whether tangible (specifically in this case, interpreted from signs or symbols or gained experientially), intangible (acquired through discourse), or some combination thereof. This interpretation has been justified by Svensson (1997) as a result of phenomenographic research. Svensson claims, “knowledge is a question of meaning in a social and cultural context” (p. 163). The artifact of knowledge is not within a vacuum, which can cause the study of it to become convoluted. In interactions with one another, humans can create, transmit, transcribe, manipulate, hide, lose, and destroy this artifact; in fact, this is done frequently without effort. This epistemological assumption impacts my approach to the study and the use of LPP.

In an LPP framework, knowledge crosses formal and informal domains. It is shared and acquired through the execution of tasks among members situated at various levels of power (responsibility, faculty, influence, etc.) in a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Scholars such as Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) and McInerney, Walker, and Liem (2011) have called this phenomenon situated learning or contextual cognition; that is, knowledge inherited from and created by communities and their respective practices over time. In Chapter 2, additional pieces of scholarship on formal and informal learning related to sexuality education are woven into the conversation to uncover differing sociocultural approaches to framing and understanding the problem identified herein.

I utilized Sari van Anders’ (2015) model of Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT) to set boundaries for collecting and evaluating qualitative data in the present study. I define and discuss SCT in depth in Chapters 2 and 3. To shape the research questions, I drew on four sources. First, I evaluated my research sites states’ overarching curricular aims for sexuality education and family life. Next, I examined Ismail and colleagues’ (2015) definitions of an effective sexuality education curriculum—that is, present in all grades, medically accurate, affirming in its approach to pleasure, and centered on rights and equality. Then, I used the previous two sources to select six dimensions of SCT that were within the study’s scope. Last, I conducted theoretical sampling

(Rossman & Rallis, 2017), a method of collecting preliminary information for analysis which I describe in the following section.

The following is a statement of the states' curricular aims that I paraphrased to maintain confidentiality; these guidelines were created and enacted by the state legislature. They do not include lesson plans and provide only minimal instructional resources. According to interview data obtained during the study (discussed in Chapter 4), individual districts and school boards have some freedom to develop their curricula based on the needs of the community while still meeting the state guidelines; per the evidence, teachers sometimes provided less information than given in the guidelines, but not more.

> The state guidelines for K-12 family life education include developmentally appropriate instruction in abstinence education and the importance of delaying sexual activities. Human sexuality, the biology of reproduction, adoption as a positive alternative the case of an unplanned pregnancy, and relationships in the family and community are also addressed. The curriculum encourages parental participation. It also cultivates an awareness of positive self-concept among adolescents and offers strategies for navigating peer pressure according to students' abilities and developmental stages. Parents have the right to review all family life curricula and supplemental documents used in the instructional program, and to opt their children out of any aspect of the program or the entire program if desired (paraphrased from the state's overarching guidelines for FLE).

I chose the following six SCT dimensions to establish the scope and shape the research questions in accordance with an interpretation of empirical findings on sexuality and family life education I present in Chapter 2:

1. Sexual identity: heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, pansexuality, sexual fluidity, panromanticism, romanticism, aromanticism (van Anders, 2015, p. 1185-1188; 1190)
2. Sexual behaviors: oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex, masturbation and mutual masturbation, sexual violence (Garcia, 2009; van Anders, 2015, p. 1197)
3. Enthusiastic consent: must be shared, should be mutually enthusiastic, can be withdrawn at any time for any reason (Morini, 2017)
4. Attitudes or stigmas, if any, toward and use of prophylactics, condoms, birth control, teen pregnancy, STI prevention, abstinence (van Anders, 2015, p. 1204)
5. Relationships with specific regard to sexuality: monogamy, polygamy, casual dating inclusive/exclusive of sexual behaviors, one night stands, friends with benefits, single by choice (van Anders, 2015, p. 1192-1193)
6. Reproduction, biology, medicine, reproductive health (Dastagir, 2018; van Anders, 2015, p. 1183)

Theoretical Sampling

I conducted a systematic review of the chosen divisions' states' guidelines for family life education—the curriculum which encompasses sexuality education at these sites—to finalize the research questions and prepare myself to enter the field. This methodologically grounded review took shape in the form of coding, a process of identifying semantically meaningful and relevant terms and concepts in a corpus of data (Haya, Daems, Malzahn, Castellanos, & Hoppe, 2015; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Coding, utilized heavily in this study, is defined in more detail in Chapter 3. The particular coding technique employed at this stage is known as theoretical sampling, which can provide orientation and direction to a qualitative endeavor; it is "responsive to the data rather than established before the research begins" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 144). Specifically, I examined the guidelines, and words and phrases specific to the statement of the problem were gathered and sorted into a table. I then used this table to help construct research questions that would resonate with participant perspectives, curricular materials, and state guidelines through the previously mentioned analytical and theoretical frameworks. This table is provided in Appendix 1. During theoretical sampling, the scope was limited to content in grades 6-12 in anticipation of the amount of data that would be generated, and to narrow the focus to secondary instruction (middle and high school).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to systematically examine the curriculum, formal and informal learning contexts, and community partnerships that shape public sexuality education in secondary schools and compare them to Sexuality Configurations Theory (SCT; van Anders, 2015) through the theoretical framework of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP; Lave & Wenger, 1991). By means of this comparison and analysis, gaps between theory and practice could be identified, as well as the ways those gaps could be addressed. I accomplished this through two major stages of analysis—content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) and phenomenography (Tight, 2016)—that I explain in detail in Chapter 3. These analyses occurred simultaneously through constant comparison once I completed theoretical sampling and had entered the field to start collecting data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

To complete the study, over a period of two months in 2019, I visited two school divisions and met with participants—that is, stakeholders as defined in the next subsection—involved in FLE. I collected and analyzed curricula and some supplementary materials that participants provided to me using content analysis to produce a descriptive set diagram. I also conducted a phenomenographic analysis of interviews that I held with stakeholders who were specifically involved in developing the curriculum and providing instruction or supplementary lectures such as teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, school resource officers (SROs), and community health practitioners and outreach partners (CHPOPs) to identify differences in their perspectives. I compared these data with SCT (as a standard of sexuality theory) in order to identify gaps in the exchange of information, and how these gaps, if any, were addressed through an abstraction of an LPP framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These steps are presented in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

To examine the aspects and dimensions of public sexuality education as I have described, I developed the following research questions:

1. What are the shared elements and differences among the formal sexuality education curriculum and SCT?
2. What are stakeholders' perceptions of the formal curriculum, and what are the gaps between their perceptions and SCT?
3. How do the differences between the formal curriculum and SCT leave gaps in students' knowledge that they may attempt to fill through informal learning, and how do stakeholders help bridge these gaps?

Table 1 demonstrates the relationship between the research questions, data sources, methods and tools of data analysis, and justification from the literature.

Table 1

Research Methods by Research Question

RQ#	Data	Method, Framework, and Tools	Justification
1	Curricula; SCT dimensions	Content analysis; coding; constant comparison; categorizing; conceptual map; SCT	Devi (2019); Krippendorff (2019); Kuckartz (2019); Schreier, Janssen, Stamann, Whittal, and Dahl (2020); van Anders (2015)
2	Interviews	Phenomenography; coding; constant comparison; phenomenographic map; SCT, LPP	Feldon and Tofel-Grehl (2018); Lave and Wenger (1991); Rossman and Rallis (2017), Seidman (2013), Tight (2016), van Anders (2015)
3	Interviews; curricula and supplementary materials	Phenomenography; coding; constant comparison; SCT, LPP	Feldon and Tofel-Grehl (2018); Hager and Halliday (2009); Seidman (2013); Shavelson and Towne (2002); Tight (2016); van Anders, 2015

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terminology I use throughout the study along with associated definitions.

- Analytical/methodological memo: a notation or partial analysis about what a researcher is learning during the research process and what decisions they make as the study progresses (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)
- Artifact: anything created by one or more persons and passed along for the purpose of sharing cultural insight and knowledge (Norum, 2008); in this study, any object gathered in the field for analysis
- Audit trail: documentation of data-driven decisions a researcher makes as a study progresses that influence the process and/or outcome; a process of documenting decisions to follow the inductive course the data take (Rossman & Rallis, 2016)

- Biopolitics: intentional monitoring and administration of individuals' bodies by their government (Lemke, Casper, & Moore, 2011); political interest in and power over subjects' lives (Foucault, 1978)
- Coding (open, axial, categorical): a process by which units of language in artifacts and interviews are gathered and sorted into one or more hierarchies of categories for advancing analysis (Asgedom, 2017; Kuckartz, 2019; Rossman & Rallis, 2016; Saldaña, 2015)
- Community of practice: a group of people with a shared interest that engage in learning about that interest through interaction, intersection, and sharing (Wenger, 1998, 2009)
- Context: in this study, a process of formal or informal learning of sexuality driven by curriculum and LPP, often embedded in a community of practice
- Criteria of reliability and trustworthiness: predefined steps a researcher implements in a study to enhance the research process' viability and the results' credibility such as self-reflection, procedural and analytical documentation, etc. (Patton, 2015; Shavelson & Towne, 2002; van Manen, 2006)
- Discourse: spoken or written exchange of information; communication and/or debate of ideas (van Dijk, 2009)
- Enthusiastic consent: shared, mutually agreed, and uncoerced consent for sexual activity that can be withdrawn at any time for any reason (Morini, 2017)
- Field: space(s) a researcher enters to gather evidence (Rossman & Rallis, 2017)
- Field note: an observational annotation a researcher makes in the field (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)

- Formal learning: structured learning, often in a classroom-like space with one or more instructors and students plus curricula and activities for engagement (Green, Oman, Vesely, Cheney, & Carroll, 2017; Sefton-Green, 2013; Singh, 2015)
- Informal learning: learning from experience, often self-directed, sometimes driven by curiosity; can also occur with little intention by the learner such as learning new information from unfamiliar surroundings (Hager & Halliday, 2009; Paradise & Rogoff, 2009)
- Interpretivism: the assertion that researchers cannot objectively investigate people because they are influenced by their own beliefs and perceptions; instead, researchers enter the context(s) of those they are studying to find and document meaning in their experiences (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011
- Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP): a theory demonstrating how novice members of a community learn and gain experience toward mastery through participation and informal guidance (Lave, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991)
- Member checking: a process of following up with an interview participant to review findings and the perceived accuracy of what was discussed during their interview (Patton, 2015; Snyder, 2012)
- Phenomenography: a qualitative research methodology often used to interpret interview data and describe variation and difference in perceptions (Åkerland, 2005; Feldon & Tofel-Grehl, 2018)
- Outcome space: a visual representation of a phenomenographic analysis; a map of differences (Tight, 2016; Trigwell, 2000)

- Qualitative content analysis: a method of investigating artifacts and documents to look for and categorize trends, sometimes for judgment or evaluation (Krippendorff, 2019)
- Qualitative inquiry/qualitative research: an inductive, non-numerical form of investigation; can result in rich description and interpretation of social phenomena (Corbin & Strauss 1990, 2008)
- Semi-structured interview: an interviewing process with a set of guiding questions that enables participants to bring up topics related to the study organically (Rossman & Rallis, 2016; Seidman, 2013)
- Sexual acts/behaviors: specific to this study, any way an individual physically expresses their sexuality with one or more partners: all forms of intercourse, non-penetrative actions, etc. with or without enthusiastic consent (Brunell & Webster, 2013; Morini, 2007)
- Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT): a contemporary comprehensive theory of human sexuality capable of expressing numerous aspects of one's sexuality in demarcated but intersecting dimensions (van Anders, 2015)
- Sexual identity: intersections of community, (sub)group, label, associated political leaning(s) (lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, and more); often synonymous with sexual orientation/sexuality (van Anders, 2015)
- Sexuality: a person's sexual identity, orientation, and behaviors; often synonymous with sexual orientation/sexuality (Lehmiller, 2014; van Anders, 2015)

- Stakeholder: a person or group that can impact or be impacted by the activities of an organization, especially the attainment of its goals; "an entity with a stake (interest) in the subject activity" (McGrath & Whitty, 2017, p. 727)
- Theoretical sampling: a qualitative sampling and examination of a predetermined unit of analysis in a set of data to inform the direction of a study often conducted early in the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)
- Unit of analysis: divisions in a sample of data that are labeled, sorted, and categorized; for textual analysis, this could be a word, phrase, sentence, page, etc. (Krippendorff, 2019)

Summary

In this chapter, I presented a brief introduction to sexuality education, its history, and its contemporaneity. I defined formal and informal learning contexts and gave examples of their relevance to the teaching and learning of human sexuality in public education. I established the study's purposes and discussed the types of qualitative analysis I conducted. I presented LPP as the study's theoretical framework and introduced SCT as the analytical framework. I outlined and justified the research questions via SCT and theoretical sampling. I also provided a definition of terms used throughout the study. In the next chapter, I conduct a comprehensive review of the literature on sexuality education as related to curriculum, instruction, and informal learning contexts.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Regarding curriculum in general, theorist Elliot Eisner (1985) writes, "Like a giant gyroscope that strives to maintain its upright position in a wind-blown sea, the school and the programs it offers attempt to withstand or adapt to outside forces. This shifting set of conditions is one of the factors that makes educational planning so challenging" (p. 25). Specific to sexuality education, the US' tumultuous relationship with this area of instruction is due to distinct values among community members, stakeholders, and policymakers. Consequently, adolescents enrolled in these programs are exposed to a range of curricula and practices (Curtiss, 2018; Irvine, 2004). One of the various pressures on sexuality education praxes is biopolitics.

Biopolitics

According to Lemke, Casper, and Moore (2011), the term *biopolitics* is in use today in various disciplines to describe phenomena increasing in frequency with advancing technology. Marks (2006) remarks that biopolitics is simply everyday reality in capitalist societies: education, health, and welfare of people—biological life forms—are tracked, catalogued, and acted upon as one might anticipate would be done to objects in industry. He continues, "Rather than exercising its sovereign right to curtail life in periodic, spectacular manner, politics focuses increasingly on the fostering and direction—the government—of life" (p. 333). In other words, political institutions are increasingly involved in collecting information on, categorizing, and controlling bodies through evolving governmental power. Beyond archives of birth, extensive demographics, work, and death, we have the Human Genome Project, pre-natal screening for genetic anomalies, DNA swabbing and storage in national database of criminal suspects and even novel coronavirus/Covid-19 tracking and cataloguing of related health outcomes (largely positive cases and deaths) in 2020 (CBS News, 2013; Marks, 2006; The Atlantic Monthly Group, 2020).

As an additional example, advocacy groups responded in outrage when the US Census Bureau, a division of the Department of Commerce, released a proposed draft of the 2020 Census that included questions addressing gender and sexual identities (National LBGQT Task Force, 2017; O'Hara, 2017). After only a few days, the draft was updated with the proposed questions removed, and advocacy groups indicating that the move constituted erasing gender and sexual identity. No explanation for the removal of these questions was given other than the first version "inadvertently" included the questions and the draft had been "corrected" (para. 5). Some may consider this biopolitics: political power expressed over populations of bodies by counting (or not counting) them according to specific biological features.

The Straight State

Canaday (2009) traces the lines of government entanglement within the private sexual life of the individual in her work *The Straight State*. She explains that historically, especially in the early 20th century, the US government had been concerned about whose bodies, identities, and behaviors seemed perverse: in this case, any and all non-heterosexual acts and desires. These non-normative individuals were consequently policed, penalized, and labeled degenerate. It was during this time, Canaday notes, that homosexuality emerged as "one of several powerful and competing sexual ideologies" (p. 3). The government's response to this was to paint the homosexual as abnormal, a disfigured person, as less of a citizen than a heterosexual. In this way, the definitions of hetero, homo, and citizen became deeply connected. Their interlocked meanings may have formed the foundation of contemporary notions of heteronormativity, defined as "monogamous, marital, middle class, and white heterosexuality" (McNeill, 2013, p.

826), upon which some current sexuality education curricula are grounded. Additionally, these curricula may be exclusionary or ambivalent toward LBGTQ+ and non-heterosexual populations of students. Curricula may also be reductive and medicalizing of both adolescent and adult bodies and sexual practices. In summation, heterosexual behaviors, including marriage and family, often take center stage in many state or locally mandated curricula (McNeill, 2013).

Furthermore, McNeill (2013) explains that sexuality education entrenched in heteronormativity has its history in regulating women's reproduction, especially among underprivileged and underrepresented communities. It also propagates that non-hetero sexualities are contrary to the laws of nature and establishes highly gendered norms about which desires, what families, and which sexual behaviors are healthy for Americans. It holds heterosexual, vaginally penetrative sex inside a faithful, monogamous marriage as an ideal, conceptualizing what could be termed *hegemonic sexuality*. Thus, heteronormativity in the school curriculum and its associated policies may even enact and legitimize homophobia in formal and informal learning contexts (Blackburn & Pascoe, 2015).

For Garcia (2009), sexism and heteronormativity structure the content of sexuality education and associated instructional practices. If states, policies, teachers, and textbooks label non-normative identities and sexualities as pathological and deviant, or if they completely prohibit discussion of them, students could learn that these sexual configurations do not belong, do not exist, or that they may be related to STIs and mortality. Thus, indifference toward diversity in gender and sexual identities diversity may validate, at minimum, isolation and exclusion of some adolescents among their peers (Pascoe, 2005, 2011), and perhaps in doing so cause them to seek out information elsewhere.

The History of Sexuality

In the seminal work *The History of Sexuality* (1978), French philosopher-historian Foucault rejects the view held among his contemporaries that Western society repressed discourse on sexuality during the 17th through early 20th centuries. He asserts that this was a side effect of the rise of capitalism and that the new, reorganizing governments of the time realized they had to concern themselves greatly in policymaking with marriage, contraception, and birth rates. Consequently, they shifted their interest in sex tremendously due to a simultaneous increase in interest in labor, economy, taxation, and more; in abbreviated terms, biopolitics

Foucault (1978) also notes a growing interest in sexual perversions during the aforementioned period: the sexuality of children and homosexuality, for example. In addition, he argues that sexuality was discussed and explored widely using an idiolect that clearly delineated which topics could be discussed with whom in which contexts. In the West, this dialectic emerged in part as what he calls *Scientia Sexualis,* or the reduction of sexuality to medicine, research and, within discourse, labels and categorizations: a shared but standardized "Truth" about lived sexual experiences. He points to a socio-politically charged interest in sexuality that emerged in the West through a desire to understand the science driving sexuality. This included self-reported acts and discussions among subjects and governing authorities' interests in civil pairings (marriage, etc.), reproduction, birth rates, mortality rates and causes, and related matters intensified. He contrasts this with ancient Eastern cultures, theorizing their distinct discourse on sexuality as *Ars Erotica*, or erotic art, in which sex is valued and examined for the pleasure that belies it. Foucault blames Western conceptualizations of *modernity* for a loss of sexual and other creativity. All in all, Foucault may have been the first to establish sexuality and even sexual identity as socially constructed (Hannon, 2004; Vance, 1998). The socially constructed approaches to the "Truth" of *Scientia Sexualis* found its way into the classroom during the 20th century (Corngold, 2013).

Inquiry, Controversies, and Imaginaries in Sexuality Education

Given the disparities and societal pressures at play in sexuality education, adolescents in formal educational contexts may independently seek out information via other channels. In this chapter, I synthesize studies and literature that illuminate formal and informal sexuality education, including the history of family life education, current laws and policies, queer theory, and empirical research in the classroom. information to current law and policies, and from queering (disruptive) underpinnings to empirical studies. It is significant to note that there are considerably fewer studies that directly address the informal acquisition of the knowledge of sexuality, but many imply the existence or emergence of informal learning contexts within communities of practice. First, though, I address adolescents as public school students and sexuality.

As established, for many students and adults, sexuality and associated discourse is uncomfortable and controversial. In the context of health or family life education classes, at its most restricted, these classes are not taken seriously; abstinence is reinforced and reiterated; and sexual acts are reduced to pathology, demise, and self-destruction (Rubenstein, 2017). Sometimes, the quality or amount of sexuality education is sacrificed in favor of core curricula (Strasburger & Brown, 2014). Furthermore, in formal and informal contexts, adolescents face controlling images; that is, generalized representations in society and culture that marginalize and subordinate non-normative genders, bodies, and sexualities (Carlson, 2012). In light of this, research that recognizes the entangled and sociocultural nature of sexuality education can work to deconstruct these entanglements, potentially leading toward more affirming, inclusive, and comprehensive curricula. Moreover, this kind of research can serve to mitigate the normalized images contemporary adolescents may be exposed to regarding their own sexual development.

I first explore curriculum theory as it relates to the matter at hand, and then formal public sex education under the umbrella of family life education. I align my definition of comprehensive sexuality education with that of the United Nations Fund for Population: a curriculum composed of medically accurate information about reproduction, sexual health, and myriad sexualities and gender identities; cultivation of a positive self-image, attitudes, and values toward sexual well-being; and a holistic embrace of skill sets that promote safety in sexual behaviors (Curtiss, 2018).

Curricula and Controversies

Of academic textbooks and biases, scholar Elliot Eisner notes in his book *The Educational Imagination* (1985) that

> Textbooks not only define a substantial proportion of the content, sequence, and aims of the curriculum. They also *influence the way in which certain topics will be regarded*. The most obvious illustration of this is found in the ways in which textbook have treated women's and minorities' rights and other controversial issues. The kinds of bias subtly conveyed to young children about sex roles and minority groups have been so egregious [and] *sensitive issues are frequently diffused or avoided altogether* by textbook publishers seeking a wide market. Stockholders' investments are not to be jeopardized in the service of education. (p 32-33, emphasis mine)

Without a doubt, restrictive sexuality education curriculum and instruction falls into the community and market-shaped mold described by Eisner three and a half decades ago. In a related vein, Corngold (2013) notes the tenuous capacity of sexuality education to influence adolescents' attitudes and behaviors but argues that the controversies within sex education in the US formed as a result of two opposing sexual ideologies: the restrictive and the permissive. For Corngold, this divergence of ideologies can be simplified into strictly husband and wife sex versus sex of any kind between any number of mutually consenting persons. As this author points out, disagreement in society about what defines sexual morality entails disagreement about how children should be educated about sexual behaviors and sexualities, and that sex education curricula are endemic with implicit representations of what is normal and what is not. When establishing normalcy, he wonders, should students be provided with detailed how-to instructions? Should contraceptive use be demonstrated, and if so, how? Should abstinence-only ideals be asserted? In the US, Corngold's rhetorical questions and the rest of the sexuality curriculum are by and large left to each state to mandate and to each district to design and implement, if at all (Rubenstein, 2017). One way that states and schools include sexuality education is through family life education programs.

Family Life Education

FLE has been defined as "a multidisciplinary area of study…multiprofessional in its practice" and continues to serve as the medium of sexuality education in most states (Arcus, Schvaneveldt, & Moss, 1993, p. 17; Jordan, 2012). The first appearance of FLE as a school subject was in the late 19th century. It included topics such as cooking, sewing, gardening, and nutrition; early in the 20th century, information on childbirth mortality statistics was introduced (DeMaria, 2002; Gordon, 1993). Other household-focused topics specifically aimed at women were included, especially a range of domestic work, in-home birthing, and childcare given the government's interest in population growth at the time. Also included were community relationships and limited human development themes (Lewis-Roley, Brasher, Moss, Duncan, & Stiles, 1993).

It was soon recognized that advancing and, consequently, increasingly complex societal matrices like evolving family structures paired with developing technology and the emergence of new information from a wide variety of fields gave cause for increasing sexuality studies within some schools' family life education curricula. Arcus, Schvaneveldt, and Moss (1993) note that practitioners recognized that the pedagogical practices of prior generations were no longer sufficient. As time progressed, stakeholders in FLE identified shifting family dynamics and trends toward urbanization as factors pushing FLE toward obsoletion (Powell & Cassidy, 2007). Thus, according to the present day Family Life Education Institute (2020), the FLE curriculum nationally, on average, has redesigned and implemented the objectives of enhancing quality of life and providing community resources students as they grow and form relationships of varying kinds. As one contemporary curriculum and formal context for the instructional delivery of sexuality education, FLE was a phenomenon of interest in this study. In some communities, however, there is a lack of inclusion of differing sexualities, gender identities, bodies, and sexual practices in the FLE or sexuality education curriculum, differences that adolescents in these courses will embody through lived experience. Queering sexuality education and spaces of learning is a method that has been proposed to address this.

Queering Sexuality Education

Edelman (1998) takes a distinctively queer approach to sexuality, the drive to reproduce, and the nature of youth. *Queer* as a verb in academic literature reclaims vulgar, derogatory, and slang uses, enabling its predicate to be critiqued and deconstructed. In other words, *to queer* when used herein (and by cited scholars) means *to disrupt violently* or *to exist outside some* *boundary*. In his article "The Future is Kid Stuff," Edelman (1998) describes a collective societal imaginary of children who, by their nature, are unable to protect themselves, children who need figureheads in their lives, children whose "innocence [cries] out for defense" (p. 19; see also Blake, Simkin, Ledsky, Perkins, & Calabrese, 2001). This imaginary of the child is as political as it is personal—a social construction and an iterative, or repeated, social production. We are bound to be birthed, be innocent, grow up amongst other innocent children, have our own children, keep them innocent as we were once kept innocent, and see them off.

Further, the act of sex, or as the author names it *making love*, is perceptually bound to having children:

> sexual practice will be made to allegorize the vicissitudes of meaning so long as the heterosexuality-specific alibi of reproductive necessity covers up the drive *beyond* meaning that drives the symbolic's machinery of sexual meaningfulness and erotic relationships. (Edelman, 1998, p. 22)

To paraphrase: meaningful, intimate, sexual encounters and/or relationships are acceptable under the guise of the social construction of reproduction. Sex for sex's sake is reduced to *other* discourses because it is not necessarily about creating children. Queer and non-heterosexual sexualities stand in opposition to this, and comprehensive, inclusive, and affirming formal sexuality education might not only serve as an impetus from which to resist this construction of sex for reproduction, but may also help adolescents learn about sexuality for pleasure in and out of multiple kinds of mutually consenting adult relationships, and to dismantle controlling images of identities and bodies impressed upon them in informal contexts as well.

Echoing Edelman's (1998)' notions of the child as an imaginary, Corngold (2013) muses whether we protect the innocence of our children by leaving them in the dark about sexual behaviors. He points out, “the urgency of these (and many other questions) pertaining to sex education is exacerbated by our sense that how we answer them will have a substantial effect on the quality of individuals’ lives and the welfare of society as a whole” (p. 462). For Corngold, sexuality education in whatever form it takes, upholding whichever values it assumes, has a tremendous impact on communities. The community members most impacted by this value-driven education, adolescents, have rarely had their perspectives incorporated into decision-making at the policy level (Charmaraman, Lee, & Erkut, 2012).

But how could they if children are an innocent imaginary? How can they impact policy if they must also be protected? In a relevant thought experiment, Stockton (2009) asserts, “[t]he child is precisely who we are not and, in fact, never were” (p. 5). Is it this disconnect between child, adolescent, and adult the set of imaginaries that generate taboos, that govern decisions, that propel normative identities into the spotlight, and that oblige communities to make assertions about a curriculum of sexuality that enforces arbitrary guidelines? One potential answer to these questions is queering the curriculum.

The term *queering the curriculum* (Mayo, 2007) involves the deconstruction of hidden and/or underlying assumptions about lived experience embedded in curricula, thus bringing marginalized voices and underrepresented groups to the forefront. As reported by Carlson (2012), much of the formal sex education curriculum is reduced to binaries: family/not-family, straight/gay, hetero/homo, male/female, with no other options to choose. He states, “binary oppositional sexual identities are not so much natural as *produced by dominant groups to legitimate their domination*, and that the attempt to categorize and police human sexuality in terms of two oppositionally defined categories is both futile and oppressive” (p. 15, emphasis mine). In line with this assertion, it may be ineffective for stakeholders to exclude knowledge on a diverse array of lived experiences, identities, and acts because adolescents will likely observe and experience such an array regardless of formal instruction. However, local school personnel could have little to no say regarding the level of comprehensiveness of their curricula and instructional practices given the role state and federal guidelines play in determining sexuality education and FLE content and associated curriculum provided, if any is provided at all. Accordingly, an inclusive and comprehensive curriculum may open a healthy dialogue not just between adolescents and teachers, but in an entire community of practice via a framework of LPP. It may also discourage discourse through informal learning wherein misinformation and myths can be disseminated. Researcher Jessica Fields explores the nuances and effects of comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education in her ethnography *Risky Lessons* (2008).

Risky Lessons

Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality (Fields, 2008) explores the cultural battleground of sexuality education in the state of North Carolina, where only a decade earlier, the state had enacted a policy of exclusively teaching abstinence until marriage. Fields investigated how three middle schools in the state implement sexuality education, paying special attention to portrayals of young women and people of color both at the sites she visits and in the curricula she scrutinizes, noting that abstinence-only education as defined by state and federal guidelines is historically and systemically problematic, and that it

> has particular damaging consequences for African Americans, young and old…[because] antiwelfare politics have increasingly linked illegitimacy and dependency to unwed African American motherhood by assigning African American women responsibility for the apparent weakening of conventional family structures, gender roles, and class systems. (p. 10)

Fields' (2008) research posed two questions: how do educators adhere to, push against, or even move above and beyond the mandate of abstinence-only, and to what extent do the objectives of such an education further the larger systems of oppression of sexism, heterosexism, racism, and classism? As one measure of reliability, she provided a methodological appendix for transparency in which she documents her decision-making processes as well as more details of her experiences in the field.

Fields' focus on gendered and racialized sex education became apparent through early observations of *some* student testimonies to school divisions in favor of *protecting white girls' virginity* in order to *save their childhood innocence*. The racialized socio-historical rhetoric grows clearer as Fields provides evidence that Black adolescents' misbehaviors are popularly imagined as inherently predatory and intentional, while White adolescents' misbehaviors are construed as innocent missteps and mistakes. Per Fields, this convoluted social narrative is especially clear in the content and delivery of lessons in the sexuality education classrooms.

Fields identified three middle school sites: two lower-middle class public schools (namely a school serving mostly African American students and another serving mostly White students) and one private school (a religious school serving mostly middle- and upper-class White students) to serve as the foci of her classroom observations. The goal of the programs at all three sites was the same: reduce risk-taking behavior among youth through some form of education, whether that be comprehensive education or abstinence-stressed. However, she explored what she names the "racialized and gendered rhetoric of 'children having children'" (p. 33), specifically *Black* children who are bound to racialized tropes of sexual criminality and illegitimate reproduction, as controlling images for the development of sexuality education curriculum, and how this is problematic, especially with regard to the systemically oppressive nature of the instruction. In other words, sexuality education in and of itself should not be developed as or exclusively geared toward a preventative measure for youth, especially Black youth, not getting pregnant to avoid perpetuating the aforementioned narrative. Despite this, she argues that this is largely what she found in the public school sites she visited.

Fields (2008) entered middle school sexuality education classrooms to see the intersections of hidden messages embedded in the curriculum: sexuality tied to gender, race, socioeconomic status, and other social inequalities. At the public school sites, Fields also uncovered ideologically normalized “whitened” or “pink,” able-bodied, slender-formed representations of adolescent and adult bodies. The author notes in particular the absence of the clitoris and the cartoonization of the vulva, uterus, and fallopian tubes in images (which she calls “sanitized” diagrams and descriptions, pp. 33, 112-115). She also made detailed observations on the teachers’ levels of comfort discussing genitalia and associated reproductive and pleasure functions, as well as the students’ reactions, especially to anatomy that typically aligns with being assigned female at birth (vagina, clitoris, etc.) as evidence in favor of her hypotheses of oppression of feminine sexuality and the female body.

Given the data she collected from the community before entering the field through newspapers, interviews with community members, and more, Fields (2008) asserts that the expectations for a classroom were those of a sterile, asexual environment. She notes that this is impossible given the interactions with students: “knowledge and behavior are relentlessly intertwined, gendered, and sexualized” (p. 36) at all sites she visited. While at an affluent, mostly white, private middle school, she uncovered extended time dedicated to sexuality education, with students free to ask questions about anatomy, bodily autonomy, pleasure, and responsible or irresponsible acts. At a predominately White, public, middle-class middle school, she notes the school's and curriculum's position that "only abstinence from all sexual expression outside of heterosexual marriage would keep them safe from physical, emotional, and moral harm" (p. 98). On the contrary, she found that as she entered a primarily Black, lower-income middle school with less time dedicated to the topic and more restricted content, the community called for an even stricter, more reduced, abstinence-only curriculum. She interprets this as evidence of systemic racism and classism as driving forces for curriculum development and implementation.

Fields' (2008) primary purpose for introducing and navigating this issue was utilizing sexuality education as a way to push back against systems of oppression. She poses an important question: "What makes young people's sexual knowledge—and particularly their knowledge of female bodies—so very dangerous?" (p. 138). Fields concludes that a critical feminist sexuality education pedagogy can unmask and break apart embedded systems of oppression that barrage people of color, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, and young women in general who are systematically targeted by the same curricula that claim to protect them. Fields' approach aligns with van Anders (2015) research in that gender-inclusive and queer-affirming, comprehensive models of identity and behavior or education should create space for and champion every facet and intersection of identity, sexual expression, and behavior.

Kinsey and Sexual Behavior

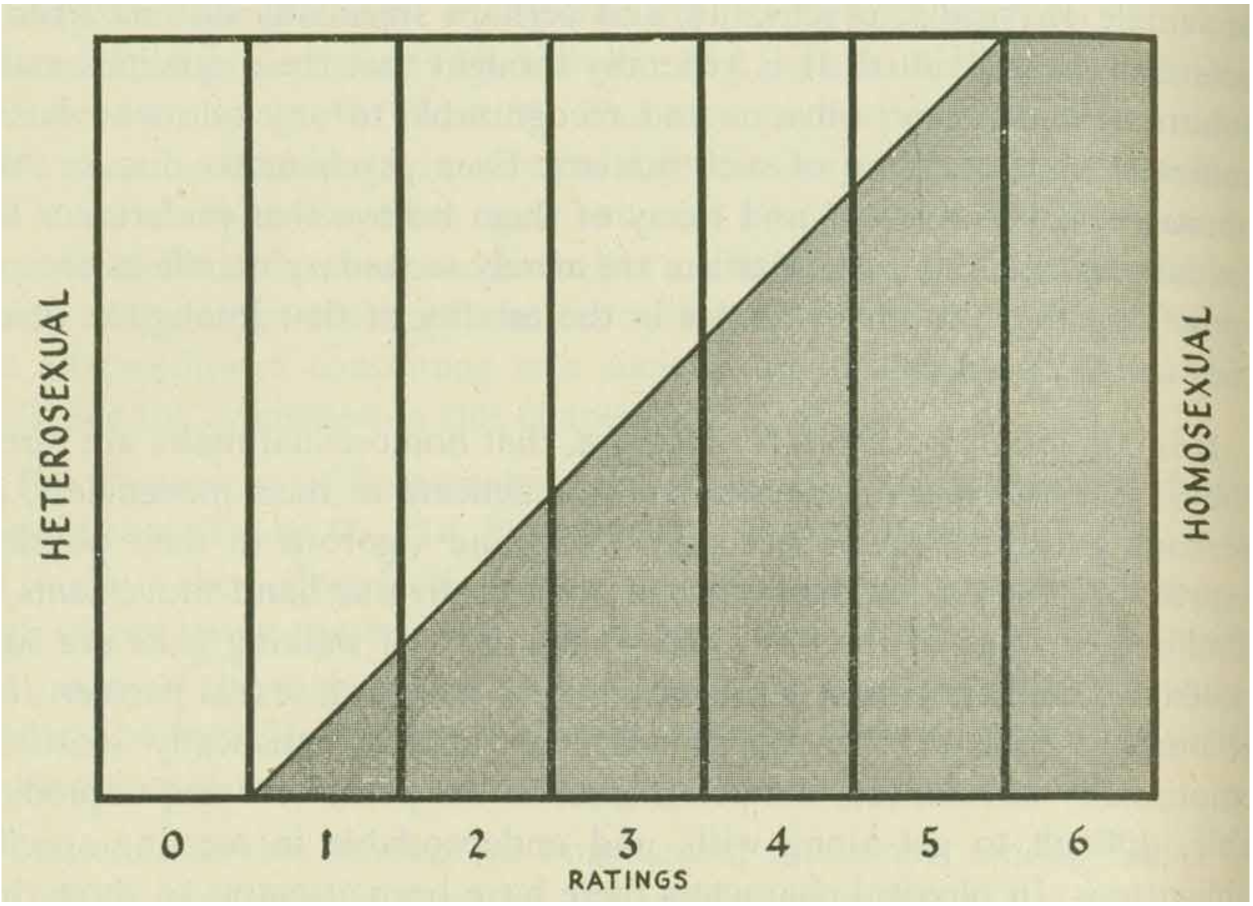
Within the domain of empirical research on sexual behaviors, Kinsey, Martin, and Pomeroy are among the most well-known scholars even though their volumes were published over half a century ago. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Kinsey, Martin, Pomeroy, & Gebhard, 1953) blazed a trail in the social sciences with abundant survey-based data that became known as the Kinsey Report and served as the foundation for the Kinsey Scale, or the Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale (The Kinsey

Scale, 2019), the first popular measure to categorize sexual orientation. This brought considerable attention to these authors, especially Kinsey, who was later named “the father of the sexual revolution” (Bullough, 2006, p. 21). It also brought widespread attention to discourse on human sexuality within and outside academe (Bullough, 1998, 2010).

Kinsey’s model has been expanded upon numerous times since then (Drucker, 2010; Ericksen, 1998), but was insufficient for the purposes of this study due to lack of nuance in identity and behavior. Kinsey’s model is two-dimensional, and individuals are scored on a scale based on their behaviors (for example, no socio-sexual contacts or reactions; exclusively heterosexual; predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual, predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual, and more). Figure 1 presents a depiction of the Kinsey Scale available on the Kinsey Institute’s webpage at Indiana University (The Kinsey Institute, 2019).

Figure 1

The Kinsey Scale, or the Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale



van Anders (2015) has more recently proposed Sexual Configurations Theory, which I already addressed briefly, but now explain in greater detail.

Sexual Configurations Theory

Sari van Anders developed Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT, 2015), in response to the need to establish parameters of sexual orientations unable to be accommodated in other models at the time of publication, as well as from research in sociology, sexuality studies, lived experiences, and "generative" replicable science (p. 1208). It is also important to note that van Anders has affiliations with the areas of neuroscience and science and technology in society, as well as vast experience researching peoples' sexualities in her lab. In defining SCT, van Anders clarifies her intent to recoup the term *sexual orientation* and shift the concepts driving it with SCT. The model is introduced here as a way to interrogate the comprehensiveness of grade 6-12 public school sexuality education curricula. I chose to utilize SCT to formulate the present study's research questions, to draw out data on diverse sexualities and identities from the corpus of data I collected, and to identify normalizing ideologies about sexualities and associated behaviors. I present a rationale for this in Chapter 3.

Gender/Sex Sexuality

van Anders' (2015) model disentangles sexuality at the levels of gender and sex. Her evidence indicates that notions of the necessity of two genders to pinpoint one's position on an axis of paired sexual orientation (man to man, man to woman, woman to woman) are not constrained to normative binaries, or even necessarily to the myriad *gender* identities at all. For example, does heterosexual mean "male attracted to female" or "man attracted to woman" or "woman attracted to penis(es)" or "man mostly attracted to female secondary sex characteristics exclusively for sexual activities?"

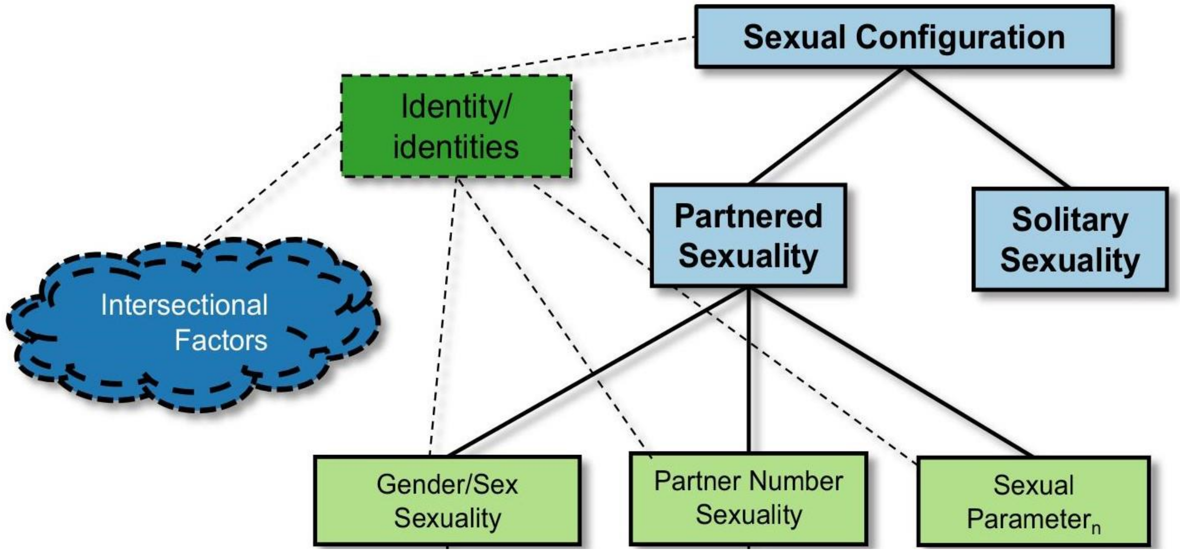
This amplification of orientation leads to a great deal of flexibility with regard to partnered sexual identity—flexibility observable in lived human experience that cannot be demonstrated within a two-dimensional conceptualization. For example, sexual orientation could be assumed to favor biological sex over gender or gender expression, but there is little scientific evidence to prove that people do not perceive it or discuss it with gender and gender expression in mind. Van Anders (2015) identifies the need to accurately "address the complexities of actual people's sexualities" (p. 1178). These complexities can be described as multiple dimensions that also include love and romantic expression (or nurturance, as the author calls it) and eroticism.

The author notes that “Sexual orientation ends up being problematic as operationalized because *gender matters*” (p. 1180). She is careful to acknowledge that her proposition of SCT is as *one* theory of sexuality, not *the* theory of sexuality; as with other theories regarding perception and experience, there are myriad ways of approaching and viewing it because there are multitudinous ways of living it. She does, however, argue that unidirectional sexual orientation theories alone are insufficient to describe the gradations of sexual experiences and desires of each person: sexual orientation is commonly interpreted as a line by those who live in a spherical world of possibilities. Furthermore, theories of sexual orientation which hold sexualities in opposition to one another (bisexual *or* pansexual *or* homosexual *or* asexual *or*…) do not leave space for overlap in individual or collective identities.

SCT dives into proportioning a deep understanding of sexual diversity and intersectionality, paying special attention to those sexualities that could be named as *other* or outliers by the mainstream. van Anders (2015) argues for the synthesis of minority and majority sexualities, viewing each as assuming a unique position in relation to one another in an interconnected model. While SCT is comprehensive, the majority of it can be summarized as identifying oneself at a position along dimensions that intersect with other dimensions at any given point in time. This kind of approach allows for a fluid sexuality over an individual’s lifetime. See Figure 2 for a diagram of the relationship between the concept of sexual configuration, identities, and sexuality (van Anders, 2015, p. 1189). Figures 2-5 reprinted/adapted by permission from Springer Nature Customer Service Centre GmbH.

Figure 2

Outline of SCT (van Anders, 2015)

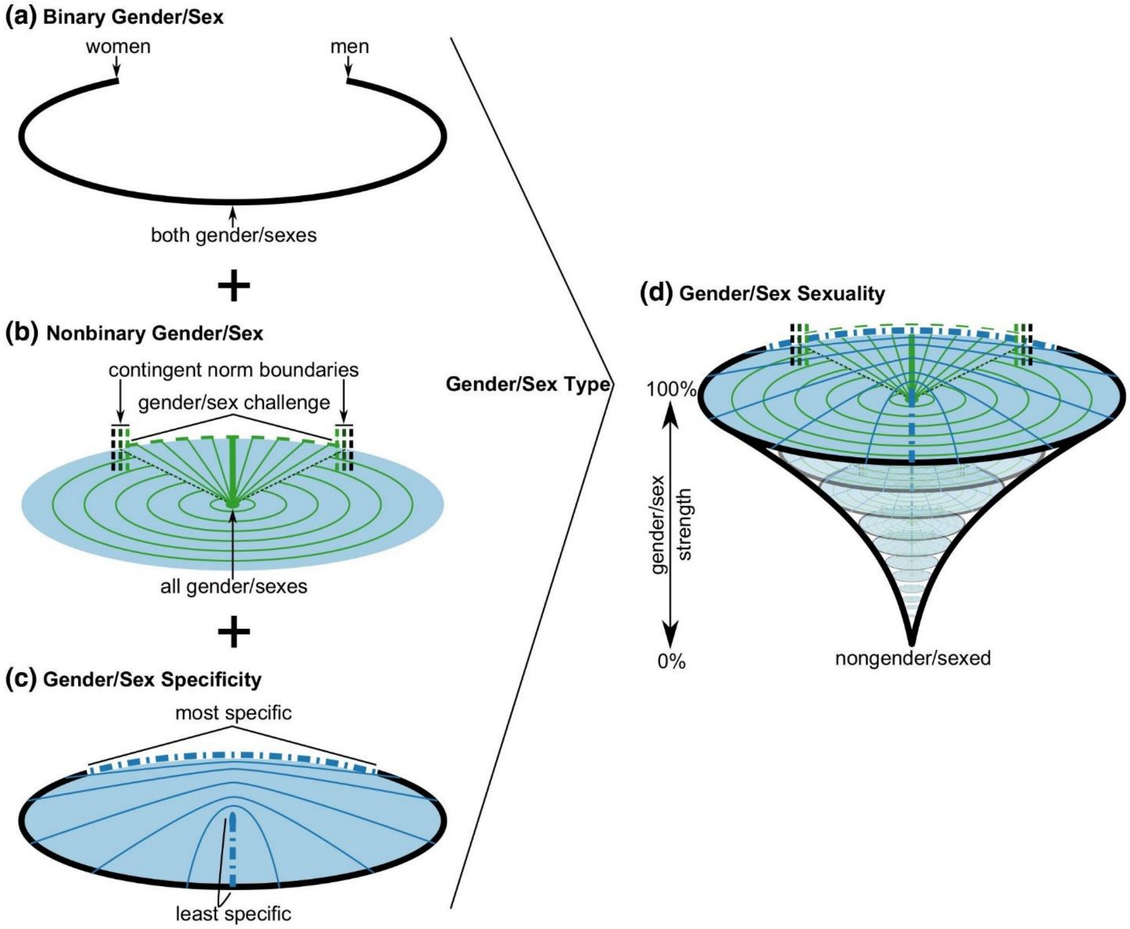


Note. "Each person has a sexual configuration that involves solitary and partnered sexuality. Partnered sexuality is subdivided into partner number sexuality, gender/sex sexuality, and sexual parameter. Sexual identities are a function of the ways these parameters assemble…that can vary in size and import" (p. 1189).

SCT also entails understanding the concept of gender/sex. Gender/sex, van Anders (2015) argues, is a term that reflects the entangled nature of both gender as a performative, societal construct, and biological, evolutionary sex. SCT utilizes gender/sex as a dimension distinct from sexuality, one that enables a person to self-identify and describe to whom, if anyone, that person is attracted in any erotic and/or nurturing way. Figure 3(a)-(d) constructs a model of gender/sex sexuality for an individual, which indicates normative boundaries (provides room for individuals who are attracted to those who exist outside normative gender/sex binaries) and may be polar or continuous (man/woman, male/female, intermediate attraction to some more than others, attraction to all). Other axes of SCT that intersect with gender/sex at varied points along the described dimensions include number of partners (if any, as compared to solitary sexuality), desired level of eroticism, desired level of nurturance, marital status (of both or all), virginity, age, race/ethnicity, ability, intensity, fantasy, and more. Each aforementioned parameter is visualized as having notches or tick marks along its radials, allowing for increased freedom in self-identification within the model (that is, one can approach a specific position on an axis from a variety of angles). To give an example of positioning, at any given time in her life, a person may self-identify in SCT as a feminine heterosexual woman who engages in specific sexual behaviors with her butch—that is, purposefully expressive as more masculine in look and demeanor—husband, and in different behaviors with butch women (one or more simultaneously) who meet her desired level of sexual intensity. The design of SCT allows for this model to manifest at one moment and shift in another; identities can branch, overlap, align, or even be in what could be perceived as contrast with one another, allowing for complete sexual expression on behalf of the individual. There is no fumbling over ontologically and, therefore, pragmatically limiting terms such as “heterosexual” without qualifiers.

Figure 3

Gender/Sex Sexuality (van Anders, 2015)

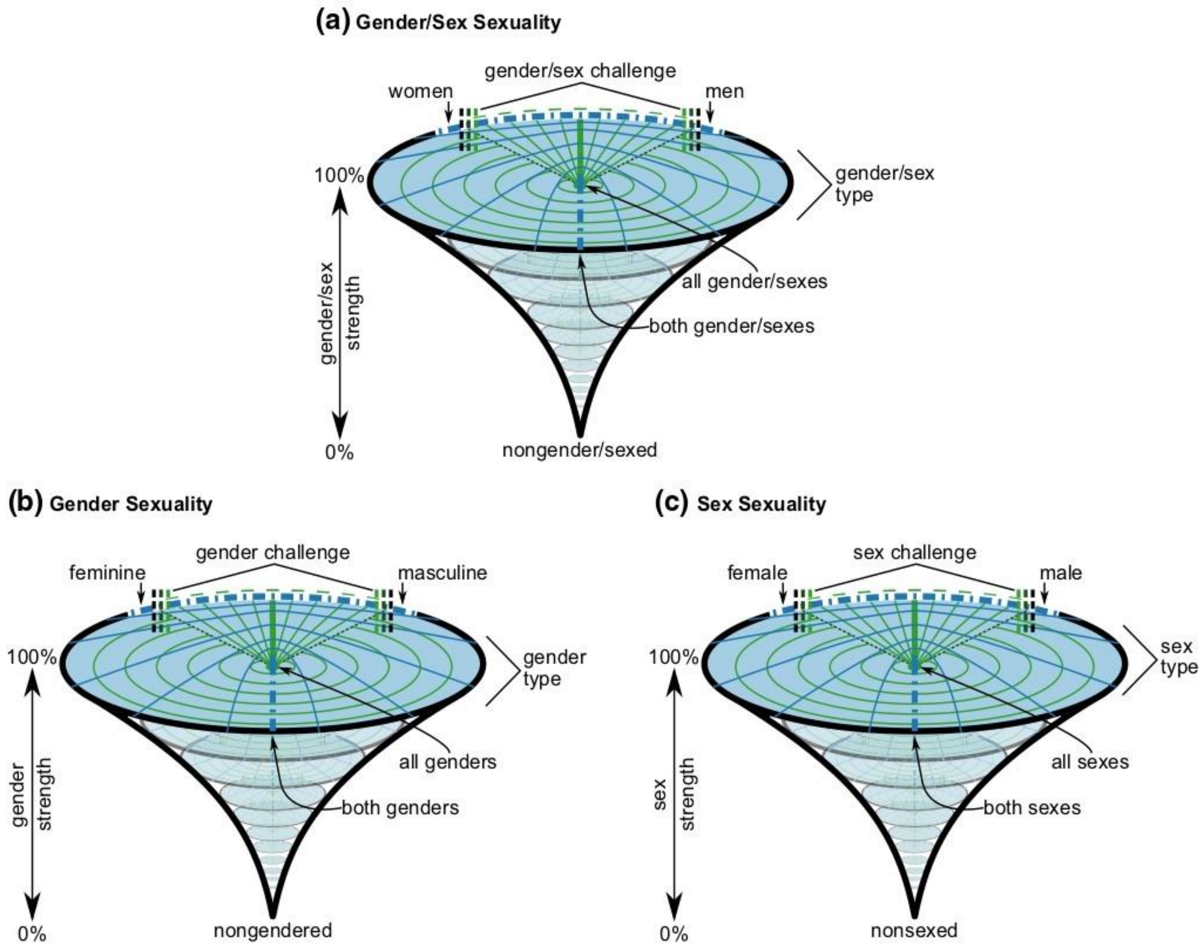


Note. "The parameter of gender/sex sexuality is characterized by a dimension of gender/sex type, which has **a** binary gender/sex, **b** nonbinary gender/sex, and **c** gender/sex specificity. Gender/sex sexuality is also characterized by a dimension of **d** gender/sex strength, which ranges from 0%... to 100%" (p. 1191).

There are other aspects that the model covers such as nongendered, nonsexed, and allosexual identification and intersections, but these are beyond the scope of this study. See Figure 4(a)-(c) for van Anders' (2015) gender/sex sexuality construct, which comprises the possibility to pinpoint an individual's attraction(s) to gender(s) and sex(es) and at what strength for each parameter. At the top of the model, **a** represents the entirety of an individual's realm of possible gender/sex attractions. "Gender/sex challenge" demarcations on the ring refer to gender/sex normative boundaries. The "both gender/sexes' midpoint on ring represents attraction at a binary midpoint (or perception of binary for the individual in question, e.g., man/woman, male/female), whereas "all gender/sexes" at the center represents attraction to the entire realm of possible gender/sexes that could exist for the individual. "Nongender/sexed" at the bottom represents attraction to those who do not identify with a gender/sex. The line to the left represents the strength of attraction for the individual for any given dimension.

Figure 4

Branched Gender/Sex Sexuality (van Anders, 2015)



Note. "Gender/sex sexuality **a** has a gender subconstruct **b** and a sex subconstruct **c**" (p. 1193).

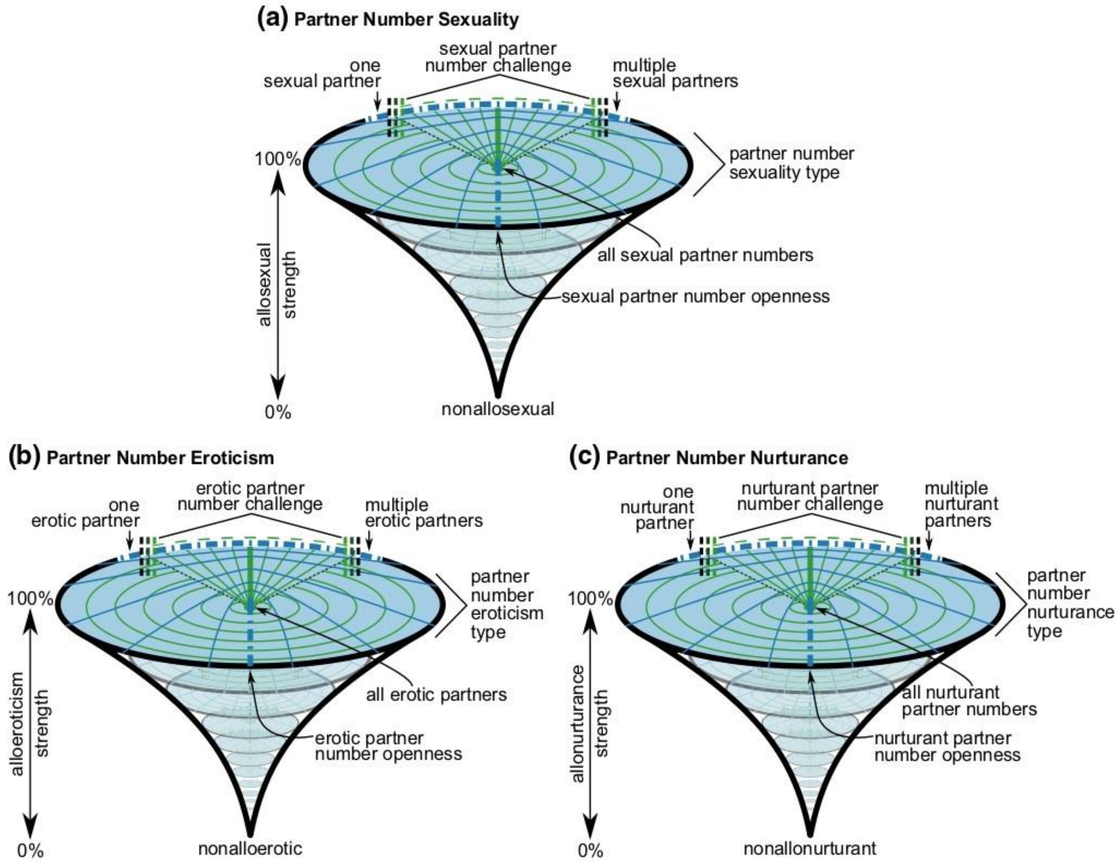
Eroticism and Nurturance

SCT also accounts for eroticism (lust) and nurturance (affection) with one or more partners. While self-sexuality and pleasuring (i.e., masturbatory behaviors) is outside the scope of this study, data on partnered sexuality for the purpose of expressing affection and/or desire among adolescents are anticipated. The dimensions upon which an individual can experience *lust* (eroticism) and *love* (nurturance) in the context of a sexually expressive partnered relationship with one or more partners (van Anders, 2015, p. 1183). Multi-partner encounters are also outside the scope of this study. The parameters of partner number, partner number eroticism, and partner number nurturance are demonstrated in Figure 5.

I interpret these figures in a similar manner to the previous SCT figures: either erotic *or* nurturing sexual activities with any number of partners are disregarded in favor of a continuous model, a model in which multiple needs and desires can be satisfied simultaneously (and potentially overlaid with any gender/sex attraction configuration described previously).

Figure 5

Eroticism and Nurturance in Partner Number Sexuality (van Anders, 2015)



Note. "Partner number sexuality **a** has an eroticism subconstruct **b** and a nurturance subconstruct **c**. Eroticism and nurturance can also be separated within gender/sex sexuality" (p. 1196).

Overall, SCT operationalizes multiple sexualities among myriad desires and the contexts in which these desires are sought and potentially fulfilled. SCTs flexibility allows for shifting identities and complementary sexual orientations to overlap rather than requiring adherence to a spot on a spectrum or a dot on a chart, as some previous research has done. However, this is not to discredit the foundational and critical work of those who have come before, but to enhance it.

SCT conceptualizes orientations as "dynamic" and argues that "gender/sex sexual orientations (and maybe other kinds too) cannot be universally fixed *or* externally changeable" (p. 1182, emphasis in original) and exhibits "intersectionality…based on a social location at the meeting points of several identity axes" (p. 1188). In Chapter 3, I explain how SCT is sufficiently robust in its assertions to serve as an analytical framework for this study.

van Anders (2015) argues that SCT, in its novel approach to sexual orientation and identity, "each of us has a sexual configuration that is composed of locations in multiple sexual dimensions" (p. 1178) including inclinations for any number of partners, attraction(s) to specific features of genders and sexes, body shapes, social identity, the role of care and nurturance, arousals, desires, and behaviors. In this model, there is room to add and expand because her theory is malleable and open-ended. Additionally, she discusses several practical contexts of sexuality and sexual health in which her model may be applicable such as counseling, clinical/health work, etc. The present study may contribute to her theory given that she does not explicitly mention any form of sexuality education as a space for her model's operationalization or as a potential outlet for the dissemination of results from studies that utilize her work. Therefore, in order to integrate sexuality education with SCT, I turn to the notion of learning contexts, especially the constructs of learning through LPP and informal learning, and how these theories could mutually benefit one another in research.

Learning Contexts in a Sociocultural Framework

In this study, the concept of learning bifurcates into formal and informal learning. Learning and schooling—that is, being *in school* for learning—have become increasingly intertwined in our age, with decreasing attention paid to informal learning contexts and spontaneous and experiential learning (Hager & Halliday, 2008; Lave, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2009).

Informal Learning

As the educational scholar Bruner has indicated, learning is almost involuntary as a result of human cognitive processes (Bruner, 1971; 2009). Informal learning, for the purpose of this study defined as learning intentionally or otherwise sought outside the confines of the classroom, can invoke an impacting and meaningful experience for the learner; its boundaries are less restrictive, and its contexts are shaped distinctly from its formal or classroom-bound partner (Brandt, 1998; Singh, 2015).

Spaces of Informal Learning

In the volume *Informal Education, Childhood, and Youth: Geographies, Histories, Practices*, edited by Mills and Kraftl (2014), various contributors define and shape the notion of informal learning (sometimes called *informal education* in their book). Informal learning "is a process that flows from the *everyday* concerns" of individuals and occurs in places in which those same individuals often *choose* to exist (Mills & Kraftl, 2014, p. 3): These include geographic and digital spaces they occupy as a result of their lived experiences and desired outcomes; places in which informal, or casual, opportunities to learn something new arise spontaneously and heavily contextualized. Mills and Kraft reiterate that "practices of informal education are woven into and implicated in the complex social, political, and cultural textures that make up particular places" (p. 5). For these scholars, individuals, especially children, cannot make a single move, whether physical or digital, without being exposed to the potential for informal learning.

In the same volume, contributor Aufseeser (2014) argues that children in low-income communities in developing countries work from a very young age in order to help sustain their families, consequently learning trades and the handling of finances, interacting with adults in their communities, and managing personal and familial safety. Crucially, she notes that this type of work is discredited by Western society at large as any type of education whatsoever. She argues:

> following supposedly universal models of childhood serve to devalue certain spaces of learning, as well as whole groups of children themselves. In direct contrast to arguments promoted by international development organisations, school is not the only space in which learning takes place. Yet false assumptions about where and how children learn may actually limit the ability of some children to succeed in school, as well as hinder their learning opportunities in other spaces. (p. 112)

If Western assumptions about schooling do not consider formal and informal notions of learning and opportunities for learning through everyday cognition in their communities, much learning potential could be lost. Nevertheless, in recent years, there has been a broad shift in academia toward a focus on sociocultural learning inside and outside a formal classroom (Lee, 2016; Resnick, 1987; Rogers, 2004; Sefton-Green, 2013; Wertsch, 1985). One sociocultural approach to conceptualizing learning is *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP) within what is called situated learning.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation in Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning occurs through a "situated activity [which] has as its central defining characteristic a process that we call legitimate peripheral participation" (p. 29). In other words, learners are participants in communities of practice embedded in the various nexuses of their communities of practice, and that the mastery of both skill and knowledge requires that new (or young) members move from the periphery to full participation along their community's sociocultural praxes. In fact, a member's sense of belonging is among the "crucial condition[s] for learning" in this model (p. 35). As maintained by these authors, LPP refers to the *intention* of a community newcomer or outsider and their efforts to transform into a full participant in the sociocultural milieu. This kind of participation is an incorporation of the individual with content and community and learning as an integral constituent. In this case, learning is not the endgame, but a series of evolving outcomes of generative social practices in the participant's lived experience. For the purposes of this study, becoming a *full* participant refers to approaching *full* knowledge of whichever aspect of sexuality and knowledge of sexual behaviors is desired: for example, arriving at adulthood and knowing and experiencing a specific sexual configuration (van Anders, 2015).

Moreover, Lave and Wenger focus on the relationship between learning and so-called "situatedness" within an encompassing cultural context as opposed to learning *in situ*, which the authors define as simple learning through hands-on experience (Lave, 2009; Wenger, 2009). In the present study, "hands-on" (i.e., physical) instruction to sexuality and sexual behavior can be construed as illicit and, frankly, impossible and must occur in other ways. Despite this, Lave and Wenger's take on learning allows me to adopt parts of their empirically grounded structure for research while abstracting away from the specific relationships between full and partial members of the communities of practice that they outline in their work.

On the reverse, these authors do not propose that community-driven learning takes place exclusively in the absence of formal teaching (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Rather, it aims to look at learning from a new, holistic perspective with respect to the person, a perspective from which a learner forms an identity. They state:

> Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning, thus, implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities. Viewing learning as legitimate peripheral participation means that learning is not merely a condition for membership in the community but is itself an evolving form of membership. We conceive of identities as long term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice, thus identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another. (p. 53)

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue against any proposition that what gets learned is exclusive to what is formally taught, but rather posit the mastery of particular content as the evolution of an identity. This position is the crux of what I argue throughout this study: learners seek knowledge in their communities to further build their identities because the two are connected, at minimum with respect to sexuality.

According to Eisner and Cuban (2013), “Too few policymakers have ever taught in public schools. Even fewer can articulate what it is about teaching young children, youth, and adults that binds teachers and students together and makes the experience of learning memorable, satisfying, and long-lasting.…If only policy elites would create and sustain the conditions that further the connection between teachers and students." Though these authors do not speak specifically of sexuality education, they illustrate the enduring relationship between educational research, policy, and practice: in this case, those responsible for making decisions about sexuality education in the classroom may lack requisite instructional qualifications, and the students are effectively at their mercy. In turn, I now draw from research on learning about sexuality in informal and community contexts, as well as works on the mechanisms of everyday cognition to which those same students may be drawn to learn independently because of any gaps in their sexuality instruction.

Informal Peer-to-Peer Spaces of Peripheral Participation. In her ethnography *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*, Pascoe (2011) explores adolescent male- and/or man-identified participation in an informal learning environment rife with socially constructed, racialized (mis)information on gender and sexuality. In her study, she observed boys around school, including in classrooms as well as communal spaces such as hallways, lunches, rallies, and dances, reporting their gendered and hypersexualized discourse. Without explicitly acknowledging LPP as a construct, she provides evidence for its robustness as a theory in her method of observation, especially since all the data gathered from students are self-reported, and that less "experienced" students, as labeled by their peers, are intentionally seeking knowledge from more "experienced" ones caught up in what could be named a verbal cesspool of toxic masculinity.

Other researchers have observed LPP in having conversations about behaviors responsible sexual acts among adolescents and their families. Weissbourd, Ross, Anderson, Cashin, and McIntyre (2017) argue in their report "The Talk: How Adults Can Promote Young People's Healthy Relationships and Prevent Misogyny and Sexual Harassment" that rumors propagated by numerous sources (peers, digital media, movies, etc.) that adolescents are crazed and hormone-controlled, and that it is expected that they will engage in sexual activity and the hook-up culture just as all their peers are doing. These authors report that instead, adolescents confuse sexuality and sexual acts with a desire for nurturance and intimacy, and that families can participate in adolescents' informal learning on sexual health and emotional well-being regarding relationships. Through honest dialogue, these authors posit that families have the capability to dispel myths through moments of informal teaching and learning. In fact, in these authors' study, over 70% of young people respondents to a survey on relationships, romance, and sex wanted *more* of this "meaningful guidance" (p. 12) about healthy sexual activity in the classroom to counteract what they are exposed to in their various communities of practice.

Everyday Cognition. In a sociocultural model of learning (such as first proposed by Vygotsky, 1966), especially outside the bounds of formal or classroom learning, the process of thinking and the acquisition of knowledge requires interactions in a richly stimulating social context (Illeris, 2009; Jarvis, 2009; Siegler, 1981; Usher, 2009). Rogoff and Lave (1999) point out in their edited volume *Everyday Cognition: Its Development in Social Context* that some research into cognition and cognitive development erroneously assumes an individual engaged in learning processes is isolated in a vacuous environment, or separates them from external variables through statistical measures.

In the first chapter of *Everyday Cognition*, Rogoff (1999) argues that "cognitive skills seem to fluctuate as a function of the situation" in which a learner is embedded (p. 1); in other words, attention, awareness, working memory, and the like (and presumably, learning capacity) increase or decrease as an expression of the relationship to one's environmental stimulation. Rogoff reports that individuals who are unable to learn a certain skill in a testing or laboratory context have been observed to organically learn it while problem-solving in their everyday lives. Further, she notes:

> Thinking is intricately interwoven with the context of the problem to be solved. The context includes the problem's physical and conceptual structure as well as the purpose of the activity and the social milieu in which it is embedded. One must attend to the content and the context of intellectual activity in order to understand thought processes. (1999, p. 2)

Related to this study, adolescents might choose to seek out what they do not learn in sexuality education courses elsewhere in the plethora of informal contexts surrounding them, exploring to learn to a level of personal satisfaction. The question as to whether the stakeholders in sexuality education, especially teachers, recognize the students' desire to seek out knowledge they do not acquire in class elsewhere and adjust the curriculum and instruction accordingly, or if they are permitted to do so by their superiors.

Potentially distinctive to sexuality education, there are parts in which these frameworks break down. They assume interaction with more experienced members of society as a necessary component of learning. However, not every sexual encounter or piece of sexual knowledge will be exchanged with a more experienced member of society. For Wertsch, Minick, and Arns (1984), novices learn under the purview of others who scaffold their learning. In this case, though, scaffolding could be loosely interpreted as *experienced peer transmitting information to inexperienced peer.* This interpretation of the theory could then include the passing along of misinformation about sexuality and sexual behavior to others under the *guise* of appearing more mature, scaling the ladder of popularity, knowing more, and/or having had more encounters (see Pascoe, 2011). Whatever the case, an individual in a framework of LPP gains social power as they gain knowledge (Lave, 2009). More so, sometimes (sexual) novices will come together to experiment with sexual behaviors on their own (Gaudette, 2018). Who teaches whom in such stimulating circumstances? Who brings what knowledge to these contexts, and from where did they acquire it if not in a formal sexuality education course inclusive of information on intimate and erotic acts? These are areas in which theories such as these can be evaluated against novel circumstances and new insights can emerge.

Problems in the Arena of Learning. According to Rogoff (1999), social interaction is an *arena* in which individuals encounter intellectual challenges and are guided by others in learning to master them. Interaction is structured as a joint problem-solving task in which information is transmitted from the expert to the novice. The phenomenon of scaffolding is well-documented in the domain of formal learning, but it is not exclusive to classrooms; it appears in informal learning contexts as well. As the novice gains greater understanding of the problem, the expert judges the novice's readiness to take greater responsibility for the cognitive work.

Parallels to sexuality education are evident here. A more experienced and/or knowledgeable member of society engaged in the conceptual instruction of sexual acts and the imparting of information on the dimensions of human sexuality may guide and evaluate the novice on their path toward mastery of the subject matter. Abstract knowledge and practical skills are passed along implicitly by means of pragmatic discourse and interactions; "the child's understanding is extended through participation in the problem's solution. [Instruction] occurs in the interaction between novice and expert…so that the novice is brought into the expert's more mature [level of understanding]" (Rogoff & Gardner, 1999, p. 116).

Despite this foundation for learning through LPP, some problems remain. Would a so-called novice seek out a potentially more experienced partner independently to guide them in self-discovery and increase their readiness to engage in various sexual behaviors, or engage in those behaviors straight away? Rogoff and Gardner (1999) assert that “[t]he adult must involve the child in the solution of the problem rather than simply solving the problem and reporting the solution to the child” (p. 101). They claim that tasks are mastered intra-individually after they are mastered inter-individually. Thus, the study of sexuality and sexual behaviors through LPP can potentially expand the descriptive power of this model or call for abstractions of its components as described herein.

In the next section, I turn to a discussion of a massive outlet of informal information on sexuality: the media, which may take the form of apps, messaging programs, webcams, social media, pornography, magazines, television, movies, the news, and much more (Dastagir, 2018; Edwards, 2016; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 1998; Weissbourd, Anderson, Cashin, & McIntyre, 2017).

Sexuality Education and the Media

According to a 2018 article in *USA Today*, the timeless back-and-forth surrounding sexuality education is as fraught as it has been for more than a hundred years. Clashes continue to erupt around questions that are perceived as practical by some and immoral by others. For example, should teenagers be given more or less information about sex in school? Should they only be told to wait until marriage to engage in intercourse? Do they have an innate human right to understand sexuality and access information regarding it, or do adults have a duty to protect them from it? Has #metoo triggered an increase in young people’s desires to understand sexuality and their sexual selves? Alia Dastagir, author of this article, notes that buzzwords like “hook-up culture,” “hypersexualization,” and the ample availability of free pornography are having a substantial impact on the national conversation about sexuality education and relevant policies.

Contrary to some of the research synthesized in the previous sections, Dastagir (2018) writes that sexuality education in public schools is quite different than it used to be. For instance, taught in separate rooms for countless years, girls and boys are now sometimes co-educated. Gender identity and bodily autonomy are themes that are beginning to spread across curricula throughout the US. As these concepts take hold in various places, lawmakers are recognizing that a restricted curriculum is, in part, responsible for sexual violence. Young minds that are never taught about affirmative consent, “no means no,” “don’t rape,” “inability to consent does not mean yes,” and notions of erotic sovereignty over one’s body (see Miller-Young, 2014) could engage in precarious behaviors with lasting consequences. The absence of this knowledge may pose a real danger to them and to other members of their communities coming into adulthood and beyond. Fields (2008) comments that

> educators have the capacity to foster in their students a sense of sexual entitlement and rights, an appreciation of sexual pleasure, and a critical understanding of sexual danger. Sex education offers students an opportunity to grasp sexuality’s place in the context of gender, racial, and class inequalities and to gain an awareness of sexual pluralism. (p. 17)

In a similar vein, Dastagir (2018) argues that programs should begin in kindergarten or earlier with discussions of biological reproduction and personal boundaries, though they note that there is still no universal standard for this subject’s instructional protocol. van Anders’ (2015) SCT holds self-knowledge and shifting contemporary understandings in informed and constructive directions as quintessential theoretical aims; therefore, SCT may support introducing fundamental concepts of sexuality at younger ages.

This article also asserts that avoiding formal, comprehensive sex education "doesn't mean kids aren't learning about sex. It just means they're learning about it from other places" (Dastagir, 2018, p. 2). The author calls today's youth *porn-educated*. On the other hand, the author notes, adolescents are responsive to the component of *communication* in a comprehensive sex education course. Several variables influence the spread and maintenance of this collective knowledge of the subject matter in any context, largely controlled by the educational stakeholders—individuals tasked with developing sexuality education curriculum, delivering and supervising instruction, and engaging with students in other ways as defined in Chapter 1—within relevant communities of practice.

In separate studies, Porter (2018) discusses the work Weissbourd, Anderson, Cashin, and McIntyre (2017) on perceptions of hypersexualization, or numerous occurrences of paired sexual acts, among young adults observed in various media. They argue that such portrayals of young people influence adolescents' sexual behavior, and that it can also cause some parents or guardians to panic at the thought of their children engaging in sexual activity. Porter indicates that this is no more than a stereotype that makes children less trusting of adults, less likely to talk to their parents about sex for fear of being misunderstood or castigated, and conceivably creating the opportunity for informal learning contexts for adolescents to search for information elsewhere. According to this research, students also convey distress over the lack of guidance on the interplay of emotions within relationships in sexuality education classrooms.

In a separate article, Gaudette (2018) presents data from the Kinsey Institute on adolescents and older youth discussing their perceptions of virginity. She reports that many of them feel left behind socially because they have not experienced sexual activity and their peers claim to have done so, regardless of whether those claims are true. According to Gaudette, this perception may be due to differences in the average age of first sexual intercourse (17.2 for women, 16.8 for men), but it may also be due to peer-to-peer interactions as an informal space for sexuality education.

Finally, McCammon (2017) argues that restrictive sexuality education curricula fail young people in an interview with Guttmacher Institute scientist Laura Lindberg (2017). McCammon explains that policymakers, schools, and parents depend on programs to coerce students into trying to make the *abstinence choice* in a context rife with pressured temptations *and* in the face of increasing evidence that this mode of instruction does not delay adolescent intercourse. Additionally, she writes that most adolescents would rather develop affectionate bonds or caring relationships than just have casual sex as can be demarcated in the nurturance/eroticism dimension of SCT (van Anders, 2015). This is evident despite what they tell one another (Cashin, 2017). Lindberg (2017) laments that such abstinence-stressed programs withhold too much information and, consequently, create community health hazards around pregnancy and STI prevention. She argues that these educational programs also unrealistically emphasize failure rates of condoms and birth control, potentially scaring adolescents and instead nudging them into spaces in which they are more at ease where they can discover sexual knowledge and potentially be exposed to myths.

Sexting

Other recent research indicates that rates of physical sexual acts among high school students (grades 9-12) are falling, but digital sexual activities are on the rise (Klass, 2018). While some researchers argue that *sexting*—a portmanteau of *sex* and *texting*—can occur as a result of curiosity about the body of oneself and others, a desire to evoke arousal in another, and a way to express intimacy in a consensual relationship, it may not be without consequences. These may include social ramifications and legal punishments in the US and internationally; such ramifications can include adolescents forwarding sexts to their peers or displaying them publicly or online without the consent of the original sender. In many areas, adolescents under the legal age for viewing or distributing pornography have suffered severe punitive actions, including criminal charges as a consequence of ostensibly innocuous sexting (Schmitz & Siry, 2011).

In an international study, Van Ouytsel, Walrave, De Marez, Van Damme, De Wolf, Baccarne, Vanhaelewyn, and Ponnet (2019) surveyed 5,344 secondary students in two cohorts and discovered that 8.3% of respondents in the first cohort and 12.1% of respondents in the second cohort had sent a sext at least once. They also found that owning a smartphone increased the rate of prevalence of having sent a sext, and they discovered no gender differences amongst sexters. Finally, they report that 36.8% of respondents in the second cohort were visibly identifiable in the images they sent.

Klass (2018), a physician specializing in pediatric health, recommends that parents and guardians begin teaching about the dangers of sexting from a very early age—in terms of this study, in the informal context of the home and family—even as early as one would begin to warn a child against getting into cars with strangers or accepting a private message from an unknown party on social media or elsewhere. Despite this advice, evidence suggests that sexting among adolescents continues to occur, although it may not be as rampant and widespread as it is portrayed to be in the media, especially the news (Patchin & Hinduja, 2019).

Contemporary Formal Sexuality Education Curricula

Less than half of states in the US mandate sexuality education (Guttmacher Institute, 2008, 2012, 2016). Since around 20 years ago, the US government has spent a total of $20 billion on abstinence-only education while simultaneously cutting $200 million in funds designated for the prevention of teen pregnancy (McCammon, 2017). In 2019, President Trump's budget allocated $75 million for abstinence-only programming and $0 for comprehensive sexuality education, according to a report by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) (Panjabi, 2017). In the next section, I examine the relationships between policies and sexual identity, curriculum theory, and research on varying types of formal education programs.

Identities, Acts, Relationships, and Curricular Policy

Hall, Jones, Witkemper, Collins, and Rodgers (2019) conducted a comprehensive analysis on school-based state-level sexuality education policy across the US. These authors found:

> rates of sexual activity increase significantly during adolescence. National data from the US show that 20% of 9th grade students had sexual intercourse, whereas 57% of 12th grade students had sexual intercourse. Nearly 90% of young people have had sex by age 24. (p. 506)

According to these scholars, unintended pregnancy is higher among adolescents than any other age group, and adolescents are also disproportionately affected by STIs. Furthermore, among cases of intimate partner violence and sexual assault, survivors are most commonly between the ages of 11 and 24 for first incidents. These authors provide evidence for disparities in sexual health outcomes for LBGTQ+ adolescents, including even higher rates of unintended pregnancy and STI exposure for individuals who identify as such.

Hall, Jones, Witkemper, Collins, and Rodgers (2019) argue that schools play a major role in advancing knowledge on sexual health. They discuss how public policies have significant effects on curriculum and instruction and demonstrate that policymaking power lies primarily at the state level. Their study addresses the themes of sexual behaviors, personal and social identities, interactions, and relationships. Through a process of iterative coding and memoing (two analytical tools explained in detail in Chapter 3) of publicly accessible curricula for all 50 states, they compiled the following figures:

- 74% of states recommended or required abstinence or abstinence-stressed instruction;
- 54% of states did not require lessons on contraceptive use;
- 42% of states included content related to healthy sexual or romantic relationship;
- 36% of states required content specifically on some form of consent;
- Eight states had policies in place that explicitly stigmatized homosexuality;
- 12 states had policy that sex education should be inclusive of diverse sexual identities;
- Seven states were inclusive of gender identities and expressions; and
- Two states included explicit instruction on sexual acts such as all forms of intercourse (penile-vaginal, penile-oral, penile-anal). (p. 509-511)

Given the disparities in content comprehensiveness across all states, these researchers call on others to collect data specifically from sexuality educators and stakeholders. In point of fact:

> educators [can] be considered policymakers because they are responsible for putting policies into practice [or not] on a regular basis on the ground level, relatively autonomous from high-level bureaucrats. (Hall, Jones, Witkemper, Collins, & Rodgers, 2019, p. 516)

In sum, these authors indicate the relative influence that sexuality educators and state legislators hold to challenge the formal sex ed zeitgeist and address the perceived national disparities in classrooms and curricula. As this discussion heads toward an explanation of the types of sexuality education curriculum, I explore some ideas on the theories driving curriculum.

Curriculum Theory

Curriculum does not simply exist; it happens; it is alive, it is a verb (Hwu, 2004; Wallin, 2016). In view of these suppositions, researchers are increasingly working to triangulate studies in curriculum development and implementation with perspectives on sexuality, gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Reynolds & Webber, 2016). Curriculum theory is fraught with business ideologies, matters of finance, political interweavings, and personal biases (Pinar, 2012). Though there is an entire corpus of literature on curriculum theory with its varied histories, complexities, and (de)constructions, for the present study it is most important that "as the 'modern' history of industrial schooling demonstrates, the development of curriculum is enjoined to the question of how schools ought to regulate life for its optimal contraction with established modes of sociopolitical and economic production" (p. 45). Though these scholars do not explicitly mention sexuality education or FLE, they do note that "curriculum thought is intimately concerned with the question of life" (p. 46).

Types of Formal Sexuality Education Programs

Most states stress abstinence in their curricula, while only one state requires instruction on consent, and seven states require that LGBTQ+ sexualities be portrayed negatively (Rubenstein, 2017). Additionally, evidence indicates that because of abstinence-only education in parts of the US, rates of teen pregnancy, teen births, and STI infection are higher on average nationally than in most other industrialized countries (Guttmacher Institute, 2007; Kohler, Manhart, & Lafferty, 2008; Sing & Darroch, 2000). Research demonstrates that comprehensive sexuality education can counter this (Bennett, 2005), though there is also a small body of evidence to the contrary (Carr & Packham, 2017). Access to formal sexuality education is strongly associated with age, income, locale, and civil and family status; at least 10% of teenagers ages 15-19 do not receive any sex education whatsoever, with most members of this group self-reporting as underrepresented identities and low socioeconomic status (Kohler et al., 2008)

Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Programs

The first federal abstinence-only initiative was created in 1966 (Kohler et al., 2008), and has continued ever since with minimal changes in requisite standards of implementation. The current iteration, complete with a set of requirements for states that receive funding, began in 1996 as the Abstinence Education Grant Program (AEGP) as part of Title V of the Social Security Act, and has been renewed each year (Rubenstein, 2017). Up to 36 states currently receive this funding and must supplement the federal dollars with about 43% in state and local funds. States that accept this funding are required to adhere to the statute's strict definition of abstinence-only education, which includes the teaching that a

> mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity…[that] bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society…[and that] attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity is of utmost importance. (Rubenstein, 2017, p. 531).

Evidence against the effectiveness of abstinence-only programs notwithstanding, LGBTQ+ students who learn in a heteronormative environment such as this do not necessarily have the agency to discuss or even disclose any desires specific to their sexual selves (Crewe, 2016; Edwards, 2016).

Programs funded by the AEGP cannot teach about contraceptives or protecting oneself against STIs except through abstinence. In these cases, students do not have access to medically accurate information on sexual health in the classroom, the dearth of which can prohibit them from making informed choices about their health, or even cause them to seek out information from sources such as the internet (e.g., WebMD), social media, and their peers, which may or may not be accurate (Gesselman, Webster, & Garcia, 2016). These programs also alienate "students who come from single-parent households" or divorced families (Rubenstein, 2017, p. 532). Per this author, the problem of access is the biggest inhibitor for certain populations where sexuality education is most needed. These include, but are not limited to, rural communities and low-income localities.

With the exception of California, which introduced legislation in 2015 that requires the dissemination of medically accurate information and holistic education, the landscape of sexuality education can be barren and biased (Kohler, Manhart, & Lafferty, 2008; Perrin & DeJoy, 2003). Rubenstein notes that "Some who oppose comprehensive sex education argue that exposure to non-abstinence information about sex will encourage sexual behavior at a young age" (2017, p. 538). However, she presents evidence that nearly half of high school students in abstinence-only courses engage in conceivably risky sexual acts anyway.

Taught vs. Sought in Formal Contexts

In a 2012 study by Charmaraman and colleagues on what students want to know about what is not covered in a formal classroom setting, a sample of students (n = 795) asked their sexuality education teacher questions in an anonymous drop box-type format in order to illuminate student curiosities with sex, any prior knowledge of the subject, and potential student-perceived omissions in the curricula. Table 2 contains example questions quoted from the article that indicate students’ strong desire for more information in a formal context, and an implication of the existence of informal learning contexts through discourse. The study’s results are coded and categorized into themes such as *sexual activity and behaviors, sexual consequences*, *sexual timeframe*, *sexual coercion*, and *male/female anatomy*, to name a few.

Table 2

Example Student Questions Quoted from Charmaraman et al., 2012, pp. 528-529

Why is sex so important?	If you have anal sex, is it still considered sex?
How old do you have to be to have sex?	What does being raped mean?
How risky is it to have sex early in life?	Is it ok to have an erection when you aren’t sexually influenced?
Why do people think sex is disgusting?	If you beat your meat, does it mess up your health?
What should you do if someone asks you to have sex?	Is sperm alive?
How can I communicate with my parents about sex and sexuality?	How many parts of a condom are there?
What do you mean by “practicing abstinence”?	Is there such a disease as a micropenis?
Someone told me that sex hurts the first time for women, is that true?	How do you know if your partner for sexual intercourse has AIDS/HIV? What are the signs if you aren’t told?
How big is the vagina?	How did AIDS start?
How do you persuade a girl to have sex?	Is it true if you’re gay you will go to hell?

These questions exemplify the proclivity that adolescents have to explore information on sexuality and sexual behaviors beyond the potential script of what may be taught in a more restrictive classroom. Furthermore, it makes salient that what students may not be learning through the sexuality education curriculum; they are potentially asking what they may be exploring informally through LPP and everyday cognition, even attempting to dispel myths they have encountered.

In a study by Kohler and colleagues (2008), a group of epidemiology researchers and health services professionals compared the classification (viz., comprehensiveness) of formal sexuality education to rates of unintended pregnancy and the contraction of STIs for a sizeable sample of adolescents and older teenagers that they claimed to be a nationally representative data set (*n* = 1719, ages 15 to 19). They report that "adolescents who received comprehensive [sexuality] education…were significantly less likely to report pregnancy than those who received no formal sexuality education," whereas there was no such effect uncovered among students in abstinence-only education (p. 344). Moreover, comprehensive sexuality education was linked to a lower chance of having engaged in vaginal intercourse, but abstinence-only education was not. Neither type of education significantly reduced the reporting of STI diagnoses, and teaching about STI prevention and contraceptives was not linked to increased rates of adolescent sexual activity or STI transmissions. However, adolescents having undergone comprehensive education was associated with a lower risk of unintended pregnancy than those who received abstinence-only or no sexuality education at all.

These authors also note that underrepresented and disadvantaged youth—that is, non-white students, English language learners, and students from low socioeconomic households—are less likely than their white and/or middle or upper-class peers to benefit from any formal abstinence-only programs offered in their school districts . However, "a recent review suggests that abstinence-only programs, whether conducted in low- or middle-income settings, had similarly modest effects on risk behavior" (p. 350). These authors do not expound upon other potential causes for disparities in their results and other data such as hidden biases toward underrepresented groups in curricula. Last, these authors argue that an overall paucity of education delayed the age of *reporting* the initiation of sexual activities but did not necessarily delay their *actual age* of initiation. Other studies have produced similar results (Green, Oman, Vesely, Cheney, & Carroll, 2017; Smoak, Scott-Sheldon, Johnson, & Carey 2006; Trenholm et al., 2008; Underhill, Montgomery, & Operario, 2007).

Allen (2008) collected comments on and suggestions for improving sexuality education among youth ages 16-19 in New Zealand. Utilizing a mixed methods approach for a large sample of surveys (n = 1190) and 10 focus groups representing a range of geographies, she writes that students reported high levels of dissatisfaction with the content and instruction they received. In fact, they had multiple suggestions for improving the curriculum that, according to the author, would meet their needs and interests to engage them more fully in evidence-based dialogue and topics that mattered a great to deal to them. These themes included emotional health in dating, long term relationships, diversity in sexual identity, pleasure and orgasm, and media literacy surrounding sexuality. They also reported topics that they did not like to cover in class such as growth and development, puberty, menstruation, and the effects of drugs and alcohol. The evidence in this study demonstrates that there may be clusters of comprehensiveness around certain themes in curricula that students have reported as unnecessary, repetitive, or unwanted, whereas other areas seemingly more relevant to the participants' ambitions to learn are reduced or withheld.

Other researchers have posited slightly divergent positions regarding the real world outcomes of curricular structure and instruction. Lindberg and Maddow-Zimet (2012) report that in a study of 15-24-year-old survey respondents (n = 4,691), sexuality education inclusive of information on abstinence behaviors and measures of birth control was associated with healthier sexual outcomes as compared to no instruction at all. The smallest portion of those sampled received no instruction at all in either abstinence or sexual activity, and again, low income and underrepresented groups were the highest demographics in this subset of the data[1]. Though the authors do not explore the reason behind this inverse relationship in the data, it may be due to the relationship between the costs of comprehensive education, both financial and temporal, creating accessibility barriers at local levels to information and seating comprehensivity as an issue of equity and social justice—specifically, the undoing and removal of racialized and gendered guidelines, curriculum, and instruction—as Fields (2008) has established.

Lindberg and Maddow-Zimet (2012) also report that for all gender/sexes (to use SCT terminology, van Anders, 2015), the timing of first vaginal sex had significantly earlier onset for those reporting no sexuality education, contradicting Kohler et al. (2008). Notably, 70% of respondents in this study who received abstinence-only education reported having vaginal intercourse by the age of 20. No data on oral, anal, or other sexual contact were provided. The researchers do not provide a rationale for excluding these data, and this limits their findings. Future research to assume a queer/queering approach—inclusive of diverse sexual acts—instead of heteronormative in its methods.

Peer-led and Post-program Research

Peer-led Instruction and Intervention. Rotz, Goesling, Manlove, Welti, and Trenholm (2018) implemented two trials of a peer-led sexuality education program as both an intervention and a control for comparison group. As claimed by the researchers, peer-led sexuality education programs had previously produced mixed results in preventing unintended teen pregnancies and

[1] Other subsets include those who received abstinence-only education and those who received a more comprehensive approach, with those coming from affluent families and White individuals receiving the most comprehensive sex education.

reducing compromising sexual behaviors. In this study, 50 schools in the US northeast were selected at random, and half of them immediately implemented the peer-led sexuality program, while the other half waited until the first implementation was complete in order to compare the results of a survey between the two groups.

As with many other studies on sex education, this research was limited in its scope of the definition of sexuality. The researchers referred to intercourse as exclusively vaginal. This may have eliminated self-reporting from varied groups of students engaging in some kind of non-penile-vaginal penetrative or non-penetrative behavior. Despite this limitation, the study found that this formally structured, peer-led alternative approach, while not significantly delaying students' sexual experimentation or decreasing teen pregnancy risk, increased students' knowledge of the subject matter considerably.

Reflected-on Past Experiences. In the article "College Students' Suggestions for Improving Sex Education in Schools Beyond 'Blah Blah Blah Condoms and STDs'", the authors report the results of a study on 38 college students who reflect on their school-based sexuality education programs and provide suggestions for improving them (Astle, McAllister, Emanuels, Rogers, Toews, & Yazedjian, 2020). The participants reflected on their experiences in the classroom as mostly negative and mostly incomprehensive, with an emphasis on the illegalities of underage sexual behavior and "gross" pictures of STDs (p. 6). They reported a desire for less scare tactics and exaggeration in the curriculum, and for inclusion of nurses and guest speakers. The authors sorted the participants' suggestions for improving the curriculum into several categories, such as the inclusion of mental, social, and social parts of sex; realism and relevance (that is, an up-to-date curriculum); the use of condoms and STI prevention; diversity in sexual identities and behaviors; more frequent classes beginning earlier in schooling; and dedicated faculty. The authors discuss the implications of their findings in policymaking as well as at the administrative and educator levels, focusing especially on the evidence that restricted or absent curriculum does not “address the new relationships and sexual decisions young people face at this age” (p. 11). They also argue against accommodating student suggestions that also contradict a primary aim of comprehensive sexuality education such as suggestions that “perpetuate sex-negative or misogynistic beliefs” (p. 12).

Women, Underrepresented Groups, and Informal Learning. For Edwards (2016), public or private sex education has considerable disadvantages for women, LBGTQ+ identified individuals, and underrepresented groups. In a series of interviews of adult women who had completed courses in school (n = 17), the author found that participants learned more from their environments (i.e., informal learning contexts) than in their formal school programming. Edwards establishes this learning context as the space in which people glean pertinent information and simultaneously develop a sexual identity, akin to the framework of LPP I have already assembled. Her participants primarily reported that they learned more as adults, developing their own values within their communities. One participant reported that her formal sex education experience promoted the notion of adolescents being unworthy of making their own judgments about sexual behavior. Edwards argues that sexuality education should be relevant to students’ interests, especially inclusive of protective discourse for women and underrepresented groups and taught by individuals who are equipped with a wide array of knowledge and appropriate tools for instructional immersion. “It was obvious there was so much they weren’t telling us,” one participant recalled (p. 269), and then stated that she looked elsewhere for what she wanted to know and how to express herself fully, potentially indicating informal learning processes through LPP.

Summary

Throughout Chapter 2, I synthesized literature on sexuality, discourse, sexual acts, formal and informal learning, communities, and various sexuality education programs. I defined biopolitics and provided examples relevant to sexuality. I introduced Foucault (1978) and Canady (2009) to underpin my explanations on the controversies surrounding sexuality and the notion of the child as an imaginary (Edelman, 1998). I discussed FLE and queering sexuality education, particularly Mayo (2007), and explored the seminal work of Fields (2008) in public and private schools. I also explained the Kinsey scale (Kinsey, 1948, 1953) and van Anders' (2015) contemporary Sexual Configurations Theory which served as the analytical framework for this study.

I then turned to the concept of learning in sociocultural matrices, especially communities of practice, and discussed legitimate peripheral participation at length (Lave, 2009). I indicated how learning may occur informally through LPP, discourse, and when exposed to or interacting with media. I then described contemporary formal sexuality education, including curriculum theory (Reynolds & Webber, 2016) and various types of sexuality education programs along with their advantages and disadvantages.

In the next chapter, I outline the study's methodology, including the selection and implementation of qualitative methods and how the study meets criteria of trustworthiness and reliability. I present the tools that helped guide my data collection and analysis in the field such as memoing and the audit trail. I also discuss site and participant selection and demographics, human subjects approval, and the interviewing process.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of the present study was to examine sexuality education in different contexts, specifically formal and informal learning contexts, as compared in comprehensiveness to SCT (van Anders, 2015) as framed by the exchange of information theorized to occur in LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This included division curricula (locally developed and approved objectives and lesson plans based on state guidelines) and community partnerships that include a team of health and public health professionals, counselors, and school resource officers that contribute in some way or another to the curriculum and instruction. The aim was to identify gaps in the curriculum that drive adolescents toward informal learning, and how stakeholders may try to bridge these gaps within their community of practice.

To fulfill this objective, I chose a multimodal qualitative research approach. I selected two public school divisions and collected and analyzed division-wide curricula and supplementary materials provided to me after a round of theoretical sampling. I used content analysis to categorize information uncovered in these documents (Krippendorff, 2019). I also interviewed multiple stakeholders involved in developing and teaching sexuality education including teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, community health and outreach partners (CHPOPs), and school resource officers (SROs). Using phenomenography as an interview methodology, I compared the interview responses to SCT to paint a picture of differing perspectives and emergent gaps in curriculum and instruction. I used qualitative tools such as coding, memos, member checking, and an audit trail to ensure reliability and trustworthiness in the findings. All this allowed me to address the following research questions:

1. What are the shared elements and differences among the formal sexuality education curriculum and SCT?

2. What are stakeholders' perceptions of the formal curriculum, and what are the gaps between their perceptions and SCT?
3. How do the differences between the formal curriculum and SCT leave gaps in students' knowledge that they may attempt to fill through informal learning, and how do stakeholders help bridge these gaps?

In the next section I unpack the nature of qualitative inquiry in the social sciences and discuss some applications to educational research.

Qualitative Research in Education

The purpose of qualitative research is "to shed light on an issue (illuminative research) or to explore it (exploratory research)" (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 209). The aim of this study was to explore public sexuality education curriculum and illuminate participant perspectives as compared to SCT (van Anders, 2015) through a framework of LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This involved an interrogation of these perspectives to draw meaning out of them, tell the story of the population from which they came, and substantiate them (Seidman, 2013, p. 212). Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2012) argue that "a belief in multiple realities, a commitment to identifying an approach to in-depth understanding of the phenomena, [and] a commitment to participants' viewpoints" are all critical factors in qualitative methodology (p. 398).

Qualitative methods are fundamentally reflective and philosophical processes that require "sensitive interpretive skills and creative talents from the researcher" (Derrida, 1973; van Manen, 2006, p. 720). Eisenhart (2006) calls on researchers to depict evidence like a painting or illustration and ensure that elocutions between researcher and participant are meaningful and sensical; this is a form of interpretivism (Carcary, 2009; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Presentation of raw qualitative data contrasted with or compared to an analytical framework and overlaid within a theoretical framework can aid in making results more credible when a research topic is complex, convoluted, or sensitive. I discuss this and other criteria of reliability in the next section. Additionally, van Manen (2006) writes:

> Qualitative writing may be seen as an active struggle for understanding recognition of the lived meanings of the lifeworld, and this writing also possesses passive and receptive rhetoric dimensions. It requires that we be attentive to other voices, to subtle significations in the way that things and others speak to us. In part, this is achieved through contact with the words of others. (p. 713)

In the domain of education scholarship with an exclusively quantitative focus may miss the rich, descriptive resonance of sociocultural influences and relationships (Crano, Brewer, & Lac, 2015; Mertens, 2015). Additionally, qualitative educational research that can be interwoven with fields like critical race theory and disability studies as well as queer theory and queer-affirmative inquiry (for example, Blackburn & Pascoe, 2015; Mayo, 2007) can provide an ad rem lens for developing an inclusive study. This interweaving may also allow the researcher to help amplify and circulate the voices of their participants, weaving nuanced descriptions of their lived experiences into a depiction of learning and the sociocultural contexts in which it occurs as modeled by LPP.

Moreover, interpretivism—a paradigm in which a theoretically informed interpretation of data is assembled and disseminated via an illuminated understanding of how people make sense of their world in context—is justified in much educational research by authors such as O'Donoghue (2007), Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), and Schwandt (1994). A researcher entering the field is subject to their own interpretations of the field and interactions with their participants as much as their participants experience when the researcher is not present. Given this highly contextual nature of data collection and analysis, it falls within the interpretivist paradigm as well (Carcary, 2009). Overall, this approach allowed me to follow patterns in the data I collected as they emerged in anticipated and unexpected ways and systematically synthesize them into rich description. This became possible through adherence to standard criteria of reliability and trustworthiness in qualitative investigation.

Criteria of Reliability and Trustworthiness

When research recounts participant stories, the complexity of lived experience can complicate the creation and communicability of the narrative (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Since qualitative research cannot be generalized, replicated, or defined by statistical formulae, a qualitative researcher must adhere to a set of criteria that have been well established in the literature and present, or map out, a comprehensive, codified picture of the evidence (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Qualitative research must meet a specific set of criteria to ensure that the results are reliable, ethical, transparent, and capable of enduring critique. Criteria of reliability and trustworthiness, akin to their counterpart tests of validity in quantitative sciences, also reduce bias in the results (Patton, 2015). A given study's methodology should be systematic, representing "a continual process of rigorous reasoning supported by a dynamic interplay," and corroborated via constant comparison between theory, method, and findings (Shavelson & Towne, 2002, p. 2).

In the qualitative domain, reliability of the method and findings is typically established through an empirical process that includes a set of guidelines. Those applicable to this study were *rigor*, *credibility*, *transferability*, *resonance*, and *the role of the researcher.*

Rigor

A study that is rigorous asks questions that invite empirical investigation. A rigorous study connects findings to pre-existing theory, creating a concatenation of sound reasoning from start to finish (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). However, rigor in qualitative research is not without its challenges. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posit the following:

> Because what is being studied is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and because the emergent design of a qualitative study precludes a priori controls, achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not...possible. (p. 251)

Given this, the burden shifts from generalizability and precision to rich conceptualization of the study and all possible truths that can be uncovered. This is accomplished through consistent documentation of processes and decisions; memoing and an audit trail; member checking; as well as overall transparent and rational thought (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Snyder, 2012).

Field Notes

Following Patton (2015) and Corbin and Strauss (2008), field notes are an effective way to annotate any number and type of observations made by a researcher during field work, site visits, and interviews. These scholars posit that as a result of entering the research environment (the field), the researcher will experience insights and have analytical ideas relevant and even crucial to the direction of the research endeavor that may be forgotten if not recorded. In this study, I took field notes before entering and while in the field, especially during and following interviews. These notes were sometimes as simple as documenting the source of a particular piece of supplementary material and its purpose, or as complex as indicating a need to follow up on specific points made by a participant later in the interview. Field notes were coded along with other data as recommended by Patton (2015).

Member Checking

Member checking is an intentional component in qualitative research in which the researcher asks participants to come back after initial interviews have been completed in order to examine transcripts, clarify points made or request portions of transcripts to be removed, and to discuss preliminary findings (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009; Snyder, 2012). I explained member checking to participants in this study and asked them to indicate their preference for being contacted again.

Overall, the present study satisfied the criteria of *rigor* because it was designed to connect results to pre-existing theories, namely SCT (van Anders, 2015) and LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It also met the burden of uncovering possible truths by utilizing a semi-structured interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), giving participants freedom to express their experiences on the topic and what they believe to be connected areas. The data were gathered and analyzed side by side through constant comparison (Shavelson & Towne, 2002), which is explained in a later section.

Credibility

To claim that research is credible, specific aspects of the method(s) must be readily accessible to the intended audience (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). These aspects include the sample selection, the coding process, how theory guides data collection and analysis, and an open discussion of any negative cases (that is, data that contradict the study's hypothesis, if there is one). It is here that memoing—or taking notes in the field and throughout analysis and writing—and documenting decision-making become especially crucial to the research process. Corbin and Strauss (1990) argue that the process itself is paramount for credibility:

> Identifying process in research is important because it enables theory users to explain action under changing conditions. The conceptual scheme used to explain process is less important than attempts to bring it into analysis. (p. 308)

That is to say, in human subjects research, there are as many confounding variables as there are individual differences, and just as many truths to uncover. A lack of transparency in process could potentially conceal some of these differences and individual truths in the data from the researcher.

Analytical and Methodological Memos

The careful documenting of analytical and methodological memos while in the field and during constant comparison of data points is paramount to a study's credibility by triangulating the data (Corbin & Strauss 1990, 2008; Eisenhart, 2006; Snyder, 2012). Memoing has been described as a sort of *backwards* coding process, a process of recording holistic impressions in the field and while examining the data as opposed to working through the data piece by piece as it is received (Creswell, 2005). Memoing consists of two types: analytical and methodological.

I kept analytical memos during data collection and analysis. That is, I kept them as I gathered documents, conducted interviews, made observations, and utilized content analysis and phenomenography—both explained in detail in the next section—to highlight specific aspects of the data that would prove relevant to the research questions. I also added analytical memos to documents that had already been coded as part of constant comparison. Some examples of analytical memos from this study include:

- The term *appropriate* keeps coming up, and everyone seems to have a different idea about what it means.
- It's interesting that participants are discussing informal learning and LPP without realizing that these concepts are in motion.
- This participant could be queering curriculum by inviting a self-identifying trans student to sit in a classroom designated for a different gender/sex; this could be affirming and empowering for the student.
- This participant perceives the community as conservative, but they perceive that the partnership they provide is disruptive in a positive way.

In a similar manner, I used methodological memos to keep my interviewing and coding strategies in line with the research questions and to serve as reminders to avoid leading questions and keep the research process transparent. In some instances, along with analytical memos, these memos brought new insights and potential directions the interviews could take should they emerge organically from the participant. Examples of methodological memos include:

- That was a leading question/comment. Next time ask, "Could you elaborate more on X?"
- Guidance counselors do not seem to have any knowledge of FLE curriculum and instruction, whereas SROs have been invited into the classroom.
- Because of the open-ended nature of the semi-structured interviews, several unanticipated themes are emerging: foster and transient students, recently passed laws governing FLE…. Ask about these in upcoming interviews.
- Some participants have indicated they are parents without prompting. When they do so, ask about their perspectives specifically as parents.

Audit Trail

An audit trail is documentation of decisions made from a project's inception to the interpretation of results (O'Donogue, 2007). The audit trail contributes to a study's credibility by demonstrating considerable care in carrying out research, confirming findings through verification of decision-making, and physically and/or intellectually informing raw data, reduction/abstraction, and reconstruction (Creswell, 2005; Eisenhart, 2006; & O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Carcary (2009) states

> Research audit trails may be intellectual or physical in nature. An intellectual audit trail assists the researcher in reflecting on how his/her thinking evolved throughout all phases of the study. A physical audit trail documents stages of a research study, from identification of the research problem to development of new theory; and it reflects the key research methodology decisions. (p. 16)

Carcary (2009) also argues that since qualitative research is "context sensitive and largely concerned with understanding complex issues, [an audit trail] enables readers to trace through a researcher's logic and determine whether the study's findings may be relied upon" (p. 11). The audit trail is an integral tool to address the challenge of reducing the influence of the researcher's biases.

As I collected data and annotated memos during the present study, I made multiple decisions that I documented in the audit trail. Four of them crucially affected the path the study took:

- School (guidance) counselors were omitted as participants at the second site. This was because the perspective they were able to provide and insight into sexuality education at the first site was minimal.

- School resource officers (SROs) were included as participants at the second site. This was because they were mentioned frequently as resources, guest lecturers, and members of the community of practice, with particular regard to the legality surrounding students' sexual acts surrounding technology.
- Parents who mentioned organically that they were parents were encouraged to discuss their views *as parents*. Specifically, they were asked to elaborate on their own desires were for sexuality and family life education as parents with children who had been through the program, who were in or would be enrolled in the program, or who would have the program in another division, especially given how much difficulty I had recruiting parents to participate.
- I ceased interviews and the collection of artifacts when saturation was achieved at 29 cases. It was clear that no new data relevant to the research questions were emerging, and referrals were suggested to new participants with increasingly less relevance to the study topic—nutritionists, medical personnel, individuals in adjacent districts, and more.

Transferability

Transferability is an additional component to establishing rigor. In some ways it can be seen as parallel to generalizability as a measure of validity in quantitative research; in others, it is quite different (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Transferability refers to whether specific findings can be put into context outside of the study. It is a criterion of *relatability* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Transferability depends heavily on thick descriptions of the interview's context: the atmosphere, environment, and setting, as well as participant attitudes, actions, or reactions that are observed by the researcher but not necessarily captured in an audio recording (Amankwaa, 2016). These descriptions are meant to tell a thoroughgoing story of entering the field and are documented by the researcher in the form of memos and field notes (Amankwaa, 2016; Jonsen & Jehn, 2009; Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). In this study, I present the results in context for practitioners and stakeholders in Chapters 4 and 5 to enhance their transferability.

Resonance

The term resonance within qualitative inquiry is one of more recent developments, having emerged from psychotherapy in a poststructuralist paradigm (Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014). Its origin has various implications within the scope of reliability. Resonance is a result of deconstruction. Medico and Santiago-Delefosse (2014) write that resonance

> allow[s] us to put forward an analysis of meaning that goes beyond the apparent materiality of data and the inevitable reductionism that studying various forms of data, such as interview transcripts, for example, imposes on the multiplicity and complexity of human communication. (p. 353-354)

Sometimes qualitative researchers will discredit their work by comparing it to the generalizability of statistics, hard numbers, and natural sciences. This may be a consequence of a popular reductionist worldview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith, 2011). Jacques Derrida, philosopher and expert in qualitative methodologies, argues that “the problem of [qualitative] writing is that one must bring into presence this phenomenon that can be represented only in words—and yet escapes all representation” (1973, p. 718). Language, the vehicle used to both collect and disseminate our data becomes the nonpareil confounder. This grows especially challenging when the topic is sex/sexuality; however, this problem can be partially addressed through resonance as a criterion for reliability. Though Derrida notes that “method (in the usual sense of following directions, procedures, or orientations) can, indeed, give guidance, one cannot rely on it” (p. 719). The criterion of resonance means analyzing and disseminating the data through processes of deconstruction and reassembling them in accessible ways for audiences such that they not only understand the results but relate to them on meaningful levels (Le Grange, 2018).

Reflexivity and the Role of the Researcher

Researchers and participants are not mentally or experientially blank slates (Charmaz, 2014). In accordance with this study’s qualitative epistemology and worldview, they exist with multitudinous preconceptions and lifetimes of experiences that cannot be isolated or factored out. This has the potential to introduce bias, especially on the side of the researcher who sometimes enters the field with expectations of a study’s results and who may lack awareness of the sonder of their interviewees (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Saldaña (2015) states that “Reflection...is the act of pondering various components of the research project to make sense of and gain personal understanding of their meanings” (p. 8). In this study, the role of the researcher is to consistently reflect on and annotate factors that could influence the research process and findings, especially toward desired outcomes as they align with personal values. This reflection, often called *bracketing* (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000), can increase the researcher’s awareness of their values, stances, and personal ideologies or other relevant biases that may appear.

Multiple authors assert that bracketing is a strict requirement (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015; Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Saldaña, 2015). Strauss and Corbin (1990) argue that bracketing should be a part of memoing. In this way, notes can be easily accessible to the researcher, members of the research team, and participants. Ashworth and Lucas (2000) argue that bracketing must be sensitive of the participants' experiences while simultaneously acknowledging and keeping researcher assumptions in mind while collecting, analyzing, and reporting data throughout the process' various cycles. In this study, bracketing was a part of memoing.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) are echoed in Braun and Clark (2006) when it comes to avoiding pitfalls in qualitative inquiry. In sum, these authors recommend the following to keep qualitative inquiry reliable:

1. Memo during the process, including when/where/how, the season, day of the week, or time of day;
2. Bracket how the researcher's presence can affect the process;
3. Triangulate during analysis: member check, community of practice, constant comparison;
4. Revisit some members of your sample when first drafting findings; orient the reader with a selection from your writing that identifies a finding and elicit feedback; and
5. Revisit the most salient themes across all ranges of data.

Researcher as Instrument

Methodologists have documented how qualitative researchers can experience changes in their perceptions and worldviews, over time evaluating and distilling their praxes of interpretation, and possibly triggering epistemological shifts within themselves (Barrett 2007; Pratt, Kaplan, & Whittington, 2020). As partners in the creation of knowledge, qualitative researchers should consider employing a methodology rich in reflection at each stage of research as has been explained so far (Xu & Storr, 2012). This is partly because the researcher *is* the instrument of data collection as opposed to surveys, questionnaires, data mining, or other methods. Barrett (2007) argues, "The process of conducting qualitative research depends upon a series of transformations", not only in the analysis and interpretation of the data themselves, but the researcher's methodological and ontological awareness and understanding, their development in practice, and the refinement of their interpretive lenses (p. 417).

The researcher's subjectivity should be taken into account in data acquisition: "Data analysis and interpretation are often intertwined and rely upon the researcher's logic, artistry, imagination, clarity, and knowledge of the field of study" (Barrett, 2007, p. 418). It is probable that all those personal qualities seep into data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions. Furthermore, "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of [material practices] that make the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3), and the researcher as instrument is responsible for those practices. In line with Barrett (2007), when the researcher is aware of their role as instrument, internal transformations occur to strengthen representation of phenomena, observations, artifacts, and illustrations.

The researcher can also be an active respondent in data collection and is heavily involved in the construction of increasingly abstract ideas that emerge from interviews and artifacts. The researcher is also responsible for creating a unique conversational and interactive space in which interviewees feel safe to share stories and build narratives (Pratt, Kaplan, & Whittington, 2020; Xu & Storr, 2012). Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) state that "Because the researcher *is* the instrument in semi-structured or unstructured interviews, unique researcher attributes have the potential to influence the collection of empirical materials" (p. 166).

Accordingly, researchers must take great care to be reflexive in thought and action throughout the entire investigative process. There are several tools that can aid in this. For example, member checking is a way to identify potential bias (Wolcott, 2008). Additionally, a researcher should utilize members of her or his community of practice to check over data, examine field notes, and contemplate the process together (Kvale, 1996; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Memoing is one way in which reflexivity and the role of the researcher satisfy criteria of trustworthiness. Apart from that, bracketing (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000), especially regarding my own perceptions of LGBTQ+ identity and my stance on inclusive and comprehensive sexuality education helped cultivate a research process that minimized procedural pitfalls (Braun & Clark, 2006). Satisfying these criteria also involved consistent self-reflection, i.e., thinking about the study and my relationship to it, as well as my relationship to the stakeholders.

Researcher Positionality

Given that qualitative researchers are reflexive in their work, the reflections they produce have the ability to impact work in the field that follows their contributions. Because of this, "qualitative researchers have taken to deconstructing how their own positionalities or social locations, and how their own biases or preferences are impacting how they do researcher, where they do research, and with whom they do research" (Thurairajah, 2019, p. 132). Simply describing oneself and one's relation to the research does not take into consideration the power differential between the researcher and the subject(s) being studied. Thurairajah (2019) asks, "how does the researcher utilize their position of authority? How does the participant articulate a narrative in a space in which there may be a perceived power imbalance? How can the researcher help the participant reclaim their agency in this space? Finally, which positionalities of the participant are interacting with which positionalities of the researcher?" (p. 133)

Contemporary trends in methodological literature view assertions of unbiased qualitative research as outdated. Notions of the researcher setting aside personal values and biases or pretending to maintain control over them throughout the research process to prevent influencing the results can be problematic. In fact, failure to discuss how those values and biases can impact research outcomes can cause others to question the viability of the resulting narrative (Drake, 2010; Harding, 1993). Researcher positionality, then, is about recognizing the boundary between respondent and researcher, evaluating its consistency (that is, solid or more flexible regarding how much the participant reveals about their person and their beliefs), and accounting for differences in power between the observer and that which is being observed (Waldron, 2017). This includes identifying with participants during data collection as an insider or outsider and whether or not any intersections of lived experience present themselves, later including these moments of identification and co-understanding in the data analysis (Dean, Furness, Verrier, Lennon, Bennett, & Spencer, 2019).

Thurairajah (2019) identifies three types of researcher positionality: the *fully cloaked* researcher, *strategic undressing* (fostering trust and accord with participants), and *being naked* in the field. According to the author, in a fully cloaked approach, a researcher examines their own values, biases, and identities apart from the data collection and analysis, without sharing any relevant information during data collection or other interactions with participants. Which parts to include, if any, in a discussion of results are left to the researcher. In a strategic undressing approach, a researcher acts as both an insider and an outsider, their role shifting when a belief or value is expressed in concordance with the flow of information during data collection (but without being deceitful). Being naked in the field entails a considerable shift of power from the researcher to the respondent, a shift which can establish substantial trust. Thurairajah (2019) gives the example of participants asking the researcher questions and the researcher sharing deeply personal histories as being naked in the field.

I utilized a strategic undressing approach to foster accord with participants before, during, and after interviews. Upon my arrival in the field, before many interviews commenced, most participants asked me questions about:

- My relationship to Virginia Tech ("Do you work there? Do you teach there? Do you know so-and-so? [I never knew anyone mentioned] What is your program/major? Are you getting a degree? What kind of degree?");
- If I had any prior teaching experience in their division or elsewhere, and what I had taught previously;
- Where I had attended high school and college, what I had studied, if I had played sports, if I was a fan of a certain team or sport; and
- What my career plans were (e.g., "Do you want to be a teacher [again]? Are you looking for a job here? Do you want to be a professor or a researcher? Do you do lots of research? What other kinds of research do you do?").

It was my interpretation that participants were genuinely curious about me as a visitor entering the field, not protective or malicious in their intent. The participants also could have been feeling out my stance and values to get a sense of the interpersonal context of the interview. I answered their questions truthfully without giving away details about the study before the interview had begun. No one specifically asked about my stance on FLE or sexuality education until after an interview had occurred. After six of the interviews, participants (three teachers and three CHPOPs) asked about my views of equality in education, women's rights, bodily autonomy, community values, sexual violence prevention, and "if the government is doing enough in family life education." I answered these questions from a strategically undressed stance—I gave honest and brief personal perspectives to every question to provide truthful responses without compromising the study's credibility or integrity, or especially in case participants spoke to one another between interviews. Then, I annotated in field notes that I had been asked about these themes before departing from the interview site.

This type of strategic undressing proved beneficial in that it seemed to foster trust; however, this positionality is limited in that some have accused it of being only a partially honest approach, instead arguing that it can create an uncomfortable landscape for researcher and participant alike to navigate (Thurairajah, 2019). Nevertheless, given that the pre-interview questions were unrelated to the study content and that answers to the post-interview questions did not reveal the research questions, methodology, or compromise the study, strategic undressing as researcher positionality was effective.

I now turn to the selection of methods for data analysis: content analysis for curriculum comparison with SCT, and phenomenography for interview transcripts.

Selecting Methods

Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) write that qualitative inquiry is:

> a particular structuring of the analytic results as interpretive. The interpretive approach is generally set in contrast to a positivist approach, and indeed, for many the two are incompatible...qualitative methods provide considerable room for interpretive inquiry...it is what you do with qualitative data, and not the methods themselves, that define whether you are engaged in a research endeavor that is interpretive. (p. 4)

Common selections in the interpretive domain are ethnography, content analysis, biography, case study, phenomenology, phenomenography, and more. Any methodology should be grounded in the research questions and generate accessible results that resonate with the intended audience, the study's scope, and its limitations (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) note that not everyone will comprehend the nuances of qualitative methodologies or their driving epistemologies and ontologies. Due to this, they recommend that researchers clearly identify the boundaries of inquiry—that is, what qualitative evidence can and cannot be or do—and in this way distill assumptions that the audience could make, as well as clarify misunderstandings.

Qualitative inquiry is not without drawbacks or complications. For example, how can qualitative researchers be trusted to represent their participants faithfully, and on whose authority can they collect, catalog, structure, and present the data and their voices? Eisenhart (2006) calls this a "crisis of representation" (p. 567) and proposes a poststructuralist approach in which the researcher continuously evaluates her or his authority through reflection while the methodology itself constructs the argument; the context or space of the research—the identifiable space—is dismantled as the information uncovered within is constructed through a carefully established method (Derrida, 1978; McQuillan, 2001). Last, Svensson (1997) argues that research in this domain is identifying "the relational character of conceptions and the uncertainty of this relation" (p. 169). Uncertainty can be problematic at the stages of designing empirical investigation and entering the field. In light of this, I now turn to a description of the multimodal approach to this study and the selection of methods.

A Multimodal Approach

When justified by the research questions and the nature of the subject(s) or object(s) of study, more than one method may be combined if appropriate steps are taken to ensure compatibility (Creswell, 2007). For the present study, a phenomenographic approach is appropriate for conducting face-to-face interviews with participants, but not the most effective method for examining documents and artifacts like curricula and supplemental materials. In that case, content analysis is justified because, while its aim of inquiry may be the same, it functions differently, and allows distinct organization and interpretation of the data. At the data collection stage, the two methodologies must be utilized in tandem, with similarities in procedures like coding, reflecting, and documenting methodological decision-making, in addition to corroboration between theory findings, and interpretations (Feldon & Tofel-Grehl, 2018; Smith, 2006).

There is also a need for integrity in the reporting of results. This requires that the conclusions and any connected interpretations be grounded in and generated from the data. There should be a balance between displaying the raw data and the interpretation that has taken place (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015; Wolcott, 2008). Multiple methods can invoke opposing ideas within the same phenomenon. Smith (2006) notes that multimodal studies create a dialectic design and "invite the juxtaposition of opposed or contradictory ideas to interact with the tensions invoked by [such] contesting arguments, or to engage in a play of ideas" (p. 471). It is this interplay that can yield itself to thick description of the data. Because of this and the nature of the data that was to be collected, I chose a multimodal approach to the study.

SCT and Qualitative Research

As stated in Chapters 1 and 2, SCT (van Anders, 2015) is the analytical framework, or tool for critical contrast and comparison, that I have selected for this study. SCT presents a sphere of possibilities of sexual identities and acts associated with gender/sex. I do not anticipate finding every element of SCT in the perceptions and themes of a public school curriculum or stakeholder interviews, but I do expect to find a dynamic, organic model from which to work toward phenomenographic mapping and deconstruction of convoluted and problematic notions that may emerge. As stated previously, I am also interested in the design of the model that allows for identification along multiple axes or dimensions of identity, including gender, partner preference, attraction to gender/sex expression(s), and sexual acts (p. 1188). Additionally, my work may contribute to van Anders' theory in that she addresses several practical contexts in which sexuality and sexual health are discussed: counseling, clinical/health work, etc. but does not address public sex education as a potential outlet for the dissemination of results that utilize her work in their own investigations.

Recently, SCT has been tested qualitatively in some studies. Foregrounding van Anders' pioneering assertions on the complexities of lived sexualities, Abed, Schudson, Gunther, Beischel, and van Anders (2019) published a study in which, through the course of interviews, 26 self-identified sexual and gender majorities successfully positioned themselves along multiple axes within the pre-identified parameters of SCT (see Chapter 2, Figures 3-5). Echoing van Anders' original assertions:

> Extant research on gender and sexual majorities suggests that when asked directly about their attractions, identities, and experiences, they disclose more complexities in sexual behavior, identification, and orientation than is generally assumed by identity terms alone. (p. 422)

These authors utilize thematic analysis with gender and sexual majority (heterosexual, cisgender) subjects to independently evaluate the robustness of the theory. Participants were asked to discuss and mark their position on the gender/sex, nurturance and eroticism, and partnered sexuality dimensions, among others. Since the authors posit that people of dominant gender identities and sexualities do not tend to critically reflect on these identities, their perceptions warrant a litmus test of several of the SCT parameters. Their results indicated that these so-called majority subjects were able to express a range of their gender/sex and behavior interests which normally lie outside the expected range for what would be presumed about a typical heterosexual and/or cisgender individual would—for example, attraction to gender nonconforming individuals, or a number of statements about attraction to a *person* over a gender—led subjects to claim they had never thought about their identities in this way before, yielding new insights for them. The authors conclude that this evidence demonstrates the utility of SCT in deconstructing majority identities by desire and experience, creating a more complete picture of human sexuality.

In a similar vein, Schudson, Manley, Diamond, and van Anders (2017) conducted a qualitative study on the engagement of self-identified sexual and gender minorities with the SCT model. In this study, 25 self-identified gender and sexual minorities explored and positioned themselves within the aforementioned parameters of gender/sex, partnered sexuality, nurturance and eroticism, and others. These authors indicate that “Traditional...measures of sexual orientation and gender/sex have been described as especially limited, marginalizing, and/or inaccurate by sexual and gender minorities” (p. 423).

In their study, the authors recruited participants who identified as cisgender and transgender, as well as gay, lesbian, asexual, bisexual, pansexual, panromantic, and queer. The data from this study were analyzed thematically, and the authors found that frequently the participants vocalized their opposition to rigid categories of sexual orientation and binary/oppositional genders, identifying themselves strongly at overlaps and intersections in the SCT model. The researchers noted that the subjects would often vocalize their rationales for locating gender/sex, for example, along the notches “in between” what may be considered mainstream views of opposing genders and supposedly contrasting sexualities, and point out that the model allowed them to think about how these constructs can be considered in increasingly abstract ways that also connected to their lived experiences. They conclude that SCT allows one to express the fullness of one's gender/sex and nuanced sexuality on paper, so to speak.

Both of the aforementioned studies utilize SCT with participants directly to elicit responses and locate themselves on a variety of possible dimensions where overlaps might occur and insights can abound. The purpose of using SCT in this study was as a tool of comprehensiveness of sexuality education as observed in interviews and artifacts, without exposing participants to the theory directly. Instead, I relied on what was shared and withheld in interviews and curricula against SCT to identify potential gaps in the formal and informal gender/sex and sexualities discourse.

van Anders (2015) has invited others to continue to test this theory. To accomplish such a test on the phenomena under study, the specific and relevant parameters of SCT as outlined in Chapter 1 were systematically compared to codes and categories (qualitative content analysis) and the mapping of differences (phenomenography) in the data gathered and sorted during analysis. These six dimensions are restated here:

1. Sexual identity: heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, pansexuality, sexual fluidity, panromanticism, romanticism, aromanticism
2. Sexual behaviors: oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex, masturbation and mutual masturbation, sexual violence
3. Enthusiastic consent: must be shared, should be mutually enthusiastic, can be withdrawn at any time for any reason
4. Attitudes or stigmas, if any, toward and use of prophylactics, condoms, birth control, teen pregnancy, STI prevention, abstinence

5. Relationships with specific regard to sexuality: monogamy, polygamy, casual dating inclusive/exclusive of sexual behaviors, one night stands, friends with benefits, single by choice
6. Reproduction, biology, medicine, reproductive health

I chose these dimensions of SCT for the reasons listed in Chapter 1, as well as because of their overlap with common sexual identity vernacular and what may be considered familiar or common sexual behaviors.

Qualitative Tools

Coding

Coding is a process of identifying conceptual anchors, or meaningful units, in the data that allow information to be collected from it in a methodical and empirical manner (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Coding is a linguistic and transformational tool employed in multiple methodologies within the interpretivist paradigm and beyond. During coding, the researcher identifies and marks words and phrases with meaning relevant to the research questions. Often numerous codes, later sorted into a number of levels or hierarchies, will emerge from a single transcript, document, or set of field notes. Computer software can assist with marking and sorting codes as is the case in this study.

Coding also relies on the researcher to employ constant comparison between other codes in transcripts, field notes, and memos to ensure data are collected to the point of saturation, and that the results are sufficiently robust to gather into increasingly levels of abstraction (for example, open codes, axial codes, phenomenographic points and mapping; and themes) in order to address the research questions in Chapter 1. Coding is a delicate methodological aspect of the research process that entails interrogating the raw data directly from the sources to accurately circulate participant voices and perspectives (Saldaña, 2015). However, as qualitative research can be interpretivistic (and is in this study), it is also the researcher's responsibility to make sure that each level of codes, increasing in abstraction, also increases in its approximation toward answering the research questions set forth within the constraints of established criteria of trustworthiness and reliability(Amankwaa, 2016).

Unit of Analysis

In a corpus, a unit of analysis is the smallest element of meaning that a researcher codes. Units of analysis are sometimes called textual units or relevance samples (Krippendorff, 2019). When coding an artifact, the researcher must decide on a unit of analysis that both addresses the research questions and fits the data. A unit of analysis may be a word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or page, or a smaller or larger bit if appropriate (Asgedom, 2017). I chose words and phrases as the unit of analysis for both methods I employed in this study.

Open Coding

In qualitative research generally, a researcher normally conducts the first round of coding by proceeding through the data line by line and identifying semantically rich units of analysis and directly labeling them as open codes. In subsequent rounds of coding, the researcher returns to the data and the codes simultaneously, organizing the codes into categories and themes according to the chosen methods, the robustness of the data, and the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Constant Comparison

As Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommend, constant comparison was utilized during the data collection and analysis phases of the study. Constant comparison calls for incoming data to be compared with data already collected in a continuous fashion. In this study, I listened for, watched for, notated, and coded crucial differences to gradually construct arguments from both methods I employed. Corbin and Strauss (2008) also note that constant comparison is useful during coding and while data are still being gathered because it can evoke “further interview questions or observations based on evolving theoretical analysis” (p. 77), as well as influence the member checking process.

Categorizing and Mapping

As open coding progresses during a study, codes germane to the research questions are sorted together into groups of some kind—in this case, similar or dissimilar meanings—and assigned labels that increase in abstraction with each iteration of coding. Put simply, more tangible open codes will be represented as a group by a hierarchically elevated label such as a set of axial codes, themes, or categories, a process which can permit a deeper interpretation of the evidence on par with the study’s aims.

Asgedom (2017) notes this “concrete-abstract dichotomy” (p. 5) when sorting open codes into categories or other higher-level units: simple moves toward complex, scattered becomes compiled. It is at this point in the present study that the process of how open codes are grouped into units of increasing abstraction and interpreted becomes distinct between the chosen methods: qualitative content analysis for documents and phenomenography for interviews.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis is an umbrella methodological term for various systematic strategies of analysis of documents and discursive artifacts in various forms: texts, pictures, video and audio, etc. (Bryman, 2011; Holste, 1969; Kuckartz, 2019; Mayring, 2014; Neuendorf, 2017). Asgedom (2017) calls this method “a formal system for doing something that we all do informally” (p. 2), that is, inferring from observance, and remarks that the method has historically varied in method from study to study but has since gained some coherence. That being said, scholars still debate on its design, reporting of results, etc. (White & Marsh, 2006).

Characteristics of Communication

Content analysis enables a researcher to identify trends and patterns in a corpus of data and establish relationships among them that can be depicted in some form such as a conceptual map, diagram, or list (Devi, 2019; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). According to Kuckartz (2019), content analysis is at its most profound level *communication* analysis. It seeks to uncover the meaning of linguistic expressions and how any number of contexts allow that meaning to be interpreted via communication from a document or artifact to the observer. An assumption of this form of analysis is that text does not exist in a vacuum and cannot have meaning without the surrounding text and the reader (Devi, 2019; White & Marsh, 2006). Mayring (2014) writes that “the text is thus always interpreted within its context, i.e., the material is examined with regard to its origin and effect” (p. 39).

Asgedom (2017) notes that content analysis can be quantitative, qualitative, or both, even in the same study. Specific to texts, it allows the content “to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted upon” whether manifest or latent (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013, p. 401).These authors indicate that this method can be conducted automatically or assisted by any number of computer programs which may enrich evidence gathered. Regarding this study, qualitative content analysis, or QCA, was used to analyze a corpus of text, specifically, the sexual education curriculum (i.e., state guidelines, lesson guides, and any associated materials that were provided by participants). Kuckartz (2019) posits that an analyst will “construct a world in which the texts make sense and can answer the analyst’s research questions” (p. 24) and establish connections “between the part and the whole” (p. 14); these assumptions lay the methodological foundation for this study's interpretive focus I mentioned in Chapter 1. QCA also challenges positivistic understandings of reality; according to Devi (2019), QCA produces a portrait of reality from the data as well as the nature of that reality; in other words, not just *what,* but potentially *why*.

The Context(s) of Texts

QCA is interpretive, flexible, and open-ended. It is driven by researcher decision-making, reflexivity, and the data themselves, and compatible with other research methods (Borrego, Foster, & Froyd, 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). In other words, QCA allows a researcher to uncover meaning that, for lack of a better descriptor, does not exist when the text is not *read*, such as when it is sitting on a shelf. It assumes that text alone has no reader-independent characteristics, but instead is densely interlaced with histories and purposes. This is congruent with arguments I have presented so far regarding sexuality education curricula: a corpus (of sexuality education curriculum) never speaks for itself, but through QCA a researcher can locate how manifest meaning is communicated in context. In sum, Krippendorff (2019) remarks:

> a context is always someone's construction, the conceptual environment of a text [or medium], the situation in which it plays a role.…In the course of a content analysis, the context embraces all the knowledge that the analyst applies to given texts, whether in the form of scientific theories, plausibly argued propositions, empirical evidence, grounded intuitions, or knowledge of reading habits. (p. 33)

Examples

QCA has been used extensively in research in the humanities and social sciences in fields such as literature, nursing, and public health (Kuckartz, 2019). It has also been used to investigate multiple areas in education such as e-learning platforms (Hara Bonk, & Angeli, 2000), online discussion threads (Keller & Cernerud, 2002), engineering education (Borrego, Foster, & Froyd, 2014), and components of problem-based learning among medical students to "create evidence" (Prihatiningsih & Qomariyah, 2016, p. 206). In point of fact, QCA fulfills many of the methodological requirements for qualitative educational research (Schreier, Janssen, Stamann, Whittal, & Dahl, 2020).

In one study, Jones and Egley (2004) used a mixed content analysis to examine teacher perceptions of high-stakes testing—specifically, whether or not teachers believed such tests were leading schools in the right or wrong direction at the time, and why. The study consisted of a two-question survey with possible responses of yes or no, and an open-ended item asking respondents to explain why they believed or didn't believe the tests were taking the school in the right direction. The authors' open-ended qualitative question allowed the data to "speak" and the authors to "listen closely" to what the teachers wanted to tell them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 65, as cited in Jones & Egley, 2004). Out of over 700 participants in the full study, 60 responses (n = 60) to the open-ended item were selected at random for QCA. The authors conducted an initial round of open coding followed by a round of re-coding and reorganizing to eliminate redundancy and overlap; the authors also indicate that, in contrast, they took great care not to *force* inclusion of a code into a category. The researchers then organized the categories into themes which they present in tables along with examples from the data set. Their analysis amplifies the teachers' voices on both negative and positive effects of high stakes testing on motivation, curriculum, teaching, and the politics of education, though negative responses outnumber positive ones considerably.

In a separate study on the portrayal of scientific methodology in two high school textbooks from the two major publishing houses of this topic in the US, Binns (2013) used QCA to search for the implicit or explicit inclusion of, or exclusion of, broad views of scientific methodology—as opposed to a simplified presentation of a singular multistep scientific method—weaved throughout the text. The author notes that some texts did not recognize observations, field studies, epidemiology, and various other methodologies, relying instead on a sole presentation of the aforementioned more traditional ordered method of hypothesis testing. Binns reports having conducted searches with computer assistance as well as manual readthroughs of the content, utilizing a rubric that continued to take shape as an effect of researcher reflexivity during the process. Categories and excerpts from the text are presented in the article to demonstrate the finding that these specific texts did not offer students information on multiple scientific methodologies.

Procedure

QCA is more than counting frequencies of units of analysis. It is an unobtrusive technique that explores commonalities and differences and allows a researcher to develop hypotheses and evaluate or judge material (Devi, 2019). Krippendorff (2019) argues that “Ultimately all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers” and, in QCA, require close reading (p. 16).

Data Collection

Copies of curricular maps and related guides were provided to me when I met with school personnel. These artifacts became my textual corpus. I did not solicit additional materials during interviews or other interactions in the field, but sometimes supplementary documents were shared with me. I added these to the corpus as well.

Rationale

Borrego, Foster, & Froyd (2014) write that decisions made in conducting a QCA should be documented with clear rationale. Kuckartz (2019) argues for methodical rigor in framing codes and categories by means of transparent justification of steps taken and the implementation of theory in analysis. Mayring (2014) and Krippendorff (2019) establish a protocol to delineate the direction that a content analysis will take specific to the data. I have synthesized this protocol into a list of relevant questions and answers in Table 3.

Table 3

Areas to be Addressed in Qualitative Content Analysis

#	Question	Present Study
1	What data are analyzed?	Curricula; supplementary materials
2	What is the origin of the data?	Two public school divisions in southeastern US; interviews with and documents collected from school personnel, SROs, and CHPOPs
3	What is the direction of analysis?	Open code to manifest category to conceptual map to comparison with SCT
4	How are the data defined?	Collectively developed documents and artifacts shared by participants
5	What population do the data represent?	State and national sexuality education curricula
6	What are the data's contexts?	Public education; rural communities; community partnerships and outreach programs
7	What will be counted, evaluated, and/or assessed?	Occurrence of salient themes and categories of open codes at a word-level unit of analysis
8	How will the data be dissected into units of analysis?	Words, phrases
9	How will the data be interpreted?	Narrative; set diagram
10	How will the results be checked?	Criteria of reliability and trustworthiness; reflexivity
11	What are the limitations of the analysis?	Any categories that do not overlap between curriculum and SCT; dimensions of SCT that do not overlap with curriculum

12	What is the researcher's stance on the role of theory?	SCT as frame of comprehensiveness; LPP as contextual mechanism for learning; QCA as interpretive tool for semantically rich content

Sorting, Rechecking, and Mapping

Asgedom (2017) posits that the coding process must be manageable—hence the necessity of units of analysis—in addition to pertinent to the research aims and consistently *toward* the formation of categories. With this in mind and as exemplified by others, I completed a round of open coding on artifacts assisted by NVivo 11, a software program that assists with coding and sorting qualitative data. I then grouped similar and synonymous codes together and categorized them, rechecking for inconsistencies, and using memoing, constant comparison, reflexivity, and the audit trail for reliability[2]. I compiled these categories and dimensions of interest in SCT into a conceptual map[3]. I present this analysis in Chapter 4.

I now present a discussion of phenomenography, the methodology I utilized to analyze participant interview data.

Phenomenography

Phenomenography as a method has its origins in educational research (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). It came into public view half a century ago, was officially "named in 1981...at first considered a research programme [aimed at] phenomena of learning, studying, communication, teaching, and instruction" (p. 161). It has increasingly been used on a diverse array of research endeavors (Feldon & Tofel-Grehl, 2018; Holsten & Gubrium, 1994; Seidman, 2006). It has further been defined as "mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in the world around

[2] I do not include excerpts from the curricular maps and guides that the districts gave me in this study to protect confidentiality.
[3] I did not conduct QCA on the van Anders (2015) article that introduces SCT. This was unnecessary due to the organization and presentation of the dimensions of sexuality therein.

them" (Marton, 1986, p. 31). Feldon and Tofel-Grehl (2018) name phenomena as "the objects of a person's perception" (p. 887). The data have been called *reflected-on* experience as opposed to *lived experience* in other paradigms (Marton, 1994), though the literature discussed herein does not necessarily adhere to that terminology: the terminology is not as crucial as the emphasis on identifying and amplifying differences among what participants say.

Aims and Design

The principal aim of phenomenology is to discern the ways individuals experience their worlds through descriptions of variation among those experiences (Marton, 1986; Marton & Booth, 1996). A chief underpinning of phenomenography is that individuals do not experience events in the same ways (Holmqvist, Gustavsson, & Wernberg, 2007). This differs from other, common experience-centered research methods. Like other qualitative methods, a phenomenographic approach gathers respondents' voices to identify differing patterns in perspectives through the development of a rigorous analytical system such as coding (Feldon & Tofel-Grehl, 2018).

According to Åkerland (2005), phenomenography became the quintessential qualitative "variation theory" in both data and method (p. 321). For this author, this means variation in meaning-making, perceiving, conceptualizing and, more recently, awareness of multiple ways of experiencing and reflecting on the same phenomenon. Åkerland emphasizes forming structural relationships between codes during data analysis, as well as the use of an outcome space, or visualized map, to present results. Åkerland also notes the importance of interpreting a range of meanings across a group rather than focusing on a collective or assimilated experience—in principal terms, differing perspectives or different voices. Per Åkerland, phenomenology requires constant comparison, paying attention to codes of *how* or *what*, and elucidating mismatches.

Mapping Differences

Beaulieu (2017) argues, "Qualitative analytic approaches tend to reduce data to a few common themes, yet phenomenography is about purposefully coding the data to *explore differences*," (p. 62, emphasis mine). This kind of relational-differential mapping makes divergent perspectives among participants more salient, that is, delimiting conceptions or uncovering variations (Holmqvist, Gustavsson, & Wernberg, 2007; Svensson, 1997). It is important to note that Svensson (1997) also establishes that interviews focus on objects and concepts, not persons, but rather the relationship between a respondent, a part of the world, and that part of the world's manifestation(s) to the respondent. This is in contrast to ethnographies, biographies, and many other forms of inquiry. In fact:

> [Phenomenography] represents a reaction against, and an alternative to, the then dominant tradition of positivistic, behavioristic and quantitative research. It makes its own ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions with inspiration from and similarities to several older and concomitant traditions, without agreeing entirely with any of those. (Svensson, 1997, p. 171)

According to Marton and Booth (1997) and Gansemeer-Topf (2016), the researcher(s) will know when all perspectives within the study's scope have been identified related to the study's scope through saturation which I discuss later.

Comprehensiveness

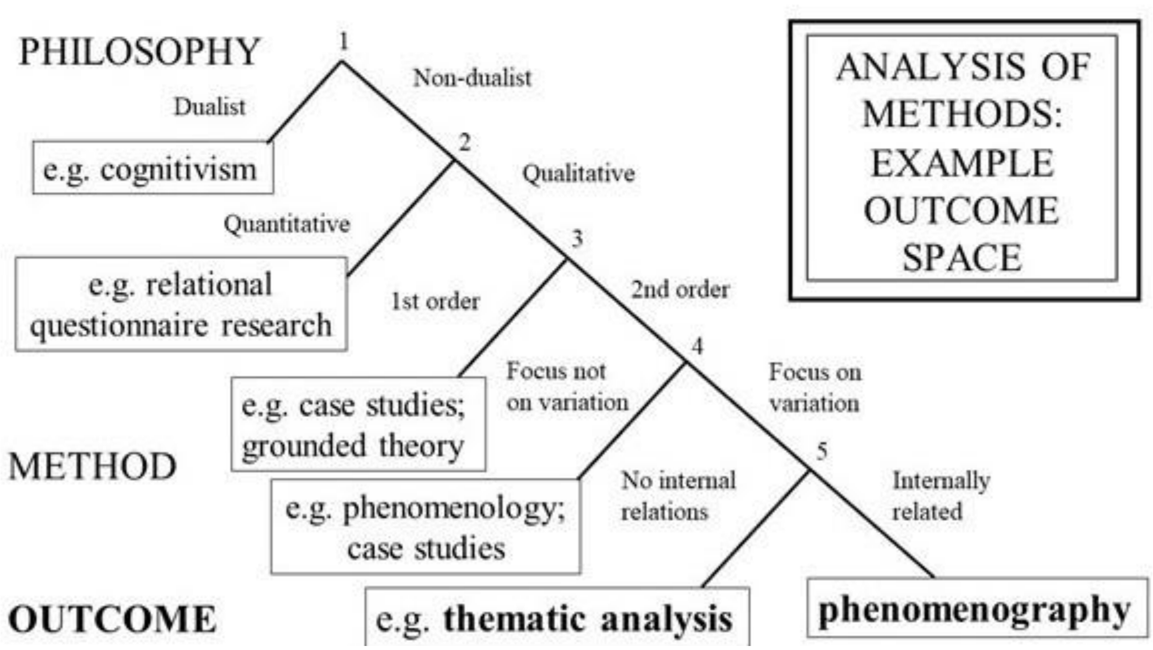
Phenomenography is sufficiently comprehensive to accommodate variegated research objectives, and flexible enough to serve as one of any number of approaches in a multimodal study. Authors Feldon and Tofel-Grehl (2018) state:

> phenomenography conveys specific methodological principles but does not dictate the specific methods used; those are expected to vary according to the needs of specific research questions. Collectively, these features may resonate with readers familiar with contemporary discussions of mixed methods research. (p. 888)

A phenomenographic approach to working with participants for the current study was appropriate because it was congruent with another method like content analysis which was required for analysis of different data. Figure 5, an outcome space created by Trigwell (2000), demonstrates the epistemological hierarchy of multiple methodologies using phenomenography.

Figure 6

Epistemological Relationships of Phenomenography and Other Methods (Adapted from Trigwell, 2000, p. 6)



Before I discuss the integration of content analysis and phenomenography as a multimodal study, it is important to note the crucial ways in which phenomenography and phenomenology, an abundantly utilized methodology, are dissimilar.

Phenomenography and Phenomenology

Phenomenography is not to be confused with phenomenology. While both are concerned with how phenomena are perceived, phenomenography aspires to portray the multifarious ways similar phenomena are experienced by individuals (Marton, 1986, Marton & Booth, 1997, Marton, 2000, Säljö, 1988). Phenomenography explores the variety of experiences and perceptions for the purpose of understanding rich dimensions of variation, including individual differences (Holmqvist, Gustavsson & Wernberg, 2007).

According to Creswell (2005), analyzing qualitative data is “an inductive process of narrowing data into a few themes” (p. 237). However, in the domain of phenomenography, the focus is not reducing and abstracting data into a handful of categories. Instead, the analytic focus is on spreading the data to reveal a broad spectrum of categories and expose differences (Marton, 1981; Tight, 2016). Phenomenographers use interviews and written responses to collect data, but these researchers can be considered the research instrument in addition to their interview questions and other tools (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). Zoltowski, Fila and Dringenberg (2017) accentuate the importance of the role of the researcher and the precautions they must take. These authors note that since the object under scrutiny is the perception of the phenomenon, it is important that the researcher not allow her or his own views of the phenomenon to interfere. To assuage this, Bowden (2005) recommends that researchers do the following: (1) adhere to a strict opening protocol with each interview, (2) refrain from introducing additional input into the interview except to explore issues that participants raise with the exception of follow up questions, and (3) use evidence only from transcripts when constructing categories of variation. I followed this protocol in the current study with the exception of employing *strategic undressing* regarding my perspectives on the project during off the record conversations.

Zoltowski, Fila, and Dringenberg (2017) suggest that, upon analyzing the data, the researcher set up categories that represent distinct ways participants in a study reflect upon the phenomena of interest. As is typical in other modes of qualitative research, the researcher should also resort these categories when proceeding through the data, notating relationships through constant comparison (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Van Manen, 2006). The categories, especially when sorted hierarchically, form an outcome space that delineates the categories and structural relationships among them; in the outcome space, themes manifest themselves distinctly for each category, thus providing the researcher with an expanding awareness of difference (Zoltowski, Fila, & Dringenberg, 2017). Table 4, originally compiled by Reddy (2010), provides an example of an outcome space presenting the results of a study of clinicians participating in a problem-solving medical curriculum.

Table 4

Example of a Phenomenographic Outcome Space from a Study on Clinicians Participating in a Problem-solving Medical Curriculum (Adapted from Reddy, 2010, p. 9)

THE PHENOMENOGRAPHIC OUTCOME SPACE

WHAT-ASPECT (STRUCTURAL)	CATEGORY	WAYS OF EXPERIENCING
	▪ GUINEA PIG IDENTITY	• Conceptions of being in the experimental first cohort. • Conceptions of labelling by medical ward staff. • Conceptions of being compared with traditional curriculum students. • Conceptions of racism and marginalization.
	▪ KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION	• Conceptions of learning in a Skills Lab. • Conceptions of transference of skills from a simulated to a real clinical context. • Conceptions of clinical context. • Conceptions of theoretical inadequacy.
HOW-ASPECT (REFERENTIAL)	▪ PROFESIONAL IDENTITY	• Conceptions of transition from student to graduate. • Conceptions of competence as interns. • Conceptions of relationships with the health care team during internship. • Conceptions of relationships with rural practice.

The illustrations in both Figure 5 and Table 4 are samples of how experiences and perceptions among study participants can be mapped and documented in phenomenography.

Note, however, that the results of a phenomenographic study can be presented via any number of visualizations (Zoltowski, Fila, & Dringenberg, 2017).

Criteria of Reliability Specific to Phenomenography

Criteria of reliability in phenomenography are contested in the methodological literature (Sin, 2010; Tight, 2016). Burns (1994) notes that for this class of research to be reliable, the researcher's background must be acknowledged, especially scholarly knowledge of the themes in question; this provides the audience with context. Cope (2004) writes that analytical strategies must not impose a particular structure, but rather be approached with an open mind. Sandberg (1997) argues against the allegedly tried and true method of interrater reliability, that is, coding and analyzing a data set among a team of researchers, for phenomenography given the aim of the method not to produce "objectivistic" results" (p. 211). Instead, he posits an awareness of the wholly interpretative nature of phenomenography on the side of the researcher as a criterion for reliability:

> as the researcher is a human being, [they are] always intentionally related to the research object. As the researcher cannot escape from being intentionally related to the research object, the categories of description are always the researcher's interpretation of the data obtained from the individuals about their conceptions of reality. In other words, the categories of description, are intentionally constituted through the researcher's interpretation. (p 208)

Cope (2004) asserts that reliability must be demonstrated through careful design and articulation of the interview questions. A reliable phenomenographic study will not bias or lead the respondent in any particular direction, and checking in on several levels: how the respondent is aware of the phenomenon under study, documenting assumptions, determining any interpretations the researcher is making (through methodological and analytical memos, etc.), and making the results available to critique (for example, through member checking). Sandberg (1997) writes that among other qualitative checks of reliability, the most important is that the researcher is faithful to the participants' conceptions of and reflections upon the phenomenon throughout the entirety of the process. The participants' conceptions will be made clear in the coding and analysis of the data.

Relatedly, other methodologists argue for a type of higher-level trustworthiness. Collier-Reed, Ingerman, and Berglund (2009) assert that phenomenographic inquiry is unique in its ability to have an impact on the participant(s) in the midst of a research session in the actual research setting, potentially triggering a personal transformation. I argue that this does not supersede a phenomenographic study's potential to contribute to common knowledge and public discourse.

The Interview Process

Seidman (2013) stresses that phenomenographic interviews must be *about* something rather than casual conversation: they must involve patterns of questioning, active listening, following up, and empathizing. Ashworth and Lucas (2000) echo this position: in the case of phenomenography, open-ended interviews (interviews without aim, questions, or phenomena under scrutiny) serve no purpose. On the contrary, the interviewer must utilize empathy to open oneself to the experience of the interview itself, refrain from marginalizing erroneous or non-factual content, and avoid polarizing topics of discussion when possible (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Corbin and Strauss (1990) contend that interviewers must make a conscious effort to keep deeply held personal opinions from biasing the direction of the interview. They claim that this can be accomplished by consistently reviewing one's own interview practices, discussing them within a professional community of practice, and making necessary adjustments. These scholars also express the need to document emotional reactions and emphases in participant responses during an interview. They point out that conversations should not end over differences of opinion or uncomfortable topics, instead allowing them to become apparent unless the participant withdraws. Consistent use of positive affirmation as an interviewing strategy has been suggested as a tool for confirmation and interviewee comfort by these authors. Adhering to these professional standards, Corbin and Strauss claim that researchers increase both the salience of relevant data during investigation and the reliability of the results. Ashworth and Lucas (2000) write:

> phenomenography, in actual research practice, cannot and must not be seen as the application of a set of rules of procedure; in fact, in healthy practice, it develops, is self-reflective, integrates consistent empathy, and grows in skill along with the researcher, as their human participant has and will continue to do. (p. 307)

In synthesis, Ashworth and Lucas (2000) and Seidman (2013) ask, how does the world look different to the respondent than it does to the researcher? How will the researcher recognize, empathize, and most importantly, bracket and reflect on these moments? The researcher must "allow maximum freedom for the research participant to describe their experience" (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 302), and assume a thorough and "imaginative engagement with the world that is being described" (p. 299).

This is reflected in Seidman (2013)'s seminal piece on active interviewing in qualitative inquiry as well. For example, the subject under scrutiny should have a role in the participants' lifeworlds; otherwise the research has no purpose. The interviewer should design semi-structured questions that gently push for this by carefully seeking out “content of immense interest” (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 298). In addition, other authors explore how semi-structured interviews can be an extension of what is known as rhizomatic inquiry—that is, venturing into unvisited spaces via reflective dialogue (Ko & Bal, 2019; Moe, 2019; Semestsky, 2006). Because the questions are open-ended, the interviewer can listen for unanticipated but relevant responses and ask the participant to expound upon them to illuminate categories of potential inclusion in the findings.

Seidman (2013) states that it is crucial to take both deep and surface approaches to interviewing; he notes that analysis is not a process of discovery (as if the words of the participant have never been spoken before), but instead one of searching among pools of data and watching for structures to form. Here empathy, field notes, transcription, bracketing, and memoing come together (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Last, empathy with the participant and subject matter, working to avoid presuppositions, maintaining an open mind to myriad perceptions, and holding a positionality all help establish rapport with participants (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000).

Study Details

Institutional Review Board Approval

The study was proposed to Virginia Tech’s Human Research Protection Program/Institutional Review Board (IRB), including a recruitment script, an informed consent form for capable adults (see Appendix 2), an optional demographics questionnaire (see Appendix 3), and a semi-structured interview template (see Table 6, this chapter). Approval was obtained (IRB #19-709) and an approval letter was provided by the board to share with potential sites of recruitment and participants.

Data Collection

Pre-Collection Theoretical Sampling

I used theoretical sampling on the sites' states' guidelines for family life and sexuality education to develop the research aims and to prepare myself for entering the field and interviewing. Results of this initial round of open coding, sorted alphabetically, are provided in Appendix 1. These codes were not included in the content or phenomenographic analyses because they had served their methodological purpose, though the relationship between them and actual perceived implementation of the curriculum among personnel and community partners is possible in a future study.

Site Selection

Two school divisions in a state in the southeastern US were chosen because both had updated their curriculum within the previous two years. Knowledge of the status of these divisions' curricula (and subsequent selection as sites) became possible when, with permission, I obtained a survey requesting general information on family life instruction from a wide range of school divisions.

These two divisions are identified herein by the pseudonyms Edgeland County Public Schools (EC) and Gap River Public Schools (GR). Both districts were rural, and participants frequently identified their divisions and communities as rural and rural-serving. EC reported about 7,200 students and GR reported nearly 9,000 students enrolled in PreK-12 in 2019-2020. Demographics collected by each school division were publicly available and presented as statistical categories. In the same academic year in EC, less than 1% of students identified as either Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islander; 6% identified as two or more races; 7% identified as Hispanic or Latin; 8% identified as Black; and 79% identified as White. More than

50% of students came from low-income households, and 2% of students were enrolled in English as a second language (ESL) instruction. In GR, less than 1% of students identified as Native American or Pacific Islander; 1% identified as Asian; 3% identified as two or more races; 5% identified as Hispanic or Latin; 23% identified as Black; and 68% identified as White. Approximately 60% of students came from low-income households, and 2% of students were enrolled in ESL instruction.

Recruitment

In September 2019, I made preliminary contact by telephone with the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction or designee and sent a follow up email in both cases. Each district had a distinct procedure for research approval. In EC, the designee, a division leader, was able to approve the study and provide contact information for recruitment of human subjects. In GR, the superintendent provided a letter of approval that was later disseminated to appropriate instructional personnel, who in turn provided referrals to other potential participants in a process known as snowball sampling. No participants were informed of any other's participation by the researcher, but participants sometimes disclosed that they had spoken to one another about having been interviewed as part of their interest in the research project.

In EC, physical education teachers were responsible for teaching family life and sexuality education during their normal class periods in 6th through 10th grades over the course of two weeks. In GR, a pair of dedicated teachers traveled to each school in the district to give lessons for 16 hours per grade per year in 6th through 10th grades. Both districts had curricula for earlier grades, but those were out of scope for this study. Both divisions split their classes by binary sex (girl/boy) for some topics, and combined for others, especially when CHPOPs—that is, community health providers and outreach partners—were invited to lecture. Both divisions were also responsible for creating and maintaining their own curricular guides that aligned with state guidelines with some flexibility as to presentation and additional content. A copy of the curricular guide and several supplementary materials were obtained at EC and GR. A copy of the curricular guides from EC and GR were obtained. One of supplementary instructional documents was obtained in EC and an assessment tool was provided by community partners in GR. All these materials were treated collectively as curricula to provide insights into lived experiences of the participants and evidence to compare with interview data. I explain this procedure chronologically later.

Participants

I requested permission from the division's primary contact person or designee to interview school personnel. Through snowball sampling in the communities of interest within the theoretical framework of LPP as described in Chapter 2, I sought referrals to community partners, curriculum committee members, and guest lecturers (later identified/classified as CHPOPs). Professionals external to the divisions who (a) had direct contact in classrooms as guest speakers, (b) had contributed in some way to the development of the family life and sexuality education curriculum, (c) had some knowledge of the family life and sexuality education curriculum and instructional protocol due to the nature of their role in the community, or (d) some combination of the other three criteria were identified and recruited for participation. No students were interviewed.

It is generally accepted that an appropriate sample size is determined by both the research questions and the moment at which data saturation—the emergence of no new data—is achieved through constant comparison of incoming data points. Charmaz (2014) suggests that 25 participants are sufficient for a small qualitative study. I observed saturation at 29 participants, noted this in the audit trail, and ceased recruitment efforts. One school employee was recruited but later declined to participate. Four parents were contacted for recruitment; two declined to participate and two did not respond after two attempts at recruitment. All respondents were offered the opportunity to agree to participate in member checking. Informed consent for capable adults was explained and obtained (see Appendix 2).

Pseudonyms

Using pseudonyms for names of people and places to protect participants' real identities is a requirement not only of Virginia Tech's IRB, but also of one of the two sites chosen for the study. However, in general methodological terms, pseudonymizing participants is more than exchanging a real name for a fake one. Doing so without careful consideration of demographics can erase portions of a participant's identity that may be relevant to the study, and potentially important to the participant. Allen and Wiles (2016) note that "renaming participants—the common practice of allocating pseudonyms to confer anonymity—is not merely a technical procedure but has psychological meaning to both the participants and the content and process of the research" (p. 149). These authors argue that researchers should allow their participants to choose their own pseudonyms if possible. Moore (2018) argues that pseudonyms have three quintessential characteristics: durability, in that "[a] durable identity need not be a real name, but it must be stable over time within a particular context" (p. 170-171); connectedness, which "enables statements to be attributed to particular individuals…" and traceability, or "the capacity of observers to covertly link statements to real persons" (p. 171). With an understanding of these characteristics, I assigned pseudonyms to the sites and to respondents who did not choose their own.

Demographics

Myriad factors in an interview space—seating, temperature, interruptions, apparel, being recorded, artifacts introduced by any party before or during, and more—can influence a participant's comfort level, responsiveness, and engagement, as well as the nature and direction(s) of the discourse (Rapley, 2012). Because of this, I created an open-ended and optional demographics questionnaire (see Appendix 3). This was an effort to prevent forced choice responses, checkboxes, othering (i.e., having to select a box labeled other when describing oneself), and racial microaggressions that all could influence interview behaviors, thoughts, and outcomes (Carrigan, Tanguay, Yen, Ivy, Margherio, Riskin, & Horner-Devine, 2018; Nadal, 2008, 2011). Other researchers have used this or similar methods in interview and focus group settings such as Dorsa (2002), Wray, Ussher, and Perz (2014), Davidoff (2017), and Holter (2020).

Several participants asked what to do on the form upon seeing it; I referred them back to the instructions and read them aloud. The data are displayed in Table 5. Responses are reported exactly as written by participants (with the exception of the "Role" column). Consequently, some of the responses in to "Gender," "Race," and "Hispanic" may appear different, but could represent categories commonly interpreted as similar (e.g., a respondent's use of "F" may have represented the word "Female" used by other respondents). "Race" and "Hispanic" responses are presented in aggregate as recommended by IRB to maintain participant confidentiality. For race, one participant wrote "AA," four responded "Black," nine wrote "Caucasian," one wrote "Hispanic," four wrote "W," eight responded "White," and two left the field blank. For the "Hispanic" column, seven wrote "N/A," 13 responded "N," one wrote "Y," and eight did not respond. For clarity, I condensed the roles that participants provided in the "Role" column into a set of common terms. “Division Leader” represents assistant superintendent or divisional leader. “Administrator” represents principal and assistant principal. “Teacher” represents health, physical education, or family life education teacher. “Guidance” represents guidance counselor. “CHPOP” represents community health provider and outreach partner. “SRO” represents school resource officer.

Table 5

Participant Demographic Data

Case	Pseudonym	Gender	Division	Role
1	Dana	F	EC	Division Leader
2	Cindie	F	EC	Division Leader
3	Jackie	F	EC	Administrator
4	Monica	F	EC	Administrator
5	Louie	Male	EC	Administrator
6	David	M	EC	Administrator
7	Jonathan	Male	EC	Teacher
8	Andrea	Female	EC	Teacher
9	Greg	M	EC	Teacher
10	Nick	Male	EC	Teacher
11	Samantha	F	EC	Teacher
12	Lillian	Female	EC	Guidance
13	Lasonya	F	EC	Guidance
14	Evelyn	Female	EC	Guidance
15	Tyrone	M	EC	CHPOP
16	Caroline	Female	EC	CHPOP
17	Wendy	F	EC	CHPOP
18	Tia	Female	GR	Administrator
19	Richard	Male	GR	Administrator
20	Dalyn	F	GR	Teacher
21	Cece	Female	GR	Teacher
22	Doug	Male	GR	Teacher
23	Travis	Male	GR	Teacher
24	Mike	Male	GR	SRO
25	Titus	Male	GR	SRO
26	James	Male	GR	SRO
27	Julia	Female	GR	CHPOP
28	Lisa	Female	GR	CHPOP
29	Rose	F	GR	CHPOP

In EC, 14 school personnel had a range of 1 to 26 years of experience, with a mean of 8 years. Three CHPOPs had a range of 1 to 7 years of experience, with a mean of 4.4 years. In GR, 6 school personnel had a range of 3 to 30 years of experience, with a mean of 16.8 years. Three SROs and three CHPOPs had a range of 2 to 17 years of experience, with a mean of 7.6 years.

Analyses

Interviews

I interviewed all participants at their respective sites from October to December 2019. Interviews were audio recorded and lasted a range of seven to 59 minutes, with an average of 30 minutes. The interview questions and general themes for discussion were created from the detailed set of guiding questions justified in the phenomenographic literature and other scholarship that I present in Table 6.

Table 6

Questions and Justification for Phenomenological Interviews

Q#	Interview questions	Justification
Definitions		
Q1	What is sexuality education?[a]	Define the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005; Tight, 2016)
Q2	How is sexuality education taught in your district?	Define the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005; Tight, 2016)
Q3	Who is involved in sexuality education in your district?	Define the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005; Tight, 2016)
Q4	How has the curriculum changed during your tenure?	Define the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005; Tight, 2016)
Dimensions		
Q5	How does the curriculum address sexual identity?	SCT dimensions (van Anders, 2015)

Q6	How does the curriculum address sexual behaviors?	SCT dimensions (van Anders, 2015)
Q7	How does the curriculum address enthusiastic consent?	SCT dimensions (deFur, 2016; Morini, 2017; van Anders, 2015)
Q8	How does the curriculum address birth control, condom use, safe sex practices, STIs, and abstention?	SCT dimensions (Charmaraman, Lee, & Erkut, 2012; van Anders, 2015)
Q9	How do the curriculum and instruction address relationships?	SCT dimensions (van Anders, 2015)
Q10	How do the curriculum and instruction address reproduction?	SCT dimensions (van Anders, 2015)
Context		
Q11	How do teachers perceive the effectiveness of the sex education curriculum?	Differing perceptions (Crewe, 2016; Edwards, 2016)
Q12	How do students respond to sex education curriculum and instruction?	Differing perceptions (Gesselman, Webster, & Garcia, 2016)
Community		
Q13	How does the community respond to and influence the curriculum and instruction, if at all?	Differing perceptions; situated learning/informal learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lehmiller, 2014; Hager & Halliday, 2009)
Q14	What community resources are available and/or included in the curricular and instructional design?	Situated learning/informal learning (Charmaraman, Lee, & Erkut, 2012)
Q15	Do you have any questions for me, follow up questions, or questions about this study?	N/A

[a] Depending on the course of the interview, "family life education" was sometimes substituted for sexuality education, especially when participants shifted to the former term organically. "Sexuality education" was used and reiterated when the questions focused specifically on sexuality and sexual behaviors.

Field Notes

I described the nature of field notes to my participants and informed them that I would be taking them during interviews. In each, I detailed the date, time, and place of the interview, as well as any observations I noticed in the environment, and any interruptions experienced. I also kept track of key concepts spoken by participants to map the conversation and to follow up on critical elements that the participant introduced into the dialogue. The notes enabled me to identify multiple unanticipated themes supplementary to the research questions.

Transcription and Software

Recordings of interviews were transcribed after interviews were conducted, and field notes were digitized. I used NVivo 11 to code and organize the data into axial grouping, phenomenographic points, and emergent themes.

Artifacts

Thorough scrutiny of the sexuality education programs at the identified sites required a content analysis of available artifacts with permission of the school divisions. The grades 6-12 curriculum from EC and GR were obtained for this analysis. Guidelines for a peer mentoring program as a component of family life education from EC were also obtained. A school-wide assessment on public health which included questions on sexual behaviors and other themes related to the research questions implemented by a community partner in EC was also acquired for analysis. No additional materials for GR were obtained. I did not expressly seek out this type of artifact because supplementary materials were not a primary focus of this study, and multiple participants stated that worksheets, videos, and other teaching tools followed the state standards and local school board policies.

Member Checking

Member checking is a method of revisiting a participant’s transcript and preliminary findings with said participant. Virginia Tech’s IRB approved the study design anticipating ¼ of participants (about seven of 29 participants) would engage in member checking. I explained member checking to all participants when discussing informed consent. When completing the demographics questionnaire, 26 of 29 participants agreed to be contacted for member checking. Of these 26, I selected 13 using a stratified sampling procedure and contacted them a maximum of two times in February 2020 to request their participation in this follow-up protocol. Stratified sampling accounted for their professional role when I chose them at random in an effort to capture a diverse range of feedback (for example, because only two division leaders participated in the study, only one was contacted at random whereas since nine teachers participated in the study, four were chosen at random). Seven of the 29 total study participants participated in member checking: one administrator, two teachers, three CHPOPs, and one SRO. One division leader was unable to participate citing scheduling conflicts, and one teacher declined to participate, stating they were confident in the interview data and trusted that analysis represented their voice accurately. One teacher who participated requested that a portion of their transcript be redacted to protect student confidentiality. All those who participated in member checking provided additional insights which were amended to the transcripts and included in the final analysis. None of the other six participants selected responded to my requests.

Phenomenography and the Outcome Space

I used phenomenographic methods to code, sort, and analyze the interview data. Four tiers of codes were utilized to generate a phenomenographic map or outcome space as described earlier in the chapter. The first tier, open codes, was used to identify semantically rich, or meaningful, units throughout the corpus and familiarize myself with the data set as it formed. The second tier, axial codes, was utilized to sort and group open codes into levels of increasing abstraction, organizing the data into areas of divergent themes. The third tier, called phenomenographic points, were used to illustrate differences in perception among all participants and in the field notes. The fourth tier consisted of three general themes that emerged in the interview data: curriculum, context, and community. The outcome space was subsequently populated with open codes that corresponded to differences in perception, and lines were drawn between all these tiers to visually represent connections, or a lack thereof, between them. These results are presented in Chapter 4.

Covid-19

Interviews, artifact collection, member checking, and all other activities requiring in-person contact or school visits were conducted when schools were operating under typical conditions before the onset of the novel coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the nature of qualitative research and the criteria of reliability and trustworthiness that researchers should satisfy, especially regarding this study. I justified my multimodal approach to data collection and analysis, and how SCT (van Anders, 2015) can serve as a tool for comparison and contrast in qualitative studies. I also introduced the qualitative toolkit, specifically coding, constant comparison, and categorizing and mapping. I then delved into explanations and examples of my chosen methods, QCA for curriculum and phenomenography for interview analysis. I described the study design and IRB approval, recruitment procedures, participant information and demographics, the interviewing process, and artifact collection. I rationalized how I staged my analyses and described how the results would be illustrated. In Chapter 4, I present these analyses along with a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I present the results and set diagram I created based on the results from the QCA of the curriculum as well as the phenomenographic outcome space that emerged from the interview data. I provide quotes as evidence to support the findings and construct a narrative of differing perspectives. I also answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1 and navigate through several additional findings that surfaced organically through the use of semi-structured interview questions. Finally, I return to SCT and LPP to evaluate their effectiveness as frameworks for this study.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Open Codes and Categories

During QCA, I labeled 185 open codes in the curricular maps and supplementary documents that participants gave me. As I sorted these codes with the assistance of NVivo 11, 17 categories emerged. Table 7 presents a list of these categories with sample open codes that each category represents.

Table 7

Categories Derived from Content Analysis

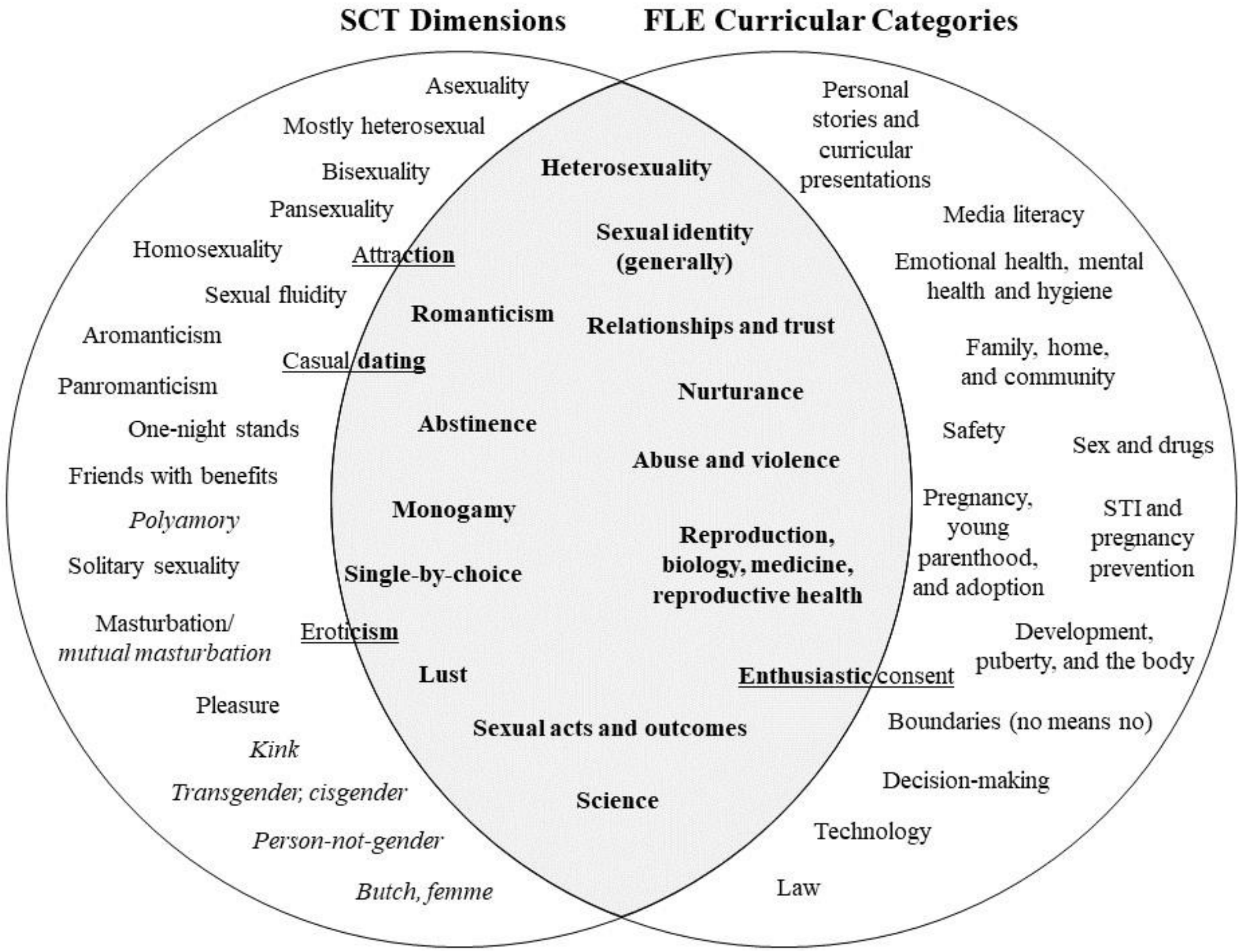
Abuse and violence • Rape and assault • Coping • Where to get help • Community contacts, resources	**Boundaries (no means no)** • Self-disclosure • Intimidation • Assertiveness	**Decision-making** • Accountability • Goals • Dispelling myths
Development, puberty, and the body • Physical changes per developmental stage • Nocturnal emissions, menstruation	**Emotional health, mental health, and hygiene** • Youth empowerment • Tough conversations • Odors, bathing, and cleaning	**Family, home, and community** • Sexual identity • Family types and structure • Conversations with trusted adults
Law • Surviving, combating human trafficking • Personal, internet safety in the law • School Resource Officers (SROs)	**Media literacy** • Understanding advertisements • Media manipulation • Discussion of sex in entertainment	**Personal stories and curricular presentation** • Open to questions from personal stories • Using "proper" terms
Pregnancy, young parenthood, and adoption • Family planning • Costs of childbearing, childrearing • Stages of pregnancy	**STI and pregnancy prevention** • HIV • STIs • Birth control	**Relationships and trust** • Types of friendship • Conflict resolution • Control • Trusted adults
Safety • Group dating • Never being alone • Roles of peers	**Science** • In-class experiments • Biology, anatomy, reproduction, fetal development • Statistics and epidemiology	**Sex and drugs** • Inability to consent • Impaired judgment • HIV and shared needles
Sexual acts and outcomes • Abstinence as 100% effective • Delaying sexual activity • Dangers of risky behaviors, STIs; health outcomes	**Technology** • Electronic harassment • Sexting • Internet and cell phone safety • YouTube, TikTok	

Set Diagram

Figure 6 presents a set diagram of the overlapping and non-overlapping evidence from the content analysis of curriculum, artifacts, and SCT. Through constant comparison, the content analysis also strengthened inductive reasoning during semi-structured interviews which contributed to the emergence of unanticipated findings as detailed later. Italicized terms are dimensions of SCT that are not within the scope of this study but are presented to form a more comprehensive picture. These include dimensions such as kink, person-not-gender, butch, femme, and more. Underlined terms cross the lines of the boundary overlaps; these concepts are only partially addressed in the curriculum and represent potentially problematic areas uncovered by the QCA. These could be problematic because their partial overlap is due to a de-emphasis on sexuality for sexuality's sake and the stress of monogamous relationships, usually marriage: attraction (with sexuality de-emphasized and friendship emphasized), casual dating (excluding sexual acts and emphasizing avoidance of controlling behaviors), eroticism (in marriage), and enthusiastic consent (presented as "no is no" consistently instead of "yes is yes." I return to this analysis in the discussion section.

Figure 7

Set Diagram of Content Analysis



Phenomenographic Analysis

Codes and Phenomenographic Points

I labeled 763 open codes in the interview transcripts. With the assistance of NVivo 11, I sorted these codes and 26 clusters of data emerged; I labeled these as axial codes, which include synonymous and similar units of analysis. Axial codes represent a hierarchical increasing level of abstraction. These axial codes represent various shared and differing perspectives among participants. Table 8 presents an alphabetically sorted list of the axial codes in bold with sample representations of open codes beneath them.

Table 8

Axial Codes Derived from Open Codes in Interview Data

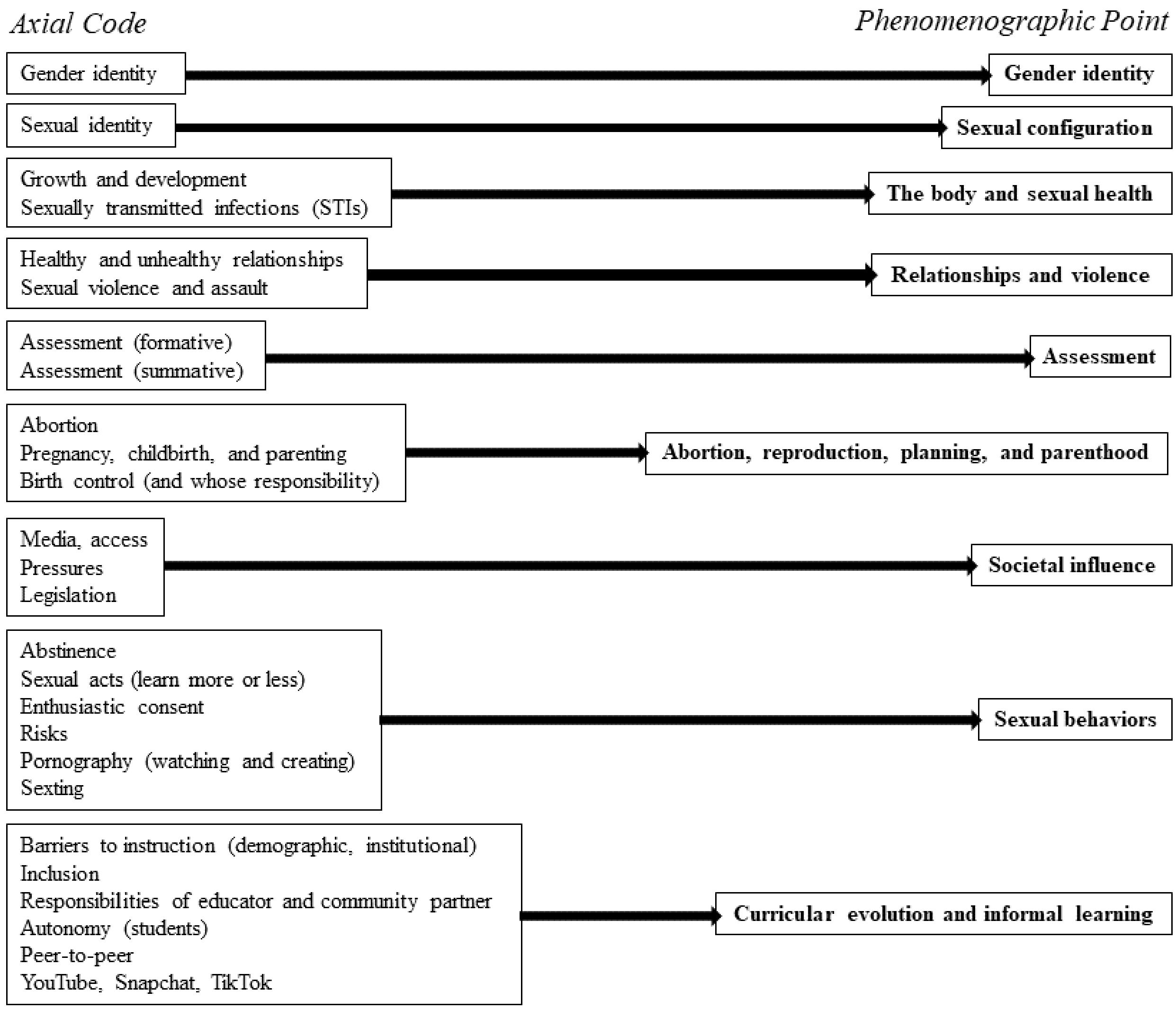
Abstinence • Abstinence-only • Abstinence-stressed/ -first • Effective or not	**Abortion** • Defined • Deferred • Alternatives (e.g., adoption)	**Access to information (increasing availability)** • Community partnerships • Volunteer programs • Outreach and togetherness
Assessment (formative) • Body language • Glancing around, elbowing classmates • Attention	**Assessment (summative)** • Pre and post tests • Participation grades • CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey	**Autonomy (students)** • Understand students' world • Try hardest as educators • Provide access/referrals to resources
Barriers to instruction (demographic) • Foster care • Non-traditional families, problems at home • Low socioeconomic status • Households that speak a language other than English	**Barriers to instruction (institutional)** • Lack of funding • Lack of professional development • Lack of understanding of practice at school board, state, legislative levels • Lack of time	**Birth control (and whose responsibility)** • Condoms • Pills, hormones • Implanted devices
Community pressures • Conservatism, rural culture • Families, values • School board	**Enthusiastic consent** • Legal definition (no consent while under the influence) • Age differences • Give and take, moment to moment, "begging"	**Gender identity** • Acknowledge and refer • Provide services for all genders (CHPOPs) • Flexibility with students in split classes • Students too young to understand gender
Growth and development • Hygiene, bathing, menstruation • Puberty and gender binary (boys, girls) • Appropriate amount of information	**Healthy and unhealthy relationships** • Friendship • Dating • Good and bad relationships • Emotions • Pressures • Red flags	**Legality** • Discipline • Intervention • Prosecution • Community safety • Community participation

Legislation • Shifting standards, scarce content • Lack of understanding among policymakers • New themes/lessons: human trafficking, female genital mutilation Urgency of training for educators	**Pornography (watching and creating)** • Ease of access • Sexting • “Inadvertent” child pornography • Human trafficking among pornography actors • Perceived gender differences in viewing	**Pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting** • Bodily changes • Labor and delivery • Motherhood, fatherhood, single parenthood
Responsibilities of educator and community partner • Due diligence, reinforcement • Curricular “evolution” • Is it “enough”	**Risks** • Toxicity, hypermasculinity • Age appropriate • Informal learning	**Sexual acts** • Intercourse (vaginal, anal, oral), masturbation • Touching • Acts in and out of relationships
Sexual identity • Focus on heterosexuality • Acknowledge and refer • Culture of non-judgment • Standards	**Sexual violence and assault** • Abuse in families, stranger danger, rape • Anyone can be a survivor • “Someone in the classroom”	**Societal influences** • Internet, smart phones • YouTube “university” • Media •
Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) • Statistics, epidemiology • Protection, HIV, all diseases Visuals, activities	**Technology** • Sharing • Snapchat, TikTok • Sexting • Pornography • Child pornography (inadvertent production by students; sexual predation)	

According to the phenomenographic method, it was necessary to sort the axial codes into an even more increasing level of abstraction. Through this sorting a set of nine phenomenographic points emerged as categories representing hierarchies of units of analysis (viz., open codes to axial codes to points). The emergence of phenomenographic points is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 8

Axial Codes to Phenomenographic Points



Outcome Space

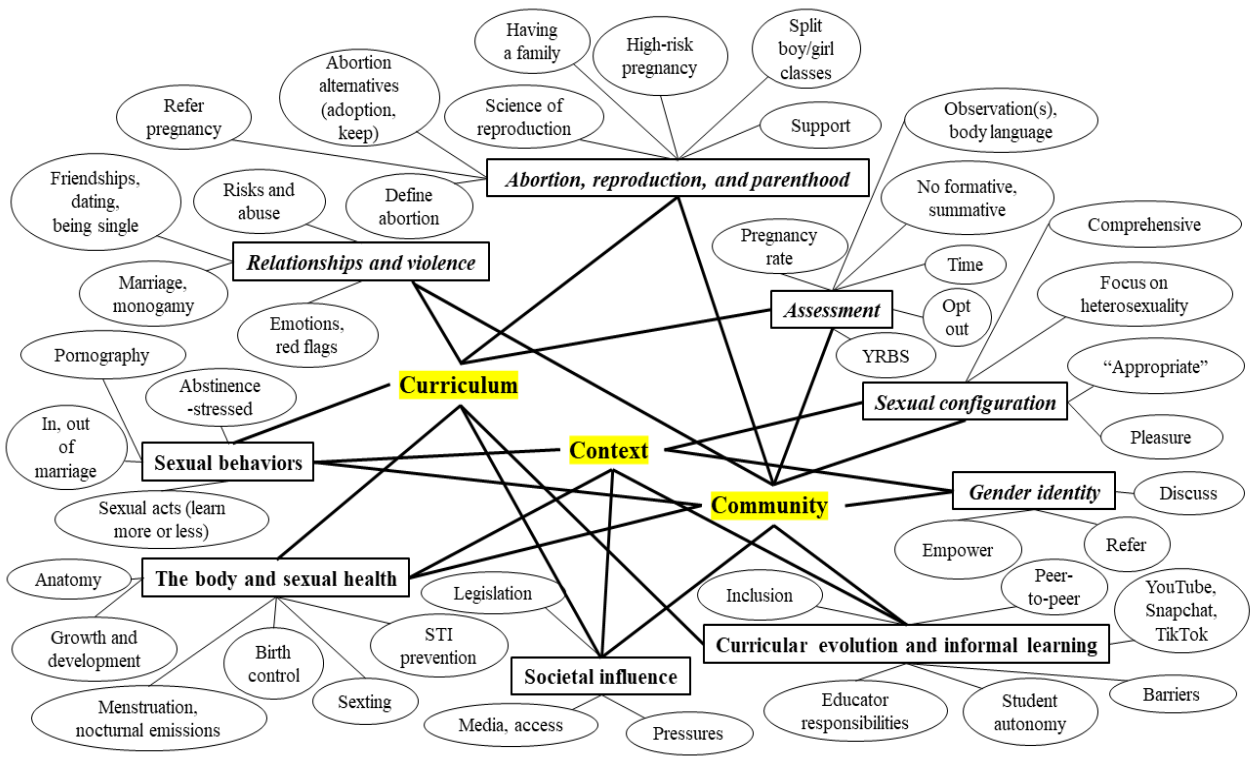
Last, I used the nine phenomenographic points to construct an outcome space, or phenomenographic map, of the interview data. This map is presented in Figure 8. At the center of the map are curriculum, context, and community highlighted in yellow, which emerged as overarching themes at the highest level of the coding hierarchy. They are connected by bolder lines to rectangles containing the nine phenomenographic points that emerged through analysis.

Thinner lines connect these points to ovals containing differing perspectives that emerged as evidence and were categorized as axial codes from interviews along with salient open codes.

The phenomenographic points in italics are those which do not connect to all three themes of public sexuality education; the visually emptier space on the top portion of the map (i.e., the lack of bolder lines) may indicate potential gaps that the phenomenographic methods brought to the surface. Inclusion of in vivo quotes from the participant interviews in the next section helped further articulate divergent perspectives and gaps. I return to discuss this space as related curriculum, context, and community later.

Figure 9

Outcome Space



Discussion

In this section, I return to the study's research questions and provide evidence from the categories that emerged in the curriculum through QCA and the differing perspectives that were captured via phenomenographic analysis to answer them. I also address additional topics that emerged organically during the semi-structured interviews. All of these are directly related to these divisions' curricula and instructional praxes in FLE and sexuality education. Next, I explore in which ways SCT did and did not serve as an analytical framework, and I discuss how LPP both functioned well and was faulty as a theoretical framework. I provide additional quotes in this section as evidence.

Constructing a Narrative: Evidence for Phenomenographic Points

In building a narrative of participant voices in relation to the research aims, I identified various in vivo quotes from the interview transcripts. This process also provided context for open and axial codes shown in Table 8 and the phenomenographic points in Figure 7. During constant comparison, I selected these quotes for their relevance to the research questions and scope of the study. Although I have organized them by phenomenographic point in this section, there is considerable overlap in topics with other points. The complexity and intersection of these overlaps can be inferred from the highly interlinked composition of the outcome space and is discussed in the next section. Crucially, the quotes I identified paint a collage of differing perspectives and give insight into lived and *reflected-on* experiences (see Chapter 3). Every interview participant used the term Family Life Education (FLE) when asked about sexuality education programming. There was frequent interchange of the phrases despite the term "sexuality education" in the interview questions. This is evidenced in the majority of the in vivo quotes under the following phenomenographic point headers.

Gender Identity

Gender identity is an individual's perception of having and/or expressing gender(s) that may or may not correspond with their sex organs. Gender identity, specifically transgender identity in the context of transmen and transwomen, became salient in almost every interview despite not being within the scope of the research questions. Examples include a participant expressing their view about the subject, what resources are available to transgender students, and what accommodations can be made for them. It also emerged as an element of queering the curriculum and queering educational spaces. However, no participant mentioned the topic of gender identity as part of the formal curriculum despite its inclusion in the state guidelines.

Various participants had had direct interactions with transgender students and offered them a level of support that the participants deemed appropriate. Jackie (Administrator, EC) recalled:

> We had a transgender male that wanted to try out for basketball last year, and I worked with this gentleman and his family to ensure he got a proper tryout. Even though he did not make the team, he felt good about it. He felt right…and he has been great with being a manager, being a part of the team, and being comfortable with who he is.

Jonathan (Teacher, EC) observed students in class who had self-identified as transgender and specifically one who sought his assistance:

> I've had students that are transgender sit in class. They are locked in, engaged, and taking notes. I've had some opt out of family life…. I remember this last year, one of the transgender students came to me and said, "Hey [teacher], some of the students are saying this, blah blah, blah, and I was wondering if you could help me out?" And I was like, "Yeah."

Dalyn (Teacher, GR) spoke about respect for students identifying as transgender and empowering them to make their own choices in FLE despite not covering the topic formally in class:

> If we have a student who just says, "Well, I'm identifying as a boy," but you've had her in your girl classes all these other years…we don't fight that at all. But as far as teaching a lesson about it, we don't teach anything about it. I respect whatever is going on with them at the time or whatever their choices are if it's appropriate. We're trying to remain very nonjudgmental. We're not going to make somebody leave the room or make them

change classes. As far as teaching a lesson about it, we don't have any lessons that address it.

From the perspective of participants on the outside working with school divisions, Lisa (CHPOP, GR) asserted that views on transgender identity were changing and that the GR division's FLE curriculum should be adjusted:

> The whole gender [identity], the different pronouns and you know, that has really come to the forefront of people's minds. [It should be in FLE] because when [my son] was applying to [a university], they asked for his gender pronouns.

Sexual Configuration

Sexual configuration refers to van Anders' (2015) SCT and the six dimensions chosen for inclusion in this study (i.e., sexual identity; sexual behaviors; enthusiastic consent; attitudes or stigmas towards prophylactics etc.; relationships with specific regard to sexuality; and reproduction, biology, medicine, and reproductive health). Perceptions among stakeholders of including comprehensive information in classrooms varied. Some participants' desire to include information were in conflict with personal beliefs, but they included them anyway. Others did not. Largely, participants expressed that they rarely conflicted about the need for adolescents to learn about sexuality. Furthermore, most school personnel shared that diverse sexual identities were not explicitly taught in their curriculum, therefore were not discussed at length in formal learning environments. Jonathan, (Teacher, EC) said:

> As far as gender and sexual identity, we don't go too far into things. We provide what's in our textbook.…We do talk about testosterone and estrogen supplements and how they affect the body, and why people may take these. We do not go into detail about certain things.

Andrea (Teacher, EC) noted that some discourse may emerge organically during a FLE class, and acknowledged some potential for informal learning given that she perceived the student community to be accepting of differences in sexual configuration:

> [Sexual identity] might come up in conversation if we're teaching on something in Family Life. But there's nothing directly. As far as it is on campus, I feel like everything is accepted here. Now you do have your jerks, of course. But you're going to have those everywhere.

As a classroom liaison, Rose (CHPOP, GR), remarked that information on sexual configuration was both broad and personal, but also empirical:

> I kind of take [sexuality] from a pretty broad perspective. I'm going to give you the statistics, I'm going to give you what works, and what you're doing is your choice, your preference.

Lasonya (Guidance, EC) perceived the potential for informal learning on sexual configuration at home. She remarked that would talk to a student who expressed concerns about or a struggle with their gender and/or sexual identities and would be obliged to inform the student's guardian(s):

> [If they are struggling with their sexual identity] of course we would talk about it, but I would also notify the parent. Just to make them aware so that maybe they could seek some resources outside of the school to help the student deal with their sexuality.... I feel like if they're struggling here at school, thinking about their sexual identity, then at home they are struggling too. So, I think your parents should be aware. They're underage, too. Parents play a big part with the students in the school system.

Cece (Teacher, GR) perceived queer identities, or non-heterosexual sexual identities, as challenging for students to claim and/or express, especially since a student she gave as an example had already acquired information he wanted to learn about gay identity through informal learning outside of FLE:

> Children are facing much more difficulties than just making a decision to be sexually active.…I had a young man approach me several years ago. He told me that he was gay. They have come to me and told me that they were gay, um, and different problems that they were having. I felt like they were aware of everything that they were getting into. I don't know where they got their information, but I felt like they were aware of what they were doing when this happened or if it were to happen. I have to defer to their families.

Other participants had no awareness of any discussion of non-cisgender, non-heteronormative sexual configuration in the FLE curriculum and/or perceived a personal struggle with how that information should, or should not, be included. This was often due to external pressures from the community, a perception that is interspersed throughout a majority of evidence. For example, Doug (Teacher, GR), who observes and monitors students in class for the FLE instructors, said, “They make it a point not to really get into all that [i.e., diverse sexualities].”

Travis (GR), another teacher who monitors students during FLE instruction perceived students’ non-cisgender, non-heteronormative sexual configurations (or diverse sexualities, as he calls them) as issues he lacked the know-how to address:

> We've had a couple of cases of [diverse sexualities] come through here. I don't think it’s addressed in family life. It's, I don't know if it's more of a don't ask, don't tell or, I don't know. I wouldn't know what to say to [a student] if they brought [them] to talk about it with me.

Richard (Administrator, GR) perceived challenges in the community associated with perceptions of non-heteronormative relationships:

> [I feel like] there's a different stigma that accompanies a same-sex female relationship than a same-sex male relationship. I feel like the same-sex male relationship would be more talked about and [be] more noticeable.

Sexual Behaviors

Sexual behaviors refer to partnered activities (oral, anal, and vaginal intercourse), as well as non-penetrative acts (touching, mutual masturbation). The term also refers to solitary acts like masturbation and activities resulting in arousal and orgasm. In SCT, sexual behaviors and sexual identity are intertwined to form part of a person's sexual configuration; however, in the content analysis and among participant perspectives, sexual behaviors emerged as (1) being paired with distinctly heteronormative/heterosexual identity and (2) disassociated from any identity or orientation (i.e., reduced as discussed in Chapter 2). Additionally, much evidence pointed to sexual behaviors among adolescents as dangerous or otherwise compromising, and stressed abstinence first followed by ways to protect oneself when choosing to engage in dangerous or compromising behaviors anyway. Consent also emerged repeatedly as a topic in the context of *no means no*, never as *yes means yes*.

Regarding sexual behaviors, some participants shared similar views about what adolescents engage in, what risks they would likely take, and what they assumed adolescents needed to hear. Divergent perspectives emerged on how strongly abstinence should be stressed and what could happen once sexual activity had begun. To substantiate, Wendy (CHPOP, EC) reflected on the cognitive changes an adolescent may experience when exposed to information on sexual behaviors and the contextual barriers they might face external to the FLE classroom:

> It is really a life-changing moment [learning about intercourse] and a lot to absorb for students. Everybody's family talks about it differently or doesn't talk about it at all. And I just think it's a very life-changing knowledge point and some people just react to it in a very physical fashion by the shock of it all.

In reference to mindfulness of adolescents engaging in sexual activity, Mike (SRO, GR) stated, "We'd be foolish to think that these kids don't do things, that the kids don't experiment with things or have the awareness of [them] in their general surroundings."

Julia (CHPOP, GR) reinforced the notion of exposure to informal discourse on sexual acts, as well as how to navigate boundaries between the needs and the desires of adolescent learners in FLE:

> I don't stick my head in the sand in regard to [adolescent sexual activity]. I know that is a reality, but do I think that is 100% the best way to avoid a lot of heartache and hardship that some people have to walk through? Absolutely. Do I think it's so much harder today? Yes. Just because we talk so openly in this day and age about sexuality, probably more than we ever have, um, in a long time. Um, because we're so open to so many different options in regards to that, and because our single parent numbers are through the roof, which means that a lot of children that are left by themselves a lot more, probably than most other generations…. I'm just there to give them truths about some of the education they've already received. So, it's a fine line between that. And we do our best obviously in a class with very mixed cultures and mixed backgrounds to not overstep one line farther than the other. But I'm not going to shy away from children that want some truthful information either. And I'm also a mom whose children are in our public school

systems. I'm not opposed to thinking that any of them are above being human for a second. We're created to be sexual beings, I believe.

Lisa (CHPOP, GR) perceived the distinction between how instructors want adolescents to behave and how they actually behave:

> I think they stress abstinence, but I think they are wise enough to know that while they're stressing that they need to get into everything else that they get into. Because they know a lot of these kids are not going to abstain.

Samantha (Teacher, EC) spoke at length about an approach of *no means no* to consent with no mention of *yes means yes*:

> You've got to think about that before you get into a situation. Because when you're in a situation and things are hot and heavy, you're not going to be able to make a decision because your mind is not clear. And we also put in the drugs and alcohol. That wipes everything out when you're involved in that and a situation with somebody. So, we talk about limits, and that no means no. And you have to say it in a way that is not like, "Ohhh, no." You've got to be assertive. Not aggressive, but not passive. You can't just be like "No," and not be assertive about it.

The Body and Sexual Health

The body and sexual health emerged as a point encompassing anatomy, growth and development (viz., puberty), mental, emotional, and physical abuse, STIs, and relevant vaccinations. A type of personal autonomy also emerged herein: getting checked and treated by physicians, protecting oneself from risks, and more. Per stakeholder perceptions, these topics were frequently presented to students and in the same context. For example, Greg (Teacher, EC) said:

> The [first lesson] is mostly what I called "plumbing." It's all body parts, male and female. The [second lesson], we cover sexually transmitted diseases, different types of abuse, and stuff.… Neglect, physical abuse, verbal abuse, any kind of abuse. And this is the part of the curriculum where we cover sexual abuse. It shows up as one of the types of abuses. Sometimes it's kind of hard to talk [it] about outside of the setting. Especially because our grouping and regular classes are co-ed.

Cece (Teacher, GR) commented:

> We show DVDs [about development]. We have lots of activities planned in there…. It's a lot of worksheets just to reinforce the information that they already have. We do a couple of activities on goals and directions, sexual boundaries.

Caroline (CHPOP, EC) stated the aim of her community organization was to "encourage families and youth to make healthy choices," not just in sexual health but in overall wellness, a mission she brought into the classroom as an invited lecturer and partner in curriculum development.

As a guest lecturer, Wendy (CHPOP, EC) noted the perceived boundaries of her role:

> Basically, the teaching I did was about puberty itself. I didn't do sexual orientation. I basically did what your body is going through, so developmental changes. We touched on how your emotions would change with hormones, and that you might have more blue days, you know, but nothing in depth…. I was more of the guest speaker. I followed whatever the school curriculum was and those years that I was teaching it…. The PE teachers who taught [about anatomy], you know, they definitely tell the boys not to compare sizes, size doesn't matter, that kind of thing.

Travis (Teacher, GR) went into the specifics of what he has perceived in his district's

FLE classroom:

> [They] talk about chlamydia, gonorrhea, AIDS, and show pictures of what happens to a person if they get it. These are like scientific pictures, medical pictures. And [they have] brought in people from somewhere in [the community], guest speakers to talk about what happens after the girl gets pregnant.

Lisa (CHPOP, GR) perceived that she took a heavily scientific approach when invited to give FLE lessons:

> We educate the public about reducing cancer risk and making people aware of lifestyle issues and screening opportunities and guidelines…. I got to talk to [GR] about getting into the schools to talk about ways to reduce cancer risk and the HPV vaccine [as] one of the ways that you could address that topic….With me, they often combine [the classes by gender] because breast cancer risk is relevant for boys, and the HPV vaccine is relevant for boys and girls…. Penile and oropharyngeal cancers are on the rise among men…rectal, I mean, all those cancers. It is relevant to both boys and girls, men and women. It doesn't get the press that other STIs get because it's largely asymptomatic, but it can cause genital warts and the vaccines does address those things.

Rose (CHPOP, GR) indicated elevated interest in sexual health and prevention measures according to the needs she perceived in the school and community:

> We've had a surge in kids actually asking when they come to their yearly physical about the HPV vaccine, which is good for us because that means I'm doing my job in the community to raise awareness for this because if I can prevent them from coming in the office 15 years from now because they need surgery because they have a cancer diagnosis or they need warts removed, then I've helped one person.

Rose also perceived that she worked to eliminate rumors when invited into FLE classes, and how she assesses her success as a community liaison in schools:

> [I've heard] "My pull-out game is strong." That's why I teach the science behind that…. I personally give true stories, like you cannot use a Ziploc bag as a condom…. For some reason, all [the] gentlemen believe that just because they make a larger size condom that everyone needs them. Well, let me tell you what happens when it doesn't fit appropriately. We had this happen, slid off, they didn't find it. Three days later they found it upon examination. It caused an infection. And she's pregnant. Another girl would go get birth control pills and pass them out like candy and think that if they just took a few over a couple of days they worked…. Every school we've gone to this year so far, [the students] have said, "What about a glove?" And I'm like, what I did I tell you? It is not do-it-yourself craft time. They don't have condom-making kits at the Hobby Lobby for a reason. So, I feel like if I can interject some kind of humor with the straight facts and it's not just a lecture, I can [assess] their learning.

Julia (CHPOP, GR) perceived an awareness of sexual activity and compromising behaviors despite abstinence-stressed curriculum and instruction, especially since the adolescents may be learning informally from adults who are not conscientious of their own sexual health behaviors:

> We refer all of our clients who are sexually active on a regular basis to get checked. It's something we also talk about in the public school systems and it's imperative that they are getting checked and being serious about it, knowing that clearly adults are not very honest about their STD and their sexual health. So, for them to have knowledge that probably, um, someone who might not be as mature, and who is still in high school or in

middle school, that they're probably not being completely honest, if that's even a question that's asked. So yes, it's something we talk about anywhere.

Abortion, Reproduction, Planning, and Parenthood

The topics of abortion, reproduction, long-term family planning, and parenthood emerged as a single phenomenographic point. Participants who discussed abortion contextualized it in the domain of reproduction, adoption, and teen parenthood. Participants perceived teen parenthood as costly, challenging, and detrimental to the community at large and often expressed the need to convey these ideas to adolescents. However, abortion as an option to terminate a teen pregnancy was defined as a medical procedure, including associated risks, and not as a method of birth control. Participants perceived the abortion as deferred and referred to external resources by almost all participants who discussed the topic. In this phenomenographic point, community partnerships were especially salient, and this point had considerable overlap with the phenomenographic point of the body and sexual health, with most nuanced differences emerging from the topics of reproduction and family.

Greg (Teacher, EC) spoke of the curriculum in his division and in his classes, especially questions he would pose to his students about the risk of teen pregnancy:

> We are abstinence-based, and in 6th grade, we don’t talk about contraception. If we do, or a question comes up on contraception, it’s usually the failure rate of contraception. We promote that abstinence is the only 100% way not to get a sexually transmitted disease or to result in pregnancy. We also talked about the feelings side of it. “How would you feel if you were in 6th grade and a father?” “How would you feel if you were a girl in 6th grade and you were pregnant?” “What are some stigmas that go along with that? What are some hardships?” We talk about the cost.

Dalyn (Teacher, EC) discussed local resources for pregnant students and their roles in the classroom, as well as a lack of abortion education:

> We don't talk about abortion. We have guest speakers who come in from our local [health centers] …. We've been trying to bring in some local people so that they can put places with faces and see that these people are kind and nonjudgmental and this is a safe place to go and it's free….[And there] they sit down with that client about their options, whether they're going to parent or they want to choose adoption, or if the client is choosing an abortion.

Tyrone (CHPOP, EC) perceived potential benefits to developing an experiential learning approach to educating teens on pregnancy and family planning:

> If you were to mold sex education and to go into the prenatal education building and do volunteer work, that's great because you're getting minds active. They're out in the community where they're able to see real life stuff being thrown at them. They can see a pregnant mom from every single socioeconomic background coming into the prenatal education center.

Julia (CHPOP, GR) shared that her center was aimed at pregnant women and fathers-to-be of any age. She stated that abortions were not performed in her health center, but she explained and answered questions about the procedure and its alternatives to clients:

> On a day to day basis we serve pregnant clients and their support person system, whatever that looks like. We serve them all. So, we offer free pregnancy tests here, free ultrasounds, all of which are performed by an RN. And then we also have a medical director that oversees that whole portion with me. So, [they oversee] those medical aspects. And then I kind of oversee the rest of that. We provide education about

> abortions, about adoptions, about parenting to every client who comes in our doors. We are a faith-based nonprofit, yet we serve people of all belief systems…. And hopefully the information that we give them is non-biased. So again, we really stand on "education is power." So if we're educating them, our hope is not to take away their right for an abortion, but our hope is to really just educate them to make the best decision for them….We're not an adoption agency, but we work with adoption agencies to them get any of their questions answered…. Another program we have is a fatherhood initiative. So, if the potential father or the father, depending on the age of that child, needs some support or is open to having support by a mentor, then he will work with one of our mentors to go through a program.

In what could be considered actions straddling a line between pro-birth (that is, encouraging pregnant girls and women to carry a child to full-term and deliver in every circumstance) and queering spaces (that is, causing rippling disruption as explained in Chapter 2), Julia described that gender identity and sexuality are never issues when seeing clients despite the organization's faith base and a personal lack of familiarity:

> We do have a higher number [of diverse identities] than we probably ever have. Um, with lesbian women mostly. And obviously just because they sexually identify as a lesbian, or even a bisexual or trans or whatever. That doesn't mean that they still may not be planning a family. And so we have a lot of, well, for lack of kind of any better verbiage here, um, people who use turkey basters, people who have a hookup with the friends that they think might be a potential good candidate as a father just to kind of help them to get pregnant. We kind of work with, we have worked with kind of all of those above…. If they are potentially pregnant, we will serve them. [For] maybe a man who is, trying to

change and taking supplements or whatever to kind of become a woman and he, I don't know how all that works to be perfectly honest, how that moving forward, what that would look like. I think clearly it would, some of that would be out of our scope or even ability to really serve him well yet. We could do what we know to do and that would be still to offer a pregnancy test, offer an ultrasound to see what is seen there. And then obviously refer to him to another physician past that point, just like we would any other person. Um, so again, would we serve them? Absolutely. 100%. Are we open to it? 100%.

Relationships and Violence

Relationships and violence emerged as a single phenomenographic point because participants perceived strong relationships between them, at least concerning adolescents. Several participants perceived the curriculum as stressing friendship and building healthy relationships in non-sexual ways. On the other hand, participants perceived many adolescent relationships as problematic, emphasizing sexual experimentation and risk taking, observing controlling behaviors, and identifying the use of technology to harass, intimidate, or stalk. Several participants also perceived relationships and abusive and violent behaviors as those learned at home or within the community. Considerable overlap emerged between this phenomenographic point and the body and sexual health, especially since consent was discussed in both the context of relationships as well as in those of violence and abuse; that is, saying *no*, not saying *yes*.

Dalyn (Teacher, GR) spoke about the trajectory of the curriculum regarding relationships and violence:

> A big push for middle and high school students is to talk about healthy relationships. So if you kind of follow it back, you see [that] they're not always called healthy relationships, but like all the way back down to elementary school in fourth grade, we talk about how to be a good friend…. I like to believe that we plant some seeds and we kind of build on those as we go.

Cece (Teacher, GR) remarked that the culture of relationships has shifted over the years, and perceived that at one time it was acceptable to just be single:

> We've had to dive into more unhealthy relationships versus healthy. I think kids are very desensitized to that. What I would've thought would have been a healthy relationship, they don't really understand what that is. When I grew up, dating was fun. It wasn't about sex or jealousy or control. And I could choose to be single also and just hang out with my friends.

Doug (Teacher, GR) observed that relationships among adolescents come and go quickly in his school. He said, "They're going out with each other, but of course they're not actually *going* out. And then of course next week they'll be going out with somebody else."

Regarding relationships that exhibited concerning behaviors, Travis (Teacher, GR) discussed compromising behaviors: "I have seen controlling [behaviors]. 'I don't want you to talk to this person. I want you to wear this.' I've heard of that going on the last couple of years. And this is in the context of a teen relationship."

Regarding *no means no* consent and the relationship(s) between adolescent and adult behaviors, Jackie (Administrator, EC) commented:

> I think you only hear the word "consent" come up when there's been a violation of it…. I don't think enough is being taught on teaching kids how to avoid toxic relationships, and

> you know, let's face it, a lot of adults can't avoid a toxic relationship. So, if we're not doing a good job, the adults aren't doing a good job, then how are we training our kids to know what a toxic relationship is?

Lillian (Guidance, EC) noted that the curriculum is more comprehensive now than it used to be regarding identifying dangers. She said, "You know, so much more goes into it now. Starting a lot earlier, with kind of safety and that type of thing.... Like 'stranger danger,' 'safe touches, bad touches,'...that type of thing."

Jeffrey (Teacher, EC) remarked that the curriculum covered topics from dating to human trafficking and the law:

> As far as the curriculum, we talk about relationships, dating, getting to know the person. We go over dating abuse, domestic violence, and how to get help. Saying no, in that kind of role there…. We've talked about human trafficking, and actually, they're just now getting with the resource officer today. They're actually getting human trafficking, cyber bullying awareness resources. We talked about the word "no" an awful lot, and how powerful the word no is. We let them know that when someone says no, it is what it means. It doesn't mean you go any further.

Societal Influence

Societal influence emerged as a point as the influences and pressures of local and larger communities on the curriculum and the perspectives of participants became apparent. While perceptions of multiple local community influences have been identified thus far, *societal* influence includes exposure to information from a larger socioecological sphere than a community of practice with shared interests. It became apparent as a phenomenographic point that has multiple axes of intersection as demonstrated in Figure 8; it overlaps considerably with technology, sexual configuration, curricular evolution and informal learning from broader influences such as collective perspectives of the family and associated media portrayals. Lasonya (Guidance, EC) described perceived differences in the way society views family structures:

> Now, in society, students can see two moms live together, two dads live together. It just makes them not so close-minded, and family isn't just a man and a woman, or your mom and your dad. It could be two dads or two moms. Or your grandparents are raising you. We have a lot of students who live with their grandparents and consider them their mom and their dad. Or, we have students that are in foster care. So, they've made that their family. So, I think it's good for them to talk about family structure. When I was in school, I think family structure was basically your mom and your dad—a man and a woman—or you live with one parent.

Louie (Administrator, EC) expressed his personal beliefs regarding society exposing adolescents and pushing them toward sexual identities while still perceiving his role to treat them equally despite this:

> I'm a traditional, heterosexual male with Christian values.... I just don't care about what other people do. But sometimes, I think kids will see something that might...push them to go in a way that they might not necessarily go. We do have some kids here that are experimenting with who they are, and we do have some girls who like other girls. We have some boys that like boys. And that's what they're doing. And it's okay. We don't treat them any different. We can't. Not that I would. But you know, to me, I can't say that I like it personally. Because that's just not how I was brought up. But life is how it is now, right?

On her perceptions of the contemporaneity of abstinence until traditional marriage as a form of relationship and oppositional views in society seeping into her students' lives and views, Cece (Teacher, GR) shared:

> [For a class of girls] I had a slide [that] says "Save sex for marriage," and we have a beautiful picture of a married couple. And I said, "Well, what do you think about that?" They said, "Hardly anybody does that." I said, "Well, tell me why they're not doing that." They could not come up with that. They're being pressured by the media, by television, by the shows that they watch, that there aren't people doing that.

Wendy (CHPOP, EC) spoke of her role, "I'm kind of more of the outreach part of [the curriculum]…. You're trying to be respectful of everyone's values and you don't want to upset anyone."

Sexting, a phenomenon which has exploded over the past decade, overlaps with the phenomenographic point of societal influence; adolescents are curious and pressured to trade explicit photographs through their electronic devices. Mike (SRO, GR) recounted his experiences in the classroom as a law enforcement officer and discussing the risks of sexting:

> [The teachers] asked me to come in and share with the kids, in regards to any type of issues that would come about. In particular was the sexting issue that we had run into where kids would have maybe taken a picture of themselves and then they would send it to like a boyfriend or something like that. And I would remind the kids and actually talk to the kids about the dangers of that first, you know, it cycles through the internet and it doesn't disappear, and second of all the legal ramifications in regards to doing that. So, anybody underage of 18, [it] would be considered child pornography, like possession or distribution.

Julia (CHPOP, GR) discussed her perspectives on pornography and potential relationship to human trafficking in addition to avoiding judgment of those with divergent views:

> It's super important to me to talk to these kids about truth, to educate them to the best of our knowledge and ability. We talk to them about realities like pornography, and the fact that both boys and girls are more addicted to pornography than ever before because we live in a digital age and everyone has these mini-computers on their hips. We talk to them about the fact that it's also attached to sex trafficking today….We tell everyone in our community what our services are so that if they ever need us, we are here with hopefully a supportive attitude towards them, not a judgmental attitude towards them. But we hope we never see them again is what we say, because in a perfect world they would not find themselves needing our services.

Assessment

Participants perceived assessment as various measures to determine the educational outcomes of their FLE programs and the sexual health within the sites' surrounding communities. Some of these measures were observational while others were common classroom assessments. Yet another was an anonymous statistical measure for each high school. In the classroom, participants reported assessment as both formative (used to provide feedback to the teacher and/or student, such as a quiz) and summative (comprehensive, such as an exam) through worksheets and other activities, though teachers reported that students were not assigned grades for these. Evaluation as a product of assessment aiming to scrutinize and modify teaching practices took the form of discussions and planning with school personnel and CHPOPs. This included curricular mapping and modifying at regular intervals and committee-based decision-making.

Samantha (Teacher, EC) noted that she struggled to find a way to determine the program's overall success:

> I don't know how you tell if it's been successful or not because we still have teen pregnancies at the high school. And if we based it on that, then we're failing here. But I don't know how to...we haven't gotten a lot of parent complaints, and we don't have a lot of kids opted out. I think maybe last semester I had one or two kids out of 60-70 that opted out. I think parents are feeling like they trust us enough to teach their children this topic. So, I don't know how you can really measure whether it's been successful or not.

Tia (Administrator, GR) gave her district's plan for evaluating the FLE program:

> We go by the number of opt outs of whether or not the community is receptive, and we're finding that our opt outs are very low. So, we are well received…. But we use that as a basis of, you know, do we need to make some serious changes? Each year we pick a different grade because they deal with so many children…. They've got to go in and do a pre and then a post and then they'll chart it and we'll talk about.

Dalyn (Teacher, GR) noted an informal way she used to evaluated FLE. "[Many] years ago when I first came on, the pregnancy rates in the county were very high and we have been very pleased at how low they have been in the last few years."

Some teachers reported observing student behaviors such as glances to one another, gestures, elbowing, and laughing as tools for assessing. No participants mentioned graded activities, quizzes, or exams in the FLE curriculum. Teachers reported few observational visits from instructors to assess instructional practices; observational assessments were perceived as general as opposed to structured or guided by a rubric. Many participants perceived considerable trust in FLE teachers. James (SRO, GR) gave a subjective review after observing a class: "It wasn’t just, you know, here’s some condoms, be safe. It was some good information they were getting.”

Travis (Teacher, GR) remarked that some school leaders see FLE as unimportant:

> There's nothing we can do with them to get [some administrators] to take it serious enough. They just think it's a joke.... It causes a disruption in the school for eight days a semester.

Regarding observing FLE instruction, Louis (Administrator, EC) stated, “We only have to get into the classes, honestly, once or twice a year.”

Mike (SRO, GR) assessed the curriculum as an observer of student behavior and student assumptions of what adults do and do not know:

> They're usually pretty engaged the whole time when I go over there. So, a lot of kids have a lot of questions. I don't think it's necessarily a shock factor when we tell them these things because they already know it. I guess they'd be more shocked at the fact that adults are aware of these things because a lot of them, they did a lot of these things. The kids believe that the adults don't know anything.

James (SRO, GR) assessed the utility of the FLE class:

> I sat in on a couple of different [classes] and, um, I thought it was really cool what they were doing because not only are they talking about, you know, the reproductive organs, you know, male and female, and explaining how that works because, you know, I didn't have any idea how that stuff really worked until I was much older.

Tyrone (CHPOP, EC) assesses FLE based on his connections to the community as a liaison and curriculum developer:

> I feel like I'm pretty connected with different teachers, different coaches, different administrators. Some would say that there's not enough [sexuality education]. Some would say that there's too much personal opinion. I would probably say there's not enough general health ed and general life ed. But whenever it comes to sex ed, I personally don't think there's enough… We have all this technology now. It's not 100%, but it's going to prevent you from getting an STD.

Richard (Administrator, GR) provided an assessment on governmental involvement in FLE in his perception:

> As we have an increasingly liberal and government-led society, their focus is going to be on wanting to have the children as young as possible in the school system. And so, you can see that creeping in, that they're even beginning to have family life education programs in 4th and 5th grade. We're fortunate that we don't promote a lot of things that are not age appropriate for the children.

Participants also perceived regular evaluation of the curriculum in response to community needs and updated state guidelines as a form of assessment. Many participants also referenced low opt out rates[4] and low or no teen pregnancy rates as forms of assessment for effective FLE instructional outcomes. Monica (Administrator, EC) noted that the FLE curriculum in her district was available to households online for review to allow parents the opportunity to opt their student(s) out of one or more lessons:

> I feel that the way it's been organized to give families plenty of information and knowledge…. This curriculum is available to them, either paper copy or online. And then the fact that they can look at the skills and completely opt out. Like, if you have 5 skills

[4] Opt out rates were not published or publicly available for the districts. I did not ask participants or the districts to calculate opt out rates given this study's aims of examining *perceptions* of program success.

within one area, they literally can click on the one that they do not want their child to participate in. So, I think that we've done a really good job of making sure that our families have enough information to make an informed decision about whether or not they want their children to participate.

Evelyn (Guidance, EC) discussed her desire for her own child who was enrolled in EC at the time to learn everything he could in FLE:

> [As I parent] I sign a permission slip for my child to participate…. My expectations are for him to gain as much knowledge as possible. Just the way he is...of course, he's embarrassed, doesn't want to talk to his mom…. So, I'm happy that there is a program because he's getting the knowledge that he needs to get that he's embarrassed to talk to me about. Of course, they separate them. I like that. There's a male teacher and there's other males as his peers. So, I'm very happy that we do have a program.... I want him to learn everything. All of it. I want him to be completely educated. That's my thoughts. I feel like he needs to be educated on everything. As a member of the community here, I don't feel like this is a common view.

Community liaisons perceived the use of a division-wide survey, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a publication of the CDC, as an effective way to assess student engagement in sexual activity alongside sexuality education. Caroline (CHPOP, EC) shared that in her role, "We actually do a pre-test and a post-test for all our evidence-based programs…It's put out by the CDC, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and we use that to gauge change in the community, so to speak."

Curricular Evolution and Informal Learning

Curricular evolution and informal learning emerged as a phenomenographic point because many participants noted that changes in FLE curriculum were driven by their observations of adolescents' informal learning activities, changes in the law, and new technologies. Additionally, participants responsible for curriculum development took feedback from CHPOPs and their measures of assessing their own programs into account.

While each division had its own approach to improving the curriculum, participants felt that their approaches were justified by the state guidelines, the needs of the students, the comfort level(s) of the instructors, and the values of their larger communities. When describing the process of developing the FLE curriculum, Samantha (Teacher, EC) recalled:

> We finally had elementary, middle, and high all on a committee, and we all sat down and worked together. Basically, the elementary came up with everybody's going to do the same thing, so that everyone gets the same message. Which was great. They had a PowerPoint, video...everybody's going to show the same thing. In 6th, 7th, and 8th, we made the curriculum according to what we were doing. And it was along with the [state guidelines]. We used those as a guide, but we said, "Let's just keep on doing what we're doing. It seems to be okay and working." We wrote the curriculum according to that and 9th did the same thing. We also did a little research with other counties around us and what they did…. You leave the discretion up to the teacher on how they cover it. Does that make sense? It's not a lesson plan that you have to follow. Because with this topic, you have certain teachers and what they're comfortable teaching and what they're not comfortable teaching. Some of them say "Here, read this in the book. If you have any

questions, let me know." And then you have other teachers who want to talk about it and discuss.

Jonathan (Teacher, EC) reflected on the evolving curriculum and his perception of parental assumptions of FLE, as well as informational boundaries:

> I think that the parents don't know what we're really talking about. I think that they see family life and sex education and view it as we're trying to push an agenda or push a view, or something along those lines versus we're just trying to provide information so that your child can make good decisions…. There are certain topics that we sort of know that we maybe should skate around. Or we talk about it, but we don't go into detail. And we tell them, "I don't know everything, and all I can provide you with is what I know."

Greg also emphasized the need for regular curriculum development:

> We've come up with them on our own since the last curriculum was done in the 80s. A lot of that stuff was outdated. We typically don't use a textbook anymore; technology and Chromebooks are where we go for our use of technology during the family life unit.

Recognizing the irregularities in her own school division on the curriculum and instruction of FLE, Cindie (Division Leader, EC) talked about the transformations that occurred when the state issued new guidelines:

> It was just something that the state had not really put a lot of effort into…and it was even up to each division on what you wanted to teach, the frequency of it. There were really not any major guidelines, but then, when the state came out, you know, these are the skills that must be covered. You decide who will be the facilitators of it, which was good. So that's why we realize as well as other divisions we had work to do. And so, it was a long process because you have to look at, well, who are the current stakeholders

providing this direction? And we found out even in our [district]…most of the schools were waiting until the last week or two of the year and whatever they were teaching it was being done though that time. We knew there was something we definitely had to correct because it needed to be ongoing… I think although it was a long process, it was worthwhile. It was worth the time and effort, including all the stakeholders. And even the teachers were very appreciative.

Dana (Division Leader, EC) also perceived some concern over lack of consistency across schools in implementing the program:

> There were some new [state guidelines] that we wanted to make sure were being addressed. There really wasn't a lot of consistency in what was happening from one school to another. We didn't have a division-wide curriculum. And so, we wanted to make sure that we had a division-wide curriculum so that there would be some accountability.

Tia (Administrator, GR) perceived the need for her division's curriculum to be in sync with current and evolving issues students face, and described how her team accomplished this with an intimate knowledge of the pressures her community places on the subject matter:

> So, [in the spring] we go through and we look at different subjects and areas and match it up with things that are going on in the world around us. Because we're held responsible every [year]. So, this is an annual thing.… Our model, believe me, it's different than most you'll hear about because we have two dedicated teachers and [FLE is] what they do…. The school board wants to know [what we're doing] because this is sexuality that we're showing in the school. Some of the activities, if I feel like it's going to stir up controversy, I'll get their approval first. So, a lot of it is using good judgment and

knowing your curriculum because we are subject to public scrutiny…. You've got to know your community.

Dalyn (Teacher, GR) perceived issues changing across time and how this drives curricular evolution:

> I've seen waves of stuff, you know, where we've had years, maybe, seven or eight years ago, [there were] so many kids who [were] cutting. It was just like that was the thing. Now, I don't see that. We don't hear of that. That seems to be better. But there's other things now…the vaping and the juuling, that seems to be the big thing right now.

As an external evaluator and community liaison, Caroline (CHPOP, EC) perceived her experiences working with evolving FLE curriculum as enjoyable and thought-provoking:

> We worked on the family life curriculum…. That was kinda fun because you got a lot of input from different schools of thought. We just spent some time going through each one for each grade level and just really picking through like, what did we think was appropriate, what changes we did and didn't need to make, even things like what we would add. We tried to be mindful. We want to know what their misperceptions are so we can help correct them and help them understand.

The notion of curricular evolution emerged because the participants largely agreed that continuous changes were necessitated to address informal learning and the potential spread of misinformation, as well as due to the evidence given previously. Andrea (Teacher, EC) inferred processes of informal learning taking place among students and the possibility for the spread of misinformation therein:

> As far as the family/sexual part of it, they hear a lot of it through the hallways. Honestly, what we say, they've probably already heard. Whether it's completely true or not, I don't know. But for the most part, they have heard about it. They are somewhat aware of it.

Greg (Teacher, EC) perceived the importance of his role monitoring discourse in a potential space of informal learning:

> We make our presence known in the locker room. So, we're always in there. Now I'm sure if we weren't present in that locker room, you would have a lot of issues. But with us being in the locker room, it kind of takes care of that. I have not heard discussion of sexuality in the locker room.

Lisa (CHPOP, GR) perceived implications for informal learning in the community at large, especially regarding medical information:

> There's a lot of bad information out there and we can provide a lot of good information to people…. And we're in a rural area, you know, the needs are so great and there are so many barriers to care and education and so we really take our jobs here very seriously.

Curriculum, Context, Community: Evidence for Overarching Themes

As a result of the semi-structured interview protocol, multiple unanticipated areas of discussion emerged organically that transcended the phenomenological interview questions but were within the scope of the research questions. These served as additional evidence for the overarching themes of *curriculum, context,* and *community* in the findings section. Because there is a finite number of divergent perspectives to uncover in phenomenographic analysis of data, the semi-structured interviews opened space for the emergence of this evidence in the discourse (Gansemeer-Topf, 2016).

During interviews, I explored these areas and topics with the participants when they brought them up, asking follow-up questions when warranted. These areas of discussion presented themselves inductively as a result of rich description during the interviews. I documented them in field notes and analytical memos and coded them in transcripts. They shared in commonalities as well as differences in perspectives among participants and necessitated further deconstruction through interpretation of the participants' voices.

Hierarchy and overlap can emerge among phenomenographic points and qualitative themes as data become clustered during phenomenographic analysis; in Table 4 (presented previously), Reddy (2010) gave an example of how data can be mapped and visualized in hierarchical and overlapping ways. The emergent topics I present and interpret in the following paragraphs frequently overlap several of the study's phenomenographic points in some ways and increase considerably in abstraction as represented by hierarchies.

The Term "Appropriate"

The term *appropriate* appeared numerous times in interviews, often in the context of discussing age or stage of development. Some participants perceived that medical standards for development were best to follow regarding exposure to advancing information on human sexuality. Other participants had different perspectives, especially those who were also parents. For example, Evelyn (Guidance, EC) stated, "I want my son to know everything. *Everything.*"

When the topic emerged, most participants agreed that the burden of defining *appropriate* fell on the state (that is, state guidelines) and should also be based on empirical evidence. However, this could become problematic when the lived experiences of students are considered. Many school personnel said that they were aware that students were already engaging in sexual acts and wanted to provide them with information conducive to sexual well-being and healthy decision-making. A few teachers and CHPOPs spoke of a small number of cases of pregnancy, abuse, and rape among students past and present.

Appropriate instruction in sexuality education and FLE therefore emerged in the phenomenographic analysis as a conceptualization being pulled in three directions: biopolitics, or the influence of state guidelines (Marks, 2006, as explained in Chapter 2); the imaginary, or collective societal notion, of the adult responsibility to protect the innocence of the child (Edelman, 1998 as explored in Chapter 2); and serving students who have experienced the circumstances listed previously, and even more that are not listed. Thus, *appropriate* remains a deeply embedded abstraction in the curricular evolution of sexuality education and FLE with its potentially problematic underpinnings resulting from the observed phenomenographic nuance.

Dispelling Myths

While one aim of this study was to uncover how stakeholders bridge gaps in curriculum and informal learning for students, the notion of dispelling wider community myths emerged during participant interviews. These myths included parental assumptions about their child(ren)'s sexual engagement, the legality of underage sexual acts, misinformation in the community at large, and misunderstanding consent. Dalyn (Teacher, GR) spoke about parents and role of trust:

> We can't put blinders on. Kids are doing things that parents don't want them doing. I just think that [it] helps that you're present…. I want you to have a trusted adult you can talk to. Sometimes it might not be Mom and Dad, but you need someone in your life that you can trust that you can talk to about anything, you know. So, we really push for them to communicate. "Please communicate to somebody."

When discussing the perception among students that certain sexual behaviors in the digital world are without punitive action, Tia (Administrator, GR) stated:

We have invited [the district attorney] here to talk about the dangers and legal consequences of sexting, cyberbullying, and internet safety because of these devices that every child has now. That's why we go back and add it to our curriculum. The world just changes every day.

In an effort to dispel myths through a wider-reaching panel of curriculum reviewers, Dana (Division Leader, EC) commented:

[Another division leader] was in charge of making sure that we have an outside community, a group that reviewed all of the curriculum as well. And that was comprised parents, grandparents. We had some, um, health people on that committee. We also had pastors on the committee, so we tried to have a good cross-section of professionals…different people to review what we've built and provide feedback.

David (Administrator, EC) acknowledged an inner conflict at his perception of the community's disregard for evidence of adolescent sexual behavior:

I struggle with that a lot. Just because there are definitely ways to prevent some of the things that are happening. And when I say "prevent," I'm talking about pregnancies, not them from "doing it." There's nothing we're going to do, it's a biological situation. So, I think as an area we could actually do much better with that. Hopefully, with some of the things they're getting into in the sex education curriculum just makes something click for some of these students. Because it's a very small percentage of people that are going to tap into abstinence. Everybody else is going to do what they want…. I like to acknowledge the things that are happening, and not pretend like they're not. And again, historically, the area we live in is an "abstain, abstain, abstain" situation. And then if it

> does happen, sweep it under a rock. Maybe some of the younger crowd have the same mindset that I do, but just again, historically, that's a foreign concept.

Mike (SRO, GR) expressed his perception of the myths surrounding consent:

> Someone may consent to a certain thing and then all of a sudden they say no, and as soon as that consent is lifted, I think then you have [legal] cases that are built on that too, when consent is actually lifted where they say no after they first consented…. There's some legislation about that right now…. I know that males can be victims [of this] too.

Cece (Teacher, GR) echoed Mike's perception of survivors of assault. She said, "I think the students respond to seeing a male victim of sexual assault. They find it hard to believe."

At-Risk, Transient, Foster, and Vulnerable Students

Multiple teachers, administrators, CHPOPs and SROs brought up vulnerability in the student body and the surrounding community, especially underserved and underrepresented groups. Most emphasized their perception that the FLE curriculum could serve as a mechanism of assistance particularly for Black and Latin/e/x/o/a (herein referred to as Latin) students; foster students who comprised a large percentage of each division's population; adolescents experiencing hardship at home; and more through their FLE programs. These students were perceived as challenged regarding their academic engagement and success and home life circumstances beyond their control. Many participants felt that FLE themes resounded with these groups of students in sensitive ways and expressed awareness and concern. Some explained how their community had rallied around them for their support. It became apparent, though, that many participants felt heartbroken and powerless to help students in the most challenging situations. Cindie (Administrator, EC) said:

Black students, students with disabilities are not performing generally…for me, this is especially critical because students [and adults] with disabilities…tend to be victims of sexual violence and sexual assault later in life.

Tyrone (CHPOP, EC) also identified a group in the community that were underserved:

We've had some of the Latino population groups that were built in [to the curriculum review] committee also. And that's one population group that I feel like it's pretty much a lot underserved and not due to any stigma or anything. but it's, I think that at least in [this area], there's a lot that goes under the radar.

Turning to households, family structures, and adolescent experience, Lasonya (Guidance, EC) noted:

Maybe their parents are going through a divorce, or maybe they've been harmed. They'll come into Guidance and share that with us. Or they shared it with a friend and the friend will come and tell us that such-and-such is being abused or something.

Andrea (Teacher, EC) shared her perception of the difficulty of discussing families in class with the knowledge of students living diverse family structures and, consequently, experiencing hardship:

We touch on adoption, abortion, that sort of thing. That part of family life is probably the hardest. Because more often than not, these kids are in foster care. And that's where I've had a hard time not getting emotional, because I can see it on their faces. We have a large amount here that come from broken homes for whatever reason.

Tyrone (CHPOP, EC) gave similar sentiments:

Home life is one of the biggest barriers to education. If you've ever experienced or seen that, you know, like go to the child advocacy center, you'll just leave there…. I personally leave there every time thanking God that place exists.

Julia (CHPOP, GR) spoke of medical vulnerabilities in the community at large:

STDs right now are huge in our area, just the need for testing, the need for treatment. It's huge. So, we have been approached by both our local university, our local community college and the health department…which to me says clearly, it's a need and it's something that with financial help we could definitely offer to our community…. If those people are knocking on your door, you know, it's a serious issue.

Dana (Division Leader, EC) perceived the challenges of getting information to transient students: "We want to make sure that students get it and there aren't gaps when we have our, you know, students that are kind of transient within our division."

Evelyn (Guidance, EC) also talked about her perception of student home life:

It can be all different things, but usually it's because their circumstances at home are poor circumstances. Or their life is changing in some way. For example, I have a [student] and [their caregiver] just got out of jail. [The caregiver had] been in jail for several years, so we've been talking about that. I have a child who got in a fight with his [caregiver], so now he's staying with [someone else] because the [caregiver] lives in the home. It's just different things…. I think the hardest thing is when they have horrible situations at home, and there's nothing that you can do about them here at school.

Last, regarding survivors of sexual assault and pregnant teenagers as vulnerable individuals, Julia (CHPOP, GR) said:

> We do work with sexual assault advocates…. We also work with domestic violence shelters for kids in our areas…. [Regarding teen pregnancy] Obviously, some of our clients have been very young. So, if she is, for instance, in middle school, she's not gonna know how to make a medical appointment. And in that moment, she either might not have parental support, or they might not have the knowledge yet and she's not ready to share [any] information yet.

Legislation and Lack of Guidance

Several teachers and CHPOP reported recent changes to state legislation regarding FLE that were working their way into state guidelines, albeit without resources like guides, plans, or activities. These changes included female genital mutilation, consent, and human trafficking both as a sexual crime and as a lived experience for survivors. Stakeholders had varying perspectives on these changes and the assumed lack of supplementary material from the state. They discussed a need for professional development activities such as funds to attend conferences and workshops, as well as common planning time. They also perceived a lack of resources from the state to teach highly sensitive materials that were newly mandated, especially to students who had lived through what was experienced; they perceived professional training to address this as a requisite for teaching FLE. Some teachers expressed frustration at the disconnect between state mandates for curriculum and the provision of resources. Others called for increased professional development dedicated to FLE for all school personnel, noting the field’s interdisciplinarity and connections to real life. Several teachers and almost all CHPOPs perceived funding for curriculum, instructional materials, and training as a major concern, while others felt that current funding was sufficient. Many stakeholders worried about the future of FLE given that the division and school boards had considered its elimination via budget cuts in prior years.

Need for Professional Development. Some teachers pointed out the need for professional development on the FLE curriculum. Dalyn (Teacher, GR) stressed:

> [Curriculum changes coming] include expanding family life curriculum to address privacy, personal boundaries, the meaning of consent, human trafficking, the emotional effects of female genital mutilation…. How do you want us to present that information? How are we going to talk about this with children?

Andrea (Teacher, EC) perceived an importance for whole-school knowledge of and informal involvement in sexuality education:

> I think we would definitely benefit as a Health and PE department to have some type of [faculty development]. Maybe it's just a speaker who comes on a teacher workday or a staff development day and leads the whole entire school on something like this, provides PowerPoints, handouts, or something that we could go by.

Lack of Funding. Some stakeholders brought up a lack of funding for FLE training, curriculum development, and time to foster community partnerships. Dalyn (Teacher, EC) noted:

> We need continuing education in this area, these topics. Our opinion is if you're going to sit at the [state] department of education and write a [guideline for FLE], then are you going to provide us some information more than just printing the [FLE]? We don't have workshops for family life. We don't have conferences necessarily. The conferences I wanted to go to were out of state and they weren't approved because of funding as it was going to require, you know, mileage and a hotel room because it was out of town. That's where I think we're lacking and that's where we just have to try to find the best stuff we can find to meet the needs [of the students].

On the other hand, Jeffrey (Teacher, EC) perceived sufficient professional development resources for faculty:

> I'd say we have tremendous support. I really would. As far as being able to go to conferences, workshops, conventions, and that kind of thing, They're huge for that. They definitely allow us to attend those certain things. We've had a lot of in-school professional development days.

All CHPOPs interviewed discussed how much larger the needs in the community were as compared to the amount of funding their organizations received. Some relied purely on grants, others on donations, still others on research-based funds from institutions, or a mix of these.

Overall Program Success Measures

How FLE and sexuality education programs in these divisions evaluated their overall success was a theme that varied from participant to participant. Some participants looked to the number of families inquiring about the program or asking to see the program as a measure of trust in the school to present FLE in a way consistent with community values. Others looked for low opt out numbers to determine overall program success. Still others looked at statistical data such as STIs and teen pregnancies as measurements. Jackie (Administrator, EC) noted the pressures of the community and the community partnership response as one measure of success:

> It seems to be that the curriculum for family life and sex education is primarily very conservative in [this area]. I believe that may be based on conservative values… I think there's more of "We're gonna teach what this community will accept," and I think it is more community-based. We look at the curriculum standards that are provided by the state, but I think a lot of leeway is left to the individual locality and how to implement that. I think the community here, honestly, would not accept a more progressive

approach. Being in a school division, school board members and principles will only…they are voted in office, so they are going to support what their constituents want them to support. We need to start being more progressive…. If you're not taking care of these students and their wants and their needs and things that bother them, then you're truly not helping the child. And if you can't, we have so many resources now, you can refer that student to someone else who can help them, maybe emotionally, that the teacher can't. Maybe they're struggling with something, you know. They might feel, "Well, I feel this way, and I don't know how to handle it." So, I think that teachers are very knowledgeable, and I think they know their limitations. And I think when students come to them if they're not able to handle it one-on-one, they will send them to our resource that is able to help them.

Cece (Teacher, GR) noted as a measure of FLE success, that CHPOPs approached them to provide resources: "We didn't go to them. They came to us and said, 'We would like to come your family life class. Could we do it?' They came to us."

Lisa (CHPOP, GR) thought that community partnerships were positive:

I think getting people from the community more involved in the school system is a good thing…. And family like family life just seems like such a great way to get your community involved in your schools.

Dana (Division Leader, EC) spoke of getting to the guts of larger social problems:

People are saying right now with the social movements that have happened with, you know, people being called out for harassment, abuse, and whatnot. They're saying, where's the root of this problem? And they're coming back and then they're seeing, we have empty curriculum, we have empty sex education curriculum…. I'm really proud of what our division built.

Jeffrey (Teacher, EC) expressed his perception that the number of students opting out could be used as a measure of success:

> We do [have kids that opt out], but not very many. We do have some that opt out, and we just give them an alternate health assignment to complete. I haven't gotten any feedback from the community…I don't know if anybody else has or not.

Cindie (Division Leader, EC) point out personal responsibility and accountability to the state: "It's a part of our wellness plan…we are accountable for that. family life education has one huge piece of that."

Dalyn (Teacher, GR) stated:

> We feel like we have one of the best programs around, but I mean, I don't know, because I haven't really seen all the other programs. I just hear that there's some counties you have nothing…. We're gonna measure success in different ways. If my kids make healthy decisions, that'll be success for me, you know? As long as you are happy and healthy and things look good for you, that's the test, I guess.

Tia (Administrator, GR) talked about parental scrutiny and curricular changes that had been implemented:

> The world's changing…. A lot of this stuff children can get on the internet parents can get on the internet. Of course, if you'd asked me this same question 10 years ago, you would not get the answer you're going to get right now. The answer you're going to get right now is, they can look it up on the internet and or parents know that, right? They [used to]

come to us to say, ‘Okay, what are you all covering?’ The few that came years ago… We had more parents look at the curriculum [then] than we do now.

Julia (CHPOP, GR) remarked about the use of statistics to measure her center’s effectiveness:

We look at pregnancy numbers in the area… Our effectiveness is kind of two-fold. Because we want them to be aware of our services, our school age numbers have risen since we have done this. And that to me is effectiveness. Right? That is saying that what we're doing is effective because well, children who might not have known our services were available prior now are knowing that we are here to serve them. So that is effective. Now the other part could be, well, is it really effective if they're coming in pregnant, you know, like, is it really effective as far as your message of abstinence? Is it as effective? I would still say yes, because we also can see that some of our teenage numbers in the area as a whole are going down.

Travis (Teacher, EC) spoke about assessing long-term effectiveness:

The only way you can assess family life is not today, not tomorrow, but down the road. If you see them pregnant or they’ve come down with something, I guess you look back and say, “Where did I go wrong with this student?” Or “Should I have done something different?” Because [the teachers] have told me before they've had students come up to them to say, “Well I'm pregnant now. I should've paid more attention in class.” You can't save everyone either.

Doug (Teacher, GR) recalled advocating for the FLE program:

A few years ago, the budget was tight, and they were looking at areas to get rid of. And family life was one of them. They were thinking about [eliminating] it. So, I, as well as some others, went before the school board and put in a plug for family life. I'm a parent, I want my kids to hear these things, and sometimes as parents, maybe we lack in that area. So even in that area, when we are talking about it [in class], they're getting to hear it again, you know, and it all comes from, us not the street.

Cece (Teacher, GR) perceived personal success as an educator: "I certainly have loved every moment of it."

Family Life and Sexuality Education as STEM Education

A few school personnel remarked that the FLE program was interdisciplinary, even constituting a form of STEM instruction based on the content included in the course. They perceived that these connections to STEM increased the value of FLE and could encourage students to pursue those areas of study in the future. School personnel discussed ratios, statistics, navigating technology, and media literacy as examples. Regarding engineering, Rose (CHPOP, EC) mentioned that she taught about contraceptives and disease prevention not only through medical displays of STIs, but also through a *how it's made* and *why it works* approach and compared it to basic principles of engineering and design: "I take an IUD, an actual IUD. I take a pack of birth control pills, a NuvaRing, and a condom. They want to know how it works."

Parallel to this, Caroline (CHPOP, EC) noted the interlinked perception of the curriculum and community involvement in FLE: "I feel like the family life curriculum is really super wide and branching of interconnected and kind of a unique animal in a way."

Renaming the Program

Some personnel expressed an interest in renaming the program given community-based stigmas and its perception as an explicit or graphic sexual how-to manual. Due to my researcher positionality of strategic undressing during participant interaction, I did not remark on these comments in the interviews except to encourage any follow-up comments from the participants. However, after the interviews, some of these participants inquired if I could think of a better name for the program; they felt it could be renamed to better describe what was covered and to change community perceptions of the course content, but struggled with a new course title. Two participants were expressly concerned about including *sex* or *sexuality* in a new title. We discussed potentially adopting terminology such as *human development*, *growth*, *physiology*, and *relationships* in future titles, but I did not make any formal recommendations.

Answering the Research Questions

1. ***What are the shared elements and differences among the formal sexuality education curriculum and the following six dimensions of SCT?***
    a. Sexual identity: heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, pansexuality, sexual fluidity, panromanticism, romanticism, aromanticism
    b. Sexual behaviors: oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex, masturbation and mutual masturbation, sexual violence
    c. Enthusiastic consent: must be shared, should be mutually enthusiastic, can be withdrawn at any time for any reason
    d. Attitudes or stigmas, if any, toward and use of prophylactics, condoms, birth control, teen pregnancy, STI prevention, abstinence
    e. Relationships with specific regard to sexuality: monogamy, polygamy, casual dating inclusive/exclusive of sexual behaviors, one night stands, friends with benefits, single-by-choice
    f. Reproduction, biology, medicine, reproductive health

The formal sexuality education curriculum shares multiple elements with SCT; these shared elements, as well as differences, were presented in Figure 6. Shared elements include heterosexuality as a sexual identity, romanticism, lust, building relationships and trust, nurturance, abstinence, abuse, violence, monogamy, single-by-choice, the science and medicine of reproductive biology and reproductive health, and sexual acts and outcomes.

Several concepts also partially overlap between SCT and the curriculum. Attraction is an example of this in the context of dating, relationships, marriage, etc. under the umbrella of normative heterosexuality. In SCT, attraction has multiple possible defining features: attracted to man, attracted to male sex organs, attracted to butch presentation, and so on. Casual dating is another concept that partially overlaps between SCT and the curriculum: in the curriculum, it is referred to as group dating, forming friendships, and social development. In SCT, casual dating can include sexual behaviors and relations such as one-night stands. Eroticism, a third dimension of SCT that partially crosses the curriculum boundary, is subtly addressed in the context of masturbation and monogamous relationships with an emphasis on marriage; it is de-emphasized in other contexts since the curriculum is abstinence-stressed. Last, enthusiastic consent partially crosses the boundary from curriculum into SCT; consent in the curriculum is grounded in *no means no* as opposed to *yes means yes*.

Among the six specific dimensions of SCT that I chose to shape the scope of the research questions, many elements are not found in the curriculum. This includes non-heterosexual sexualities (asexuality, pansexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality, sexual fluidity, and more). This also includes aromanticism and panromanticism, as well as solitary sexuality with the exception of masturbation. Relationship types such as friends with benefits were not included. Masturbation did not appear in the curriculum, nor did sexual acts explicitly for pleasure. As presented in italics in Figure 6, other dimensions such as polyamory, mutual masturbation, kink, person-not-gender sexuality and attraction, and transgender and cisgender identities were not included in the formal curriculum.

Lastly, various components of the curricular categories did not cross from the curriculum into the domain of SCT. These included personal stories as a part of curricular presentation; media literacy; emotional and mental health and hygiene; family and the home; adoption; STI and pregnancy prevention; puberty; decision-making; technology; and the law as it relates to sexual behaviors.

2. ***What are stakeholders' perceptions of the formal curriculum, and what are the gaps between their perceptions and SCT?***

Stakeholders expressed differing perspectives of the curriculum pertaining to the specified dimensions of SCT, especially regarding their preferred level of comprehensiveness. Some stakeholders expressed perspectives that the curriculum was sufficient. Others stated that it was too much for adolescents developmentally, but still a necessity due to the reality of adolescents' potential to engage in sexual activity. Still others perceived the need for a more comprehensive curriculum grounded in scientific evidence on preventing STIs, teen pregnancy rates, and the use of birth control. A few stakeholders perceived pleasure as an important part of adult sexuality, but as an aspect not thoroughly covered in the classroom.

All stakeholders discussed an awareness of some gaps between the curriculum, reported adolescent behaviors, adult sexuality, and lived experiences generally without explicit knowledge or understanding of SCT. Multiple participants perceived an awareness of a lack of instruction on gender identity and sexual identity; how to address it was a point of contention via making assumptions about students or allowing one's opinion to serve as evidence. For example, Greg (Teacher, EC) said:

> I know it would be difficult for me to talk about alternative lifestyles, if I had to present it to a 6th grader versus maybe a little bit older. These 6th graders can't figure out what shoes to put on in the mornings, or how to tie their shoes. I just don't see how they can make that determination that early in life.… "Am I going to be a male or female?" Sometimes it's attention-seeking, I feel. Maybe they're not getting attention, so they'll say "Hey, now I'm a girl." But that's just my opinion.

CHPOPs also expressed differing perspectives of the curriculum, the classroom, and their observations within the community. One CHPOP had observed an organization removed from participating in the school division because of political contention surrounding abortion and family planning. Some CHPOPs expressed that diverse sexualities and gender identity were tough topics to address, but necessary, but did not necessarily know how to include them given contrasting values and contention in the community. Wendy (CHPOP, EC) shared a conflict she observed between a women's reproductive health center and families:

> [Instruction on] sexuality identity, gender identity and these kind of mainstream [ideas]…. I'm not saying it doesn't need to be done. I just don't think [this area] is ready for that to happen at this time. They had [a women's reproductive health center] for family life for a period of time and they were very vocal in wanting to say, "Oh, everybody's, you know, a different sexuality" and they were very liberal and the parents came together and demanded they be removed from teaching that curriculum because it was too liberal for the culture of [this area].

Rose (CHPOP, GR) remarked:

[Sexual orientation] is a tricky topic. I think that could be covered in a health class. It should be part of a health lesson to discuss all that. Is it important for a child to know different cultures? Same thing if you were teaching different religions. You know, you should talk about sexuality that way…. [Diverse sexuality] is not something that's hidden, just like heterosexuality isn't, I just don't feel like it's covered.

Regarding sexual behaviors among adolescents, Jackie (Administrator, EC) said:

Here [in this division], the focus is on abstinence. Truly, I would love to think that our children abstain from sexual activity, but given the statistics, they do not. I think we kind of are doing our children an injustice not telling them how to protect themselves from being a parent before they are physically and psychologically ready, or to risk the chance of them contracting a sexually transmitted disease that can impair their life forever. By saying, "just abstain, just abstain, don't have sex, don't have sex," a lot more comes into it. It's no more the thought of "good girls don't have sex." Kids have sex now. Their views are different about what it means. To them, a lot of our students, it's no big deal. "Doesn't mean I'm in a life-long relationship or a marriage, it's just—I'm having sex." I think as an educator, my primary focus is I want kids to grow up to be happy, healthy, long-living individuals. If we don't prepare them adequately with our knowledge on how to prevent themselves from becoming a parent or having a sexually transmitted disease, we're not doing our due diligence.

Stakeholders had various perspectives regarding the inclusion of sexual acts in the curriculum. Almost all school personnel perceived abstinence first as the most effective form of preventing teen pregnancy and STI transmission, but perceived varying degrees of awareness of adolescent experimentation. School personnel reported differing perceptions of comprehensiveness, and what comprehensiveness means, in the curriculum as well. Dalyn (Teacher, GR) said:

> We always promote abstinence first. The kids [will] tell you that we going to say abstinence is the 100% guarantee. But then we do teach about birth control, different birth control options…we talk about STD prevention, we talk about condoms.

When asked about which sexual acts were covered in her class, Cece (Teacher, GR) remarked:

> Oh, all of them. Intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, touching. It's all talked about and explained and I'm letting them know that all of it is considered sexual activity, and that diseases can spread. That's pretty much our premise. We're usually talking about STDs because kids still think oral sex is not sex. [There are] still a lot of misconceptions out there…. They'll ask me "Is masturbation okay?" I say, "You should be doing it in private and looking at nothing."

> Mike (SRO, GR) noted, "We'd be foolish to think that these kids don't do things, that the kids don't experiment with things or have the awareness of them in their general surroundings."

Most stakeholders perceived worry over conversations on what they considered to be risky behaviors such as onanism, or coitus interruptus, the practice of removing the penis from the vagina during intercourse but before ejaculation as a scientifically unproven method of birth control. Others were concerned about the casual nature by which adolescents discussed their numbers of sexual partners. Travis (Teacher, GR) expressed concern over what had heard students saying:

All they want to talk about is the reason I ain't got no kids. My "pull out game" is strong. I don't think they understand the severity of any of this. They don't realize it is life alternating changes if something was to happen. And I don't think it's because of the teaching.

Cece (Teacher, GR) also perceived risk-taking acts through dialogue introduced by students in her class:

I don't know if you're familiar with this term, but they have body counts. Body counts means the number of sexual partners that they have had. When you hear somebody bragging about their body counts…. We have a sexual exposure chart that we put up for the students and they said, so what? They're bragging that they've got 10 bodies…. Let's look at the actual number of exposures. It's got the number of sexual partners on one side and then the other side is sexual exposures and…it says, if somebody has three sexual partners, we're going to make it equal and let all of those three partners have three partners. So, their sexual exposure is not just two or three people. And then we throw the statistic up: one in four sexually active people have a disease. What's the chance of somebody in that group having one?

Stakeholders had varying perceptions of the curriculum regarding pregnancy, parenting, and abortion. Some participants discussed the emotional and financial costs of pregnancies as deterrents. Others shared that they held condensed and apolitical discussions of abortion. Some discussed the increasing importance of educating students on consent in the form of *no means no*. Regarding teen pregnancy and parenting, Jeffrey (Teacher, EC) stated:

We go over any of the emotional strains with…an unexpected pregnancy and your role, money costs, responsibility, are you ready? We talk about how the STDs stay with you through life, and how that can affect your future as well. We hit some goal setting with that.

Jonathan (Teacher, EC) talked about how he approached what he perceived to be a controversial topic:

Abortion is mentioned. We talk about abortion. We don't talk about whether I believe it's right or whether I believe it's wrong. We just talk about what it is, what state laws may consider abortion, at what time frame can an abortion occur, what are the different steps for that, how might it occur…. We could talk about family life for months, and the details...but I always try to relate to them that at some point the majority of the population plans to have a family.

Dalyn (Teacher, GR) described how she taught about consent:

The way we talk about consent is whether or not both parties are consensual…making sure that they understand both parties need to be consensual. If she says no, no means no. And if you do not listen to her, no, then you could be in legal trouble…. That could be sexual assault. And we also tell them, if you're at a party and you're drinking or you're smoking weed and you're under the influence of drugs or alcohol, no one can give legal consent when they're under the influence of drugs or alcohol. So, let's say tomorrow morning she wakes up and decides, I can't believe I did that…I was drunk, I didn't know. We try to make sure the boys understand that could come back to you. So, it's kind of a heated discussion because they get mad about that. "Well, we both were drinking." Well, that's not legal consent. You cannot give legal consent [in that situation].

In view of the curriculum as a whole and its connection to both the students and the family, many stakeholders shared varying perspectives: it is better than it was; it is good, but along some themes not comprehensive enough; the community has the wrong idea about what it actually is; and the community needs it. Travis (Teacher, GR) said:

> They taught abstinence only in [my] family life [in a different division]. And that program in my opinion was not as beneficial to the students as what they teach now.

Lillian (Guidance, EC) reflected on her own experiences with an FLE program and what the community thinks of it now:

> I don’t know that I could give you an answer of how I think the community perceives family life. I do think there might be a misunderstanding of what it is sometimes. It was more like, focused on sexuality, body parts, that type of thing. Where now, based on my experience, it is much more broad than just those things. I think the hesitation is going away a little bit…it’s the small-town culture. I mean, it’s rural...a rural town. I don’t think it’s lack of education or lack of necessarily, awareness, but here and in our culture, we’re very protective over our family members and what they hear. And so, difficult topics, we want to be sure of how they’re being delivered or even who is telling them.

David (Administrator, EC) described the values and thought processes of the surrounding community:

> By and large, this area is very conservative. So, it's the “hope and pray it's not happening, kind of push it to the side, we don't want that to happen,” and that's the mindset.

3. How do the differences between the formal curriculum and SCT leave gaps in students’ knowledge that they may attempt to fill through informal learning, and how do stakeholders bridge these gaps?

All stakeholders interviewed reported an implicit awareness of informal learning. They perceived the notion as students searching for information in multiple contexts, whether through technology, from their families, their peers, the media, pornography, solitary or partnered sexual experimentation, exploration and expression of a sexual identity or configuration, or another source outside the classroom. In their perception, stakeholders worked to bridge gaps via referrals to families, guidance counselors, SROs, CHPOPs, online resources, private conversations, and a variety of community services.

Regarding the curriculum, some teachers believed that the material was outdated because they were written in the past, which they perceived as being different from current times. As Andrea (Teacher, EC) remarked, "I think the material needs to be updated. I do. Because the times are different."

Some stakeholders tried to address gaps explicitly by discussing them directly with students. Instead of allowing students to rely on what the students hear, see, read, or experience in informal contexts (e.g., school hallways, at home, online), stakeholders used various methods to redirect adolescents away from risky behaviors. It is important to note, though, that little evidence emerged that stakeholders directed adolescents *toward* healthy sexual behaviors.

Some teachers and CHPOPs observed and interacted with adolescents to identify information learned in informal contexts. Some of these explicitly addressed misinformation and its source(s) in class. Others made or served as referrals to internal or external/community resources. Jonathan (Teacher, EC) specifically referred to informal learning and how he and his colleagues helped address the gap:

> We set it up so that when we talk about it, it is a serious topic. Not to make light of the topic and the things they hear in the hallways, at home, or what you may read online.

Because we know that they're exposed to it way before we get to them, especially with phones nowadays and how you can research stuff… If we don't know it, we'll look it up and try to give you the best possible answer. Or we will send you to somebody. Whether it's a nurse at the clinic, or someone who can help give you those answers that you are looking for.

Dalyn (Teacher, GR) discussed a wide variety of informal learning contexts and what happens when she presents accurate information:

The music, the movies, the TV…. They all have cell phones. It is one click away from anything they want to know about anything. That's where they're learning a lot…and it's not always correct information. And then they look at you like a deer in the headlights when you say, well, no, that's not, that's incorrect.

Without mentioning where the knowledge may have come from, Richard (Administrator, GR) noted, "[We've] had children that confessed to already having sexual relations. I mean obviously they have a working knowledge of this stuff beforehand."

Tyrone (CHPOP, EC) elaborated upon how he has bridged curriculum with informal curriculum with informal learning in serious situations such as sexual assault:

We had a lot of folks come out and say, "Hey, I've been raped." And [we] were like, oh crap, now what do we do? But we want people to do that. Right? It was a big eye-opening factor for the folks that were on the [family life curriculum development] committee, we were like, well, now what do we do? So that kind of opened our eyes a little bit to like saying, "Hey, this stuff is pretty legit and it's not just a campaign anymore." So, then we did the Stop the Stigma campaigns. We did, you know, all the Save the Next Girl stuff.

Julia (CHPOP, GR) discussed how her community center offers support beyond the curriculum and classroom:

> We offer abortion recovery. So, if a woman is post-abortive, maybe struggling, maybe finds herself possibly in another pregnancy, and it's triggering some emotions, or some feelings or some things she's struggling with, then we have another program that's called Abortion Recovery. And [we help her] just kind of go through those emotions and feelings to hopefully turn it into something positive that she can overcome.

Some stakeholders addressed curricular gaps such as celebrating diverse sexual identities passively while still following school policies. Still others perceived their commitment to providing answers to areas covered and not covered in the curriculum that were grounded in empiricism and best practices as essential to student health and their role as a stakeholder. David (Administrator, EC) noted the acceptance of diverse sexualities among the student body and how students were permitted to celebrate their identities despite the lack of coverage of this knowledge in the curriculum:

> One of our struggles here is students that are homosexual or LGBTQ have a hard time walking through our halls, because they do not feel truly accepted. You want to be an outlet for those individuals, but at the same time, they probably don't feel comfortable coming to talk to anyone. That's a rough spot for them to be in.… Last year, there was a huge group of 7th graders. They basically tried to organize a gay pride parade through the hallway, and a lot of staff came up to us and said, "Can they do this?" And I said, "Well, they're not really harming anyone, and they're not being aggressive. Yes, we want them to follow normal hallway procedures, which means you can't be piled up in a group and you can't be getting to class late. But if they're just operating normally—and it just so happens there are a lot of them together in one spot—and they're all going in the right direction,

we can't really do anything about that. We don't do that." It was cool that they were comfortable enough and felt like they could do that. Mainly, they just wanted to sit together at lunch. They had gay pride flags and they had some rainbow add-on stickers that they put on their face, and some of them had shirts on. It was not disruptive in any way. The disruption part, that's when the school would have had to have taken action. But there was nothing that they did that was disruptive.

James (SRO, GR) stated he encouraged students to come to him with concerns external to the curriculum as a preventative measure to facing problems in the future:

> I know these kids; I work with them every day and I would much rather answer some questions for them now rather than get themselves into some trouble later on…. It's a tough stage in life anyways. And so much of the information they do get tends to come from the internet or from other people their age or just a few years older. So, I [want] to try to give them something that actually has some background, some, you know, research done into it.

Rose (CHPOP, GR) recalled that her young age served as a bridge to conveying extracurricular information more easily:

> I'm not very old, so they seem to be able to relate to me a little bit better…. I make it a very open discussion. I like to answer questions. I want to clear up that rumor that your cousin's cousin told you that you think it's okay to wear two condoms because that's what they told you and that's not the case.

Finally, one stakeholder perceived a need for families to participate in some kind of awareness-raising program. Titus (SRO, GR) expressed a desire for more community involvement in FLE:

> I think the parents should go through a program too because I think it all starts at home. If the parents go through a program where they know what's going on with the cell phones, it would help. But I think what we're doing here is proactive.

Returning to Sexuality Configurations Theory and Legitimate Peripheral Participation

SCT (van Anders, 2015) proved resourceful as an analytical framework for this study in several ways. As was shown in Figure 6 and discussed in the answers to the research questions, SCT served as an appropriate measure to evaluate the comprehensiveness of the divisions' sexuality education curricula. Furthermore, as the interview narrative formed, SCT became more relevant as increasingly complex topics emerged during the dialogue. These included perceptions on casual dating, being single, consent (*no* means *no* versus *yes* means *yes*), and risks that accompany some sexual acts.

SCT was not resourceful in the analysis of elements integrated into the sexuality education curriculum but not expressly included in SCT. These included emotional and physical abuse, sexual acts and drugs, puberty, and young parenthood. These also included how individuals learn about their own sexuality through lived experience and via community discourse. Nevertheless, given that these aspects of FLE were not part of the six dimensions selected specifically for this analysis and that LPP served as a framework for scrutinizing learning, SCT as a measure of comprehensiveness proved reliable.

LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991) was a useful framework for understanding the multitudinous connections between perceptions of students, educational stakeholders, and interested CHPOPs who were also involved in curriculum and instruction. In particular, participants spoke about their perceptions of students' formal classroom engagement on and outside interaction(s) with various FLE themes—that is, legitimate peripheral participation. This became most salient when stakeholders perceived the benefits of the informational nature of their sexuality education curriculum over risks associated with adolescent experiential learning on the theme. LPP was also sufficiently robust to account for students who learn and experience their sexuality informally, crossing various LPP boundaries identified in the interview data. These boundaries were defined in the interview narrative as technology, peer and household discourse, affirming conversations on healthy sexuality, the media's influences, pornography, sexual activity, community health resources, trusted adults in one-on-one conversations, guidance counselors, and more.

As described in Chapter 2, LPP demonstrates how individuals enmeshed in a community share a sense of belonging due a common goal (in this case, learning about sexuality), face similar conditions (such as curricular mandates and pressures of community values, as well as student experimentation with sexuality); the rapid flow of information (in this case, information constrained by instructional time, informal learning through everyday cognition as discussed in Chapter 2, and discourse generally) and the sharing of artifacts (lessons, guides, data, emergent technologies, etc.). Perceptions of these aspects of LPP among stakeholders were increasingly salient as the interviews progressed.

In some ways, LPP was ineffective as a theoretical framework. Since much research in LPP has been done on learning as apprenticeship, this model is limited in its evaluative capability without some abstraction in this study's circumstances. Additionally, adolescent students who form a substantial part of this environment were not interviewed, so their perceptions of sexuality education and family life in a theoretical framework of LPP were not included.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the results of the QCA and phenomenographic analysis with accompanying tables of data—open and axial codes as well as categories—and visual representations of findings. I presented and expounded upon the phenomenographic map, or outcome space, and constructed a narrative of differing perspectives in line with the study's qualitative methodology. I provided responses to the research questions and presented a series of additional unanticipated findings that emerged during the interviews. Last, I returned to a discussion of the utility of SCT and LPP in the present study. In the next and final chapter, I give an overall summary of the major themes uncovered in the study along with implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss the primary themes that emerged during the research process: curriculum, the context of learning, and the surrounding community. These themes were explicated in Chapter 2, the review of literature, as a formula for the sexuality education learning process, the review of literature. They also emerged organically as overarching clusters in the data as was represented in Figure 8, the outcome space. I also provide some implications for sexuality education and family life educators and stakeholders grounded in the empirical evidence gathered herein and outline the study's limitations and avenues for potential future studies.

Learning Sexuality

In the two rural school divisions that took part in this study, sexuality education was bound to family life education: this constituted the curriculum of the content in question. In addition to the formal, classroom learning to which adolescents in the FLE program were exposed, school personnel and community stakeholders alike were acutely aware of students' informal learning, discourse, and everyday cognition through which information and misinformation on sexuality could spread from adolescent to adolescent, from adolescent to household, from household to household, and so on. Evidence indicated legitimate peripheral participation as one learning framework through which the sexual and related knowledge in question was passed from stakeholder to partial member (i.e., adolescent student) and partial member to partial member. This process formed the contexts of learning for sexuality education in these divisions, specifically regarding the six specified dimensions of SCT.

CHPOPs and SROs who contributed to the curriculum and visited classrooms as guest lecturers generally reported that they promoted curricular comprehensiveness with the goal of highlighting evidence-based, positive public health outcomes. In addition, they perceived their presence in collaboration with FLE teachers as opportunities to encourage insight among students. According to almost every participant, these structured, combined efforts fostered a relationship among all stakeholders as provisioners of resources to supplement state guidelines for the FLE curriculum, thus forming a community of practice in sexuality education for adolescents in their classes and beyond.

Implications for Educators and Stakeholders

The present study's findings provide various implications for teachers, administrators, division leaders, and stakeholders. For example, both divisions indicated that the inclusion of CHPOPs in their processes of curriculum development and as guest lecturers was successful. Therefore, continuing to enhance the relationship between the schools, the curriculum, and these community partnerships could increase the comprehensiveness of the FLE and sexuality education program, especially regarding these partnerships' focus on larger public health outcomes and empirical evidence. While time and resources could certainly be a constraint, partnering with additional community resources and liaisons to exchange ideas and information on public health outcomes could strengthen sexuality education. School personnel can use evidence-based research on successful partnerships and community engagement to petition divisions and states for funds to accomplish this (Kirby, 2006; Yadav, 2018).

When asked about assessment, almost all participants had a different perspective of both how to assess student learning, as well as how to assess the overall measure of success of the program. With the exception of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in EC and statistical measures mentioned by CHPOPs in GR, few quantitative measures of assessment were discussed. This is not to discredit the rich personal narratives that stakeholders used to evaluate their success in general; such narratives can also be used to generate hypotheses for research and formal program evaluation (for example, longitudinal assessment, post-program Likert-type surveys for students and alumni, and more). Furthermore, no participants mentioned graded assignments or summative tests in FLE instruction. To determine the effectiveness of learning sexuality in class, implementation of such measures could be considered, although limited instructional time presents a problem for assessment overall. In-class, ungraded activities can provide informal assessment and feedback from students (Alford, 2008).

Other measures utilized by the school divisions and CHPOPs to determine the effectiveness of their respective programs were teen pregnancy rates and opt out ratios. The former, when low as compared to the general population, may be effective, it still does not track student sexual activity as the YRBS is designed to do. Divisions that do not use the YRBS to supplement data on unintended teen pregnancy may consider implementing it for additional insight. Furthermore, regarding households opting out their student(s) from FLE instruction, multiple participants perceived that low opt out ratios were indicative of success. However, districts may want to consider discussing and documenting the reason(s) for opting out, whether out of specific lessons or the entire program, to form a more complete picture of which topics need further review by stakeholder committees. Additionally, divisions may continue to make their FLE curricula easily available for review to all members of the community (via website, community panel or other) in addition using increased methods to raise awareness of their availability.

Regarding overall measures of comprehensiveness of the sexuality education curriculum as compared to SCT, multiple participants indicated the need for the regular curriculum evaluation for comprehensiveness despite any perceived community pressures to the contrary.

Several participants indicated that the state guidelines allowed for flexibility in presentation of contentious topics like gender identity and sexual identity. In this case, some stakeholders had chosen to defer these topics to external resources to avoid the notion of direct instruction of controversial themes and pushback from parent(s) or guardian(s). Some participants suggested that parents be offered the opportunity to take the course, or perhaps an abbreviated version of the course, to dispel myths that instruction is geared toward forcing, per se, adolescents' identifications with specific gender identities and sexualities rather than describing gender and sexual identity in the context of contemporary society; this is in line with other research findings (Fentahun, Assefa, Alemseged, & Ambaw, 2012; Lewton & Nievar, 2012; Morris & Ballard, 2003). This requires additional fiduciary resources and time which were identified as areas of critical need earlier. Of particular note, though, are freely available online courses (MOOCs) that could be used for parental engagement in the sexuality education discourse (see Doneker, Berke, & Settles, 2016).

When discussing the themes of rape and sexual assault, participants reflected on their use of the legal consequences of these behaviors, especially under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and invited SROs into the classroom as guest lecturers. Participants could also emphasize that sexual assault and rape are violence against and desecration of another person. Teachers, CHPOPs, and other stakeholders could emphasize stopping oneself from engaging in sexual violence for the *sake* of stopping, for *respecting* the bodily autonomy of others, and for *being* a good person rather than *just* to avoid a consequence both as adolescents and into adulthood (Barone, Wolgemuth, & Linder, 2007; Jervis, 2019).

Relatedly, almost all stakeholders reflected on sexuality education and FLE as a space of continuous discussion of the consequences and negative health outcomes of adolescents engaging sexual behaviors. While evidence that emerged in the interview narrative supports this as an important component of formal instruction, an affirming approach to healthy sexualities could continue to reduce risky behaviors among adolescents as a consequence of amplified, empirically grounded, and inclusive information (Curtiss, 2018; Friedrichs, 2018; Green, Oman, Vesely, Cheney, & Carroll, 2017).

Many stakeholders perceived concerns for underrepresented groups, transient students, and foster students. Black and Latin students were mentioned specifically regarding achievement and risk; students from single-parent homes, those being raised by guardian(s) other than their parents, and students from with low socioeconomic status were discussed with much concern and perceived with compassion. While participants reported that communities could (and did) reach out to students and families in immediate need, some participants reported a perceived sense of powerlessness with how to address these wider-reaching societal burdens in their communities of practice.

Findings from recent research addressing these areas may have implications for these stakeholders. Allen, Gudino, and Crawford (2011) argue for fostering an understanding of Latin culture through relationships with organizations already serving Latin families, providing documents and communication in Spanish or Indigenous languages if necessary, and more; Alford (2008) echoes these suggestions. Mancini, O’Neal, and Lucier-Greer (2020) present a potential FLE framework for transient students, specifically those that might relocate frequently (i.e., military). Lastly, Wiley and Ebata (2004) deconstruct notions of the American family in FLE and recommend bringing diversity in race, marital or relationship status, family structure, sexuality, and more to the forefront of instruction as affirmations of student identity.

Most participants recognized that the needs of students enrolled in FLE superseded their personal values regardless of perceived alignment or misalignment with the FLE curriculum—that is, what should or should not be covered. On the other hand, some teachers reported feeling uncomfortable covering specific sections of FLE such as masturbation; these instructors could consult with administrators on how to teach this information to students without their personal involvement instead of disregarding it. Additionally, online communities of sex educators can be established and utilized by instructors to search out how to handle themes they do not feel comfortable discussing, sharing their ideas with one another. Other researchers recommend that teachers establish firm boundaries in the classroom to discourage formal sexuality education as group therapy, storytelling about others, grandstanding, bragging, or being excessively graphic to diminish personal triggers and anxieties (Francis, 2016).

In addition, a few participants stated specific worldviews that contradicted their interactions with adolescent students and perceived it as difficult to address when the issue presented itself. Teachers and other stakeholders in this position can seek out or ask administrators or online communities of practice for professional development on identity, inclusion, and diversity. Moreover, these crucially scientific trainings could demonstrate best practices for addressing identities that cause them inner conflict while maintaining professional decorum and upholding responsibilities (Preston, 2013).

Participants generally perceived their community as conservative and protective of its children and adolescents, especially protective of exposure to discourse. Many reported that they, and the community, associated comprehensive sexuality education with *liberalism* (as mentioned in the participant narrative) or values contrary to their own. Others perceived their values in line with an inclusive, comprehensive curriculum and specified their beliefs as evidence-based. To be consistent with an evidence-based comprehensive approach, divisions could continue to work to provide increasing information on making safe, informed decisions regarding sexual acts given the stated rise of STIs and associated afflictions in the narrative. Kantor and Lindberg (2020) note in an international comparative study that students wanted more comprehensive information about STIs, inclusion of LBGTQ+ and gender identities, and discussion of sexual acts for pleasure among; this included those who reported sexual activity and those who did not. This is similar to reflected-on suggestions from sexuality education program alumni outlined in Chapter 2 (Astle et al., 2020). It may be beneficial for stakeholders to evaluate their values as related to students' reported desires for comprehensive curriculum and the curriculum's relationship to public health outcomes in their community.

Division leaders and school boards could consider allocating funds, or requesting state funds, for professional development for teachers and administrators, especially to empower teachers through (a) technology training given the evidence that students seek out information there already and (b) diverse identities. This can be problematic if states decide how programs division are funded as well as whether to require abstinence-only instruction to receive federal funds. Rubenstein (2017) promotes a model of comprehensive sexuality based on the parameters of *The California Healthy Youth Act* which mandates comprehensive curriculum and instruction; the curriculum is also designed to recognize and affirm non-normative genders and sexualities and provide additional support for low income and underrepresented students. Implementation of these curricula in any division may require significant legislative changes, but researchers and stakeholders could work to effect policymaking at local and state levels.

Given that FLE was identified multiple times as an interdisciplinary topic with inclusion of various fundamental elements of STEM, teachers preparing lessons may need to travel, purchase additional materials, and consult researchers and colleagues. According to Hall, Sales, Komro, and Santelli (2016):

> Ultimately, expanded, integrated, multilevel approaches that reach beyond the classroom and capitalize on cutting-edge, youth-friendly technologies are warranted to shift cultural paradigms of sexual health, advance the state of sex education, and improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for adolescents in the United States. (p. 597)

Schools could connect FLE teachers with STEM teachers and directors, as well as core subject instructors (English, mathematics, natural sciences, and social studies) to design integrated lessons and exceptions for students who opt out. School divisions could also consider providing professional days for teachers to meet with CHPOPs and discuss measures of assessment and internal or external program evaluation in addition to their pre-established plans for guest lecturing.

Limitations and Future Research

Each research endeavor is not without its limitations. For example, phenomenography as a methodology is limited in its capacity to bring similarities in the experiences of the participants to the surface, though in the present study, some commonalities did emerge in perspective and could be inferred given the thick descriptions presented in the discussion section. Future qualitative research could include phenomenology, a methodological cousin, for conducting interviews, and ethnographic methods for classroom observations. Additionally, since the presented study served as a useful context for the framework of SCT (van Anders, 2015), future qualitative research in education, public health, and other related fields could employ it for related analyses in interdisciplinary sexuality studies as well.

This study was also limited by its scope of two secondary rural school divisions, that no students were invited to participate, and no parents who were not otherwise connected to a school responded to requests for participation. Future research could examine parent and student perceptions of sexuality education and family life in rural, suburban, and urban contexts. Furthermore, no higher-level stakeholders were included, such as school board members, supervisors, and policymakers at the state level. With the exception of curricular maps and state guidelines, no artifacts such as legislation and governing policy were gathered. Future research could take a more governmental/political approach to this topic and, in comparison and contrast of themes, conduct a more vigorous analysis of the role of biopolitics in sexuality education and family life in similar geographic contexts. This could illuminate how governmental interest in gender, sexuality, and bodies influences contemporary pedagogical practice across demographics and probably uncover systemic racial and economic biases. Additionally, more work is needed on the intersections of adolescents in poverty, foster or otherwise unstable care, and homeless/transient adolescents with regard to sexual identity, informal learning, and formal sexuality education.

This study was limited because I combined all curriculum content and phenomenographic data between the two school divisions and across grades. In this case, perspectives and specific details could be lost, especially when a specific set of grades (e.g., grades 6 to 10) is analyzed. In the present study, for example, two teachers disclosed that they had taught elementary FLE, but that was out of the scope of this research. Future studies could parse content and interviews by division and instructional level to obtain a more structured and/or hierarchical outcome, but then may lack a holistic interpretation that I was able to achieve herein.

Finally, this study was limited because no observations of formal learning and instruction were conducted. Classroom observations could allow for interpretation of context and assessment of curricular goals, as well as notation of specific mention of SCT dimensions during classroom dialogue that did not come up during interviews or analysis of curriculum. Future research could adopt an ethnographic approach, for example, to related or differing circumstances of FLE and sexuality education by entering the classroom to construct a narrative separate from that built from participant interviews.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the themes of curriculum, context, and community in relation to sexuality education and FLE with FLE as the curricular seat for sexuality education. I addressed and synthesized the contexts of formal and informal learning through reflected upon experiences. I provided various implications of the results for teachers, administrators, divisions, and community stakeholders all grounded in the evidence uncovered in this study. Lastly, I remarked on some of the study's limitations and how those could be addressed in future research.

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Appendix A. Theoretical Sampling of Open Codes from State Guidelines

Abortion	Careers	Decision-making	HIV transmission	Physical abuse	Saying "no"
Abstinence	Caring for children	Discrimination	Human trafficking	Plan for adult relationships	Sensitive content
Alternatives to sex	Community resources	Education	Incest	Positive aspects of family	Sexual violence
Anatomy	Community support	Educational goals	Local agencies	Positive relationships	Signs of abuse
Benefits of abstention	Consent	Emotional development	Marriage	Postponing	Signs of puberty and sexuality
Benefits of adoption	Controlling own behaviors	Family as societal unit	Menstruation	Pregnancy	STI prevention
Birth control	Coping	Female genital mutilation	Mental abuse	Puberty/physical changes	Support
Birthing process	Date rape	Goal setting	Opting out	Readiness for parenthood	
Career goals	Dating	Groups and friendship	Peers	Reproductive biology	

Appendix B. Informed Consent

Title of research study: IRB #19-709 Analyzing Stakeholder Perceptions of Gaps in Public Sexuality Education: Curriculum, Context, and Community

Principal Investigator: Brett Jones, Ph.D.; 540- 230-0957; brettjones@vt.edu
Other study contact(s):

- Kasey Richardson, doctoral candidate; 540-580-8576; kasey@vt.edu
- Susan Magliaro, Ed.D.; 540-231-8325; sumags@vt.edu

Key Information: The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether or not you want to participate in this study. More detailed information is provided later in this form.

We invite you to take part in this research study because you are involved in the development and oversight and/or instruction of the family life studies/sexuality education program in a local school division.

What should I know about being in a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

What should I know about this research study?
The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of educators and community members involved in the development, supervision, and instruction of the family life studies/sexuality education curriculum. The researchers are particularly interested in examining how the educational and regional community perceives the curriculum, and how community values influence it. The researchers are also interested in how the information shared compares to adolescents' lived experiences as reported by the aforementioned community. Another purpose of the study is to identify gaps in curriculum, to uncover reasons why these gaps exist, and to theorize about how lacking information could encourage adolescents to engage in risky behavior. The results of this study may help school divisions identify areas in which their programs can be improved, and may be used to affect curriculum decisions, instructional praxes, and relevant educational policy to enhance adolescent safety through formal educational family life studies programming.

How long will the research last and what will I need to do?
We expect that your participation in this research study will last for a maximum of one hour, plus however much time it takes to review and fill out the informed consent documentation and demographics questionnaire. You will be asked to meet the researcher in a private room in a public space (at your school, a meeting room at a library, or other convenient and quiet location) and take part in an interview about your perceptions of and involvement with the family life studies curriculum. Your interview will be audio (voice) recorded, and once the recording is

transcribed, the recording will be destroyed to protect your privacy. Additionally, your identifying (personal) information will be kept separate from your interview data to help ensure confidentiality. Several weeks after the interview is complete, you may be contacted to participate in a follow-up interview known as member-checking. This session will also be audio recorded, and may be in person, over the phone, or by a videochat service without video (whichever is most convenient). The audio file of this interview will be destroyed as soon as it is analyzed. During this interview, you will be asked to go over the analysis of your interview with the researcher to check for clarity and make sure that the information included in the final results is accurate. You can indicate whether you wish to be contacted for member-checking on the demographics questionnaire.

Detailed Information:

The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team at 540-580-8576 or kasey@vt.edu, Kasey Richardson, researcher, or 540-230-0957 or brettjones@vt.edu, Brett Jones, principal investigator.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may communicate with them at 540-231-3732 or irb@vt.edu if:

- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team to provide feedback about this research.

How many people will be studied?

We plan to include about 50 people in this research study or continue until we have obtained sufficiently robust data from which to draw conclusions.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

- You will negotiate a convenient location, such as a private meeting room in a public space with the researcher, Kasey Richardson, doctoral candidate, in advance and in accordance with your schedule.
- You will be asked to fill out an optional demographics questionnaire.
- You will participate in a private interview with the researcher, Kasey Richardson, doctoral candidate, that will last no more than one hour.
- Your interview format is what is known as a “semi-structured” interview. The interviewer will have a set of questions to guide you, but you will also be free to discuss your perceptions relevant to the study aims as you see fit.
- Your interview will be recorded by an audio recording device.
- You may be asked to evaluate the information you shared for accuracy a few weeks later during a member-checking session for the present study.

- Your member-checking session, if applicable, may be recorded by an audio recording device.
- You may be contacted for future research related to this theme. If you are interested, you can indicate your preference on the demographics questionnaire.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You can leave the research at any time, for any reason, and it will not be held against you. This includes after your interview has been recorded. If you decide to withdraw during the interview, the interviewer may request to use the part of your interview that you recorded, as well as your demographic data. You can request to have your interview and/or demographic data removed from the research study in part or in its entirety and it will not be held against you.

If you decide to withdraw from the research, contact the investigator as soon as you make this decision so that the investigator can remove your interview from the study and destroy all related files and data points (audio files, transcripts, qualitative themes [that is, the analysis of what was said in the interview]). However, once the study is finished and the completed analysis is submitted to the primary investigator, data cannot be removed or changed.

Additionally, if you indicate your willingness to participate in a follow-up member-checking session during the primary interview, you may later decline to participate in this for any reason and it will not be held against you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? (Detailed Risks)
There are minimal risks to participating in this study. The researchers anticipate no greater risk than that of carrying on a conversation in everyday life. Given the subject matter (sexuality education/family studies), you may experience mild stress or embarrassment in discussing human sexuality (in general, not specific to your life) in educational contexts. The researcher will check in with you during the interview to ensure psychological and emotional comfort.
Taking part in this research study might lead to added costs to you. You and the researcher will meet at a location that is most convenient to you (e.g., classroom after school hours, private office at the school division, public library meeting room, etc.). There is no reimbursement for travel or other associated expenses. The researcher will strive to ensure that the meeting location is convenient to you to minimize any expenses.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
We will make every effort to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study and demographic information, only to people who have a need to review this information. Your name, your school's name, and the name of the school division will be changed to pseudonyms for your privacy. No one in your community, including supervisor(s)/colleague(s), will be told by the research team if you choose to participate in the study. However, we cannot promise complete confidentiality. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB, Human Research Protection Program, and other authorized representatives of Virginia Tech. In extremely rare instances, the principal investigator, Dr. Brett Jones, and the advisor, Dr. Susan Magliaro, may have access to your

identifying information. Otherwise, all information will be de-identified and presented in aggregate before it is presented to the public and/or published.

Since this research study involves participants who themselves may interact directly with students and minors within the community, if during an interview or follow-up session the researcher suspects child abuse, the details will be immediately reported to Virginia Tech's Human Research Protection Program and to the primary investigator. Appropriate action may also be taken, including referring the information to the relevant school division and local law enforcement.

Each participant's interview data will be stored electronically. All data will be secured on a password-protected computer with two-factor authentication. The key that holds identifying information will be stored in a file separate from the interview data with a distinct password. Demographic data will be transferred to a computer file and paper files will be destroyed immediately. Audio recordings of interviews will be destroyed immediately upon transcription. All other information will be stored until it is no longer needed.

If identifiers are removed from your private information, that information could be used for future research studies or distributed for future research studies without your additional informed consent.

The results of this research study may be presented in summary form at conferences, in presentations, reports to the sponsor, academic papers, and as part of a thesis/dissertation.

Can I be removed from the research without my OK?
The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include (a) discovery that you are not 18 years of age on the day you participate, and thus unable to give informed consent; and (b) discovery that you are not involved in the development and/or instruction of the family life studies/sexuality education curriculum.

Although unlikely, we will immediately tell you about any new information that might affect your health, welfare, or choice to stay in the research.

What else do I need to know?
Any expenses accrued for seeking or receiving medical or mental health treatment will be your responsibility and not that of the research project, research team, or Virginia Tech.

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

As mentioned previously, about ¼ of participants will be selected at random to go over their individual results in a process known as member-checking. If you are selected, you may accept, comment on, or decline these results. If you are not contacted for this purpose, you may reach out to the researcher after the interview has taken place if you are interested in a general discussion of the study.

Appendix C. Optional Demographics Questionnaire

Please fill out the following demographic information. Write or circle N/A if not applicable. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer.

1. Name ____
2. Email address ______________________________________
3. Phone number ______________________________________
4. Preferred method of contact: Email / Phone / Text / N/A (Circle one or more)
5. Gender ____
6. Race/Ethnicity _____________________________________
7. Hispanic or Latin / Not Hispanic or Latin / N/A (Circle one)
8. School division _____________________________________
9. School ____
10. Role ____
11. Years of experience in role ___________________________
12. Previous role(s) and year(s) in role _____________________
13. I am willing to be contacted for a member-checking session. Yes / No (Circle one)
14. I am willing to be contacted for future related studies. Yes / No (Circle one)

Case No. __________