SEXUAL IDEOLOGY AND SCHOOLING:
TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION

by

Alexander McKay

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Because norms related to sexuality are an important determinant of the nature of society, sexuality education in the schools is the subject of passionate debate. This discourse reflects a struggle between Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies. These ideologies compete for influence in shaping sexuality education. As a result, sexuality education often constitutes ideological indoctrination. Neither of these sexual ideologies is immune to legitimate critique. Establishing the superiority of a given sexual ideology is problematic from both a philosophical and scientific perspective. Furthermore, a diversity of ideological perspectives towards sexuality is affirmed in pluralistic democracies.

The objective of this thesis is to articulate a philosophy of sexuality education appropriate for a democratic society. Based on Rawls' (1993) theory of political liberalism, this philosophy proposes that sexuality education ought to be centred upon the overlapping consensus within a democracy on the right to freedom of belief. It is argued that sexuality education drawn from sexual
ideology inhibits the right to critically appropriate beliefs and values. In contrast to many prevailing forms of sexuality education, it is contended that a democratic educational approach must facilitate the ability of students to critically deliberate between competing ideological perspectives on sexuality. Furthermore, it is shown that a democratic philosophy of sexuality education has significant implications for how issues such as homosexuality, gender relations, and pregnancy/sexually transmitted disease prevention are addressed in the classroom. In conclusion, it is argued that although liberal philosophy, as it relates to sexuality, has been subject to considerable criticism, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education, based on political liberalism, offers a promising foundation for removing ideological bias from sexuality education and for contributing to the enhancement of democratic culture.
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INTRODUCTION

Sexuality education in the schools is not a new idea. Since the late 19th century, schools have played an active role in helping young people learn about human sexuality (Bruess & Greenberg, 1994). For example, in 1905, the American Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis began conducting classes in the schools on sexually transmitted diseases. "They called for a return to Victorian values, emphasizing the 'pure' nature of women and the importance of sexual restraint in men" (Strong & Devault, 1994, p. 216). During the early part of the 20th century, social hygienists in Canada were using the concept of nature study to introduce sexuality education in the schools with the hope that children would "understand the basics of reproduction without having their sexual instincts prematurely aroused, and be able to steel themselves with this knowledge when faced with the possibility of sexual corruption in word or deed" (Sethna, 1994, p. 192). By the early 1990s, nearly every State in the U.S. and every Province in Canada either mandated or strongly recommended that some form of sexuality education be provided in the schools.

From its inception, however, sexuality education in the schools has been a highly controversial issue. As the comprehensiveness and explicitness of sexuality education has increased, the controversies surrounding it have become more volatile and frequent. Pitched battles over the objectives and nature of school-based sexuality education are increasingly occurring in communities across North America (Rienzo, 1989; Kantor, 1994; Sedway, 1992; Ross & Kantor, 1995). One of the results of
these controversies is that sexuality education in the schools has been unable to reach its full potential in helping young people protect and enhance their sexual health. For example, as Ehrhardt, Yingling, and Warne (1991) suggest,

sex education programs in the United States have been troubled by controversy over whether schools and parents should encourage abstinence as a "moral stance" or should accept sexuality as an important marker of adolescent development and develop realistic educational programs. Because of the absence of a clear message that takes into account the realities of adolescent sexuality, this country has not been as successful as other Western countries in preventing unwanted teenage pregnancies. Similarly, the effectiveness of educational programs to prevent HIV/AIDS and other STDs has been severely hampered by debates of morality, taste, and religion rather than a realistic public health approach (p. 36).

Tragically, these kinds of moral disputes, particularly in the United States, have constrained the ability of educators to provide effective AIDS prevention education programs. As Vermund (1995) explains,

A destructive feature of the politics of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the polarization of viewpoints among HIV prevention advocates. Many persons of good will urge risk elimination through mutual monogamy (assuming an HIV-seronegative, nondrug-using partner) or celibacy, while others advocate risk reduction through more selective choice in sexual relations and the use of barriers. This strategic difference is epitomized by the recurrent debates about school-based sexual education and preventive health services for adolescents. Reliance on "just say no" campaigns is deemed the only moral option by some while being seen as ineffectual - and therefore immoral - by others. The provision of public health services, including condom distribution, is seen as encouraging promiscuity by some and as saving young lives by others (p. 1488).

A study conducted by The Alan Guttmacher Institute found that "teachers regard pressure from parents, the community or school administration as the major problem they face in providing sexuality
education" (Forrest & Silverman, 1989, p. 65). Earls, Fraser and Sumpter (1992) state that "When it comes to public education, the sexuality curriculum is mired in conflicting influences" (p. 200) and Bruess and Greenberg (1994) note that "In the 1990s there has been a growing wave of censorship ravaging sexuality education in communities and states around the nation" (p. 58).

These comments help to show that sexuality education is, without question, one of the most controversial subjects ever to be introduced into the public school. While there are frequent disagreements about the best way to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, these disputes do not typically involve considerations of morality, taste, and religion. Although the teaching of History, English Literature and other so called "social studies" has been prone to controversy along lines similar to that of sexuality education, seldom have these quarrels reached the same intensity as the battles over the appropriate nature and content of instruction in human sexuality. Relevant, meaningful, and effective sexuality education in the schools is unlikely to occur unless we can establish a framework to mediate these quarrels.

Some of the conflicts surrounding sexuality education in the schools appear irresolvable. Our beliefs about the nature and purpose of human sexuality are often very strongly held and they dictate, to a great extent, what we believe should be taught in the sexuality education classroom. For example our society is clearly divided on the issue of homosexuality. Some people believe that homosexual behaviour is wrong, while others believe it is acceptable. As a result, some people believe strongly that sexuality education should teach young people that homosexuality is immoral
as well as psychologically and socially dysfunctional, while other people feel just as strongly that young people should be taught that homosexuality can be both morally acceptable and healthy. Many people feel that the existing structure of social norms related to sexuality contributes to inequality between the sexes, while others believe that "traditional" gender arrangements represent natural differences between men and women that should not be disturbed. Subsequently, some people believe sexuality education in the schools should teach young people to rebel against traditional gender arrangements, while others believe that sexuality education should reflect what are held to be the innate differences between male and female sexuality. Some people strongly believe that premarital sex is immoral and unacceptably dangerous for the health of young people, while others believe that sexual relations between unmarried people is acceptable provided that the participants mutually consent to the activity and that health precautions are taken. In turn, some people believe that with respect to premarital sex, sexuality education in the schools should focus exclusively on promoting premarital sexual abstinence, while others believe that in addition to discussing abstinence, sexuality education should provide young people with contraceptive and safer sex information.

These conflicts of perspective are played out in the ongoing debates about sexuality education in the schools. They suggest that our opinions about the form and content of sexuality education are, as we might expect, strongly tied to our moral convictions about human sexuality. These differences in perspective appear to be mutually exclusive and resolving them for the purposes of providing adequate sexuality education in the schools has proven to be an
extremely difficult task.

My aim in this dissertation is to propose a philosophy of sexuality education in the schools that is appropriate for a democratic society where profound differences of opinion and moral conviction related to human sexuality exist. At its essence, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education must accomplish two primary tasks. First, it must find a way to acknowledge and respect moral pluralism related to sexuality. Respect for moral pluralism is a fundamental tenet of democratic society. Second, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education must not only respect the differing moral perspectives toward sexuality that exist in society, but it must also foster the democratic right of all people, including young people, to deliberate between different points of view in arriving at their own convictions. This too is a fundamental tenet of democratic society. Both of these tasks, I believe, logically lead us to a focus on the most fundamental of all democratic rights: Freedom of belief. A democratic philosophy of sexuality education must respect and promote freedom of belief.

Given the nature of prevailing differences of moral perspectives related to human sexuality that characterize contemporary Western society, and given the nature of the debates around sexuality education in the schools, articulating a philosophy of sexuality education founded on the democratic right of freedom of belief raises a number of complex and perplexing issues. We need to deepen our understanding of the debate about sexuality education and over the course of this dissertation I will examine what I believe are the most important philosophical issues relevant to the development and implementation of democratic sexuality education in
the schools.

The first step in understanding the conflict over sexuality education in the schools is to discern why this issue is so passionately fought over. Why is sexuality education so controversial? In Chapter One I will suggest that sexuality education in the schools is the site of intense conflict because it is a key battle ground in a wider debate about the nature of society itself. What we teach young people about human sexuality will at least partially influence the shape of society's future social norms related to sexuality. Social norms related to sexuality are widely regarded as being an important determinant of the nature of society and we are deeply divided as a culture as to the appropriate shape and substance of these norms. Thus, we cannot accurately understand the sexuality education debates until we see them in terms of the wider ideological disputes related to sexuality that exist in Western culture.

In Chapter Two I provide an analytical framework for clarifying the conflicts around human sexuality that permeate Western culture. These conflicts are, first and foremost, conflicts of ideology. That is, our society's disagreements related to sexuality are not trivial differences of opinion but rather represent a clash of opposing systems of belief about the nature of the world and humankind. Our ideologies help us to answer fundamental questions about ourselves and the world we live in. In other words, they help us to define and frame reality. The Western cultural discourse on sexuality can be categorized as a struggle between what I call the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies. The Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies consist
of diametrically opposed, yet internally consistent, beliefs about the nature and purpose of sexuality in human life and society. Although this classification of sexual ideology is quite broad, I will, through a descriptive analysis, show that the conceptual distinctions between Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology accurately represent the conflict over sexuality in Western culture. Thus, an analysis of the philosophical presuppositions underlying these sexual ideologies is an important step in uncovering the nature of the sexuality education debates. Not surprisingly, the proponents the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies have very different views on the form and content of sexuality education in the schools.

In Chapter Three I apply the categories of Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology to an analysis of sexuality education in the schools. Specifically, I examine the manner and degree to which the presuppositions underlying the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies have influenced the form and content of sexuality education in the schools. This influence has taken several forms. In some cases, sexuality education programs are derived almost entirely from either Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology. In other cases, sexuality education consists of a conflicting melange of ideological premises regarding human sexuality. In still other cases, the enduring conflict between the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies has cast an aura of controversy around sexuality education in the schools, and as a result educational programs are reduced, as a matter of political expediency, to the provision of an absolute minimum of information and skills related to human sexuality. These "bare-bones" programs are common and they are very
often superfluous and irrelevant to students' educational needs. Examining sexuality education in the schools in terms of the influence of sexual ideology on the form and content of educational programs suggests that, among other things, in many cases sexuality education in the schools functions as an instrument of ideological indoctrination rather than as an educational forum for critical deliberation and intellectual development.

In essence, the debate over the form and content of sexuality education in the schools has been focused on the issue of which set of ideological presuppositions ought to inform educational practice. The firm believers of both the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies assume that truth is on their side. Because they are armed with the truth, the proponents of each ideology may feel justified in insisting that their ideological presuppositions related to sexuality become the basis for sexuality education in the schools. But is it really possible to arrive at a genuinely authentic or definitively objective conclusion regarding the true nature and purpose of human sexuality? With respect to the current debate on sexuality education, how we answer this question has significant implications for determining the appropriate objectives of educational programs.

In Chapter Four, I employ a social constructionist analysis of human sexuality to argue that arriving at the truth about sexuality in either a scientific or philosophical sense is inescapably dependent on our presuppositional lenses for perceiving the reality of how the world operates. These presuppositional lenses are social constructs rather than precise representations of objective reality. A social constructionist analysis of human sexuality strongly
suggests that truth claims about the nature and purpose of human sexuality are seldom immune to legitimate critique. A social constructionist analysis invites us to acknowledge a multiplicity of truths about sexuality. If an epistemological consensus regarding the truth about the nature and purpose of sexuality eludes us, the fact of ideological pluralism related to sexuality should, at least in a democratic society, have profound implications for the form and content of sexuality education.

In Chapter Five I outline the foundational components of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education. Democratic societies are founded, in part, on the principle that moral pluralism is to be both tolerated and respected. This can clearly be seen in the fact that constitutional democracies invariably enshrine the right to freedom of belief as perhaps the most basic constitutive element of the cultural or national ethos. Given the fact of the ideological pluralism related to sexuality that characterizes Western culture, the principles of democracy provide an appropriate framework in which to seek ways to accommodate diverse and often opposing perspectives on human sexuality. In more fully explicating the manner in which a democratic society accommodates and mediates between varied and conflicting belief systems I will utilize the theory of political liberalism as articulated by philosopher John Rawls. In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls (1993) suggests that democratic societies are characterized by a plurality of religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines. No one of these doctrines is affirmed by all members of society. Furthermore, one doctrine is often incompatible with another. This kind of social-political environment contributes to basic freedoms but cannot guarantee a
harmonious relationship between incompatible doctrines. However, what enables democratic societies to persevere, according to Rawls, is that we are bound together, despite our many differences, by our agreement to live by and respect the essentials of a democratic regime. Provided that a particular doctrine does not reject the essentials of a democratic regime, a society based upon the principles of political liberalism has little or nothing to say about the correctness or validity of various religious, philosophical, or moral doctrines. Political liberalism is concerned only with that minimum set of values that define us as a democratic society.

Utilizing the theory of political liberalism as a way of understanding how a democratic society addresses the problem of accommodating incompatible doctrines provides a relevant and applicable foundation for identifying the key features of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education. The debates over the form and content of sexuality education in the schools is a vivid example of the challenge, in free and democratic societies, to accommodate moral pluralism. Political liberalism suggests, for example, that a democratic sexuality education is not based upon judgements about the correctness or superiority of either Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology. A democratic sexuality education is, however, deeply committed to promoting democratic values. It is committed to the affirmation of moral pluralism and freedom of belief.

In Chapter Six I explore, in more specific terms, the nature of democratic sexuality education in the schools. In particular, I focus on the need for sexuality education to foster in students the
ability to critically deliberate between competing ideological perspectives toward sexuality. Developing in students the ability to critically deliberate between sexual ideologies is important for a number of reasons. For example, critical deliberation contributes to the ability of people to exercise freedom of belief. The process of critical deliberation, of weighing, contrasting, and evaluating differing points of view perpetuates democratic culture. It prepares students for democratic citizenship. In addition, I argue that providing young people with the opportunity to deliberate between differing ideological perspectives toward sexuality increases the likelihood of critical appropriation and genuine attachment to moral convictions related to sexuality.

In Chapter Seven I discuss, from the standpoint of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education, three of the most controversial issues in the sexuality education debates. There has been considerable debate about how school-based sexuality education should address the issues of homosexuality, gender equality, and STD/pregnancy prevention. Approaching these issues from a democratic philosophy of sexuality education will represent a fundamental transformation in the way these issues are typically engaged in the classroom.

Ultimately, our ideas about what constitutes a good education are tied to our ideas about what constitutes a good society. Formal education presumably plays a key role in preparing people to become active participants in the ongoing development of society. An important litmus test for any philosophy of education is whether or not its principles and practices contribute to this development. In the Conclusion, I discuss the potential of a democratic theory of
sexuality education to make a positive contribution to the development of society in general. This discussion is particularly relevant to the perpetual clash between the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies in our culture. Will a democratic form of sexuality education, based on the principles of political liberalism, contribute to a reasonable and just accommodation of moral pluralism related to sexuality in our society? A number of feminist, gay, lesbian and other scholars have quite correctly pointed out that the liberal tradition in Western society has failed to fully deliver on its promise of liberty and equality for all.

Nevertheless, I will argue that the application of the principles of political liberalism to mediate the clash of sexual ideologies in our culture represents a significant and positive transformation of the status quo where social policy related to sexuality is often dictated by ideology rather than democratic principles. Solutions to social strife related to sexuality must inevitably take account of the fact of ideological diversity. Political liberalism seems well suited to this task given its emphasis on accommodating moral pluralism within the boundaries of a democratic culture.

Although I do not wish to claim that no examples of democratic sexuality education can be found in our culture, my research and experience in this field leads me to conclude that they are few and far between. The articulation of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education for the development and implementation of sexuality education programs in the schools represents, I believe, a significant contribution to this important field.
CHAPTER ONE

SEXUALITY AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NATURE OF SOCIETY

"...debates about sexuality are debates about the nature of society: as sex goes, so goes society."

"Learning a culturally prescribed way of life includes learning sexuality, having the expression of one's sex drive culturally shaped."

"Sex education is potentially a vehicle for social engineering par excellence, be it progressive or traditional."

Introduction

My objective in this first chapter is to shed some light on why sexuality education in the schools has become so controversial. I will propose that the nature of sexuality education is so passionately fought over because, as an instrument in the sexual socialization of youth, sexuality education is seen to play a role in the shaping of sexual values and behavioural norms of our culture which in turn are widely perceived to impact significantly on the character of society as a whole. Sexuality education in the schools is a key battleground in a wider social conflict about sexuality in particular and the nature of society in general. In other words, the battle over sexuality education is not simply a dispute over the most effective means to promote sexual and reproductive health of youth, but rather it is, first and foremost, a clash over the shape
and direction of society itself. Thus, we can only make sense out of different perspectives on sexuality education in the schools when we consider them in the context of divergent perceptions of the role sexuality should play in promoting a stable and just society.

**Sexuality and the Nature Of Society**

There is a long held belief that attitudes and values "pertaining to sexual behavior are of the highest importance for both the survival and effectiveness of society" (Kardiner, 1955, p. 23). Indeed, since its very beginning, Western civilization has tended to define itself, in large measure, by its moral, social, and economic organization of human sexuality. As Jeffery Weeks (1986) puts it, "Concern with sexuality has been at the heart of Western preoccupations since before the triumph of Christianity" (p. 89). The ascension of Christianity as the dominant meaning system of Western society is a key event in the modern history of sexuality, and the importance placed upon sex by the foundational Christian scholars remains with us to this day. Elaine Pagels (1988), in tracing the roots of Christian beliefs about sexuality, suggests that the theologian Augustine (353 -430) was the pivotal figure in laying the foundation of the Western approach to sexuality. "From the fifth century on, Augustine's pessimistic views of sexuality, politics, and human nature would become the dominant influence of Western Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, and color all Western culture, Christian or not, ever since" (Pagels, 1988, p. 150). Or as D.P. Verene (1972) aptly puts it, many of Augustine's views on sexuality "seem surprisingly familiar to the attitudes we have absorbed since childhood simply by growing up in Western
Augustine associated sexuality with the idea of original sin and the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. He proclaimed that sexual desire was the proof of - and penalty for - Adam's failure to resist temptation. Although men and women, according to the Christian tradition, are made in the image of God, their sexual urges show them to be a flawed and degenerate version of the deity. As Pagels (1988) suggests, "the Augustinian theory of original sin claims that our moral capacity has been so fatally infected that human nature as we know it cannot be trusted" (p. 149). From this perspective, sexuality is important for the survival of civilized society because it represents the moral weakness of humanity. Accordingly, it follows that as civilized societies attempt to control the "dark side" of human nature, they must place considerable emphasis on the regulation of sexuality. Western society has had a strong propensity to attempt to control sexual behaviour through both law and social norm. This tendency reflects the pervasive belief in the power and significance of sexuality in human affairs. "Every society, whether sexually permissive or restrictive, finds it useful and even necessary to regulate and structure its social relationships, especially sexual relations, in some way for the common good" (Shapiro & Francoeur, 1987, p. 88).

An important example of how Western society has structured social relationships by means of sexual regulation is the institution of the family. Since the Middle Ages, the nuclear family has been the dominant kinship grouping in Western society (Harris, 1990). The nuclear family is based, first and foremost, on the heterosexual union of a man and a woman bound together by a sexually
monogamous relationship, providing Western society with a normative framework for producing children. The family unit has been designated as a central biological, social, political, and economic constituent of society. From their examination of the history of sexuality in the United States, D'Emilio and Freedman (1988) concluded that "In early America, a unitary system of sexual regulation that involved family, church, and state rested upon a consensus about the primacy of familial, reproductive sexuality" (p. xvii). While there can be no doubt that during the 20th century the links between sexuality, reproduction, and the family have loosened, they have not dissolved and many of the laws and social norms regulating sexuality in support of the nuclear family unit remain in force. One of the primary reasons they have persevered is because these sexual laws and norms preserve, for better or for worse, the existing social structure.

Many of the objections to an increasing trend toward the liberalization of sexual laws and norms are premised on the belief that a break down in traditional patterns of sexual regulation constitutes an assault on a way of life based on the sanctity of the nuclear family unit. The desire to regulate sexual behaviour in support of the family unit can be readily seen in the many laws that have been instituted in Western societies regarding such things as marriage, divorce, homosexuality, and prostitution, and in often strict social norms upholding practices such as premarital chastity, monogamy within marriage, and heterosexuality. Because family-oriented sexual ethics, based on Christian doctrine, have shaped the legal regulation of sexuality, it is not surprising that, for example, many states in the United States continue to have laws
proscribing sodomy between consenting adults, adultery, and fornication (Posner, 1992, p. 77-78). As Gayle Rubin (cited in McCormick, 1994) notes "The only adult sexual behavior that is legal in every state of the union is the placement of the penis in the vagina in wedlock" (p. 7). For much of our history, including the present time, sexual laws and customs have supported the social ideal of the nuclear family. Since the nuclear family has been basic to the organization of Western society, we can see how the regulation of sexuality plays a central role in maintaining the social order.

Social scientists from a diversity of disciplines have emphasized the importance of sexuality to Western society. While early Christian theologians connected sexuality with the sinful tendencies of humanity, 20th century psychology has attached a different but equally significant meaning to sexuality. One of this century’s most influential figures, Sigmund Freud (1977), theorized about the centrality of sexuality in personality development and in so doing stressed "the importance of sexuality in all human achievements" (p. 43). Indeed, the psychological health of individuals and couples is now seen to be greatly dependant on sexual adjustment and fulfilment. James Nelson (1988) reflects this view of the importance of sexuality when he writes

Our sexuality is far more than genital activity. It is our way of being in the world as gendered persons, having male or female biological structures and socially internalized self-understandings of those meanings to us. Sexuality means having the capacity for sensuousness. Above all, sexuality is the desire for intimacy and communion, both emotionally and physically. It is the physiological and psychological grounding of our capacity to love. At its undistorted best, our sexuality is that basic eros of our humanness - urging, pulling, luring, driving us out of loneliness into communion, out of stagnation, into creativity (p. 26).
This emphasis on the importance of sexual fulfilment and happiness has not detracted from the social or political significance of sexuality. In this view, sexual happiness is linked to the well-being of society. As George Frankl (1974) writes, "the root of human happiness is love, and sexual happiness is the foundation of social happiness, for he who cannot find sexual happiness cannot find love, and he who cannot find love cannot build a good society" (p. 13). The expansion of the meaning of sexuality beyond genital activity for the purposes of procreation is part of a shift in emphasis toward what sociologists call "affective individualism", the quest for personal fulfilment (Giddens, 1987). It has been argued that such a shift also has implications for the economic structure of society.

The rise of "affective individualism" has been closely involved with the association of sexuality with personal fulfilment, inside and outside the formal ties of marriage. Some radical writers have argued that the origins and continuation of capitalism are closely bound up psychologically with the repression of sexuality. The strict discipline demanded by industrial labour, in their view, is secured through the generalised curtailing of personal desires, epitomised by Victorian mores in the heyday of nineteenth-century capitalism. According to this standpoint, which in one version or another was widely adopted by those involved in the student movements of the late 1960s, the liberation of sexuality is the key to securing a general emancipation from the routinised nature of work and everyday life in capitalism (Giddens, 1987, p. 130-131).

Herbert Marcuse (1966) is perhaps the most well-known theorist to propose a link between the social control of sexuality and the workings of capitalism, and other writers such as Wilhelm Reich (1962) have attempted to show that political liberation cannot occur without a complementary freedom from sexual repression. As Richard Posner (1992) suggests in an analysis of the legal regulation of sex in the United States,

We have seen that a number of sexual laws, and sexual
customs having the force of law, including a variety of apparently senseless, seemingly vestigial sexual laws in this and other Anglo-Saxon societies (culturally although not ethnically, ours is still an Anglo-Saxon society), make sense - social-functional sense - when analyzed in economic terms. This is not to say that these laws are good; that is a moral issue. It is to say that they are rational means for promoting social ends (p. 213).

One of the most provocative perspectives on the place of sexuality in the structuring of social life comes from philosopher Michel Foucault, who theorized that the organization of sexuality acts as a mechanism of power, operating as a means of control over bodies and identities. Foucault saw the history of sexuality as a history of discourses. By employing the term "discourses" Foucault was referring to organized bodies of knowledge which, when joined with the practice of theology, medicine, psychology, psychiatry, and the other human sciences, produce and transmit power. According to Foucault (1978), we have been engaged in a perpetual "will to knowledge" (p. 12), "speaking of it ad infinitum" (p. 35). The resulting discourses become mechanisms of power, ordering, classifying, and organizing the body's capacity for sensual pleasure into "polymorphous sexualities." Sexual identities, orientations, and perversions are formulated and come to define the individual and his/her behaviour. In sum, the discourses of knowledge-power become the reference points through which personal identities are constructed and social life is organized. For Foucault (1978), sexuality is "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population"(p. 103). Sullivan (1995) succinctly states Foucault's position when he writes, "The history
of sexuality in the West is not a history from repression to liberation, but the exchange of one kind of power relations for another" (p. 64).

Not only does the organization of sexuality continue to determine the nature of many of our key social institutions such as the family, but as Foucault suggested, sexuality has also increasingly come to define individual identity. This too has important ramifications for the nature of society. Biological sex and gender identity are arguably the most fundamental defining characteristics of the individual. The existence of the category of homosexuality "made the sexual significant by making it a signifying aspect of character" (Simon, 1994, p. 7). In the social world of our present culture, a person's sexual orientation is among the most salient features of how an individual is perceived by the self and others. It is at least as important as race, ethnicity and perhaps gender. More than any other event, the onset of puberty - the attainment of sexual and reproductive capacity - and subsequent experiences of sexual interaction, is seen as the clearest indication of the transition between childhood and adulthood. For many women, menopause - the cessation of reproductive capacity - is seen as a key marker in the shift from adulthood to old age.

Feminism, perhaps the most influential social movement of recent decades, also emphasizes the relationship between sexuality and the power to organize social life. This linkage between sexuality, gender equality, and social organization has, as Janice Irvine (1990) explains, been a central focus of the feminist movement.

Although the feminism of the 1960s envisioned new strategies for organizing around sexual issues, this
analysis reaffirmed that of feminists of the early 1900s: achieving sexual liberation for women was indistinguishable from changing wider sociopolitical power structures (p. 137).

Feminism is grounded, in part, on the theory that the inequality of women is expressed through the gender specific codes of sexual behaviour inherent in the patriarchal social system (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975; Steedman, 1987; Vance, 1984). Feminists such as Catherine Mackinnon (1982) identify "sexuality as the primary social sphere of male power" (p. 529). In sum, "Sexuality is important, feminists argue, because norms regarding 'proper' and 'normal' sexual behavior function everywhere to socialize and control women's behavior" (Tiefer, 1995, p. 114).

This brief survey of different perspectives toward the importance attached to sexuality leads to two basic conclusions. First, from early Judeo-Christian theological scholars to contemporary feminists, virtually every social scientist who has seriously examined the cultural implications of human sexuality, in one or all of its multiplicity of dimensions, arrives at the conclusion that, in one way or another, the sexual norms of a particular culture provide a central pivot upon which much of the social, political, and even economic character of that culture is derived. In other words, sexuality is important in that its organization significantly shapes the nature of society. In Eve Sedgwick's words (cited in Stanton, 1992), sexuality is "the most meaning intensive of human activities" (p. 2), or as Stephan Jay Gould (cited in Stanton, 1992) puts it, sexuality is "a sign, a symbol, or reflection of nearly everything in our culture" (p. 2).

Second, the history of sexuality is a history of change. For example, as we have seen, whereas Augustine saw sexuality as the
expression of human weakness and immorality, contemporary psychology sees sexuality as vital to human happiness. The enormity of this difference in perspective is summed up well by Thomas Szasz (1980) when he suggests that "To the great doctor of Christianity in the fourth century, sexual desire was a disease; to the great doctors of coitus today, lack of sexual desire is a disease" (p. xi). Put another way, "The dominant meaning of sexuality has changed during our history from a primary association with reproduction within families to a primary association with emotional intimacy and physical pleasure for individuals" (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988, p. xv). As William Simon (1994) suggests, this shift in the locus of sexual meaning leads to a multitude of transformations in the way we see the role of sexuality in human affairs.

We might also speak of the decentering of the sexual in recent years in recognition of its increasing detachment from the family as an institution, which was once its nearly exclusive social address. This partial abandonment of the familial near monopoly on legitimate sexual expression involved not only changes in sexual practices but also the changing practices describing other aspects of the family. The implications of this sociocultural shift for the immediate present and future of the sexual in our lives are numerous (p. 9).

In sum, Western culture's conceptualization of the nature, function, and potential of human sexuality has been subject to considerable transformation.

These transformations in the meaning of sexuality have been neither smooth nor complete. Indeed, these divergent meaning systems are the site of major social conflict. While large segments of Western society remain strongly attached to what might be described as a traditional view of sexuality based on reproduction within the family unit, a significant proportion of society believes that a dismantling of traditional sexual values, replacing them with a set
of values that emphasize sexual and reproductive freedom, will lead to a more just society. The schism in the views of sexual morality in contemporary America has been made abundantly clear in surveys on what sexual activities people believe are morally acceptable. For example, according to a recent, nationally representative survey, 19.7% of Americans believe that premarital sex is always wrong. In addition, 60.8% believe that teenage participation in premarital sex is always wrong and 64.8% believe that homosexual sex is always wrong (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994, p. 514; Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, & Kolata, 1994, p. 234). In other words, while about 60% of people resolutely reject the moral acceptability of homosexuality and premarital sex among teenagers, close to 40% do not, indicating that large segments of society disagree with each other on this issue. The authors of this survey concluded from their findings that "aspects or consequences of sexual behavior such as sex before marriage, abortion, and homosexuality are among the social issues about which we as a nation seem to have no clear consensus at this time" (Laumann, et al., 1994, p. 547). A Kinsey Institute survey of American's beliefs about sexual morality, conducted in the 1970s, provides further evidence of clear divisions on these issues. In the Kinsey Institute survey, while 56.4% of respondents believed that "premarital sex by a teenage boy with a girl he loves" is always or almost always wrong, 42.8% felt that it was wrong only sometimes or not wrong at all. While 70% disapproved of homosexual activity even when the participants were in love, close to 30% believed there were circumstances where homosexual sex had the potential for moral acceptability (Klassen, Williams & Levitt, 1989, p. 18). In addition, 59.1% believed that homosexuality
should be against the law and 37.8% stated their opposition to the legal proscription of homosexual acts (Klassen, Williams & Levitt, 1989, p. 173). What is apparent from these findings is that while a little over half of Americans seem to believe that certain sexual acts are intrinsically or always wrong, a sizable proportion of Americans look to the context or circumstances in which a sexual act takes place before proceeding to make a moral judgement about it.

Although there have been no systematic, large scale national studies on the sexual attitudes and beliefs of Canadians, available data support the conclusion that while many Canadians continue to hold conservative views of sexual conduct, "more Canadians in the 1990's than in prior years accept, or are at least tolerant of, a wider diversity of forms of sexual conduct, expression and communication" (Barrett, King, Levy, Maticka-Tybdale, & McKay, 1995, in Press).

Overall, these numbers indicate a clear lack of consensus within the North American public on issues of sexual morality. In addition, they also suggest that although Western society has passed through numerous scientific, political, philosophical, and demographic transformations, including at least one "sexual revolution" since the ascension of the Augustinian view of sexuality, many, if not most, Americans continue to adhere to the traditional Christian moral perspective on sexuality. This perseverance of traditional views of sexual morality exists simultaneously with a growing trend of revolt against traditional values on the part of many groups, including feminists, gay and lesbian rights activists, and those who might generally be described as embracing secular humanist values and/or liberal theological
interpretations of sexual morality. Although most Americans apparently continue to adhere to a traditional sexual morality, since the 1960s, in particular, "Many more Americans than before liberalized their views on masturbation, premarital relations, extramarital affairs, homosexuality, and began to forgive themselves and others for engaging in previously tabooed acts" (Ellis, 1990, p. 6).

However, these divergent meaning systems do not peacefully co-exist in an open market place of ideas and lifestyles. The mere existence of one meaning system in the public sphere is perceived as a threat to the way of life based on another meaning system. The clash between the traditional Christian and contemporary secular moral perspectives on sexuality as they pertain to sex and gender roles and homosexuality illustrates why these seemingly mutually exclusive meaning systems have been unable to peacefully co-exist. From the traditional Christian point of view both feminism and the homosexual rights movements seek to destroy the family as we know it. According to the feminist and homosexual rights movements, the traditional Western organization of social life is oppressive for women and gays and lesbians.

The degree to which feminist perspectives on sexuality have been the subject of intense social science and media discussion and debate is an example of the power of sexuality related issues to provoke disagreements. While nearly everyone would agree that the implications of sexual changes related to sex and gender are immense, the direction that society ought to take in the organization of sex and gender is hotly contested. For example, the changing nature of sex roles, partially embodied by male and female
scripts for sexual behaviour, are seen as an important issue because, as Robert Francoeur (1987) suggests, "Sex roles and conformity to those roles are essential if an individual is to relate to and be accepted as a part of the whole society. Sex roles allow us to maintain a stable society" (p. 29). In addition, sex role arrangements, even in societies that are stable, need to be viewed in terms of their ability to protect individual rights, ensure equality between groups, and to benefit society as a whole. Those with a traditional view believe

The differences between the sexes are the single most important fact of human society. The drive to deny them - in the name of women's liberation, marital openness, sexual equality, erotic consumption, homosexual romanticism - must be one of the most quixotic crusades in the history of the species. Yet in a way it is typical of crusades. For it is a crusade against a particular incarnate humanity - men and women and children - on behalf of a metaphysical "humanism" (Gilder, 1987, p. 37).

According to this perspective, allowing women to explore avenues of sexual freedom which for many may lie outside the confines of marriage, and to have easy access to contraceptives and abortion, tempts women away from participation in the nuclear family structure, a trend which is seen to be detrimental to society. According to many feminists, the patriarchal family and the sexual norms that support it are at the root of gender oppression. Feminists, therefore, have encouraged women to explore alternatives to traditional family life and the roles that men and women play within it. Many feminist social scientists believe that gender differences, and their complementary sex roles, do not reflect incarnate humanity but are "best explained as a social construction rooted in hierarchy" (Fuchs Epstien, 1988, p. 15), created by patriarchal society in order to institutionalize male privilege.
As noted above, many feminists contend that this gender hierarchy is embedded in the sexual world, requiring a dismantling of traditional sexual scripts that emphasize male assertiveness and female passivity and a double standard toward sexual freedom. Reshaping the sexual aspects of gender arrangements is a key aspect of feminism's goal to create a gender equal society. These two competing conceptions of sex roles are seen to be mutually exclusive in that one can only gain in influence at the expense of the other.

Those who follow the traditional Christian view of sexuality have been unable to affirm the moral validity of homosexuality because they see it as not only against the laws of God and nature but also because they see homosexuality as a dangerous threat to a way of life based on the family. Naturally, those who favour equal rights for homosexuals are unable to accept this version of Christian doctrine because they see it as discriminatory against gay and lesbian people. In effect the feminist and homosexual rights movements have undermined the "naturalness" and inevitability of traditional gender stereotypes and the monolithic nuclear family. And whereas feminism had affirmed nonreproductive sexuality, gay sexuality involved an explicit separation of sex and reproduction, which foregrounded the option of sex solely for pleasure. By their very existence, gay people challenge the "principle of consistency," which links sex, gender, and sexual preference in a socially normative ideal (Irvine, p. 139).

Here we can see the logic behind the belief held by many traditionalists that "If homosexuality is 'allowed,' that will be the end of the family as we know it" (Schur, 1988, p. 19). It reflects an assumption that if membership in the nuclear family, and acceptance of the moral codes governing the sexuality of the family unit, become optional rather than compulsory, the nuclear family
will disappear as a social institution.

Homosexuality and sex/gender roles are but two of a number of sexually related issues that are a source of intense social conflict. The pressures for, and resistance to, sexual change can be seen in the deep divisions within Western society on issues such as premarital sex, pornography, contraception, strategies for AIDS prevention, prostitution, and sexuality education in the schools. Because sexuality is considered so important, changes in sexual norms and values are often resisted by large segments of society. This is not surprising since as sexual norms and values change, society itself is changed in fundamental ways. Since sexuality is not a simple or unified phenomenon, but rather an extraordinarily complex and varied one with a multitude of profound implications for the ordering of social life, sexuality has become a major battleground in a cultural war between competing value systems. As D’Emilio and Freedman (1988) note, by the 1980s, this clash of value systems had reached a new high point of intensity.

The debates about sex, rather than remaining the province of feminist and gay liberationists, were polarizing the nation’s politics. The contentious quality of the debates stemmed not only from the demands of radicals, but also from conservatives distressed by the reorientation of sexual values that had occurred since the 1960s. The sexual politics of the New Right, as well as more recent controversies generated by the AIDS epidemic, attest to how deeply sexuality had infiltrated national politics by the 1980s (p. 345).

By the mid 1990s, Western culture’s continued inability to cope with and agree upon solutions to a growing plethora of sexually related social problems, including epidemics of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, gender conflict and inequality, sexual violence and abuse, oppression of sexual minorities, and high rates of unwanted adolescent pregnancy, reflect and exacerbate
increasingly volatile social conflict surrounding sexuality. As Weeks (1986) puts it,

There is a struggle for the future of sexuality. But the ways we respond to this have been coloured by the force of the accumulated historical heritage and sexual traditions out of which we have come: The Christian organization of belief in sex as subversive, the liberal belief in sex as source of identity and personal resource, all rooted in a melange of religious, scientific and sexological arguments about what sex is, what it can do, and what we must and must not do (p. 5).

The very nature of society is believed to be at stake in this battle between competing views of the nature, function, and moral aspects of human sexuality.

**Sexuality Education**

There are many factors which can contribute to socio-sexual changes in our society. According to Gagnon and Simon (1973), "Changes in the sexual component of the human condition can result from changes in the biological, technological, and psychosocial domains of life" (p. 287). Shifts in the demographic structure of society (i.e., expanding urbanization, ethno-cultural mixing, changing age ratios, etc.), rapid advances in communication technologies resulting in easier access to sexual information, growth in our scientific understanding of human sexuality, technological advances related to sexuality such as better and more effective birth control and countless other factors can affect the way we think and behave sexually. The advent of birth control, in particular, has been cited as a major agent of social change. As Money and Tucker (1975) argue, "The ability to separate the bait of sexual pleasure from the hook of reproduction sparked a revolution more momentous for the human race than any in history" (p. 186).
Although, as we have seen, many people continue to share the sexual views of Augustine, Hatfield and Rapson (1993) note that by the late eighteenth century, changes in the material, economic, political, philosophical, and psychological spheres of Western society had begun to fundamentally alter the fabric of the Western world and many of these changes have unavoidably resulted in "a metamorphosis in Euro-American approaches to love and sex" (p. 87). In sum, many shifts in sexual beliefs, customs, laws, and behaviours can be viewed as more or less rational adaptations to changing socio-historical contingencies.

However, given that sexuality has been imbued with monumental social significance, it is not surprising that conscious attempts to socialize youth in sexual matters has become such a decisive and controversial issue. If we define socialization as the process by which social authorities and institutions transmit to children the beliefs, values, and behaviours deemed appropriate to a particular culture, a bitter debate about the sexual socialization of youth is a highly significant and natural outgrowth of the sexual conflicts that now permeate Western culture.

In order to harmoniously participate in society, an individual must internalize and adhere to the ground rules of the social reality of that society. "The ontogenetic process by which this is brought about is socialization, which may thus be defined as the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or sector of it" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 130). And, as Berger & Luckmann (1967) note, even human activities which are "grounded in biological drives", such as sexual behaviour, are subject, through the socialization process, to "the
social channelling of activity" (p. 181). Indeed, it has been argued that "nothing is more essentially transmitted by a social process of learning than sexual behavior" (Douglas cited in Stanton, 1992, p. 4). In their analysis of adolescent sexuality, Zabin and Hayward (1993) note that "Young men and women adopt sexual behaviors at a time that is influenced by hormonal development, but they follow a script that is largely determined by social expectations" (p. 41).

Or as McCary and McCary (1982) put it,

> Our sexual attitudes and behaviors are greatly influenced by our beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions regarding sex. Cultural demands and expectations as well as religious teachings and doctrines also help shape our attitudes toward sex. One aim of growing up in a society is to learn how to express sexuality appropriately without the burden of unreasonable prohibitions or excessive anxiety or guilt (p. 361).

Thus, there is reason to believe that, while historical forces inevitably influence sexual norms, conscious effort to shape the sexual socialization of youth, either in accordance with or against historical trends, will significantly affect the beliefs and behaviour of emerging generations. But as cultural diversity in sexual norms and values becomes more and more of a reality in Western culture, a clearly articulated and widely agreed upon set of reference points from which the sexual socialization of youth can proceed becomes exceedingly difficult to identify.

The sources of sexual socialization are numerous. For example, research has shown that a number of "important variables affect sexual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior including peer attitudes and behavior, family of origin values, self-efficacy, locus of control, choice of partner, relationship with partner, and media exposure" (Dine Jacobs & Wolf, 1995, p. 91). However, it is with sexuality education in the schools that our society makes its most
concerted attempt to employ a public institution to socialize youth in regard to the sexual norms and mores of our culture. There is considerable evidence that some school-based sexuality education programs have influenced students' sexual knowledge, attitudes, and some aspects of their behaviour (Kirby, 1993; Kirby, Short, Collins, Rugg, Kolbe, Howard, Miller, Sonenstein, & Zabin, 1994; Mellanby, Pheleps, Crichton, & Tripp, 1995; Frost & Forrest, 1995; Mauldon & Luker, 1996). Thus, it is not surprising that with the diverse plurality of moral perspectives on the meaning of sexuality, the picture of human sexuality to be presented in the public school classroom is fertile ground for what has become a polarized debate. After all, "Visions of what is considered 'good education' are intimately rooted in the conscious and/or unconscious visions of what is considered a 'good society'" (Goodman, 1992, p. xix).

Thomas Szasz (1980) shows how sexuality education has come to be seen as a battle between seemingly irreconcilable moral perspectives on the sexual socialization of youth when he writes:

Since human behavior denotes the actions of moral agents, all behavior is, in part at least, a matter of ethics. Sexual behavior is very much a matter of ethics. Hence, since time immemorial, persons who proposed to teach people about sex had but two choices: to embrace and endorse the accepted, traditional sexual ways of the group, or to explore and enjoin sexual principles and practices at odds with those ways. There is no such thing as value free sex education, nor can there be (p. 99-100).

Will youth be taught to embrace the values of chastity, monogamy, and the nuclear family model of sexuality? Will they be taught to see procreation or intimacy or recreation as the primary purpose of sexuality? Will they be taught to accept the moral legitimacy of homosexuality? Will they be encouraged to critically evaluate prevailing social constructions of gender? Will their sexuality
education programs be based on religious or secular conceptualizations of human sexuality? How these questions are answered will determine the nature of school-based sexuality education, and in turn this aspect of the socialization process will at least partially demarcate the range of sexual norms and values that will be adopted by future generations. "Sex education is potentially a vehicle for social engineering par excellence, be it progressive or traditional" (Thompson, 1994, p. 40). As Philip Meredith (1989) suggests, in one view, sexuality education should "recommend self-control over the force within in order to ensure the survival of the marriage bond, the family, and by extension society itself, from collapse" (p. 45). Yet from another perspective, sexuality education may be able to impart "the capacity and courage to look critically at social arrangements, to chart out rigorous spaces analysis of power, to seek out intellectual and political surprises" (Philips and Fine, 1992, p. 249). Given its potential role in shaping the sexual-moral landscape, it is not surprising that sexuality education has become arguably the most crucial battle in the cultural war over sexuality.

Until relatively recently, the validity of providing sexuality education in the schools was suspect for a number of reasons. Primary among them was the widely held assumption that it was inappropriate to discuss sexuality with children. Such discussion, it was believed, would corrupt youthful innocence and predispose children to immoral behaviour. In addition, teaching about sexuality in an open forum such as the public school classroom violated a cultural taboo on any form of public discussion of sexuality. Most importantly, since the formal sexuality education of youth, when it
existed in any direct or tangible sense, was considered to be the exclusive domain of the family and church, school-based sexuality education has, as we have seen, raised difficult and controversial questions about which set of norms and values will be taught in the classroom.

In most respects, all but the last of these concerns has dissipated with the growing recognition in principle that we must equip young people with the means to understand and protect their own reproductive health and potential: and that rapid changes taking place in society demand that parents and churches be assisted in this through the formal educational process (Meredith, 1989, p. 1).

The question of whether sexuality should be hidden from youth is now more or less moot as various forms of media continually expose youth to sexually oriented imagery. Thus, many of those formerly opposed to school-based sexuality education now contend that it is necessary in order to counter what are seen as the overly permissive messages and mores propagated by the popular media.

Since the advent of the AIDS crisis, the need for sexuality education in the schools has become almost universally accepted. Surveys in both the United States (Gallup Poll, 1985; 1991; Janus & Janus, 1993; Louis Harris Associates, 1988; Welshimer & Harris, 1994) and Canada (Gallup Poll, 1984; Lawlor & Purcell, 1988; Marsmen & Herold, 1986; McKay, 1996; Monk, 1984; Nolte, 1984; Ornstein, 1989; Verby & Herold, 1992) indicate that the vast majority of adults, including parents of school age children, approve of sexuality and/or AIDS education in the schools. For example, a 1991 survey of a national sample of American adults indicated that 87% approved of sexuality education in the schools (Gallup, 1991). In a national sample of American adults, Janus and Janus (1993) found
that only 1% of respondents were adamantly opposed to sexuality education in the schools while 90% were "definitely" in favour (p. 97). Perhaps most notable was the finding that 89% of those respondents who were categorized as "ultraconservative" were "definitely" in favour of sexuality education in the schools (Janus & Janus, 1993, p. 280).

However, as Meredith (1989) suggests, "The problems that follow from a 'formalization' of what has traditionally been a hidden, furtive, taboo-ridden, even unconscious area of learning for many are many and complex" (p. 1). So, as Bruess and Greenberg (1994) note, "in recent years the sexuality education controversy has centred more on the content and methodology of programs rather than on whether or not there should be a program" (p. 57). Much of this controversy centres around different perspectives on the value positions reflected in contemporary sexuality education, and on what those positions should be. For example, Barrett (1994) summarizes this tension in Canadian sexuality education as follows.

Canadians appear to be strongly supportive of the schools involvement in sexuality education. Nevertheless, a sizable minority views contemporary sex education as skewed toward liberal, secular attitudes, particularly in the areas of abortion, homosexuality, teen sexuality, and access to contraceptive information and services, and actively promulgates a more restrictive agenda in all of these areas. Although historically this view has been expressed as an opposition to sexuality education in the schools, at present it is more likely to focus on either the specific value positions that schools should adopt, the appropriateness of particular topics (e.g. homosexuality, contraception, abortion), or the ways in which student behaviour should be influenced (e.g. abstinence-only programs) (p. 200-201).

There have been many different objectives proposed for sexuality education in the schools. Among the more common, and sometimes contested, objectives for sexuality education are
instilling a basic knowledge of human reproductive physiology, clarifying values, increasing social skills, learning methods of expressing affection, increasing comfort with communication about sexuality, enhancing self-esteem, and reducing exploitation (Kirby, 1992). It has also been proposed in some quarters that sexuality education should encourage a critique of prevailing gender roles as they pertain to sexuality so that students may have a greater opportunity to build more egalitarian relationships than those prescribed by patriarchy (e.g., Fine, 1988; Szirom, 1988). A small number of sex educators have increasingly focused on reducing homophobia and have begun to recognize the sex education needs of gay and lesbian students (e.g., Sears, 1992). These latter two objectives have been, as we might expect, highly controversial. In any case,

...educators in the field of sexuality inevitably do their work under some assumptions about its purpose and value - assumptions that include a particular vision of the place of sexuality in social behavior in general and the needs of teenagers in particular (Nathanson, 1991, p. 113).

Despite the controversy over the objectives of sexuality education in the schools, nearly all programs do intend, in some way, to provide information that will help students reduce or eliminate their risk of unintended pregnancy, or STD infection with a particular emphasis being placed on HIV/AIDS. Indeed, any account of contemporary sexuality education in the schools cannot be divorced from the fact that a major priority for sexuality education is to help young people avoid sexual problems such as unintended pregnancy and infection with sexually transmitted diseases (Fisher, 1990). The emergence of HIV/AIDS has added an unprecedented urgency to what can be described as sexuality education’s public health
mandate. With a focus on the pragmatic aspects of pregnancy and disease prevention, one might expect that the public controversy around sexuality education in the schools would be diminished.

However, proposals for how problems, such as pregnancy and STD/AIDS prevention among youth, should be addressed both pedagogically in the classroom and in the larger society are closely interwoven with one's views on sexual morality. So, for example, if I have qualms about the moral acceptability of premarital sex, I might favour sexual education for adolescents that emphasizes sexual abstinence outside of marriage. If I think that sex outside of marriage can be morally acceptable, I may be more likely to sympathize with educational programs that encourage sexually active youth to use contraception and practice safer sex. In sum, whether one bemoans the lack of emphasis on a "Just Say No" to sex approach in contemporary sexuality education or complains that sexuality education fails to sufficiently acknowledge the positive aspects of safer sex practices will largely depend on where one lines up in the cultural battle over the future of sexuality in our society. In other words, if it is true that sexuality education cannot be value free, it would also appear that even seeking to achieve commonly shared objectives like preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases is a morally laden and divisive enterprise.

Conclusion

When communities battle over sexuality education in the schools, it is not simply a minor quibble over the effectiveness of particular educational methodologies. Although the question of what works in terms of pregnancy and STD prevention is a hotly debated
topic (McKay, 1992), when battles over sexuality education occur, they reflect a clash of fundamental values, of different ways of seeing the world. In short, it is a struggle between ideologies in general and a clash of sexual ideologies in particular. The essence and true character of the sexuality education question becomes more visible when it is understood in the context of ideology.
CHAPTER TWO

RESTRICTIVE AND PERMISSIVE SEXUAL IDEOLOGIES


"The forces of liberation or chaos, depending on your vantage point, stand against the forces of repression or civilized morality. Sexuality has become a battlefield where opponents rally their troops against a demonized enemy." Steven Seidman. (1992). Embattled Eros: Sexual Politics and Ethics in Contemporary America. New York: Routledge.

Introduction

Jorge Larrain (1979) describes ideology as "one of the most equivocal and elusive concepts one can find in the social sciences" (p. 1). The social science literature contains a multitude of meanings given to ideology. Thompson (1984) in Studies in the Theory of Ideology simplifies things considerably by delineating two fundamentally different ways the concept of ideology is defined in the social science literature. On one hand, "ideology is essentially linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power - that is, to the process of maintaining domination" (Thompson, 1984, p. 4). In this sense, ideology carries a negative connotation, linking ideology to the process of critique. Hence Thompson calls this perspective the critical conception of ideology.

There is another conception of ideology which is perhaps more commonplace, and descriptive in its meaning. In this other view,
ideologies are seen as systems of thought and belief and/or of symbolic practices that inform social action or political projects. According to Thompson (1984),

No attempt is made on the basis of this conception, to distinguish between the kinds of action or projects which ideology animates; ideology is present in every political programme, irrespective of whether the program is directed towards the preservation or transformation of the social order (p. 4).

This approach is what Thompson calls a neutral conception of ideology.

I will adopt a neutral conception of ideology to analyze the relation between sexual ideology and sexuality education in the schools. While the beliefs inherent within a particular sexual ideology may contribute to asymmetrical relations of power, I intend to look at sexual ideologies as unified systems of belief, focusing on their normative character rather than on their empirical or moral validity. I will treat ideologies, to use Mosher's (1991) words, as "...systems of belief about the nature of the world and of humankind that define and frame 'reality'" (p. 7).

Ideologies have a variety of functions. They provide us with a cognitive structure around which we can organize our thoughts into a unified, logically consistent set of beliefs about the world and of humanity. A primary function of ideology is to provide a framework that gives our beliefs order, coherence, and consistency. As Greenberg (1988) puts it,

As people live in society, they grapple with and try to come to terms with it. In so doing, they develop ideologies that explain, justify, or challenge it. Possibly they act on the basis of their ideologies. Their actions generate exposure to new experiences, which may induce them to modify their previously held beliefs. Of course, the ideas so developed need not be a direct unmediated reflection of a social reality. In general, people interpret experience in light of
previous ideas and conceptual schemes, not with a mental tabula rasa (p. 18).

Ideologies may be held dispassionately and unreflectively as a set of taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of things or, in the case of what Hoffer (1951) calls the true believer, an ideology may be held with a passionate fervour.

Ideologies have other important functions. An ideology, as a system of belief, unites the individuals who share it, giving them a sense of solidarity and collective purpose. It is in this way that the members of social-political movements achieve their identity as part of a wider community of people with similar beliefs. An ideology can tell us who we are, and just as importantly, who we are not. As Mosher (1991) puts it,

Ideology binds us together and divides us from the Other as a nation, as a religion, and as a gender. We become one, a union, a unity of shared believers, invidiously contrasted to the Other who holds those foreign and false beliefs, who can’t see the forest for the trees, can’t see the end of their own noses, can’t see the way things truly are (p. 7-8).

A third but equally important function of ideology is to cement the ideologue’s convictions in the face of uncertainty. As a system of beliefs, an ideology can provide us with an epistemological framework for addressing philosophical questions that are not amenable to empirical verification. Questions about the existence of God or which is the best political creed are examples of philosophical questions to which there are no objectively certain answers. An ideology entails a unified set of intellectual, social, and moral constructs that manifest themselves in a belief system with an internalized logical consistency, providing a secure foundation for how we approach such questions. When these constructs are strong and consistent enough they can imbue an ideology with the
power to define reality for those who are true believers. In his analysis of the true believer in mass movements, Hoffer (1951) illustrates the dynamics through which an ideology provides certainty of belief.

All active mass movements strive, therefore, to interpose a fact-proof screen between the faithful and the realities of the world. They do this by claiming that the ultimate and absolute truth is already embodied in their doctrine and that there is no truth nor certitude outside it. The facts on which the true believer bases his conclusions must not be derived from his experience or observation but from holy writ (p. 78).

In other words, "Whatever his sanctified line, the true believer is wholly convinced he or she is acting in the very best interests of both the proximate and ultimate truth" (Hentoff, 1992, p. 57). Within the ideologically constructed reality, explanations that are congruent with the ideology's logic seem plausible and eminently reasonable. Thus, the theory of creationism seems reasonable to the devout Christian and the theory of evolution seems reasonable to the secular Humanist. In other words, ideology defines reality, not vice versa.

Ideologies encompass a wide spectrum of beliefs: religious, political, social, etc. Beliefs about sexuality fall into the ideological realm. As a subset of ideology, sexual ideology "refers to an individual's beliefs and attitudes regarding the regulation and expression of sexual conduct" (Troiden & Platt-Jendrek, 1987, p. 257). Questions about the nature of human sexuality, its purpose, its proper role in human relationships, and the moral guidelines that ought to govern its conduct are invariably addressed in an ideological context. One's ideas about the moral validity of homosexual relationships, for example, are based on subjective
conviction rather than objectively observable facts. One's views about homosexuality can take on the veneer of objectivity when immersed within an ideological belief system. Hence, within the ideological reality of the fundamentalist Christian, homosexuality is sometimes seen to be, in an objective sense, unnatural, contrary to the word of God, and therefore immoral. To those of a contrary ideological persuasion, that line of reasoning has nothing to do with objective reality. Indeed, using biological sex as a criterion for the moral evaluation of a sexual relationship would be seen, in this alternate view, as patently absurd. Other criteria such as the potential for mutual fulfilment and respect would be considered far more important in judging the moral validity of a sexual relationship than the sex of the participants. When ideological perspectives, such as these, collide, the resulting disputes almost invariably deteriorate into bitter rhetorical and social battles. Sexual differences seem to automatically escalate into sex wars.... These skirmishes on the sexual front escalate as sexual and intimate affairs get entangled with nonsexual interests and conflicts. As sexual issues like pornography, homosexuality, S/M and casual sex are interpreted as signs or symptoms of the social state of America, sexual conflicts assume a heightened moral and political interest (Seidman, 1992, p. 7-8).

Because ideologies are social constructions with highly variable conceptions of reality, a contest between sexual ideologies - a testing of their respective validity - is a fight between combatants who are often competing on different conceptual playing fields. They are, in effect, attempting to play the same game but with different rules. This is so because "the world views that underlie sexual interpretations are not held rationally, but rather are the very conditions of rationality" (Davis, 1983, p. 230). When we present arguments to a person that are outside his/her
ideological belief, we are unlikely to change his/her mind. It is tantamount to asking them to transform their perception of reality. Thus, it is unlikely, for example, that Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and their millions of followers will one day renounce their belief that homosexuality is morally wrong and gay and lesbian rights activists are not likely to give up their belief that homosexual relationships are in every way just as legitimate as heterosexual unions.

Perhaps because its popular culture is suffused with sexual imagery, Western society seems to be permeated by ideological conflict around issues of sexuality: homosexuality, premarital and extramarital sex, teenage sexuality, contraception, pornography, to name a few. A number of typologies may be used to classify the players in these ideological disputes. While some sexual ideologies clearly represent different ends of a continuum of ideologies (hedonist and religious fundamentalist views about sexuality for example), many ideological beliefs about sexuality are only distinguishable by subtle shades of difference. A meticulous representation of these belief systems would therefore require the identification of a multiplicity of discreet sexual ideologies. This is so because "Sexual attitudes are strongly influenced by subcultural norms in general and religion in particular, by sociopolitical ideology, SES, and to a lesser extent, gender, and family structure" (Smith, 1994, p. 94). To the extent that different belief systems are mediated by individual characteristics such as personal history, gender, age, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, the possible permutations of sexual ideology become infinite. For the purposes of clarity, most scholarship
describing the conflict between sexual ideologies has emphasized ideological polarities or divided the ideological groupings into two or three broad categories. For example, Davis (1983) contrasts the Jehovanist with the Naturalist sexual ideology, Weeks (1985;1986) looks at the Absolutist, Liberal and Libertarian, and Siedman (1992) dichotomizes the Romanticist and Libertarian ideologies.

In the remainder of this chapter, I use a synthesis of these typologies to provide a categorical framework for analyzing ideological perspectives on sexuality education. This synthesis yields two opposing perspectives which I term as the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies. In my view, the Jehovanist, Absolutist, and Romanticist ideologies described by these authors share a restrictive approach to human sexuality; whereas, the Naturalist, Liberal and Libertarian ideologies are united by an emphasis on the assumed virtue of varying degrees of sexual freedom which, when compared to restrictive approaches, can be described as permissive. The views of religious traditionalists from various faiths, social-political conservatives, and radical feminists are generally encompassed by Restrictive sexual ideology. They advocate sexual ethics that prescribe strict limitations on sexual behaviour when compared to Permissive sexual ideology. In contrast, secular humanists, social-political liberals, and liberal feminists are representative of Permissive sexual ideology in that their views are generally less directive in terms of sexual ethics and behaviour.

At a superficial level, the division between Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology can be understood in terms of the more familiar differentiation between the conservative and the liberal in that, "Conservatives tend to value order, individual
responsibility, and control, while liberals are more likely to value variety and personal freedom" (Eisenman, 1994, p. 75). (Radical feminism may constitute an exception to this form of categorization, depending on whether one considers Radical feminists to be more liberal than conservative). Although conservatives typically discourage government intervention in the economic environment, there is as Eisenman (1994) notes,

one area where conservatives tend to want government interference, in order to produce more order and control. That is the area of sexual behavior. Many conservatives see sexual freedom as an evil that can lead to the decline of the society (p. 75).

Research on the correlates of individual attitudes towards sexuality suggests that those with a liberal political philosophy have a greater acceptance of sexual permissiveness (Smith, 1994). "This may indicate that those adopting a general liberal philosophy apply broad principles such as tolerance and individual choice to the sexual arena and that support for sexual freedom is seen as a liberal tenet" (Smith, 1994, p. 83).

Although I will present detailed accounts of the various permutations of the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies, I am fully aware that these classifications are imperfect. Since our beliefs about sexuality often have complex and sometimes contradictory origins, no typology or classification system can avoid representing ideal types rather than the specific, multifaceted belief systems of unique individuals. Nevertheless, my classification of sexual beliefs into Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies does, to borrow a phrase from Andrew Sullivan (1995) "delineate the essential contours of the debate" (p. 20) over how our society should approach sexuality in general and sexuality
education in particular. They do, as I hope to show, hold enough currency as general categories to help us make sense out of the debate and to move forward in resolving it.

Restrictive Sexual Ideology

The origins of Restrictive sexual ideology can easily be traced to early Christianity and its biblically oriented negative perception of human sexuality. Augustine set the tone for Western perspectives on sexuality through his interpretation of Adam and Eve's action in the Garden of Eden, and it is at this point that Murray Davis (1983) locates the beginnings of what he calls Jehovanist sexual ideology.

Adam and Eve were the first to sift their sexual experience through Jehovanism's conceptual and moral mesh. In other words, they suddenly realized that their world was divided into two realms - a "good" every day realm and an "evil" erotic realm - and that they had to suppress the latter as much as possible by concealing the physical features that generated it (p. 166).

In this view, Adam and Eve's donning of fig leaves to cover their genitals symbolized the shamefulfulness of their sexuality. Sexual desire was condemned for its propensity to drag the self downward toward the earthly realm, preventing it from flowing upward towards God. Davis (1983) labels this perspective toward sexuality Jehovanist "after the name for the God of the Old Testament who becomes especially wrathful whenever his lawful category system is violated by sex or other tabooed activity"(p. 95). This Jehovanist view of sexuality reflected "a more general asceticism which accused all physical pleasure from diverting attention away from the highly valued spiritual realm toward the lowly valued material realm" (Davis, 1983, p. 167). As Christianity became the dominant Western
world view, the condemnation of sexuality became all pervasive. Davis (1983) cites Kant as an example of how Western philosophical discourse adopted an anti-sexual perspective. "Kant saw sex as undermining the essential distinction between human beings and beasts" (Davis, 1983, p. 170). In his Lectures on Ethics Kant (cited in Davis, 1983) proclaimed that

All men and women do their best to make more alluring not their humanity but their sex, and direct their activities and lust entirely toward the latter. Humanity is thereby sacrificed to sex.... By making human nature an instrument to satisfy their lusts, they dishonor it by lowering it to the level of animal nature. Sexuality, therefore, exposes mankind to the danger of equality with beast (p. 170).

With this statement, Kant expressed the core premise of Jehovanist sexual ideology: sexuality is a negative force, polluting and corrupting human nature, and should therefore be reserved solely for procreation. Once this core principle of Jehovanist sexual ideology was established, the ethics governing human sexual conduct followed logically. Because of its propensity to pollute the soul, sexual ethics, according to Jehovanist ideology, must emphasize the need to suppress sexual desire except for the purposes of procreation which is the only absolutely necessary and therefore justifiable purpose of sexual expression. All other sexual acts and desires were deemed immoral. According to Don Ward (1971),

These standards, as they originally evolved, reflected the need to tie sexual activity to procreation. Any use of sex that did not contribute to reproduction was lustful, even immoral. This emphasis on procreation in time gave rise to the moral restrictions against homosexuality, masturbation, and the use of contraceptives: they impeded or prevented procreation (p. 205)

Mosher (1992) suggests that the doctrines of Thomas Aquinas, another of Christianity's more influential theologians, expresses the
Jehovanist ideological construction of sexual morality.

Aquinas expounded an eight-fold truth: (1) seminal discharge defines the essence of sexual intercourse, (2) the only moral function of sexual intercourse is procreation, (3) the act of procreation is completed only when the child becomes an adult, (4) procreators are obligated to provide for their issue until adulthood, (5) an unadulterous monogamous marriage is the best environment for socializing and moralizing children, (6) females are inferior to males, (7) male acts as the female's governor in marriage, and (8) divorce is improper. Thus, the only moral sex is coitus in the missionary position between marital partners for the purposes of procreation, experienced without too much pleasure, passion or affection (Mosher, 1992, p. 21).

While Jehovanist sexual ideology has a long history, rooted in theological interpretations of human nature and sexuality, its taboo-ridden conceptualization of sexuality continues to express itself, often in nonreligious terms, in contemporary society. "Although Jehovanism proper has produced no original argument against sex since Kant, its critical thrust has continued in other forms. We may label 'Neo-Jehovanist' those utterances that express the antisexual impulse euphemistically without acknowledging its religious inspiration" (Davis, 1983, p. 171). According to Davis (1983) the influence of an implicity Jehovanist sexual ideology is evident in the expression of "a theory of concomitant evil to convince those who do not find illicit sex despicable in itself that they should at least find deplorable the biological, psychological, and social evils that necessarily accompany it" (p. 207). Thus Neo-Jehovanists have claimed that premarital sex ("sexual freedom", "the new morality") leads to "insecurity and hurt" and "dashed expectations" as well as "emotional problems" including "depression", "neurotic behavior", and "feelings of inadequacy", not to mention "loss of appetite" and "headaches" (Davis, 1983, p. 209).

Not surprisingly, from this perspective, adolescent sexual activity
is not just immoral in the theological sense, but given its consequences it cannot be rationally justified.

Jehovanist social psychologists often accuse teenagers who engage in premarital sex of giving in to "peer pressure." This accusation assumes not only that no adolescent who concluded that the benefits of sexual activity outweigh its detriments could be rational, but also that their own opinion of adolescent sex is completely uninfluenced by the "peer pressure" of their own colleagues (Davis, 1983, p. 210).

As we shall see in Chapter Three, this Jehovanist perspective on adolescent sexuality permeates many contemporary sexuality education programs in the schools.

In sum, Jehovanist sexual ideology is restrictive in that heterosexual intercourse within marriage is seen as the only morally valid sexual behaviour. All other sexual acts are, by nature, immoral. The moral codes of Jehovanist sexual ideology have constituted the core of Western sexual morality. All other ideological constructions have been conceived in terms of an oppositional relation to the central moral precepts of Jehovanist sexual ideology.

In analyzing the sexual politics of contemporary America, Seidman (1992) describes a struggle between "two broadly conceived sexual ideologies" (p. 5): romanticism and libertarianism. According to Seidman (1992), "The conflict between these two sexual ideologies is at the core of many sexual and social struggles" (p. 6) and they "project antithetical sexual constructions" (p. 7). "The presence of these two sexual ideologies divides Americans on issues of homosexuality, teen sex, cohabitation, sex education, public sex, pornography etc. By and large the two sides remain polarized" (Seidman, 1992, p. 178). Within this dualism of ideologies, Romanticism expresses an approach to human sexuality that is
restrictive in nature.¹

Seidman (1992) offers a typology of sexual ideology that is similar to but more complex than that proposed by Davis (1983). While the restrictive ethics of Jehovanism is rooted in a resolutely negative evaluation of sexuality, Romanticism, although highly suspicious of the sexual impulse, does see sexuality as a potentially positive force, provided that it is carefully controlled. While Romanticists leave open the possibility that sexual activity can be beneficial in terms of enhancing intimate relationships, they share with Jehovanists an emphasis on the dangers of sexual expression and the need for a restrictive sexual ethics. On the one hand, "The Romanticist believes that to harness the beneficial aspects of sex, eros must be connected to and kept intertwined with emotional, social and spiritual intimacies" (Seidman, 1992, p. 6). On the other hand, a liberalization of sexual norms is, to the Romanticist, not only unhealthy, but is a threat to social cohesion. "For them, the imagery of a sexual revolution evoked anticipations of libidinal chaos, the breakdown of family and moral order, and national crisis and social decline" (Seidman, 1992, 1

¹ Seidman's application of the label Romanticist to this particular brand of sexual ideology may seem curious to some readers. Romanticism is a term loosely applied to 18th and 19th century artistic and literary movements. There are a wide variety of interpretations of the meaning of Romanticism, although it may be said that most of the various strains of Romanticism are united by their opposition to classicism. In philosophy, Romanticism is most often associated with Jean Jacques Rousseau who professed a belief in the natural goodness of humanity. In my reading, it is likely that Seidman has chosen the term Romanticism to describe this sexual ideology because of its belief in the strong emotional bonding of mature relationships, which Romanticist sexual ideology holds in high regard. The emphasis is on intense emotion rather than reason or logic. This is congruent with the emphasis on emotions that is typical of much Romanticist thought.
p. 21). In sum, while Jehovanism sees only procreation as a positive outcome of sexual expression, Romanticism adds the idea that sexual expression can help build intimacy within a committed relationship. In this respect, although it takes a restrictive approach to sexual behaviour, Romanticism does have a sex-positive element.

However, in some fundamental ways, Jehovanism and Romanticism are synonymous. That is, Davis (1983) and Seidman (1992) are describing what seems to be the same ideological perspective. For example, according to Seidman (1992), those Romanticists who oppose homosexuality mirror Jehovanists "by appealing primarily to a Judeo-Christian religious tradition and a concept of natural law, both of which were said to be organized around a heterosexual familial order" (p. 177). In many respects, Romanticism reflects the Neo-Jehovanist tendency to rely on psycho-social, rather than theological, arguments to emphasize the potential evils of sexuality. So, for example, like the Neo-Jehovanist, the Romanticist rejects the possible validity of sex between teenagers "on the grounds that adolescents lack the maturity to approach sex in an intimate committed relationship" (Seidman, 1992, p. 6).

In historical perspective, the Romanticist view of sexuality clearly has its roots in the traditional Judeo-Christian conceptualization of sexuality as a force that, if not carefully controlled, could wreck havoc on the individual and society. Seidman (1992) cites Victorian culture as a prime example of Romanticist sexual ideology in practice.

Many Victorians held that sexuality is an enormously powerful, life-giving-and-enhancing force that must be expressed. Yet, they were equally convinced that sexual expression automatically elicits lust, which carries serious personal and social dangers. The Victorians responded to this dilemma by organizing an intimate
culture that attempted to control and spiritualize lust or sublimate it into productive social projects. Sexual expression was legitimated only within a heterosexual, coitus centered, marital norm. As the campaigns against masturbation and the moral reform efforts to spiritualize sex and marriage indicate, Victorian intimate culture sought to affirm sex expression while purging it of its carnal aspects (p. 24).

With this Romanticist sexual ideology, the Victorians repudiated the subversive ideas popularized by the infamous eighteenth-century thinker the Marquis de Sade who

insisted that physical and spiritual passion need have little to do with one another. Sade was the arch anti-Romantic when, in the novel Juliette, he asked, "Can't you go to bed with a woman without loving her, and can't you love her without going to bed with her?" (Robinson, 1977, p. 194).

Seidman (1992) goes on to say that in seeking to relieve sex of its nefarious aspects, the Romanticist ideology "promoted a politics of sexual restriction. It sought to limit sexual choice by severely circumscribing the socially available opportunities for sexual expression and by stigmatizing nonconventional sexual expression" (p. 24).

During the twentieth century, however, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, the influence of Romanticist sexual ideology waned as more permissive approaches to sexuality began to inform social attitudes and sexual behaviour. This decline in the influence of Romanticist sexual ideology is readily seen in the evolution of sexual attitudes from the 1950s to the 1970s. For example, Romanticism encourages sexual activity only within committed heterosexual relationships, particularly marriage. This Romanticist norm of acceptable sexual behaviour was widely endorsed, especially for women, during the 1950s. At that time only 14-17% of women believed that it was acceptable for females to engage in premarital
sex. By the 1960s the number had jumped to 45% and in 1973, 87% believed that it was acceptable for women to engage in premarital sex (Allgeier & Allgeier, 1988, p. 424). Large-scale introduction of the birth control pill during the 1960s helped launch the "sexual revolution" by allowing women, particularly those who were young and unmarried, to partake of the pleasures of intercourse without the threat of unwanted pregnancy. The pill enabled people to rid themselves of one of the major negative consequences of sexual expression. In an age where premarital sexual activity carried the risk of both moral condemnation and the practical consequences of an unwanted pregnancy, the moral dictates of Romanticism were more difficult to reject. When birth control enabled people to eliminate a major consequence of sexual behaviour, the foundation of Romanticist sexual ideology had lost one of its critical supports, leading many people to reject its restrictive approach to sexual behaviour.

However, as Seidman (1992) notes, the sexual ideology of Romanticism has enjoyed a considerable resurgence during the 1980s and 1990s. The increasing popularity of restrictive approaches to sexuality grew out of a dissatisfaction with the perceived outcomes of the sexual permissiveness of the 1960s and 1970s: Skyrocketing divorce rates, single motherhood, teen pregnancy, abortion, rising STD rates, and AIDS. In addition, increasing permissiveness was seen to contribute to emotional alienation and disturbances.

Psychologists spoke of a rising tide of anxieties associated with sexual performance, impotence, and loneliness; feminists highlighted an epidemic of child abuse and violence towards women stemming, in part, from an intimate culture encouraging the objectification of individuals as mere bodies to be exploited for personal pleasure and adventure. Cultural critics assailed American intimate conventions for promoting emotionally
shallow and callous behavior, and for reducing individuals to mere bodies and organs. Many Americans thought the source of this malaise to be liberationist ideology that was characterized as excessively permissive, that placed too much value on erotic pleasure, and that was so tolerant toward variant sexual expressions that it undermined moral standards (Seidman, 1992, p. 64).

Seidman (1992) associates the re-emergence of Romanticist sexual ideology with the rise of the social values and politics of the "New Right", "a loose coalition of political, religious, and single-issue pro-life and pro-family groups which combined grass-roots mobilization with professional lobbying" (p. 70). Generally speaking, the New Right has sought to strengthen "family values" by advocating sexual ethics aimed at restoring the supremacy of the patriarchal nuclear family. This involved strenuous opposition to abortion, pornography, the feminist movement, homosexual rights, and premarital sex. In terms of teen sexuality, one of the primary achievements of the New Right was the passage in the United States Congress of the Adolescent Family Life Act in 1981. The Act stipulated that federal government funds would only go towards sexuality education programs that promoted premarital sexual abstinence. The Act also prohibited agencies that "advocate, promote, or encourage abortion" from receiving government funding (Bruess & Greenberg, 1994, p. 164). According to Reiss (1990) the Adolescent Family Life Act reflected a "dogmatic, sexually restrictive approach" and was evidence of a bubbling to the surface of a "residual Victorianism."

Further evidence of our residual Victorianism is found in the 1981 Adolescent Family Life Act, known as the "Chastity Bill," which was proposed by Senators Denton of Alabama and Hatch of Utah - two well-known political conservatives. The bill set up an Office of Adolescent Pregnancy, which to the present day spends millions of tax dollars each year on programs to encourage chastity
for high school students. In 1986, the government put out a chastity workbook called Sex Respect with slogans like: Score on the field, not on your date," "Control your urgin - be a virgin," and "Don't be a louse, wait for your spouse" (Reiss, 1990, p. 22).

It is significant to note that Seidman (1992) places Radical feminism within the Romanticist camp. At first glance this may seem puzzling because it aligns social-political conservatives with the most provocative segment of the feminist movement. When we think of the conflict between Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology in terms of the traditional dichotomy between conservative and liberal, it is, on the surface, natural to place the feminist movement within the Liberal-Permissive spectrum of ideological beliefs. However, as is often noted, there exists considerable diversity in feminist positions on sexuality. Most observers have cast these differences in terms of the sometimes conflicting points of view expressed by Radical as opposed to Liberal feminists (e.g., McCormick, 1994). While there are, in turn, differences within the overall Radical and Liberal feminist positions, Seidman (1992) suggests that the sexual perspectives of many Radical feminists fall within the scope of Romanticist sexual ideology. For these feminists,

The sex act itself should exhibit intimate qualities by being gentle, nurturing, tender and person-oriented. Sex that occurs outside an intimate setting or sex that occurs within a loving relationship but that is centered on bodily, sensual pleasure is morally degrading and unacceptable (Seidman, 1992, p. 106).

Because these quite specific criteria are applied to the moral evaluation of the sex act, Radical feminists have been accused of "promulgating a restrictive sexual ethic that reinforces a politic of sexual repression" (Seidman, 1992, p. 106).

A Romanticist perspective toward sex can be found in many Radical feminist writings on sexuality. For example, Sheila
Jeffreys' (1990) Radical feminist analysis of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s suggests not only that sexual liberalism is synonymous with moral relativism but also that the sexual revolution was "...really an exercise in training women to become experts in sexually servicing men, and to get over their own tastes and interests in order to become efficient at this task" (p. 110). By focusing on aspects of sexuality such as orgasmic potential and other, often unconventional, means of enhancing physical pleasure, the sexual revolution has further removed female sexuality from a world where sex, equality, nurture, and intimacy all go hand in hand. Here, we can see that the sentiment is Romanticist in nature because it limits the range of potentially positive outcomes of sexual activity to those which enhance, with a Radical feminist twist, the Romanticist ideal of mature intimate relationships.

This particular feminist approach to sexuality implies a restrictive sexual ethics in two fundamental ways. First, as other feminists, with a different perspective, have noted, from the Radical feminist perspective,

sex has to occur in a certain way for it to be good. And the only legitimate sex is very limited. It’s not focused on orgasms, it’s very gentle and it takes place in the context of a long-term, caring relationship. It’s the missionary position of the women’s movement (English, Hollibaugh, & Rubin, 1987, p. 70).

Secondly, because many Radical feminists consider male sexual desire to be dependant on the sexual subordination of women, heterosexual sexual activity is seen as inherently immoral (Dworkin, 1987; MacKinnon, 1987; Jeffreys, 1990). If this is so, then, as Jeffreys (1990) argues, "The demolition of heterosexual desire is a necessary step on the route to women’s liberation" (p. 312). If heterosexual sexual interaction is, in and of itself immoral, then
it is evident that this Radical feminist approach to sexuality is a Restrictive sexual ideology in that it is only certain forms of homosexuality that are morally permissible. All heterosexual acts are immoral, no matter their context. The preference for homosexuality, lesbian sex in particular, does put Radical feminist thought at odds with what we might call mainstream Romanticism which generally opposes homosexuality, Radical feminism is, however, appropriately described as Romanticist because it only affirms sexual acts with particular "intimate qualities".

The Radical feminist approach to the issue of pornography is illustrative of its Restrictive ideological leanings and its subsequent union with the forces of political conservatism. For example, as Stanton (1992), points out,

the feminist activism that led to the redefinition of pornography as violence against women c. 1975, rather than the "liberal" view of healthy sexual expression against a puritanical society, influenced and gained support from the 1986 Meese commission that pornography is and causes violence. Some feminists - notably Women against Pornography - formed an alliance with the New Right to ban sexually explicit materials: the ordinance written by Andrea Dworkin and Catherine A. MacKinnon, though subsequently overturned, declared pornography a violation of women's civil rights. While it aimed to combat misogyny, this alliance also supported broad conservative goals of imposing stringent limitations on sexual practices and discourses (p. 13).

In sum, Romanticist sexual ideology falls squarely into the Restrictive camp. On one hand, it acknowledges only a very narrow range of beneficial outcomes that can result from sexual activity. On the other hand, Romanticists only grant moral approval to sexual behaviour that takes place within a very specific context. With the exception of the Radical feminist perspective, all sexual acts that fall outside of the context of the heterosexual, coitus centred, marital norm, even if they are subject to mutual consent and
pleasure, are deemed immoral. So, for example, by most Romanticist ethical criteria, a sexual interaction between two homosexual adolescents must be, in and of itself, immoral. Homosexuality does not conform to the coitus centred marital norm. In this respect it threatens a social order based on the nuclear family. Just as importantly, according to the Romanticist view, adolescents are incapable of mature committed relationships and therefore their sex acts can have no legitimate moral purpose. Thus, Romanticism, like Jehovanism, is not only restrictive in its approach to sexual ethics, its inflexibility in judging the validity of specific sexual acts adds to Romanticism and Jehovanism an element of moral absolutism. Moral absolutism, as we shall now see, tends to be a central feature of Restrictive sexual ideology.

Jeffrey Weeks (1985; 1986) describes three different approaches which he suggests have influenced our thinking about sexuality in Western culture: the Absolutist, Liberal, and Libertarian. Although Weeks (1985) employs the term "approaches" rather than ideology, he is referring to "strategies for the regulation and control of sexuality" (p. 52). "Each of these evokes different assumptions about the true meaning of sex" (Weeks, 1985, p. 53). Or put another way, "What we believe sex is, or ought to be, structures our responses to it" (Weeks, 1986, p. 100). In these respects, the approaches described by Weeks constitute ideologies. Weeks' descriptions of these approaches are particularly useful because his differentiation between the Absolutist and Liberal approaches, in particular, provides a basis for a more precise analysis of the sexual ethics inherent in the broader Restrictive and Permissive ideological categories.
Of the three dominant approaches described by Weeks, the Absolutist clearly represents a restrictive ideological approach to sexuality. In essence, with the Absolutist approach, Weeks is describing a perspective that is reflective of the Jehovanist and Romanticist sexual ideologies.

Historically, we are heirs of the absolutist tradition. This has been based on a fundamental belief that the disruptive powers of sex can only be controlled by a clear-cut morality, intricately embedded in a particular set of social institutions: marriage, heterosexuality, family life and (at least in the Judaic-Christian traditions), monogamy. This absolutist morality is deeply rooted in the Christian West, but through its grounding may be embraced as readily by the atheist as by the Christian (or other religious) who is ready to worship at the foot of strong, moral values. Moral absolutism has deeply influenced our general culture, and in particular the forms of legal regulation, many of which still survive (Weeks, 1986, p. 100).

The convergence of moral absolutism with Jehovanist sexual ideology is relatively straightforward. They are both rooted in an Aristotelian fixed view of human nature that has served as a foundation of the traditional Judeo-Christian moral perspective. Central to this view is the notion that "human beings were created by God as unchanging archetypes, thus determining standards of human behavior for all time" (Francoeur, 1987, p. 3). This world view developed out of rationalistic and theological presuppositions regarding the orderliness of nature including the idea that human nature is the work of a divine architect and is revealed through reason and divine revelation. The physical world and human nature are viewed as being governed by fixed and immutable laws. According to Mosher (1989), from this perspective moral principles are expressed

as authority-given rules such as the Ten Commandments. People with a conventional form of moral judgement believe moral rules were fixed forever on Mount Sinai.
Not only are God-given rules everlasting, but they are always enforced (p. 496).

Thus, a major underlying assumption of this ideology is that "...these moral regulations apply basically for all times, all societies, all cultures, all age groups, and all individuals alike" (Guindon, 1986, p. 5).

In the realm of sexuality, the early Christian scholars deemed certain sexual behaviours (i.e. procreative intercourse) as natural, and therefore morally permissible, while others were deemed as unnatural (i.e. masturbation, sodomy), and therefore immoral. As the overwhelmingly dominant moral authorities of the time, these theologians took on the responsibility of setting the standard of morally acceptable sexual behaviour and in turn determined the sexual moral norms of Western society. In effect, "responsibility for wise-decision-making in sexual matters was transferred, one way or another to an exterior authoritative agency" (Guindon, 1986, p. 3).

We can see that this perspective is absolutist in the sense that once the moral rules of sexual behaviour have been established they are, like the Ten Commandments, etched in stone. They are unchangeable and not subject to modification. This approach is also clearly restrictive in nature in that it is highly proscriptive in terms of what specific forms of sexual behaviour are morally valid.

One of the central features of the moral absolutist approach is that it focuses on specific sexual acts as the object of moral evaluation. Jehovanist sexual ideology employs an act-centred focus to conceptualize the process of sexual ethics. In their discussion of the traditional Catholic moral evaluation of sexual conduct Kosnick, Carroll, Cunningham, Modras, & Schulte (1977) succinctly
summarize this act-centred sexual ethics.

Catholic tradition in evaluating moral behavior has placed a heavy emphasis in recent centuries on the objective moral nature of the given act itself. Particularly with regard to sexuality, it was believed that there is a meaning intrinsic to the very nature of the act itself - a meaning that is absolutely unchangeable and in no way modifiable by extenuating circumstances or special context. Thus, masturbation, any premarital sexual pleasure, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, sodomy, and bestiality were considered intrinsically evil acts, seriously immoral, and under no circumstances justifiable. This approach was influenced to a great extent by an oversimplification of the natural law theory of St. Thomas, the negative sin-oriented approach of the moral manuals, and a strong desire for clear, precise absolute norms to govern moral conduct (p. 88).

Consequently, Jehovanist sexual ideology has a simple, straightforward moral code. A specific, and very narrow set of sexual behaviours are morally acceptable: all others, are not.

Romanticist sexual ideology is also absolutist by virtue of its act-centred approach, although it slightly expands the context under which morally acceptable sexual activity can take place. With the exception of the Romanticist element within Radical Feminism, sexual behaviour can achieve moral validity, in the Romanticist view, if, and only if, it enhances emotional intimacy within mature, monogamous, heterosexual marriage. So, for example, while Jehovanism condemns adolescent sexual behaviour on the basis of God-given moral dictates, Romanticism rejects the behaviour on the grounds that teenagers are too immature to be involved in emotionally sound, stable relationships. Both ideologies take an absolutist approach to adolescent sex because they disapprove of the behaviour under any circumstances and with no exceptions. Once these arguments have been established as ideologically constructed "facts", either by theologians or psychologists, there is no need for individuals to
contemplate alternatives or engage in moral deliberation: the path to morally valid behaviour is self-evident and must be followed with faith and discipline.

In sum, Restrictive sexual ideology traces its origins to a fixed view of human nature that emerged as a fundamental component of the early Christian tradition’s understanding of the universe. If human nature is a fixed, divinely inspired creation, moral truth is, objectively speaking, available to us through divine revelation. As we have seen, Augustine was an exemplar of this world view with his belief that "absolute or objective knowledge of the good was obtainable through direct mystical experience of the divinely revealed truth of God" (Kurtines & Gewirtz, 1984, p. 12). Since this truth was derived from a God in the heavens, unaffected by changes in the earthly human social world, its substance was unalterable.

Until the age of "enlightenment", beginning in the seventeenth century, this fixed conception of human nature and morality held an almost total monopoly of belief in Western culture.

Since the fifth century A.D., the intellectual history of the West had been unified by an unshakable faith in the truth of the Christian revelation and an equally deep and abiding belief that reason (guided by faith) would ultimately provide objective or certain knowledge about the world. Consequently, for very long in the intellectual history of the Western world, questions of morality did not seem truly problematic. Issues were raised; differences encountered; fine points debated. But never did it appear that issues could not be settled, that differences could not be resolved within a larger, commonly accepted framework. The Western world experienced a unity of thought like never before and perhaps never again. This unity of thought provided an ethic or morality (Kurtines & Gewirtz, 1984, p. 14-15).

Combined with a negative conceptualization of the nature of human sexuality - the belief that sex is essentially dirty and sinful - the principles of morality inherent in this unity of thought yielded
the absolutist act-centred sexual ethics that characterizes Restrictive sexual ideology.

These are the key components of Restrictive sexual ideology, and, as I will show in Chapter Three, many contemporary forms of sexuality education in the schools take their cue from these ideas.

**Permissive Sexual Ideology**

Until relatively recently, Restrictive sexual ideology, particularly the religiously inspired doctrines of Jehovanism held a near monopoly on the sexual moral discourse of Western society. A number of factors, including demographic, scientific, and philosophical transformations, have fundamentally changed the nature of society, and in the process produced alternative ideological perspectives which have arisen to challenge the supremacy of Restrictive sexual ideology. These, relatively more recent, ideological perspectives share a fundamental premise that sexuality, rather than being a primarily negative force requiring strict control, is either benign or positive in its ability to provide pleasure and contribute to self-fulfilment and psychological adjustment. As opposed to seeing the need to limit the context and range of morally acceptable sexual behaviours, these ideological perspectives suggest that the human condition, both at the individual and societal level, is better served by a sexual ethics that replaces Absolutist, act-centred evaluations of sexual conduct with methods of moral evaluation that emphasize individual differences in desire and person-centred relational concerns such as mutual consent, pleasure, and respect. Within such a framework, the range of morally acceptable sexual behaviours is greatly
expanded. Ideological perspectives of this kind are clearly more permissive in nature than the Restrictive sexual ideology.

A key factor in the emergence of Permissive sexual ideology is an historical trend away from the theologically rooted fixed view of human nature which was the genesis of Restrictive sexual ideology. This historical trend towards secularized, evolutionary conceptualizations of human nature, particularly in the last several hundred years, has dramatically reshaped the intellectual, social-political climate of Western culture. As Francoeur (1987) puts it, "no greater revolution has occurred in the history of human thought than the radical shift from a fixed world view rooted in unchanging archetypes to a dynamic, evolving world view based on populations and individuals" (p. 52).

The emergence of this alternative world view would have profound implications for the way we think about sexuality and its role in defining human nature. A concept of human nature that is dynamic rather than fixed, evolutionary rather than theological, creates the conditions for a Permissive sexual ideology that Davis (1983) labels Naturalism. Naturalist sexual ideology, according to

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2 The terms Naturalism and Natural Law are frequently used, particularly in philosophy. Although they both refer to aspects of nature, they have quite different meanings. Naturalism, as a philosophy, generally refers to the position that all phenomena can be explained by means of natural, as opposed to supernatural, categories. In other words, natural science provides an over-all explanation of the universe. The theory of natural law, however, suggests that there are some basic and immutable laws that govern human nature. Moral principles flow from these laws. These laws are universal and unchangeable in that since they constitute a priori human nature, they are not subject to modification. Natural law has been particularly popular among Christian philosophers, whereas Naturalism lies at the root of empiricism. In these respects, Natural Law fits well with the fixed view of human nature characteristic of Restrictive sexual ideology and Naturalism is compatible with the secular, evolving world view of Permissive
Davis (1983) is characterized by "its connection with a broader historical tradition that interprets sexual phenomena in terms of nature rather than in terms of the sacred" (p. 183).

Modern Naturalism is the heir of several historical trends, which have given its conception of copulation a distinct character. Like many formerly sacred activities, sex has been caught up in the process of secularization, which has severed its spiritual ties. Naturalist metaphysics is that sex has no metaphysics. Sex has none of the tremendous cosmic meaning for modern Naturalists that it has for Jehovanists... (Davis, 1983, p. 185).

The removal of sexuality from the realm of the sacred is important for several reasons. First, and perhaps most importantly, such a move makes possible a clean break with the tradition of looking at sexuality as something that is necessarily, or has a great potential to be, a corrupting presence. If sexuality is, like human beings themselves, just another part of nature, it can be more easily viewed as either harmless, neutral, or potentially beneficial. This Naturalist ideology takes a dim view of restrictive approaches not only because of their behavioural restrictions, but also because they instill feelings of guilt and shame which smother and stunt the beneficial aspects of sexuality. Freeing sexuality from religiously inspired guilt and shame has been one of the primary political projects of Naturalist sexual ideology. While theology was the vehicle for propounding Jehovanist sexual ideology, the modern sciences of biology and psychology provided Naturalist sexual ideology with its sex positive or sex neutral world view. Davis (1983) cites Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson as examples of the modern sexologists who have treated sex from a Naturalist ideological perspective. Robinson

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sexual ideology.
(1977) refers to the rise of this alternative sexual paradigm as the "modernization of sex". According to Robinson (1977), Alfred Kinsey, who conducted and published the first large scale surveys of American sexual behaviour in the 1940s and 1950s, is a pivotal figure in the growth of the modern view of sexuality. Robinson's (1977) characterization of Kinsey reveals that the famous sexologist was not only anti-Jehovanist in his belief that sexuality was benevolent, but also anti-Romanticist in his view that sex need not be tied to emotional intimacy.

He is not so unqualified a sexual materialist as was the Marquis de Sade, but he sought above all else to separate human sexual experience from its elaborate emotional associations. Those associations, he believed, placed unnecessary restrictions on the expression of an innocent physical need. Only when repressed did sexual urges threaten emotional stability, and thus a rational society, he implied, would seek to promote not only a positive but an essentially casual attitude toward sexuality. The notion that sex was permissible only when persons truly loved one another was to him no less absurd than the belief that masturbation caused insanity (Robinson, 1977, p. 194).

A fundamental aspect of Naturalist sexual ideology is its opposition to Jehovanism's hostility toward sexuality.

Naturalists are divided between moderates who tolerate sex, and radicals, who venerate it. Moderate Naturalists find most forms of sex "not harmful"; radical Naturalists find them actually beneficial, particularly for mental health (Davis, 1983, p. 185).

The second major implication of Naturalism's removal of sexuality from the realm of the sacred is to take matters of sexual morality out of the hands of God, and by extension the theological authorities, and place such questions in the hands of individuals. If sexuality is no longer viewed as a potent corruptor of the spirit, but is alternatively seen as a natural biological function, albeit one that retains considerable social and moral significance,
the foundation of sexual ethics is subject to modification.

The Naturalist's ethics for human sexuality are the same ethics of concern and respect for persons that he or she applies to all human interactions. The Humanistic spirit of the sexual Naturalist favors freedom of sexual choice and compassionate respect for others' sexual choices. The Naturalist respects each of us as an end, because each of us is a person with moral autonomy. Humanistic respect for persons translates into Naturalist respect for people's rights to make their own sexual choices. Sexuality—neither idealized nor demonized by the Naturalist—becomes a natural part of living (Mosher, 1989, p. 493-494).

With his tripartite typology of approaches to the regulation of sexuality, Weeks (1985; 1986) contrasts the restrictive Absolutist approach with what he calls the Liberal and Libertarian approaches. In essence, the Liberal and Libertarian approaches to sexual regulation described by Weeks (1985; 1986) are the applied ethics of Davis' (1983) moderate Naturalists and radical Naturalists. I have argued that there is a logical relationship between theoretical assumptions about the nature of sexuality and the complementary system of ethics that is adopted to regulate sexual behaviour. An examination of Weeks' (1985; 1986) descriptions of the Liberal and Libertarian approaches to the regulation of sexuality provides further insights into the sexual ethics of Naturalist sexual ideology in particular and Permissive sexual ideology in general.

The Libertarian approach to the regulation of sexual behaviour is at the perimeter of the permissive end of the continuum of sexual ideologies. It celebrates sex as a subversive means of disrupting the social order. Weeks (1986) cites the Marquis de Sade, George Bataille, Gene Genet, Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse as representative of the Libertarian approach. This approach has an explicitly political agenda. The more transgressive a sexual act is,
the more likely that the more radical of the libertarians will give it their moral approval.

At the heart of this approach is the belief that sexual repression is essential to social oppression; and the moment of social sexual liberation should necessarily coincide with the moment of social revolution. It is a utopian and millenarian project, and that has been its major source of energy (Weeks, 1985, p. 55).

While some conservatives have accused contemporary sexuality educators of holding this kind of libertarian sexual ideology, and although the Libertarian approach has had some influence on the sexual politics of the Western world, particularly in the 1960s, theoretical perspectives focusing on the political ramifications of the social organization of sexuality have not been a major influence on contemporary sexuality education programs (Carlson, 1992).

With his categorization of the Liberal approach to the regulation of sexuality, Weeks (1985;1986) is describing what has become, along with moral absolutism, one of the two most influential moral frameworks for evaluating sexual conduct. The theoretical points of departure of the Liberal approach to sexual ethics are secular moral concepts such as individual rights and moral autonomy and distinctions between morality and law. From this perspective, "The duty of law is to regulate public order and to maintain acceptable (though by implication changing) standards of public decency, not to patrol personal life" (Weeks, 1986, p. 54). From the legal standpoint,

The two classic propositions on which this approach relies are derived from John Stuart Mill: that no conduct should be interfered with unless it involves harm to others; and that it is not the law’s business to enforce morals. The assumption is that intervention should only be contemplated if the harm caused by it will be less than the damage caused by the continuation of a given condition (Weeks, 1986, p. 215).
This combined focus on individual rights and utilitarian concepts of social regulation have underlined legal perspectives that have challenged, mainly in the last several decades, sexual laws based on traditional, usually Christian absolutist, concepts of sexual morality. Indeed, it is in this way that we can speak of the "liberalization" of laws pertaining to sexuality. In those jurisdictions where sex laws have been relaxed or liberalized, these changes have been justified on the grounds that the state does not belong in the bedrooms of its citizens so long as the behaviours in question do not infringe on the rights of others and do not have a demonstrated harm to society. According to Weeks (1985), this distinction between law and morality "has been an important strategy in undermining the absolutist approach, and in creating certain spaces for greater individual freedom" (p. 54).

It is here, in the arena of an individual's sexual morality, that the disagreements between divergent ideological perspectives are most divisive. The Liberal approach stands in stark contrast to the Absolutist approach. Whereas the Absolutist approach relies on a universalized, fixed evaluation of specific sexual acts, implying a socialization process and sexual ethics based on the acceptance of doctrine, the Liberal approach demands individual moral deliberation based on personal choice, context, and needs, and secular moral principles such as equality, justice, and so on. Generally speaking, Liberal philosophy places a "...reliance on individual judgement, uncoerced and unindoctrinated, rather than on established authority in determining matters of truth and morality" (Jagger, 1983, p. 33).

The centrality, within the Liberal approach to sexual ethics,
of individual choice and context places individual deliberation, rather than specific sexual acts, at the pinnacle of moral evaluation. This results in what may be designated as person-centred sexual ethics.

The person is considered as an essentially free being with a capacity for reason, love, and compassion, and the potential for becoming more authentically his or her human self. Sexuality is proposed as an integral aspect of a multifaceted person; sexual relating as an expression of the person in all his or her complexity; and sexual ethics as a specific application of person-centered as opposed to more legalistic act-centered ethics. In making decisions and judgements using this approach, the person-in-context is considered rather than simply judging an act in and of itself as ethically right or wrong. Answering the reality-revealing questions of who, what, where, when, why, and how, as well as considering the viable alternatives to and the foreseeable effects of an act, enables participants to make informed decisions and judgements. The task is to discern the values, choices, and actions that enhance the essential and sacred humanness of the person(s) involved (Lawlor, Morris, McKay, Purcell, & Comeau, 1990, p. 10).

While this person-centred approach, with its focus on individual deliberation with respect to making sexual choices, is more permissive than restrictive in nature, it does suggest that sexual behaviour does need to be guided by moral principles derived from the Liberal philosophical tradition. For example, in rejecting Absolutist sexual ethics and endorsing sexual pluralism, Reiss (1992) proposes that sexual decision making should be guided by the moral principles of honesty, equality, and responsibility.

To oppose sexual dogmatism is not to favor an "anything goes," libertine philosophy. If we oppose the prohibition of alcohol, that does not mean we favor drunkenness. A person can be sexually tolerant and still be discriminating. To favor a rational, thinking, and caring approach to sexual choices is the way to bring control into our sexual lives. The pluralistic position explicitly requires moral restraint by its insistence that we seek to be honest, equal, and responsible in all our sexual relationships. Pluralism is surly not saying "just say yes." If there were a slogan for pluralism, it
would be: "choose wisely." (Reiss, 1992, p. 219).
This person-centred approach to sexual ethics has featured prominently in Permissive ideological conceptualizations of sexuality education in the schools. As Weeks (1986) suggests, "To Liberals, sexuality education was the only means of spreading the information on which rational choices could be made" (p. 95).

Seidman’s (1992) conceptualization of Libertarian sexual ideology generally encompasses Davis’ (1983) Naturalist and Weeks’ (1985;1986) liberal categories. Sexuality is seen in a positive light and is evaluated in terms of its ability to bring happiness.

Sex is viewed as a positive, beneficial, joyous phenomenon. Its expression is connected to personal health, happiness, self-fulfilment, and social progress. Sex is said to have multiple meanings; it can be justified as an act of self expression or pleasure, a sign of affection, love or a procreative act. Sexual expression is said to be legitimate in virtually all adult consensual social exchanges, although most libertarians place sex in a romantic, loving bond at the top of their value hierarchy (Seidman, 1992, p. 5-6).

In characterizing the sexual ethics of this ideology, Seidman (1992) suggests that Libertarians reject absolutist act-centred evaluations of sexual conduct and bring "a highly individualistic liberal concept of free choice to legitimate practices" (Seidman, 1992, p. 206).

Libertarians aim to defend "benign sexual variation" by abandoning a morality centered on the intrinsic moral nature of sex acts. They aim to expand legitimate sexual expression or to reduce state and social controls, by advocating for a minimalistic ethic: sexual exchanges acquire legitimacy to the extent that they are mutually consensual and perhaps entail mutual pleasure and affection (Seidman, 1992, p. 205-206).

In their position on teen sexuality, Libertarians mirror the view of Naturalists and Liberals in that they "would generally defend, at least in principle, sex between adolescents if it were consensual
and responsible (e.g., involved contraceptives)” (Seidman, 1992, p. 6).

If Radical feminism falls within the scope of Romanticism, its main rival within the spectrum of feminist thought, Liberal feminism, fits within the parameters of Siedman’s category of Libertarianism. In terms of sexuality, the Liberal feminist project is to expand women’s sexual self-determination so that it is on a level playing field with that of men. "Liberal feminists seek to remove any restrictions interfering with women’s sexual autonomy and gratification, those imposed by men and those imposed by other women" (McCormick, 1994, p. 9). So while Radical feminism would substitute the restrictions placed on female sexuality by patriarchy with a new set of restrictions, Liberal feminists seek to move from patriarchal restrictions to greater female sexual autonomy without defining the specific characteristics of what constitutes acceptable sexual behaviour. Rather, "they formulate their critique of contemporary sexual norms in terms of their characteristic values of equality, liberty, and justice" (Jagger, 1983, p. 178). This is clearly a Permissive ideological approach to sexuality in that it calls for greater sexual freedom for women and it is up to women as individuals to decide where this freedom will take them. As Seidman (1992) notes, "many women will, and indeed have, repudiated a sexual ideology that stipulates that sex is legitimate only as an expression of love, only as enacted in acts of personal tenderness and only if confined to long-term relationships" (p. 130). Finally, Liberal feminism reflects Permissive sexual ideology in that it sees the essence of human sexuality as positive in nature. Indeed, affirming women’s right to self-determined sexual pleasure is seen
by many Liberal feminists as an integral component of the quest for full gender equality. For these feminists, the hope is that women will be "less compelled to approach sex as a domain of danger" (Siedman, 1992, p. 130).

As with all of the ideologies described in this chapter, Libertarians attach great importance to sexuality in so far as the conceptualization of its nature, purpose and the ethics employed to guide it have significant implications for social life in general. This can be seen in the Libertarian interpretation of the loosening of sexual norms during the 1960s and the subsequent roll back of these trends during the 1970s and 1980s.

Libertarians describe the 1960s as a time of progress in which sex was supposedly liberated from restrictive control of the moral guardians of a repressive order. Sex was accepted as a sensual pleasure; eros moved out of the bedroom into the public arena, thereby losing some of its repressive mystique; tolerance for nonconventional sexual practices and lifestyles expanded. For many Libertarians, the late 1970s and 1980s is viewed as a time of reaction, even backlash. Sexual freedom and diversity are seen as under attack; eros is being blamed for social ills from AIDS to divorce. The forces of order and repression are said to be swelling as they have successfully linked, in the public mind, sexual freedom and permissiveness to social disorder and decline (Seidman, 1992, p. 6-7).

Davis' (1983) Naturalism, Weeks' (1985;1986) Liberalism, and Seidman's (1992) Libertarianism are examples of Permissive sexual ideology. All three represent an opposition to the restrictive ideologies of Jehovanism, Absolutism, and Romanticism. These permissive ideologies are united by their positive view of sexuality and a person centred sexual ethics which greatly expands the range of morally acceptable sexual activities. The rise of Permissive sexual ideology is the result of a number of historical trends including, most notably, the shift, within Western society, from a
fixed to an evolutionary world view. What is problematic about all of this to Restrictive sexual ideologues, many of whom hold fixed, theistically oriented, world views, is that it allows human beings themselves to decide what is morally right and morally wrong.

The profound differences between the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies in terms of the moral aspects of sexual behaviour can be illustrated through an uncomplicated example. An individual contemplating adultery (by adultery I mean the situation in which a married person engages in sexual activity with a person other than his/her spouse) will follow very different paths of moral evaluation depending on whether he or she employs a Restrictive or Permissive ideological approach. From a Restrictive perspective the individual follows the biblical commandment "Thou Shall not commit adultery." From a Permissive perspective, for example Reiss' (1990) honesty, equality, responsibility approach, the issue is not so clear cut. The individual contemplating the act must decide through moral deliberation if, in this particular case, the act of adulterous sex will exhibit the qualities of honesty, equality, and responsibility with respect to all parties involved. The answer to this question is not self-evident but must be arrived at through the deliberative process. This example illustrates two very different approaches to sexual morality, each with a well established history.

Conclusion

In the first chapter we saw that the regulation of sexual behaviour is universally regarded as being a crucial factor in determining the nature of society. Western culture is, however, deeply divided on the wide range of issues relevant to the
conceptualization and structuring of sexuality in our society. The Western cultural discourse on sexuality is characterized by a struggle between what I have called Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies. These ideologies represent diametrically opposed, yet internally consistent, beliefs about the nature and purpose of sexuality in human life and society. The struggle between the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies is frequently seen as a battle for the soul of society itself.

Today the permissives and the conservatives are organized for the politics of sex. The battlegrounds are abortion, legitimation of homosexuality, sex education in the schools, contraceptives for adolescents, AIDS, and sex research. Pat Buchanan, in his preoccupation with the homosexual menace, thinks this amounts to a war. But right now it is politics as usual (Udry, 1993, p. 104).

Not surprisingly, the proponents of each of these ideologies have a keen interest in the nature and content of sexuality education in the schools. As a fundamental agent of socialization, the public school now plays a role in teaching youth about sexuality. Like the broader social disputes around sexuality, the controversy over sexuality education shows no signs of abating. Sexuality education has become a focal point in a larger ideological struggle between opposing views of sexuality.
CHAPTER THREE

SEXUAL IDEOLOGY IN THE SCHOOLS

"What masquerades as sex education is not education at all. It is selective propaganda which artificially encourages children to participate in adult sex, while it censors out the facts of life about the unhappy consequences. It is robbing children of their childhood".


"We have to reject the dogmatic sexual philosophy that states that it is always dangerous to encourage open discussion of sexuality with preadolescents. To impose such 'sexual innocence' on all children, to forbid masturbation, to avoid discussion of sexual feelings, or to condemn sexual exploration is to guarantee that a child will develop a negative view of sexuality and learn more sexual customs from the street than from his or her parents. The way out of our sexual impasse is to reject traditional restraints on children's sexual education and to accept the importance of socializing our children to sexuality from birth onward."


"The school is first and foremost an educational institution; as such its first duty must always be to teach children the truth and good values. The truth is that sexual activity by unmarried teenagers is harmful to them and harmful to society. The morally right value is for young people to avoid such activity".


"...progressive educators must not abandon the field of school sexuality education to those who advocate saying 'no' to sex. Instead, we must continue our work in and outside classrooms to change the social and economic conditions that keep women and men from maximizing their potential as fully human, sexual beings".


Introduction

Given the quotes above, perhaps William Yarber (1994) is stating the obvious when he writes that
The ideological conflict surrounding the question of adolescent's sexuality affects the content of sexuality education. Basically, those who believe adolescents are sexual beings advance a comprehensive approach, while those who deny adolescent sexuality want total abstinence to be promoted by education (p. 10).

In other words, those with a Restrictive sexual ideology want sexuality education in the schools to focus exclusively on persuading children and adolescents to refrain from any type of sexual activity until marriage. Those with a Permissive sexual ideology favour what is commonly referred to as comprehensive sexuality education. Yarber (1994) describes the comprehensive approach as follows.

Some believe that the best way to educate adolescents about their sexuality is by a comprehensive approach involving a broad range of topics and the entire school career, especially as part of a comprehensive school health education program. An important and typical tenet of this approach is that sexuality education should prepare adolescents for the healthy expression of their sexuality instead of focusing only on the prevention of negative consequences. The comprehensive approach not only deals with traditional areas such as reproductive biology and puberty, dating, marriage and STD, but also covers many topics historically considered inappropriate, such as sexual pleasure, noncoital sexual expression, sexuality and society, and homosexuality. This approach affirms the positiveness of sexuality while striving to prevent inappropriate sexual sharing and unprotected coitus (Yarber, 1994, p. 13).

Those who favour comprehensive sexuality education in the schools are said to endorse sexual permissiveness and those who favour an abstinence-only approach to sexuality education are said to be sexual conservatives. As I will try to show in this chapter, it is accurate to say that much, if not most, of the sexuality education occurring in North American public schools is informed primarily by sexual ideology. In many cases, sexual ideology becomes the philosophy of education guiding the curriculum. In other words, many public school sexuality education programs are based on some
fundamental premises about the nature of human sexuality and how it should be appropriately expressed. So, for example, how a sexuality education program addresses an issue like teenage pregnancy prevention is often determined by a particular ideological perspective on adolescent sexuality.

Cannaught Marshner, a leading New Right spokeswoman, has summarized well the divide between the pro-family movement and others on the matter of teenage pregnancy: "They (liberals) begin with the premise that teenagers should not have babies. We begin with the premise that single teenagers should not have sex" (Joffe, 1993, p. 287).

This divide is clearly an ideological one: Marshner is not referring here to what constitutes the most effective practical strategy for helping teenagers avoid unwanted pregnancies, but is stating a difference in moral perspective. She is articulating the moral premise of Restrictive sexual ideology which argues that teenagers should not have sex and contrasting it with the Permissive moral premise that teenagers should, and inevitably will, choose for themselves how best to prevent pregnancy.

The degree to which the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies have influenced sexuality education in the schools has varied across time and place. As I will show, in some cases, contemporary public school sexuality education is overwhelmingly dominated by a particular sexual ideology. In other cases it is a melange of conflicting ideological influences. In still others, because of the ideological conflict surrounding sexuality, educational programs are, due to political expediency, lacking in substance. Examining sexuality education in terms of the extent to which it is guided by sexual ideology raises profound questions about the degree to which sexuality education functions as a form
of ideological indoctrination rather than as space for students to explore and critically deliberate between different ways of thinking about sexuality.

The Influence of Restrictive Sexual Ideology on Sexuality Education

Throughout most of Western history, various forms of Restrictive sexual ideology have played a hegemonic role in guiding the sexual norms, ethics, and social policies of our culture. As a result, we can expect that, historically, the sexuality education of youth would follow the dictates of restrictive sexual ideology. According to Money (1985), we have been living, for most of our history, under an "...official policy of antisexual prudery..." that "...distorts all public education texts for juveniles on sex education and family life" (p. 118). Consequently, "During the last 100 years...in the United States sex education materials for young people have emphasized fearful and dangerous aspects of sexuality (e.g., disease, pregnancy, behavioral aberrations)" (Frayser, 1994, p. 210). In sum, just as it has traditionally guided society in general, Restrictive sexual ideology has until recently also determined to a large extent whether sexuality education would be offered in the schools and what its form and content would be if it did occur.

In recent decades, the proponents of Restrictive sexual ideology have considerably changed their perspective toward sexuality education in the schools. Prior to the 1980s, the primary thrust of the Restrictive ideological approach to sexuality education was simply that it did not belong in the schools. "Their strategy has been to avoid the topic altogether if possible or call
for parents as the only proper purveyors of sexual information" (Pollis, 1983, p. 288). At the heart of the Restrictive ideological opposition to sexuality education was the firm belief that children and adolescents had little or no need for information about human sexuality. Knowledge of sexuality was only needed as an individual prepared to enter marriage. As recently as 1987, Tim Lahaye (1987), the president of an organization called Family Life Services argued that

Having lectured hundreds of times on the subject and having written a best-selling book on sexual adjustment in marriage, I believe we can teach most people all the basic ingredients in two or three hours just prior to marriage (p. 87).

Phyllis Schlafly (cited in SIECUS, 1993), president of the Eagle Forum, suggests that as far as teenagers are concerned, "The facts of life can be told in fifteen minutes" (p. 17) and that teens should be told to "...keep your hands out of what’s inside your swimsuit -that takes care of most girls and boys" (Schlafly cited in Haffner & De Mauro, 1991, p. 19). The Restrictive ideological conceptualization of sexuality argued that a well-adjusted individual would wait for marriage to engage in sexual activity. It followed that supplying youth with sexual information was simply unnecessary. Presumably, keeping sexual information from youth would, working in conjunction with restrictive social norms upholding the virtue of premarital virginity, keep children and adolescents sexually innocent.

Furthermore, according to the restrictive anti-sexuality education perspective, instruction in human sexuality was not only unnecessary, it was extremely dangerous. Sexuality education led to a preoccupation with sex which in turn inevitably led to
promiscuity. According to psychiatrist Melvin Anchell (1987),

Today's K- through - 12 sex education programs lead young people into becoming conscienceless, polymorphous sexual robots capable of engaging in any kind of sex act with indifference and without guilt (p. 52).

Many of those people who have actively opposed sexuality education in the schools did so because they "...were convinced that young people who were informed about sexuality will promiscuously indulge in premarital sexual intercourse and become pregnant" (Bruess & Greenberg, 1994, p. 61).

However, from the restrictive ideological perspective, the greatest problem with sexuality education in the schools was that it was likely to focus, in part, on the concept of decision-making, encouraging students to make at least semi-autonomous choices about their sexual behaviour. In school-based sexuality education, "Refusing sex, no less than having sex, becomes a matter of following individual dictates rather than following socially instituted and culturally enforced norms" (Dafoe-Whithead, 1994, p. 80). This violates the restrictive ideological principle that an individual's decisions about sexual behaviour are to be derived from an external authority which prescribes pre-set standards of sexual conduct. In effect, from this view, individuals - least of all children and adolescents - should not make sexual decisions based on personal deliberation per se except to endorse the prescriptions of Restrictive sexual ideology. As long as sexuality education in the schools encouraged or focused on decision-making it was in conflict with Restrictive sexual ideology. As I will argue later in this chapter, the focus on personal deliberation and decision-making is a primary emphasis of sexuality education informed by Permissive sexual ideology.
By the 1990s, the Restrictive ideological battle to prevent sexuality education in the schools had been lost. In response to public opinion favouring sexuality education in the schools and a growing awareness of the need to educate youth in regard to AIDS prevention, nearly all states now either mandate or recommend that sexuality and/or AIDS education be taught in the schools (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1989; Britten, de Mauro, & Gambrell, 1992). In Canada, all the provinces and territories have school programs that include some form of sexuality education (Barrett, 1994).

Having lost this battle, proponents of Restrictive sexual ideology now actively seek to have sexuality education programs that exclusively reflect their ideology implemented in the public schools. This shift in the Restrictive ideological approach to sexuality education in the schools can be summarized as follows.

Opponents formerly argued that schools had no role in sexuality education, and that sexuality education was the sole province of parents and/or religious groups. The new strategy is for opponents of comprehensive sexuality education to define themselves as being in favour of sexuality education, so long as the curriculum exclusively emphasizes abstinence-only, or the "just say no" approach. Abstinence is defined in these curricula to mean that young people should refrain not just from sexual intercourse, but from any sexual activity (e.g., masturbation, breast fondling, kissing) (Scales & Roper, 1994, p. 73).

The influence of Restrictive sexual ideology on contemporary sexuality education can most readily be seen in the growing call for abstinence-only sexuality education programs in the schools and in the content of abstinence-only curricula. The arguments provided in support of abstinence-only programs, as well as the value positions promoted in abstinence-only curricula, provide an undisguised example of how these sexuality education programs are typically guided, first and foremost, by the influence
of sexual ideology. The conceptual fit between Restrictive sexual ideology and abstinence-only programs such as Sex Respect and Teen-Aid is seamless.

The current abstinence-only sexuality education movement in North America can be traced to the resurgence of conservative political and social values manifested in the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States in 1982. Sexuality was a fundamental rallying point for the New Right. As Weeks (1986) notes, "During the 1970s and early 1980s some of the most skilful and influential developments of a politics around sexuality has come from the conservative forces, especially those grouped under the umbrella label of the New Right" (p. 89). According to Trudell and Whatley (1993), the organized campaigns to introduce Sex Respect and Teen-Aid into the schools

...must be seen in the context of a conservative resurgence over the past 15 years in government, national politics, and education. It is part of a growing backlash against gains made in the areas of civil rights, including race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability - particularly gains made by feminists. Fear-based abstinence-only curricula are part of a well-funded and well-organized political movement, the New Right, that has been increasingly able to influence public school curricula (p. 269).

Official government support for sexuality education informed almost exclusively by Restrictive ideology was displayed with the passage of the Adolescent Family Life Act.

Enacted in 1981 and often considered the far rights' "alternative" to the Title X family planning services program, the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) has two primary purposes: the prevention of teenage pregnancy through the teaching of abstinence, and the promotion of adoption over abortion as the appropriate choice for teenagers who become pregnant (Richards and Daley, 1994, p. 56).

Passage of the AFLA led to government funding for the
development and promotion of a number of abstinence-only sexuality education curricula intended for use in the public schools, including Sex Respect and Teen-Aid (Kantor, 1994). According to former Senator Jeremiah Denton (cited in Rhode, 1993, p. 313), author of the AFLA, "The most effective oral contraceptive yet devised is the word 'no'." These programs, in accordance with Restrictive sexual ideology, promote sexual abstinence as the only viable lifestyle for unmarried persons, and reflect other Restrictive ideological positions on homosexuality, abortion, and gender. The links between abstinence-only sexuality education and right-wing or conservative ideology are well known (Eisenman, 1994; Goodson & Edmunson, 1994; Kantor, 1993, 1994; Sanderson & Wilson, 1991; Sedway, 1992; Trudell & Whately, 1991, 1993; Yarber, 1992).

Not only were AFLA funds used to sponsor these programs but, in effect, the AFLA funds were used to support the organizations that developed them, organizations that have become the major opposition to comprehensive sexuality education in the United States (Richards & Daley, 1994, p. 14).

In the United States, the Sex Respect curriculum has been adopted by over 1,600 school districts and other similar programs such as Teen-Aid are being used in many other communities (Sedway, 1992). Although Sex Respect has yet to gain a foothold in Canada, over 20,000 students in Saskatchewan schools are taught the Teen-Aid curriculum (Mitchell, 1993).

The philosophy behind these abstinence-only programs is straight-forward, reflecting the moral absolutes of Restrictive sexual ideology. As a spokesperson for Sex Respect puts it, young people "...must not only be told how to decide but also what to decide about sex. That decision should be to avoid sexual activity until marriage" (Socia, cited in Medical Institute for Sexual
Health, 1993, p. 1). Furthermore,

There is no neutral position. To simply say that it is okay to abstain conveys the idea that it is okay not to abstain. Directive abstinence teaches that the only right, good, and healthy activity is to abstain from sexual intercourse until marriage (Soscia, cited in Medical Institute for Sexual Health, 1993, p. 1).

Sex Respect was written by Colleen Kelly Mast who also authored Love and Life: A Christian Sexual Morality Guide for Teens (Trudell & Whately, 1991). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that according to Trudell and Whately (1991), many of the recommended resources and cited sources in Sex Respect "are published by organizations with specific religious agendas" (p. 128). The curriculum itself is unabashed in its abstinence-only, if not anti-sex, orientation.

The curriculum underscores the progressive dangers of sexual arousal in a chart that identifies the "beginning of danger" as occurring with a "prolonged kiss", with dangerous arousal increasing through "necking" and "petting" to "sexual intercourse." That chart concludes grimly with "end of relationship in its present form" (Trudell & Whately, 1991, p. 132).

Authored by Steven Potter and Nancy Roach (1990), the Teen-Aid curriculum follows a similar pattern. The curriculum contains a full chapter on the Advantages of Abstinence but has little to say about contraception/safer sex except to point out their risks and disadvantages. Fifteen advantages of premarital abstinence are described, including "Freedom from the bother and dangers of contraceptives", "Freedom from the trauma of having to give your baby up for adoption", "Freedom to develop respect for self", "Freedom to have greater trust in marriage", and "Freedom to enjoy being a teenager" (Potter & Roach, 1990, p. 163). Meanwhile, a separate chapter, Consequences of Adolescent Sexual Activity, begins with the message that providing teenagers with contraceptives -
"birth control pills and condoms so you can have sex and not get pregnant (caught)" - is the equivalent to saying "here are some guns and getaway cars so you can steal and not get caught" (Potter & Roach, 1990, p. 163). The chapter continues with a descriptive list of the negative consequences of teen pregnancy, infection with sexually transmitted diseases, and the physical and psychological after effects of abortion.

In sum, both the Sex Respect and Teen-Aid curricula exclusively present to students a Restrictive ideological view of adolescent sexuality. Sexuality is presented in an essentially negative light and abstinence is urged as the only acceptable lifestyle for teenagers.

Although it is clear that at the curriculum content level, abstinence-only sexuality education programs vividly reflect Restrictive sexual ideology, it remains unclear as to whether these programs are philosophically grounded in accepted or popular theories of educational practice that provide a justificatory basis for exclusively encouraging abstinence. Or is it the case that with abstinence-only programs, educational practice is indelibly imprinted at its very core not so much by a philosophy of education per se but by a sexual ideology?

Within the literature advocating abstinence-only sexuality education there is little explicit explication of the relationship between the basic tenets of the abstinence-only approach to educating youth about sexuality and the broader philosophy of education that it embraces. Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility by Thomas Lickona (1991), professor of Education at the State University of New York and a
past president of the Association for Moral Education, provides one of the few examples of a detailed attempt to provide a justification for abstinence-only sexuality education. What is strikingly apparent from an analysis of Lickona's basic philosophical approach to educating youth about moral issues in general and his approach to educating about issues of sexual morality in particular is that the two approaches are in direct conflict. An analysis of Lickona's perspective towards these issues helps to illustrate how abstinence-only sexuality education is guided more by a sexual ideology than a more general philosophy of education. Lickona recommends Lawrence Kohlberg's well-known theory of moral development as a basis for many aspects of moral education in the schools, but recommends for sexuality education an approach to the moral aspects of sexuality that is completely contrary to Kohlberg's theory.

Taken as a whole, Kohlberg's theory of moral development and education is an inherently complex body of work (for a summary see Kohlberg, 1981; 1984). Kohlberg's approach to moral education is based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development and a moral philosophy that focuses on the principle of justice. In short,

Kohlberg combines philosophy and psychology to explain (1) what is meant by morality and (2) how one develops more adequate modes of moral reasoning. The results of his philosophical analysis and psychological research provide teachers with a powerful rationale for, and explanation of how to promote moral growth (Reimer, Paolitto & Hersh, 1983, p. 12).

At the heart of Kohlberg's approach to moral education is the classroom discussion of moral dilemmas as a method of facilitating students' moral development. In presenting a class with moral dilemmas, the teacher gives students an opportunity to think about and discuss conflicting value positions about the moral dilemma in
question.

In *Educating for Character*, Lickona (1991) endorses Kohlberg's dilemmas approach, noting that

With this approach, a teacher encourages students to use their own moral reasoning and allows for different responses. But at the same time the teacher challenges students to examine their reasoning and that of their peers critically (p. 245).

Lickona argues that the use of classroom dilemmas where competing points of view are debated will help students develop the skills for rational decision-making and cites research supporting the use of classroom dilemmas in facilitating moral development.

Lickona is particularly adamant in regard to the appropriateness of using the dilemma approach for controversial social issues. In a chapter titled *Teaching Controversial Issues*, Lickona (1991) discusses the necessity for young people to address controversial issues as a key aspect in helping students make "...reasoned judgements about the difficult moral questions of our day (p. 269)." He cites the Vietnam war as a useful example of a controversial moral issue that can be addressed in school-based moral education. By discussing issues like the Vietnam war, students are encouraged "...to arrive at their own judgements by examining conflicting points of view fairly" (Lickona, 1991, p. 270). American involvement in the Vietnam war is presented as a moral dilemma in which students are asked to "Consider all points of view and identify the assumptions behind the different viewpoints and the values behind the assumptions" (Lickona, 1991, p. 270). In sum, Lickona's recommendations for integrating controversial issues in the classroom are roughly congruent with Kohlberg's cognitive developmental approach to moral education.
In a separate chapter of *Educating for Character* Lickona (1991) turns his attention to sexuality education. Although he opens the chapter by stating that "Sex education must educate young people about the moral dimensions of sexual conduct" (Lickona, 1991, p. 348), his approach for teaching about controversial issues such as premarital sex is strikingly different than it is for issues like the Vietnam war, nuclear power, and medical ethics, among others. Rather than ask students to critically examine conflicting viewpoints so they can make their own informed judgements as he does for other issues, Lickona (1991) argues that when it comes to sex "The challenge now before the schools is to help young people in every way possible to make the moral decision not to get sexually involved" (p. 349).

The school is first and foremost an educational institution; as such its first duty must always be to teach children the truth and good values. The truth is that sexual activity by unmarried teenagers is harmful to them and harmful to society. The morally right value is for young people to avoid such activity (Lickona, 1991, p. 364).

In his chapter on teaching controversial issues Lickona (1991) states that while teachers may express their own opinions about controversial issues, "the classroom should not be used as means for the inculcation of their own personal opinions and beliefs" (p.271). Yet, for the controversial moral issue of premarital sex, Lickona (1991) maintains that

Schools clearly have a responsibility to their communities - as well as to the moral growth and well-being of young people - to select sex educators who do not approve of sexual involvement by their students (p. 373).

Lickona (1991) is clear that as far as the moral aspects of sexuality are concerned, students should not critically evaluate
different points of view through Kohlberg's dilemma approach, but rather "an unambiguous commitment to the value of abstinence for teenagers gives sex education the clear ethical viewpoint needed to engage, and positively influence, students' sexual moral values" (p. 355).

It seems clear that while Lickona's approach to teaching about most controversial moral issues is compatible with Kohlberg's theory of moral development and education, his approach to sexuality education is not. In one of his few statements about how his theory could be applied to sexuality education, Kohlberg (1974) suggests that moral dilemmas of a sexual nature can be "...approached as other moral dilemmas are approached - that is in a developmental rather than a preaching or indoctrinative manner" (p. 111). Rather than impose specific moral viewpoints, the teacher engages the "...student in a process of thinking and dialogue about a moral issue of concern, and the process allows the student to move to the next stage of development in thinking about that issue" (Kohlberg, 1974, p. 112).

What is particularly noteworthy about Lickona's position on the teaching of sexuality education is that the primary justification for his approach is a moral one: abstinence-only sexuality education instils truth and good values. (For a similar argument favouring abstinence-only sexuality education see Kilpatrick, 1993). Whatever the merits of Lickona's moral perspective on the issue of teenage sexuality, it is striking that he has chosen indoctrination as an educational approach for this issue but favours an approach where students use their own moral reasoning for other, nonsexual, controversial issues. How can this
discrepancy be explained? Lickona offers no explanation for why his approach to teaching young people about the issue of premarital sex is so radically different than his approach for teaching about other controversial moral issues. This apparent contradiction is perhaps reflective of the tendency for sexual ideology to gain ascendancy over the basic value of freedom of belief as a guiding force behind sexuality education programs in the schools. While Lickona never discloses his own view on controversial moral issues such as the Vietnam war or abortion and is content with Kohlberg's dilemma approach for addressing these issues in the classroom, he clearly holds a Restrictive sexual ideology. This is evident not only in his statements about the virtues of teenage abstinence but also in those pertaining to the "ideal of sex within marriage." Not surprisingly, Lickona strongly endorses Sex Respect and Teen-Aid as examples of the best kind of sexuality education.

Thomas Kelly (1986) describes four approaches to discussing controversial issues in the classroom, one of which, called exclusive partiality, provides an apt summation of the abstinence-only approach to sexuality education.

This position is characterized by a deliberate attempt to induce students into accepting as correct and preferable a particular position on a controversial issue through means which consciously or unconsciously preclude an adequate presentation of competing points of view. In more authoritarian forms of exclusive partiality teachers assert or assume the correctness of a particular point of view while competing perspectives are ignored, summarily dismissed, or punitively downgraded (p. 116).

Yarber (1992), in describing those groups who most actively support abstinence-only sexuality education, suggests that they hold what cannot be mistaken for anything other than a Restrictive sexual ideology.
These groups adhere to an absolutist or fixed worldview ideology based on biblical authority, although some individuals and groups may be more tolerant. Adherents of this perspective believe, for example, that sexuality is basically animal passion and must be controlled, that the main goal of sex is marriage and reproduction, that sex is acceptable only in heterosexual marriages, that masturbation and same-gender relationships are forbidden, and that males are the superior gender. In other words, there is only one right way for everyone. Sexuality is dominated by fear and denial, and its expression is accompanied with shame, guilt, and embarrassment (p. 327).

While it is, for all intents and purposes, imminently clear that Restrictive sexual ideology is at work in abstinence-only curriculums, its presence is also discernable in most other forms of school-based sexuality education. There can be no question that the Restrictive ideological insistence that sexuality education actively promote sexual abstinence pervades sexuality education in the schools. National surveys of sexuality education in the United States have found that only a small minority of states provide a balanced discussion of both abstinence and safer sex practices, the former receiving far more emphasis than the latter (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1989; Britton, de Mauro & Gambrell, 1992). In Canada, the same approach to sexuality education can be found in some provincial ministries of education curriculum policies. For example, Prince Edward Island's Family Life Education program suggests that "Central to teaching about human sexuality is the moral and social value of abstinence from sexual intercourse as an ideal practice for unmarried persons" (P.E.I. Department of Education, 1988, p. iv). In a similar vein, the AIDS education component of New Brunswick's Health and Physical Education program suggests that "Teachers have a responsibility to promote adolescent sexual abstinence as a primary means of preventing transmission of the HIV virus" (New
The province of Manitoba’s Department of Education and Training’s student objectives for Family Life Education illustrate the tendency toward Restrictive sexual ideology in contemporary sexuality education. While among the list of student objectives is "an appreciation of sexual abstinence as both a health and moral value among young people" and "an understanding of the risks and consequences of adolescent sexual activity" (Manitoba Education and Training, 1990, p. 6), none of the objectives refer to things such as an appreciation of the health value of consistent condom use among sexually active young people.

The Dutch sexologist Jany Rademakers (1995), in reviewing an American publication on model programs for teenage pregnancy prevention, offers the following observation on the apparent emphasis on promoting abstinence in sexuality education.

"From my (Dutch) point of view, the amount of effort aimed at either sexual abstinence or the postponement of first sexual intercourse is astounding. Since the international comparative study on teenage pregnancy by the Alan Guttmacher Institute (Jones et al., 1986), we already know that postponement of sexual intercourse is not a prerequisite to avoid teenage pregnancy. Effective use of contraceptives should therefore be the targeted behavior in pregnancy prevention programs. Instead of teaching teenagers to behave responsibly and maturely in this respect, for example, by encouraging them to choose their own time, place, and conditions to have intercourse, they are more or less explicitly told that having intercourse is wrong for teenagers. This moralistic message is often defended with a practical argument: the logical fact that less teenagers having intercourse results in less teenagers at risk for unintended pregnancy. But the same applies, for example, to car accidents and no one would think about forbidding people to drive a car or postponing the age one can get a driving license. The question program designers and authors should really answer is: Would they consider it bad for teenagers to have sexual intercourse when they would protect themselves effectively against pregnancy and AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD)? When they answer this question affirmatively, their
restrictive attitude toward teenage sexuality becomes evident, whereas all others can start aiming their activities at the real problem: unsafe sexual behavior (p. 359-360).

It is clear that, if they were candid about it, many of those who profess a Restrictive ideological approach to sexuality education would answer in the affirmative to Rademaker's query.

The Influence of Permissive Sexual Ideology on Sexuality Education

It is difficult to discern the specific influences of Permissive sexual ideology on contemporary sexuality education in the schools. Because Permissive sexual ideology emerged out of a culture in which Restrictive sexual ideology was, until relatively recently, largely hegemonic, the Permissive influence on sexuality education has been somewhat diffuse. Sexuality education has always been controversial and when confronted with opposing views "...government reaction has occurred primarily in the direction of fundamentalism" (Neutens, 1992, p. 72) In other words, because sexuality education programs informed by Permissive sexual ideology take place within a larger culture that is heavily influenced by Restrictive sexual ideology, few of these programs have completely escaped the cultural weight of Restrictive ideology. For example, whereas sexuality education based on Restrictive sexual ideology exclusively promotes abstinence, programs informed by Permissive sexual ideology frequently bend to Restrictive sexual ideology by complementing discussions of safer-sex not just with a discussion of abstinence but with the recommendation that abstinence is the "most effective" or "best way" to prevent unwanted pregnancy and STDs. (For example, see American School Health Association, 1991, p. 111; Frost & Darroch Forrest, 1995, p. 190; Yarber, 1993, p.
Indeed, the Restrictive ideological belief that educators should be in the business of promoting sexual abstinence among teenagers has become so accepted that even educators who would be considered Permissive in their approach to sexuality education often actively lobby adolescents to be abstinent. For example, as Joffe (1993) explains

...it is in fact not only pro-family adherents who believe in sexual abstinence for teenagers. Many, if not most, "liberals" who work directly in the field of pregnancy prevention also deeply believe in the desirability of the choice of abstinence for teenagers, and they actively promote this option (p. 287).

Although some form of Restrictive sexual ideology is present in most, if not all, sexuality education programs in the schools, the mere existence of school-based sexuality education is testimony to the powerful influence of Permissive sexual ideology. In addition, many of the precepts of Permissive sexual ideology have

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1 The assertion that "abstinence is the best way to prevent pregnancy and STDs" appears to be a taken for granted assumption within the public and professional discourse on adolescent sexuality and sexuality education. However, abstinence is only "the best way" if an individual or couple is, of their own accord, willing to forsake the potential benefits of sexual activity. The statement seems to assume that all rational adolescents would choose abstinence: An issue that certainly could be debated. Do all adolescents who choose to become sexually active do so irrationally? An analogous statement that frequently appears in sexuality education curricula is that "abstinence is the only 100% effective means of pregnancy and STD prevention." However, this statement is only true in-so-far as the individual who chooses abstinence is able to abide by that choice consistently. Many people who make vows of abstinence are unable to keep them. History certainly shows us that if abstinence is to be considered a birth-control method, it is far less than 100% effective. Indeed, a study of American contraceptive practices found that of people who report that they use abstinence as their method of contraception, 26% become pregnant each year (Jones & Forrest, 1992). Both of these statements are perhaps indicative of how certain Restrictive ideological assumptions are so deeply ingrained in our culture that they are rarely questioned.
become the guiding principles of many sexuality education programs. Indeed, conservative critics have pointed to the influence of Permissive sexual ideology as a justification for condemning current forms of sexuality education in the schools. For example, according Barbara Dafoe Whitehead (1994),

The unifying core of comprehensive sex education is not intellectual but ideological. Its mission is to defend and extend the freedoms of the sexual revolution, and its architects are called forth from a variety of pursuits to advance this cause (p. 70).

Whereas I have earlier suggested that the unifying core of abstinence-only sexuality education is Restrictive sexual ideology, Dafoe Whitehead is making a similar argument about the relationship between Permissive sexual ideology and comprehensive sexuality education. An analysis of the evolution of contemporary sexuality education in the schools shows that this argument is not without foundation.

Of the architects of modern sexuality education, Mary Calderone was perhaps the most influential. A medical doctor by profession and former Medical Director of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Calderone co-founded the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) in 1964. She served as the executive director of SIECUS for over five years and remained a key SIECUS spokesperson for many years afterward. Through the 1960s and 1970s, Calderone worked diligently to further the cause of sexuality education. Szasz (1982) refers to her as "the founding mother of modern sex education"(p. 124). While many, if not most people, would applaud Calderone's efforts to see that young people have the opportunity to learn about human sexuality, her critics are quick to point out that her views on the proper nature of sexuality
education were liberal and permissive (e.g. Reisman & Eichel, 1990; Szasz, 1982). On one level, Calderone was seen as liberal and permissive because she advocated "... a good, basic, window-opening course of education for sexuality" (Calderone cited in Mass, 1990, p. 68), a view that few Restrictive ideologues shared during the 1960s and 1970s.

It is apparent that at the time Calderone was advocating for the right of people to receive sexuality education, she believed, with some justification, that the primary obstacle to providing such education was the religiously inspired taboos surrounding sexuality. These taboos kept basic sexual information out of the reach of most people. Her solution was to separate sexuality from religion and its moral dictates and link it instead with the concept of health. When asked in an interview if this was her purpose, Calderone responded:

Yes, and that turned out to be wise because it took sex out of the realm of morals. Fundamentally, sex has always been preempted by the religions and everybody kept hands off. By putting it into the area of health, where it scientifically belongs, by recognizing its role in physical, mental, and social well-being, we immediately freed it for objective, less emotional study and consideration (cited in Szasz, 1982, p. 122).

Calderone's statement that linking sex with health "took sex out of the realm of morals" reflects the common, but faulty, assumption that sexual morality is equivalent to religious morality. This statement is deceptive because Calderone did not take a moral-free approach to her philosophy of sexuality education. In fact, she invoked a basic moral principle in saying that "sexual self determination is clearly what sex education is all about" (Calderone, cited in Szasz, 1982, p. 123). In chronicling the sexuality education controversy in the United States during the 1960s, Breasted (1970), although highly critical of the Right-wing
opponents of sexuality education, discerned in Calderone's writing and speeches "...a willingness to present the truth selectively to youngsters. Instead of a propaganda by polemics, she was in favor of filtering material to them that supported her views on morality" (p. 238). In terms of the morality of premarital sexual intercourse, it is clear that while Calderone had no qualms about advising teenagers of the medical and emotional risks of premarital sex, she also argued for the provision of contraceptives to young unmarried couples (Breasted, 1970, p. 237). Kobler (1972) describes Calderone's moral perspective as follows:

As to sexual morality, Dr. Calderone is no absolutist. "Do's" and "don'ts," she believes, cannot be imposed on the young by fiat. They simply won't accept them. In her own moral code the key words are "exploitation" and "responsibility." Sex with no object except transient physical pleasure she scorns as the crassest exploitation of one's partner. A moral person considers the welfare not only of the opposite sex but also of family and society. Though Dr. Calderone feels that the odds against a responsible, meaningful sexual relationship outside of marriage are overwhelming, she concedes the possibility. "But [before making any decision on the subject] young people should be given all the information and help to make a good decision" (p. 136).

Although one can discern elements of the Romanticist variant of Restrictive sexual ideology in this perspective, it is essentially permissive in nature. The rejection of moral absolutes in favour of more pragmatic considerations such as the welfare of others is characteristic of Permissive sexual ideology. The notion that a morally valid sexual relationship can occur outside of marriage is also a clear marker of Permissive sexual ideology.

The ideology behind Calderone's and SIECUS's philosophy of sexuality is evident in SIECUS's mission statement during the 1960s, which was as follows:
To establish man's sexuality as a health entity: to identify the special characteristics that distinguish it from, yet relate it to, human reproduction; to dignify it by openness of approach, study, and scientific research designed to lead towards its understanding and its freedom from exploitation; to give leadership to professionals and to society, to the end that human beings may be aided toward responsible use of the sexual faculty and toward assimilation of sex into their individual life patterns as a creative and re-creative force (Breasted, 1970, p. 206-207).

This mission statement is clearly not ideologically neutral. In commenting on contemporary SIECUS positions, (Ruenzel, 1993) argues that

There is in the SIECUS materials an earnestness about sexual matters that seems far removed from moral lassitude. It seems to me, rather, that SIECUS has values to which its opponents simply object. Chief among these values, according to the group's mission statement and guidelines, is the importance of conveying sexuality as "a natural and healthy part of life," be it heterosexual or homosexual expression. The goal of comprehensive sex education, a SIECUS fact sheet reads, "is to assist children in understanding a positive view of sexuality..."(p. 25).

Calderone's approach to sexuality and sexuality education is reflective of Permissive sexual ideology in three distinct ways. First, viewed in the historical context of the 1960s, Calderone's belief in the virtues of sexuality education in the schools, providing sexual information to young people, was characteristic of Permissive sexual ideology. During this period, those with a Restrictive sexual ideology generally opposed the idea of sexuality education in the schools. Second, the reliance on science, as opposed to religion, as the explanatory framework that would deliver the goods on what constitutes responsible sexuality reflects the philosophy of Naturalism which informs much of Permissive sexual ideology. Third, the sexual ethics that Calderone proposed as a framework for sexuality education was, at the very least,
sympathetic to Permissive sexual ideology.

The adoption of a Naturalist conceptualization of human sexuality is perhaps the most easily discernable influence that Permissive sexual ideology has had on contemporary sexuality education programs in the schools. As I noted in Chapter Two, Naturalists conceptualize the nature of human sexuality, not from the standpoint of spirituality as Jehovanists do, but rather from the standpoint of science and nature. Sexuality, from the Naturalist point of view, is simply one of many more or less "natural" parts of life. This view is reflected in Mauro's (1990) survey of sexuality education programs of the public schools which found that "two thirds of the curricula affirm that sexuality is a natural part of life" (p. 7).

It is clear that the most common theme in modern sexuality education in the schools is a focus on the biology of reproduction and STDs. In fact, it is often the case that sexuality education consists of little else aside from biology. While few would disagree with the idea that sexuality education should include biological information, programs that rely exclusively on the science of biology as an explanatory framework for learning about human sexuality should not be seen as completely neutral in their approach. As Whatley (1987) points out in her analysis of

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4 The coexistence of this tendency to affirm the Permissive ideological notion that sexuality is a natural part of life appears to coexist with Restrictive ideological notions, such as the abstinence-only imperative, suggests that the content of contemporary sexuality education in the schools is influenced by a melange of often contradictory ideological influences. One can imagine that some students may have difficulty grasping the concept that although sexuality is a natural part of their lives, they must resist their inclinations for sexual expression.
contemporary sexuality education, "The scientific approach to sexuality can easily lead to a view in which the 'laws of nature' neatly coincide with a political agenda" (p. 29).²

Although biologically-based sexuality education is frequently viewed as ideologically innocuous, particularly by its proponents, it is clearly compatible with Naturalist sexual ideology. As Davis (1983) argues, "Although Naturalists believe that their sex education courses teach children about sex in an unbiased way, they actually proselytize Naturalist metaphysics by depicting a cosmos in which sex is merely a neutral, natural, harmless activity like any other" (p. 243). While neither the proponents of Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology are content with the reduction of sexuality education to the provision of strictly biological information related to reproduction and STDs, such education is more likely to conform to Permissive sexual ideology in that it fails to prescribe strict limits on sexual behaviour.

The adoption of Values Clarification as a method of exploring ethical issues related to sexuality is perhaps the most potent example of the influence of Permissive sexual ideology on the history of modern sexuality education. During the 1960s and 1970s, the forces of Permissive sexual ideology began to have some success in introducing sexuality education into the public school classroom. However, in attempting to articulate the moral context in which sexuality education would take place, these educators were caught

² It is not only those with a Restrictive sexual ideology who oppose a strictly biological approach to sexuality education. For example, both Sears (1992) and Whatley (1987) are concerned that this type of sexuality education de-emphasizes the pleasurable aspects of sexuality and may reinforce prevailing gender stereotypes by, perhaps inadvertently, promoting biological determinism.
in a catch-22. On one hand, the advocates of sexuality education were keenly aware that their programs needed to avoid any hint of moral indoctrination. Substantiated accusations that sexuality education was enforcing a particular set of moral, most likely Permissive, prescriptions would be catastrophic to the cause of sexuality education. This lead to the popularization of the idea of a "value-free" or "value neutral" sexuality education. The idea of a value-free sexuality education was appealing because it would achieve the dual purpose of freeing programs from the rigid morality of Restrictive sexual ideology and of removing the spectre of indoctrination. As Andrew Greely (1988) puts it,

One of the reasons that the allegedly "value-free" approach to sex is so popular is that those who claim to have a "value-oriented" approach have almost universally confused interpretation with morality. In the minds of most people, to have values about sex means to be saddled with a heavy baggage of moral prohibitions (p. xiv).

Since "a heavy baggage of moral prohibitions" did not correspond to Permissive sexual ideology, the proponents of sexuality education often portrayed themselves as taking a value-free approach. Morris (1994) describes the appeal of a value-free approach to sexuality education.

Some social scientists in this period argued that sexuality education should remain value-free. Louis Karmel (1970), for example, argued that sexuality education should be limited to "sex information." This information should impart "biological and mechanistic data without prescribing how these impulses should not be channelled" (p. 95). Karmel saw the teaching of values-related areas as inappropriate for public schools given the growing pluralism of American society and given the lack of certainty about value issues (p. 7-8).

With the 1966 publication of Values and Teaching by Raths, Harmin, and Simon the values clarification movement began to gain
currency. The book has been a standard text for training teachers to teach moral education in the classroom (Carter, 1984, p.49). Values clarification became a popular model of moral education during the 1970s. Its rise to prominence can be attributed to the growing recognition in educational circles of the need to conceptualize moral education in a way that accommodated the growing moral pluralism of American society. This pluralism, it is argued, leads to "value confusion."

Values clarification advocates point out that within "value-rich" areas such as politics, religion, friendship, love, sex, race, and money, decision making is subject to many influences. Students are exposed to parental, peer, school, and religious influences, which often contradict one another. The effects of such variables as working parents, broken homes, television, big schools, different teachers, a variety of friends, and travel often result in value confusion (Hersh, Miller & Fielding, 1980, p. 74).

Values clarification would help young people overcome their value confusion.

According to the principle architects of this theory, many of the problems experienced by young people "...are profitably seen as caused by a lack of values" (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1978, p. 10). Those who lack values tend, it is claimed, to be flighty, apathetic, uncertain, inconsistent, drifting, overconforming, and overdissenting. Those, however, who develop a clear sense of what their values are in the relationship between themselves and society will be more likely to exhibit qualities of being positive, purposeful, enthusiastic, proud and consistent. This approach is not necessarily value free, but rather attempts to remain value neutral by limiting itself to helping students clarify what their values are.

The goal of values clarification is to help students develop
the desired qualities by participating in class exercises involving a seven-step valuing process. Once students are accustomed to addressing value related issues through reference to the seven-step process they will exhibit the desired qualities typical of those who are able to have a clear sense of their own values. The seven steps of values clarification are: choosing freely; choosing from alternatives; choosing after consideration of the consequences; prizing and cherishing; affirming; acting upon choices; and repeating (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1978).

Values clarification has become a common way of addressing value-related issues in sexuality education. It is a frequently proposed strategy within the sexuality education literature (for example see Bruess & Greenberg, 1994; Lohrman, 1987; Morrison & Price, 1974; Vincent & Pfefferkarn, 1994). In Canada, surveys of teachers (Lawlor & Purcell, 1988) and curriculum guidelines (Ajzenstat & Gentles, 1988) suggest that values clarification is the preferred approach. According to Morris (1994) "This is by far the most popular position on values in sexuality education" (p. 11).

Morris (1994) summarizes the rationale for the integration of values clarification into sex education.

Although proponents of values clarification reject the idea that sexuality education should be value-free, they do argue that teachers should remain value-neutral. They argue that teachers should be non-judgemental and should convey to students that there are no right or wrong answers. Since values are viewed as personal and subjective, the teachers role is to ex-pose but not im-pose values. Sexuality education, the argument goes, ought to encourage decision-making by helping students clarify their own values (p. 11).

However, as Morris (1994) notes, even this type of presumably value-neutral sexuality education was vigorously denounced by Right wing groups who maintained that any type of sexuality education in the
schools "...would lead to moral perversion and the disintegration of the family" (p. 8).

In the end, the value-free approach was unworkable, leading to a "catch-22" in that although sexuality educators had now side-stepped the potential accusation of moral indoctrination, they were now susceptible to accusations of an even more heinous crime: implying, albeit perhaps unintentionally, that sexuality itself need not be subjected rigorous moral analysis. This was highly problematic since most people will agree, no matter their ideology, that sexuality and morality are inextricably linked. Aside from the moral absolutes of Restrictive sexual ideology, it is an "...undeniable fact that a considerable part of managing sexuality also involves managing social relationships" (Gagnon & Simon, 1973, p. 123).

This claim is based on the contention that sexuality is, in many respects, relational in nature. Sexual expression, apart from autoeroticism, affects both the person who relates sexually and those who are the objects of that expression. It is this relational component that constitutes a way in which nearly all people can agree that sexuality is directly tied to morality. Of course, the conditions that lead a particular instance of sexual contact between people to have positive effects in the moral sense is necessarily dependent on the sexual ideology of those who wish to pass judgement on the sexual act in question. Nevertheless, it may be said that the interpretation of the way one's actions in a particular situation affects the welfare of others is a major component of morality (Rest, 1984). Thus, if sexuality is viewed in its relational context, it becomes a topic for critical discourse from the
standpoint of social morality (Darling & Mabe, 1989). In sum, sexuality educators had a dilemma on their hands in that they had a difficult time articulating a way in which they could refrain from indoctrination on one hand, and avoid being highly relativistic on the other.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, Permissive sexual ideology is not without moral substance. Although its opponents have sometimes tried to portray the sexual ethics of Permissive sexual ideology as being extremely relativistic, if not entirely subjective, it is more likely that most people who hold a Permissive sexual ideology champion secular moral principles such as mutual consent, reciprocity, and fairness as the basis for sexual ethics. However, driven by the imperative to avoid community controversy and charges of indoctrination, the advocates of sexuality education, most of whom held a Permissive sexual ideology, in many respects betrayed their ideology's moral perspective by embracing the openly relativistic values clarification approach as their way of integrating values into sexuality education.

It is, perhaps, self-evident that when Restrictive ideologues assert that public schools must insist that their students adopt an abstinence-only standard of conduct, they are promoting indoctrination: telling students what to think rather than exploring different ways of thinking. It is, perhaps, less self-evident, but often no less true, that Permissive ideologues, through the promotion of values clarification in sexuality education, are guilty of a similar offense. But doesn't values clarification encourage and respect students freedom of belief? The answer is yes, but only within the confines of Permissive sexual ideology. Among the
fundamental steps of the valuing process in values clarification is the task of choosing between alternatives. Making such choices is fully consistent with the ethics of Permissive sexual ideology. They are, in fact, an exercise in decision-making within the Permissive ideological framework of sexual ethics. The philosophical adequacy of these exercises may even be enhanced, to become more reflective of the essence of Permissive sexual ideology, with the introduction of substantive moral criteria such as considerations of honesty, equality, fairness etc.... What needs to be made very clear, however, is that while choosing among alternatives is a staple of Permissive sexual ideology, it is anti-ethical to Restrictive sexual ideology. From a Restrictive ideological perspective, addressing a question like "should I have premarital sex" does not involve choosing between the alternatives becoming sexually active or remaining abstinent until marriage: one follows the moral absolute that sex before marriage is immoral. Values clarification exercises rarely ask students to clarify their religious beliefs or basic philosophy of life. Rather, they typically present a concrete dilemma to be solved through the process of choosing among alternative solutions to a specific situation. This is at odds with the core principles of Restrictive sexual ideology. For example, adhering to natural law theory does not mean choosing among alternatives, it means learning and applying moral absolutes.

Ajzenstat and Gentiles (1988) note that the values clarification approach is directly contrary to the sexual ethics espoused by most religious and ethical traditions which rely on, in their words, "objective standards" for decision-making. It may be inferred that what the authors mean by "objective standards" is the
moral absolutes of Restrictive sexual ideology.\textsuperscript{6}

We would add that virtually all of the world's religions or ethical traditions could furnish the framework of an "objective standards" based sex education program. Globally speaking, it is hard to think of an ethical/religious tradition, apart from Western liberal utilitarianism, that would sanction a "personal values" approach (Ajzenstat & Gentiles, 1988, p. 61).

The important issue here is that it would appear that many sexuality education programs do not offer students an impartial opportunity to differentiate and ultimately choose between the "objective standards" that are the moral absolutes of Restrictive sexual ideology and the "liberal utilitarianism" of Permissive sexual ideology. Rather, the values clarification, used by so many sexuality education programs, seems to validate Permissive sexual ethics as a preferred form of moral judgement.

Values in Sexuality: A New Approach to Sex Education written in 1974 by Morrison and Price contains a large number of values clarification exercises designed to be used in the sexuality education classroom. Although the authors contend that "...the approach in this book precludes endorsement or condemnation of any particular point of view with regard to sexual codes..." (Morrison & Price, 1974, p. 11), many of the values clarification exercises contained in the book are conducive only to the parameters of Permissive sexual ideology. For example, the first exercise in the values clarification section of the book asks students to answer the following multiple choice question, "For me, it is most important that a sexual experience: a. Be fun and pleasurable. b. Increase the

\textsuperscript{6} Ajzenstat & Gentles (1988, p. 45) cite programs that are "deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian values" or that encourage students to behave in ways that "will be in keeping with their duties to God, themselves, and society" as examples of sexuality education that promotes "objective standards."
possibility of honesty and openness. c. Enhance self-respect" (Morrison & Price, 19754, p. 97). All of these choices are reasonable within a Permissive ideological perspective. However, none of the three choices conforms, in any direct way, with the dictates of Restrictive sexual ideology. If the list of choices had included "Has the potential to result in procreation within a marital relationship" or "Contributes to the loving bond of a mature marital relationship" then one could at least argue that the possibility of choosing an option reflective of Restrictive sexual ideology was possible within the boundaries of the exercise. Other exercises follow the same pattern. For example, students are asked to complete the following item. "In a sexual relationship, I would prefer that: a. Sex be more meaningful to me than to the other person. b. Sex be more meaningful to the other person than me. c. Sex be meaningful to neither one of us" (p. 99). None of these possible answers are amenable to Restrictive sexual ideology.

In sum, values clarification reflects Permissive sexual ideology in two distinct ways. First, students are encouraged to repeatedly make deliberated choices about specific sexual issues. They are not being asked to clarify their ideological perspective as a precursor to discussing these issues, but rather are being sent the explicit message that choosing among alternatives is the preferred method for doing sexual ethics. This reflects Permissive sexual ideology, but is directly contrary to Restrictive sexual ideology. Secondly, as the two examples given above show, the alternative choices provided in most exercises of this kind
exclusively fit Permissive sexual ideology. Restrictive ideologues may have a point when they accuse the proponents of values clarification in sexuality education of attempting to rig the proceedings in favour of Permissive sexual ideology. It might even be argued that the integration of values clarification into sexuality education represents a covert attempt to introduce an exclusive partiality representing Permissive sexual ideology. As Kelly (1986) notes,

> Whether the advocacy and dismissal is done passionately or matter of factly, haphazardly or more systematically, the sum effect is a one-sided presentation where challenge to the preferred point of view is discouraged or precluded. In more subtle forms of partiality, the teacher may give the appearance of permitting genuine dialogue and dissent yet nevertheless attempt to stack the deck (p. 116).

In other words, while values clarification is, at first glance, impartial with regards to divergent sexual ideologies, it is fully compatible only with Permissive sexual ideology.

**The Bare-Bones Approach to Sexuality Education in the Schools**

There is another form of sexuality education in the schools which is far more prevalent than those which are exclusively partial to either Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology. This is not a form of sexuality education that impartially allows students to explore, critically evaluate, and affirm or reject various sexual...

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7 It should be acknowledged that some of the exercises provided by Morrison and Price do allow for the expression of views amenable to Restrictive sexual ideology. For example, one exercise asks students to consider a number of specific sexual activities with the aim of having individual students clarify whether the activity is "Acceptable to me, Does not matter to me", or is "Unacceptable to me". Indeed, such an exercise may be quite useful in helping students clarify their ideological position.
ideologies. Nor is it a form of sexuality education that encourages students to clarify their own ideological perspectives and debate their implications for self and society. Nor does this form of education provide students with a broad base of information which they need to protect their health. This most prevalent form of sexuality education does none of these things. It is what I call the bare-bones approach to sexuality education and it occurs precisely because of our society's ideological conflict around sexuality.

Because there is a pervasive conflict of sexual ideologies in Western society, it is often the case that sexuality educators go to extraordinary lengths to avoid offending the proponents of both Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology. Sexuality educators have, as Whately (1992) writes, "picked up the strong message that it is dangerous to teach about sexuality and that every care must be taken to avoid attracting notice or stirring up controversy" (p. 78). Many educators, as we have seen, respond to the threat of controversy by claiming a nonpartisan or neutral status for their sexuality education as they relate to different ideological perspectives on sexuality. However, in most cases, the chosen strategy to accomplish this feat is not to teach in a way that is inclusive of different ideological perspectives for this itself would cause controversy. Rather, the chosen strategy is to omit from the program any topic that is the subject of ideological dispute. As Neutens (1994) suggests,

While the conservative and liberal camps fight over "what's right" and "what's wrong", those in the middle are left in a moral smog that compounds an already difficult decision-making process. As a result of the moral smog, well-founded program objectives may be diluted or distorted at the local level (p. 30).

Kelly (1986) describes this approach to education as a
position of exclusive neutrality. It is the idea that "teachers should not introduce into the curriculum any topics which are controversial in the broader community" (Kelly, 1986, p. 114). Such exclusion, it is argued, "allegedly preserves the nonpartisan or neutral status of the school" (Kelly, 1986, p. 114).

There is no question that what passes for sexuality education in the schools most often consists of little more than the most cursory provision of knowledge about human sexuality. As Haffner (1992) puts it, "Although most young people receive some type of sexuality education before they graduate from high school, what is labelled sexuality or family life education is often little more than teaching about biology, reproduction, and virology" (p. vii).

A number of surveys of the content of sexuality education programs in the United States clearly indicate most programs are characterized by the omission of fundamental aspects of human sexuality (Britton, Mauro, & Gambril, 1992; Calamidas, 1990; Forrest & Silverman, 1989; Holtzman & Greene, 1992; Mauro, 1990). For example, one review of state sexuality and AIDS education curricula in the United States found that,

few provide information on the historical and cultural aspects of human sexuality, sexual values, attitudes, beliefs, sexual activities and functioning. Fewer than one in ten include any information on sexual behaviors. Almost half of the curricula limited information about family planning. In fact, fewer than one in six of the state curricula provide young people with a comprehensive base of information and education (Mauro, 1990, p. 7).

Because sexuality is so controversial, for school administrators and educators, the safest possible position to take is that of exclusive impartiality: the omission from sexuality education of any substantive base of critical thought and knowledge.
Conclusion

Based on a series of interviews with the proponents of both abstinence-only and comprehensive sexuality education, Nelson (1996) articulates the ideological context and scope of the battle over sexuality education in the schools.

My interviews with advocates of comprehensive sexuality education show a deep concern that abstinence-only education is part of a crusade to transform contemporary American society into an authoritarian theocracy.

Similarly, my interviews with the proponents of abstinence-only education suggest that their opposition is based upon a belief that comprehensive sexuality education is a component in "relativist" ideology where students will learn to choose their own sexual values.

The work of both groups stems not only from their desire to promote specific sexual ideologies and societal visions but also from their perception that the opposition represents a crucial component in a hostile and encroaching political movement.

As such, the debated curricula are manifest symbols in a much larger cultural struggle over which of the two group's visions of morality, family, and gender will predominate (p. 16).

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate how the ideological underpinnings of the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies have influenced the form and content of sexuality education in the schools. I have described three tendencies that shape sexuality education. The first two - sexuality education informed by Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology - represent exclusive partiality: the explicit or implicit imposition of a particular sexual ideology. The third and most prevalent tendency is for sexuality education to take a position of exclusive neutrality: the omission of any subject matter which might be deemed to be controversial.

Which, if any, of these three forms of sexuality education is preferable? In chapters Four, Five and Six, I will argue that sexuality education informed by either Restrictive or Permissive
ideology is unacceptable for two basic reasons. First, it is not possible to conclusively demonstrate that one ideology is superior to the other. Second, even if demonstrating the superiority of one ideology were possible, imposing the superior ideology, through the public education system, would not be acceptable in a just society. This, I believe points us in the direction of a democratic philosophy of education as the most reasonable framework for the form and content of sexuality education.
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCOVERING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE NATURE OF SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL ETHICS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SEXUALITY EDUCATION

There is no easy way to decide who is right because, like scientific paradigms, each interpretive sexual scheme determines the very facts by which it justifies itself.

In observing the mote in our opponent’s eye we may have become blind to the beam in our own.

Introduction

How should we, as individuals, groups, and a society, respond to the social conflicts around sexuality in general and sexuality education in particular? Our initial response might be to engage in a comparative, presumably objective, critical assessment of the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies in order to draw some conclusion about which ideology seems more reasonable in the sense that it corresponds to the essential and true nature of human sexuality and reflects sound moral reasoning. By drawing a conclusion of this kind, we might want to create and implement sexuality education programs in the schools that are based on the superior ideology, perhaps intending to impose it on the adherents of the inferior ideology. If we look at the history of sexuality education, we can see, as I tried to show in Chapter Three, that assumptions about the superiority of one ideology or another have determined, to a considerable extent, the shape of sexuality education in the schools. But is it possible to arrive at a
definitive and objective conclusion about the true nature and purpose of human sexuality?

In this chapter I will argue that one cannot conclusively demonstrate the superiority of a particular sexual ideology in either a scientific or philosophical sense. This being the case, I will propose in Chapter Six that a philosophy of sexuality education ought to be based not on a particular sexual ideology, but on a democratic perspective that acknowledges ideological diversity and the right of individuals and groups to hold, and live by, different sexual ideologies.

Can We Discover the Truth About Sexuality?

Can we as a society arrive at a truth about sexuality that is independent of ideology? This question can be addressed in a number of ways but all of them raise doubts about the likelihood of finding universal non-ideological truths about the nature of human sexuality and sexual ethics. In general, part of the problem in finding the truth about sexuality is that it is very difficult to come at these issues in a completely detached way. When we discover something about the sexual we discover something about ourselves both individually and as a society. At the personal level, our values may be supported or refuted, our desires and emotional responses normalized or pathologized, our identity affirmed or questioned. At the societal level, our inquiries into the nature of sexuality can dramatically shape our perceptions of appropriate social policy regarding fundamental aspects of the social order. In sum, there is much at stake when we seek the truth about sexuality. Since we are all sexual beings to some extent, with identities, attitudes, and
values, it's not hard to see why bringing an impartial eye to finding an ideology-free truth about sexuality is a highly problematic project. Although this observation seems self evident as a matter of simple common sense, the same type of critique, focusing on the problems encountered in attempting to objectively explore human sexuality, provides solid grounds for being sceptical of truth claims about sexuality emerging from scientific, theological, or philosophical discourse.

Assessing the potential of the various empirical and social sciences to deliver the truth about sexuality, to provide value-free, unbiased criteria to determine the validity of Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies, easily, or perhaps necessarily, slides into an interpretive evaluation of the concept of objectivity as it pertains to empirical observation and moral philosophy. While my inquiry into sexual ideology does imply a questioning of our empirical and moral objectivity in sexual matters, my focus is not on solving the philosophical puzzle of objectivity per se, but is on presenting a reasonable justification for questioning a claim that either Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology entails a reality-revealing set of indisputable facts that captures the true essence of human sexuality and its appropriate role in social life. Although one might argue that the question of sexual ideology is ultimately answered in terms of our ability to think and examine objectively, I will rest my case on the assertion that sexual ideologies correspond to complex socially derived assumptions rather than on a set of value free objective facts which can be easily demonstrated.

In sum, I am taking a social constructionist approach to the
analysis of sexual ideology which, I hope to show, provides a convincing case for the need to not only acknowledge ideological diversity but also to understand it in a way that allows us, no matter our own sexual ideology, to affirm the right of others to hold beliefs about sexuality that are contrary to our own. As I shall discuss in greater detail, later in this chapter, acceptance and affirmation of diversity of sexual ideology does not deny that truth exists but only that it is contingent upon the ideological world view in which the truth is sought. The higher order question then becomes one of how we live in a society where no one truth about sexuality is likely to universally prevail.

In matters of sexuality, which are imbued with intense individual and social importance, affirming the right of others to hold beliefs about sexuality that oppose our own is exceedingly difficult. As I indicated in Chapters One and Two, we have reached a conflicted ideological impasse in our society where we have been reduced to accusing opposing ideologies of being wrong headed, destructive, unhealthy, morally bankrupt, and discriminatory. A social constructionist analysis of sexual ideology may provide an initial foundation for moving away from an intellectual and sociosexual framework that pushes us to wage the war of ideological superiority to a more pluralist acceptance of diversity. This requires that we, as sexual ideologues of all stripes, begin to approach issues of sexuality and sexuality education in ways that we, in our society, are unaccustomed to. We are familiar and comfortable making the, often unconscious, assumption that our truth is the truth of the universe: the way things really are. Seeing our truth as a truth that corresponds not necessarily to the universe,
but to the internal reality of our ideology opens new avenues to thinking about many of the issues that divide us as a society.

Social constructionism relies on methods of inquiry drawn from symbolic interactionism, symbolic anthropology, ethnomethodology, literary deconstructionism, existentialism, phenomenology, social psychology and other theoretical perspectives that emphasize the role of historical and socio-cultural contingencies in arriving at epistemological assumptions (Tiefer, 1995). In terms of the individual’s experience and knowledge of the sexual, social constructionists maintain that our perceptual lenses for seeing the sexual are tinted and framed by a social milieu that is specific to a particular cultural context.

What these disciplines have in common is an emphasis on the person’s active role, guided by his or her culture, in structuring the reality that affects his or her own values and behavior. This perspective is to be contrasted with empiricism and positivism, which ignore the active role of the individual in favor of the impact of external forces that can be objectively examined and analyzed (Tiefer, 1995, p. 18).

Social constructionism emphasizes the cultural origins of the development, substance and meaning of social categories such as masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality etc. It stresses that sexual meanings and behaviours are learned as culturally normative scripts. "The actual experience of the sexual as well as what is done sexually by individuals is a result of particular learning circumstances of a specific culture" (Gagnon, 1990, p. 4). Historical and cross cultural variations in sexual norms and beliefs provides credibility to the social constructionist view that sexuality is never free from the guiding hand of ideology.

This theory allows for an understanding of the historical and cultural mediation of sex and gender, and also examines the issue of power and privilege. When we
explore how certain constructs change over time and across cultures, we can start to understand the role of certain groups and organizations in establishing new ideas and expectations. We can begin to ask, "How does the meaning of certain activities change historically?" and "For whose benefit does this operate?" We can examine conflict over language, definitions, policy, and legislation. Whether we are discussing stereotypes about men and women, teenage pregnancy, the emergence of a gay community, or the medical discourse on sexually transmitted diseases, social construction theory acknowledges human agency in sexuality and gender. And it becomes increasingly clear that sexual and gender differences are not simply variations but delineate important dimensions of political activity and conduct. Essentialist theory with its belief in normal, stable categories of sexuality and gender, can easily support a dominant ideology that views some behaviors and privileged and others as inferior (Irvine, 1990, p. 20).

The role of social forces in shaping our sexual beliefs and behaviours does not, in my view, completely negate the possible contributions of biology in the configuration of human sexuality. It does, however, suggest that the forces of history and culture are omnipresent. For example, it has been proposed that some aspects of human sexual desire and behaviour are the artifacts of evolutionary processes (Buss, 1994; Symons, 1979; 1980). As anthropologist Donald Symons (1980) argues, "Human beings, like all living things, were designed by natural selection. On this there is little scientific question. Natural selection is the only known candidate" (p. 171). Thus, according to Symons and others who argue for a psychobiological explanation of human sexual behaviour, our genetic heritage, moulded by the forces of natural selection, creates psychological predispositions that shape our sexual desires and behaviours. This psychobiological theory of sexuality closely corresponds to the underpinnings of Naturalist sexual ideology and its validity rests on an acceptance of an evolutionary world view and of the power of natural selection to influence our sexuality.
It is not my intention here, nor is it necessary, to argue that all aspects of human sexual behaviour are either biologically or socially driven. Rather, I am suggesting that our beliefs, our ideologies related to sexuality, are socio-cultural constructions.

In any case, the extent to which this psychobiological perspective corresponds to a hypothetically culture-free human nature is unavoidably muted in its relevance by the mediating powers of the social environment. In the words of Jerome Bruner (1990), "The biological substrate, the so called universals of human nature, is not a cause of action but, at most a constraint upon it or a condition for it" (p. 20-21). Most importantly, biology has little or no impact on how we construct and perceive the meaning of sexuality. "So if sex is not a natural act, a biological given, a human universal, what is it?" (Tiefer, 1995, p. 7). According to Tiefer (1995), sex is

a concept with shifting but deeply felt definitions. Conceptualizing sex is a way of coralling and discussing certain human potentials for consciousness, behavior, and expression that are available to be developed by social forces, that is, available to be produced, changed, modified, organized, and defined. Like jell-0, sexuality has no shape without a container, in this case a sociohistorical container of meaning and regulation (p. 7).

Thus, even our most basic assumptions, as individuals and groups, scientists, theologians, and lay persons, about the nature and purpose of human sexuality can only be confirmed or rejected within the context of a particular version of what must be an admittedly subjective socially constructed reality.

The social constructionist conceptualization of the sexual as being subjectively experienced, through cultural contingencies, extends also to our attempts to discover, through social science
inquiry, the nature of human sexuality. As Simon (1989) puts it, "Despite its implicit posture of describing social life from some transcendent elevation, all social science remains inescapably part of the social world it attempts to describe, explain and understand" (p. 32). To the extent that this proposition is accurate, establishing the superiority of one sexual ideology over another, with any reasonable degree of certainty, becomes highly problematic.

Along with theology, the science of sexology represents our society's most formalized, or official, means of acquiring insights about human sexuality. Sexology, as defined by the American College of Sexology is "the interdisciplinary science of sex including its anatomical, physiological, psychological, medical, sociological, anthropological, historical, legal, religious, literary, and artistic aspects" (Francoeur, Perper, & Scherzer, 1991, p. 588). It is often presumed that science can tell us the unbiased truth about sex. But can sexology maintain a genuine value neutrality?

In our culture, we have often been accustomed to thinking of sharp distinctions between science and philosophy. We commonly think of science as the domain of empirical proof: provider of observable facts. Philosophy, however, is commonly thought of as the domain of belief, perception, reasoned argument, and values. In this view, while a philosophic position may be entirely persuasive, it is, unlike the fact driven scientific stance, a perception or value driven argument. In advancing their theories about the nature of human sexuality, many 20th century sex researchers have striven to portray themselves as investigators employing the methods of empirical science rather than as social philosophers engaging in
speculative conjecture. For example, Money (1991) argues that those working in the fields of sexual medicine, therapy, and education are influenced by what he suggests are the conceptually distinct concepts of "sexology" and "sexosophy".

Today's practitioners of sexual medicine and pedagogy, who look into the mirror of sexological history, see that they are reincarnations of their 19th century forebears, whose professional persona was divided. On the one side of the divide is the sexual researcher; on the other side, the sexual law reformer. To the researcher belongs sexology, the concepts of which derive from the principles of science; to the reformer belongs sexosophy, the concepts of which derive from a philosophy of sexuality (Money, 1991, p.1).

As Clive Davis (1992) notes, "'sexosophy' seems to smack of bias, of preconceived notions, of values, of subjectivity" (p. 12). And yet, sexosophy seems to continually make its presence felt in the discipline of sexology.

The positions advocated or opposed by some who call themselves sexologists concerning such controversial issues as sexual addiction, sexually explicit materials, childhood (particularly adult-child) sexual expression, and sexual orientations are by no means objective, supported by empirical evidence; nor are the views of some who advocate particular forms of sexuality education or particular types of sex therapy techniques as the right way to do it. These positions and actions are not the result of having reconciled well thought out theoretical perspectives with reliable and valid evidence. These positions are more often based on implicit assumptions and values about the nature of sexuality and what defines good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable sex that have not been validated (Davis, 1992, p. 13).

Unless these positions are subject to objective validation, Davis' observation suggests that it may be inevitable that sexology and sexosophy must be reconciled as "the two halves of one whole" (Money, cited in Davis, 1992, p. 12).

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8 For historical accounts of the methodologies of modern sexology see Bullough, 1994; Irvine, 1990; Robinson, 1977.
Any attempt to prove the superiority of a particular sexual ideology must confront the inevitability that our theorizing, whether in terms of scientific or philosophical-religious paradigms, is unavoidably built on the foundation of some basic presuppositions. These presuppositions are, as Reiss (1993) puts it, "the general assumptions we make about how the world operates, including moral assumptions about how it should operate" (p. 4). Drawing from Thomas Kuhn's (1970) critique of positivistic science, Reiss (1993) suggests that what we refer to as "facts" derived from empirical data are themselves dependant in their creation on the paradigmatic presuppositions of the person or group who is making the statement of fact. As a result, these data, and the conclusions drawn from it, "are not a precise representation of the 'true external reality' of the world" (Reiss, 1993, p. 4).

Kuhn's major point was that to see the world we must make some basic assumptions, what I am calling presuppositions, about how the world operates. We need some presuppositional lenses through which to see the world, or we are blind. We are not born wearing the one correct prescription lens for perceiving reality. Our basic assumptions, or presuppositions, lead us to a theory about how the world operates. What we call empirical data or "facts" are shaped by these prior views of reality. Facts are not just there to be discovered. Rather...we begin to observe a selective set of "facts" only after we start to view the world through the lenses prescribed by our presuppositions (Reiss, 1993, p. 4).

What becomes immediately apparent here is that ideological and scientific paradigms are fashioned using the same epistemological dynamics. Both require presuppositions that colour the way the world is seen.

In chapter Two, I suggested that each sexual ideology encompasses particular conceptualizations of the nature of human sexuality, assumptions about sexuality's inherently negative,
benign, or positive attributes, and about the function of sexual desire and behaviour which in turn lead to conclusions regarding the naturalness or unnaturalness of specific sexual behaviours. So, for example, within Restrictive sexual ideology sexual pleasure is essentially negative in its character and consequences and the function of sex is reproduction. Behaviours that fall inside this conceptualization are deemed natural and those that fall outside it, such as homosexuality, are condemned as unnatural. In other words, in order to decide if a given sexual behaviour is natural, we must have a standard of nature against which to compare and evaluate the behaviour. But what is nature? We can only discover nature by looking through the lens of our ideological presuppositions about the world.

What we call natural is, in fact, a confused mixture of biological and religious explanations used to justify our culture's norms. When we label sexual behavior as "natural" or "unnatural" we are actually indicating whether the behavior conforms to our culture's sexual norms (Strong & Devault, 1994, p. 35).

The use of the terms nature or natural, however, often functions to mask the subjective, socially constructed basis of what is being said. By employing these terms in our rhetoric "the existence of a material world that lies outside of human intervention is assumed" (Tiefer, 1995, p. 32).

By emphasizing that something is in nature, an author gives whatever is being discussed solidity and validity. That special rhetorical power often seems to call on nature by contrast with culture, as if anything human-made can be the result of trickery, but something prior to and outside of human culture can be trusted. The laws of nature, for example, are thought to be above human politics, while the laws of people are polluted with politics. The term confers the authority of something before or underneath culture, something prior to culture. Sexual nature, then, sounds like something solid and valid, not human made (Tiefer, 1995, p. 32-33).
Once ideologically bound visions of what is natural become embedded within a culture, they take on the appearance of objective truth, a taken-for-granted set of assumptions about the way things really are. The social constructionist analysis of sexuality has helped to bring about an awareness that our perceptions of the nature of sexuality are contained within the confines of ideology. Among the many implications of this new-found awareness is that, evolutionary psychology notwithstanding, many aspects of our sexual nature are culture bound.\(^9\)

We have recognized that ideology works precisely by making us believe that what is socially created and therefore subjected to change is really natural and therefore inevitable. We no longer believe that of all social phenomena sexuality is the least changeable but, on the contrary, that it is probably the most sensitive

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\(^9\) This point should not be taken to mean that the Restrictive ideological belief in a fixed view of human nature is any less correct than the Permissive ideological belief in an evolving view of human nature. Rather, it suggests that all beliefs in particular visions of human nature are to some extent culture bound. As Weeks (1995) notes, “Social constructionism has no political belonging. It does not carry with it any obvious programme. On the contrary, it can be, and has been, used recently as much by sexual conservatives as by sexual progressives” (p. 8).

Restrictive ideological approaches to homosexuality offer a clear example of the social constructionist bent of some Restrictive ideological thinking. For example, Jehovanist ideologues do not deny that homosexual desire exists or that culture has shaped and, much to their consternation, legitimized homosexual identities. Indeed, their approach is profoundly constructionist in that they believe that if moral and legal prohibitions against homosexuality are applied rigorously and consistently enough, the practice of homosexual behaviour will be greatly diminished if not eliminated. The fact that many Restrictive ideologues argue for a sexual morality based on the presumably objective standards of God’s commandments does not logically prevent them from invoking a social constructionist analysis of sexuality. They acknowledge the social and historical relativity of human affairs but see it as opening up the possibilities for humanity to drift away from God’s will. The solution for the Restrictive ideologue is to aggressively pursue social norms that bring us as close as possible to the infallible objective moral standards of the supernatural.
to social influence, a conductor of the subtlest changes in social mores and power relations (Weeks, 1992, p. 393).

In sum, our ideological presuppositions provide the conceptual hook upon which we hang our philosophical beliefs about the nature of the universe and, subsequently, our convictions regarding the naturalness of various sexual behaviours. This, in turn means that, as Habermas (1990) puts it, "an exclusive division of labour between philosophy and science is untenable" (p. 14). Sexosophy and sexology are never completely divisible. Although social scientists conducting research in human sexuality have developed, mainly in the last two decades, sophisticated methods of investigation resulting in increasingly sound theoretical constructs, the emergence of post-positivistic science and postmodern analysis has made rigid truth claims in the social sciences difficult to support (Rosenau, 1992, p. 89).

This scepticism of truth claims helps to explain why the science of sexology, although it may be quite useful in many respects, cannot help us, to any great extent, in resolving ideological disputes about the nature of human sexuality. In the realm of sexuality, ideology and science are never completely separable.

Consequently, those who attempt to refute, say, the Jehovahist interpretation of sex through "scientific" research will seldom dissuade a single believer, no matter how impeccable their logic or irrefutable their facts. For the world views that underlie sexual interpretations are not held rationally, but rather are the very conditions of rationality. They determine which arguments about a topic seem reasonable and persuasive. Most scientific studies of sex simply do not seem reasonable and persuasive to Jehovahists because they

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10 For a review of contemporary sexological theory see Geer & O'Donohue, 1987.
disregard what Jehovanists regard as its most important aspects. Thus Naturalist sexologists "talk past" Jehovanists (and of course Jehovanists do the same to them) (Davis, 1983, p. 230).

The objective validity of our assumptions about the nature of human sexuality must, to some degree, be illusionary and suspect since nothing that we perceive, think, or say can be entirely independent of the social world within which we exist or the ideological space that we occupy. This does not mean that we can never say anything meaningful about sexuality or present compelling, albeit ideologically based, arguments about what is the best approach to sexuality issues. Nor does it mean that the findings of sexologists cannot be helpful in better understanding human sexuality. It does mean that those who claim to know the complete and final truth about such matters, and who claim that others must be made to see this truth, should be viewed with a wary eye.

Ultimately, there is only one criterion by which beliefs can be judged valid, and that is that they are based on agreement reached by argumentation. This means that everything whose validity is at all disputable rests on shaky foundations. It matters little if the ground underfoot shakes a bit less for those who debate problems of physics than for those who debate problems of morals and aesthetics. The difference is a matter of degree only, as the post-empiricist philosophy of science has shown (Habermas, 1990, p. 14).

If the modern history of sexuality, and the social constructionist tradition in particular, reveals anything that is definitive or indisputable, it is that the foundational ground underfoot the discourse on sexuality shakes with the force of an earthquake.

If our ideas about the nature of human sexuality cannot be realistically held up as universalized truths, what about the ethics that various ideologies propose to guide sexual behaviour? Are we able to make truth claims about the relative merits of ideological
conceptualizations of right and wrong sexual behaviour? As we begin
to lay the foundations for social policy around sexuality related
issues, including a philosophy to guide sexuality education in the
schools, this question becomes of fundamental importance.

Within the realm of Restrictive and Permissive sexual
ideologies, their respective claims about the nature of sexuality
and the ethics that ought to govern sexual behaviour are one and the
same theory extended in different directions. If sex is, from the
Restrictive perspective, essentially negative in nature, it follows
that the moral rules that govern it should direct sexual behaviour
in the direction of its narrow range of socially desirable outcomes:
procreation and/or intimacy in "mature", monogamous relationships.
If sex is, from the Permissive perspective, either benign or
positive in nature, it follows that the moral rules that govern it
should allow for a wide range of contexts in which sexual acts are
morally acceptable.

This is not to suggest that universal moral principles of
human conduct cannot be identified or justified, but rather that
since the sexual ethics proposed by Restrictive and Permissive
sexual ideology derive part of their justification from socially
constructed notions about the nature of human sexuality that
constitute truth only for those who share that ideological world
view, neither moral paradigm has universal applicability. For those
who do not inhabit the ideological space of a particular sexual
ideology, reconciling that ideology's concept of sexual morality as
representative of objective morality is a nonstarter. It is akin
to being asked to see an apple as an orange. As Fromer (1983) puts
it "To be universalizable, a moral theory must be sufficiently
concrete to be understood by a vast majority of rational people" (2-3). In regards to the specific criteria used to judge the morality of particular sexual acts, the adherents of opposing sexual ideologies do not share a concrete common ground. This is why those with a Restrictive sexual ideology cannot accept the epistemological foundations of person-centred sexual ethics and why those with a Permissive sexual ideology cannot endorse the logic of an act-centred sexual ethics.

As I discussed in Chapters One and Two, particularly in relation to the development of Restrictive sexual ideology, many of our prevailing beliefs about sexuality are religious in origin. Therefore, we need to consider, at least briefly, the ideological claims about sexual morality that are rooted in theological interpretations of sexuality. Although religious traditions consist of both concrete socio-cultural and abstract spiritual elements (Progoff, 1963), when regarded as systems of spiritual belief, the claim on behalf of a particular religious tradition for the universal application of that tradition's sexual ethics is subject to the same problems faced by secular moral truth claims.

It perhaps goes without saying that, at their very essence, religious beliefs are a matter of faith rather than of concrete observations about the material world. Faith "is based on the religious experience of people as they individually relate to the transcendent" (Johnstone, 1975, p. 14). And subsequently, the individual's relationship with the transcendent involves an element of the "supernatural, a power or being not subject to the laws of the observable universe" (Johnstone, 1975, pp. 16-17). In the moral domain, ethics based on religious faith require "human beings to
make some response to God.... A theistic orientation must relate to moral ideas or there would be no point to theologic theories of morality" (Fromer, 1983, p. 31).

A logical relation implies that a practice derives from a belief and that a particular belief implies a practice. A psychologic relation denotes that a theistic orientation motivates obligations or duties, that is, reasons for developing one's character in certain ways or for doing certain actions arise from a theistic orientation. An epistemologic relation implies that one can know that a theistic orientation contributes to morality. This relation holds that certain truths are known only through a theistic orientation. The ontologic relation holds that the existence of moral obligation is vitally connected with the existence and activity of God. If everything in existence depends on the existence of God, then morality also depends on the existence of God (Fromer, 1983, p. 32).

In this sense, the epistemological foundation upon which spiritual beliefs are grounded represents the foundation for moral truth only in so far as one accepts, on the basis of faith (i.e. knowing god), that which cannot be comprehended in a concrete, directly observable context. Put another way, the world view and essence of religious beliefs, including moral truths, are given form and transmitted to us through symbolization. That is, "religions exist in symbolic forms" (Spinks, 1963, p. 68).

Although some of the adherents of the various religious faiths believe that their particular religious text (i.e., The Bible, The Koran, The Torah) must be interpreted literally as sacred infallible truth, this claim is itself dependent on a faith, a particular set of strongly held spiritual beliefs that is infallible only to those that share the ideological reality of the religion in question. To see the Bible, for example, as a source of unimpeachable moral rules for sexual conduct makes sense only to those who have faith in the sacred authority of the Bible.
Another way of addressing the question of the relative merits of each ideological conception of sexual morality is to examine each form of ethics in terms of how it fits into broader categories of moral philosophy. It would be exceedingly difficult, perhaps impossible, to neatly fit each proposal for a sexual ethics, given their sometimes subtle intra-ideological variations, into perfectly matched schools of moral philosophy. However, some basic, but tentative, observations about how each ideology views the nature of morality itself are possible.

As we saw from Weeks' (1985; 1986) discussion of different approaches to sexuality, the Restrictive sexual morality tends to be absolutist and act-centred in nature and the Permissive sexual morality is liberal and person-centred in orientation. In these respects, the conceptualization of morality inherent within Restrictive sexual ideology tends to be deontological in that it "holds that an act is morally correct because of the rightness or wrongness of features of the act regardless of the consequences" (Fromer, 1983, p. 17).

Whatever basis is used for justification of deontological theories, they all have one thing in common - the consequences of an act, although not completely discounted, are far less important than the moral characteristics of the act itself (Fromer, 1983, p. 18).

In contrast, some forms of Permissive sexual ideology appear to conform more closely to the Consequentialist school of moral philosophy which "holds that the moral correctness of an action is  

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11 I refer the reader back to p. 44 where I indicated that ideological beliefs about sexuality are mediated by a number of factors which results in a multiplicity or continuum of beliefs that are sometimes only distinguishable by subtle shades of difference. One of the implications of this is that moral beliefs about sexuality may defy easy categorization.
a function of its end result or consequence" (Fromer, 1983, p. 14). The most prominent of the Consequentialist theories, utilitarianism, emerges, in part, from the work of Nineteenth century philosopher John Stuart Mill who, as we have seen, articulated some of the fundamental moral premises employed by Permissive sexual ideology. "Utilitarianism holds that an action is morally correct if the consequences of that action produce the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people including the actor" (Fromer, 1983, p. 14). So, for example, in some versions of Permissive sexual ideology, sexual acts are morally acceptable as long as they do not result in unhappy consequences such as emotional discomfort, disease, or unwanted pregnancy.

The moral theories inherent within Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies can also be examined in terms of their tendency towards employing concepts of objectivism or subjectivism. For example, Restrictive sexual ideology clearly has an objectivist bent in that its act-centred moral commandments are considered to be independent of human mind or interpretation. Permissive sexual ideology is subjectivist to the extent that the moral judgement of the individual is dependent on his/her autonomous interpretation of his/her rights, needs etc. as well as those of others. However, Permissive sexual ideology also contains, in most of its forms, an element of objectivism. For example, a person holding a Permissive sexual ideology may make autonomous moral judgements about a particular sexual act on the basis that individual rights and needs are balanced or mediated in the view of what are thought of as a

12 It should be noted that employing objectivist concepts in one's thought is distinct from the notion that a particular moral theory is morally superior in an objective sense.
priori objective moral principles such as fairness or justice. Here, Permissive sexual ideology is not purely consequentialist in character in that it relies on principled considerations that are not necessarily rigidly tied to consequentialist considerations in order to arrive at moral judgements.

The degree to which the sexual ethics inherent within the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies reflect consequentialist, deontological, objectivist, or subjectivist schools of moral philosophy can tell us a great deal about their descriptive characteristics but it does not get us out of the dilemma of which sexual ideology is correct. Without being flippant about the issue, to use the words of Fromer (1983),

It is obvious to any aware reader that no ethicist or moral philosopher from Socrates to the present has presented conclusive proof, to the satisfaction of all thinkers, that one moral theory is superior to all others (p. 13).

We can find multiple truths about sexuality. When the theologian interprets scripture and the sexologist interprets empirical research data, they are each revealing a truth which will make sense to those individuals and groups within society that share the ideological perspective of the theologian or the sexologist. Whether or not the truth about sexuality, in an objective sense, is ultimately identifiable is somewhat of a moot point. For the true believers in various sexual ideologies, the truth about sex is already self-evident. But this brand of truth is located in the subjective paradigms of ideological belief systems which are themselves subject to enormous variation. Thus, we need to understand individual and group beliefs about the sexual within the context of their culturally situated sexual ideology that serves as
the foundation for arriving at a socially constructed truth in sexual matters. This does not imply

an abandonment of all we have learned about the constancies and varieties of the biological substratum, but it does require the effort of going beyond that and examining that which can only be understood in terms of individuals situated in specific points of social space and specific points in time; individuals with and within history (Simon, 1989, p. 23).

Implications for Contemporary Sexuality Education

The social constructionist analysis of sexuality has, in the words of Naus and Theis (1991),

far-reaching consequences for sex education and sex therapy. Most importantly, it raises questions about the objectives or desired outcomes of these practices, and about the manner in which these objectives are decided upon. The objectives are usually derived from explicit or implicit concepts of what sexuality really is, and the development of these concepts, as well as the derivation of objectives from them, are typically done by experts, that is, by individuals who claim scientific or professional expertise about sexuality (p. 20).

Among other things, Naus and Theis (1991) argue that the social constructionist analysis of sexuality strongly suggests that the objectives for sexuality education "reflect the diversity of constructed sexuality and emphasize that people need the freedom to make their own sexual choices" (p. 20).

How well do the three currently predominant variations of sexuality education in the schools, described in Chapter Three, meet the standard set by Naus and Theis? In other words, do sexuality education programs that are reflective of Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology or the bare-bones approach adequately address the diversity of constructed sexuality and provide students with the freedom to make choices congruent with their own ideological perspectives?
In the case of sexuality education that is largely informed by either Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology, the answer is clear. As we have seen, these types of sexuality education are exclusively partial in their approach to sexual morality, precluding an even or balanced presentation of divergent ideological perspectives toward sexuality. Thus, it is extremely unlikely that such programs can realistically reflect the existing diversity of constructed sexuality within Western society because they tend to address sexuality issues from a particular ideological perspective without a complimentary consideration of alternative perspectives. Further, without such a complimentary consideration of alternative perspectives, it is also highly unlikely that such programs are conducive to students making their own choices. Within the intellectual climate of the classroom, choices that are congruent with the preferred sexual ideology are inevitably encouraged at least implicitly if not explicitly.

The bare-bones approach to sexuality education also fails to meet the standards set out by Naus and Theis. It is difficult to see how sexuality education can adequately reflect the diversity of constructed sexuality in our society if educational programs are designed to avoid the often divisive issues that are the product of ideological diversity. Bare-bones sexuality education, with its exclusively neutral tendency, is unlikely to stimulate students' capacity to think critically about important social issues related to sexuality. To deliberately circumvent the opportunity for students to address such issues is questionable by all but the most totalitarian of standards. The problematic nature of a position of exclusive neutrality is summed up by Kelly (1986) when he writes
that schools,

...particularly those publically financed and state supported in a democracy, have a moral responsibility to develop in their charges the understandings, competencies and commitments to be effective citizens. Among other attributes, these broad goals include the ability to make informed judgements in a reasoned, if passionate manner. In order to achieve these democratic goals, teachers need to include rather than exclude public controversy (p. 114).

In addition, as we saw in Chapter One, it is now widely recognized by a large majority of people that sexuality education in the schools serves a useful purpose. The importance of sexuality education is most often associated with the desire to help teenagers avoid unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. There is considerable evidence to suggest that bare-bones sexuality education is of little value in this respect. Evaluations of the behavioral effects of sexuality education programs implemented during the 1970s and 1980s show that these programs, more often than not, did nothing to help teenagers protect their sexual health (e.g. Kirby, 1984; Stout & Rivera, 1989). The primary reason for this, according to many researchers, is that these programs excluded the necessary information and skills for adolescents to either abstain from intercourse or practice safer sex (See Brown & Eisenberg, 1995, p. 131-135; Kirby et al, 1994). Brown and Eisenberg (1995) conclude from their review of studies on the content of school-based sexuality education that programs are characterized by "a lack of prevention information"(p. 133). As Brown and Eisenberg (1995) put it,

While it is true that many states require schools to provide sexuality education and HIV/AIDS education to students at different grade levels, it is also the case that in many states, the content of those educational programs is limited by statute or by state policy or both (The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1989). The precise
nature of these restrictions can serve to limit the effectiveness of the educational programs by, for example, prohibiting explicit discussion of topics directly related to pregnancy prevention, such as contraception. (p. 132).

As Nicolas Freudenberg (1989) aptly puts it in discussing the social and political obstacles to effective HIV/AIDS prevention education, "The danger of education that offends no one is that it may fail in its effort to communicate anything at all to those most in need of the information and resources at the time" (p. 3). In sum, the bare-bones approach to sexuality education is unacceptable from a health perspective because in seeking to avoid controversy it is bound to omit the information and skills necessary for students to protect their sexual health.

Aside from issues related specifically to physical health, sexuality, as we have seen is deeply imbued with personal and social significance. Few would disagree with the view that our psychological well-being is inherently interconnected with our sexuality. In other words, successfully meeting the developmental challenges that sexuality presents us with throughout our lifetimes is an important factor in determining our overall health and well-being. We can likely agree that education might help us to meet this challenge by, at the very least, providing a solid knowledge base upon which to gain a basic understanding of sexuality. This being the case, a bare-bones approach to sexuality education is likely to be of little value in this respect.

While the bare-bones approach to sexuality education offers the highly desired avoidance of public controversy, it is clearly a deficient solution to the ideological struggle over the form and content of sexuality education in the schools. In order to arrive
at a just and workable solution to this dilemma we must deepen our understanding of the nature of sexual ideology and its place in a democratic society.

**Conclusion**

If the solution to the dilemma of conflicting sexual ideologies cannot be found through an epistemological consensus on what constitutes an objectively superior sexual morality, we then have no alternative but to turn to a pragmatic or political solution to the conflict of sexual ideologies. This, however, does not infer that sexuality must become a moral-free zone. Rather it suggests that the moral dimension of the solution rests at a higher political level than at the level of specific disagreements around ideologically laden issues of sexuality. In other words, the problem of conflicting sexual ideologies is a type of problem that is specific to democratic societies where a multiplicity of ideologies are permitted to exist. In this sense, in a democratic society our moral imperative is not to establish which ideology is correct, but rather "moral thinking is essentially thinking about the fundamental values by which we profess to live" (Duncan, 1979, p. 7). As I shall propose in the next chapter, these higher order fundamental values of democracy provide a means of mediating between sexual ideologies in a way that preserves their integrity while at the same time allowing, as is consistent with a democratic society, a pluralism of ideologies to coexist. Subsequently, a democratic philosophy of education can be explored as a means of mediating ideological conflict around sexuality education.
CHAPTER FIVE

SEXUALITY, MORAL PLURALISM, AND THE CONCEPT OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

One sign of a healthy Western civilization is that within a relatively integrated moral outlook— for example, agreement on democratic principles—a myriad of ideas and methods are brought face to face, through civilized conflict and society’s assumed moral correctness is constantly tested. This tension—emotional, intellectual, moral—is what advances the society. 


If the members of a society have not yet reached an agreement on the content of what some consider an adequate range of beliefs and practices, how can any group in a democracy have authority to decide what this content should be, and to inculcate it through a public system of schooling?


Introduction

The social and political dilemmas facing us in Western democracies are many and perplexing. As opposed to totalitarian societies, moral issues and social policy are the subject of never ending debate in the Western democracies. It is the clash of freely articulated ideas and perspectives in reasoned debate that provides the framework for the making of presumably enlightened social policy. Providing the opportunity to deliberate between competing points of view is among the central components of a democratic way of life. For example, Mark Weinstein (1991) in conceptualizing education for democracy, argues

what constitutes "good lives and good societies" is not fixed once and for all, but rather is open to reconsideration by individuals in a democracy, and is reflected in the process of mediating among competing views. Granting this, we can indicate what is preserved by conscious reproduction in democratic societies, that
This deliberative process is the heart, for example, of the parliamentary system. Perpetually accommodating and deliberating between conflicting points of view is the happy fate of living in a society characterized by liberty, moral pluralism and, presumably, equal respect for the rights of all persons. However, confronted by strongly held but unprovable social-political "truths" and opposing wills, we are left only with our most fundamental, and hopefully shared, values and principles as a means of resolving our differences with the aim of preserving both peaceful cooperation and individual liberty.

Contemporary Western societies are constitutionally conceived as liberal democracies. However, as Giroux and Maclaren (1992) point out "Consistently, the notion of democracy is invoked as an inviolable principle but rarely defined as a social or cultural practice" (p. xi). If we begin to think of the constitutive elements of democracy as a social or cultural practice we begin, I believe, with the idea of freedom of belief. Accorded with freedom of belief, each of us is provided at least with the possibility of autonomously choosing our own conception of the good life. The first two "fundamental freedoms" accorded all citizens of Canada in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are "(a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression..." (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Appendix B in Gosh & Ray, 1987, p. 281). The constitutions of other Western liberal democracies, particularly the United States, place freedom of conscience, religion, and belief at the core of the commonly shared national ethos.
Freedom of belief is held to not only protect the individual's right to autonomously choose a conception of the good life, but also to foster the development of intellect and wisdom that advances and perpetuates a democratic culture. As John Dewey observes about democracy in the United States,

the basic freedom of action and experience is necessary to produce freedom of intelligence. The modes of freedom guaranteed in the Bill of Rights are all of this nature: Freedom of belief and conscience, of expression of opinion, of assembly for discussion and conference, of the press as an organ of communication. They are guaranteed because without them individuals are not free to develop and society is deprived of what they might contribute (Dewey cited in Mosher, Kenny, and Garrod, 1994, p. 35).

An exclusive focus on the freedom of conscience, religion, and belief is, of course, too simplistic a summation to realistically characterize the intricacies of a liberal democratic society, but I do believe it captures its most essential element, particularly when liberal democracy is contrasted to totalitarianism. Although democracy is a wide ranging and complex concept, I am focusing here on those elements of it related specifically to the freedom of belief, conscience, and the freedom to form beliefs through the process of unencumbered critical deliberation. I take it as a basic, and hopefully realistic, assumption that those who consent to citizenship in a democratic state endorse these freedoms as indispensable to a just society. In articulating a philosophy of sexuality education based on democratic principles, I will emphasize the principle of freedom of belief because I believe that this principle is at the very foundation of a democratic society and that the opportunity to deliberate between divergent points of view is the central constitutive element of a democratic education.

The most obvious and complicating factor related to the basic
freedoms of liberal democracy is that these freedoms can often collide, resulting in a situation where one person's or group's freedom places a significant burden on another person's or group's freedom. As a result, the basic freedoms inherent to liberal democracy are not absolute. They are limited by the obligation to respect the equal right of others to these same freedoms. Such obligations are, for example, expressed through democratic precepts such as the principle of nondiscrimination. Thus, among the central tasks of the public institutions of liberal democracies is to balance conflicting freedoms in a fair and equitable fashion. In essence, this comes down to the delicate exercise of accommodating different and often opposing claims, points of view, and values. As Moon (1993) suggests, "The commitment to accommodating difference is at the heart of political liberalism" (p. 191).

As I shall suggest, acknowledgement of the basic democratic task of accommodating difference has profound implications for sexuality education. It is necessary first, however, to place the dilemma of Western society's plurality of sexual ideologies in the context of a democratic framework for accommodating moral differences. I do acknowledge that the meaning of democracy is, as it should be, up for debate and is the subject of varying interpretations. In this chapter, I will therefore outline what I strongly believe to be the essential unifying principles of liberal democracy. These principles are those basic values and conventions that are presumably shared by all people who willingly consent to live by the rules of a democratic regime. In order to accomplish this task I will rely almost entirely on philosopher John Rawls' (1993) *Political Liberalism* which I believe reasonably articulates
the essential elements of liberal democracy.

**Political Liberalism**

A unified truth about sexuality eludes us and because we live in a highly heterogeneous society, from a sociological perspective, we will likely live in a society with multiple versions of sexual truth for the foreseeable future.

In complex societies such cultural scenarios for sexuality are not monolithic or hegemonic, even within institutions. Instead there is a constant struggle between groups and individuals to foster their own scenarios. Some are more powerful than others, but no individual or group or institution is in entire control of the sexual scenarios for most Western societies (Gagnon, 1990, p. 9).

As Rubin (1970) points out, "The United States - long a pluralistic society as far as religious beliefs and political parties are concerned - has now become a pluralist society as far as sex values are concerned" (p. 161). Simon (1989) writes of the "denaturalization" of sex: a refutation of the modernist tradition of positivistic certitudes regarding the nature of human sexuality (p. 18-25). As a result there is "an emergent consensus about the absence of consensus. And perhaps, not so much an absence of consensus but a sense of being forced to an unexpected and often discomforting pluralism" (Simon, 1989, p. 18-19). Weeks (1995) in *Invented Moralities: Sexual Values in an Age of Uncertainty* argues that,

The sexual order, with its fixing of sexual identifications under the banner of Nature, Science, and Truth, has all but gone, reflecting a fundamental shift not only in theory but in what theory is attempting to grasp. The contemporary sexual world appears as irrevocably pluralistic, divided into a host of sovereign units, and a multiplicity of sites of authority, none of which claim a firm foundation. There is no longer a hegemonic master discourse telling how we
should behave, and those clamant moralities which attempt to fill the vacuum may have their listeners, but cannot affirm an ultimate legitimacy (p. 27).

Given the existence of a pluralism of sexual ideologies and their corresponding moral truths, the identification of, and consensus for, a normative sexual ethics - moral principles related to sexuality that all people can and ought to be guided by - is unlikely to be within our grasp.

Because human beings are social animals who do not live in isolation from each other but must live together in a multiplicity of social relationships, we cannot leave the issue of opposing sexual ideologies at the point of a simple "agree to disagree" relativism. Issues such as the form and content of the sexuality education of youth are not resolved by an uncomplicated acknowledgement that we, as a society, cannot realistically hope to come to an agreement on which sexual ideology should inform educational programs in the public schools. Such an acknowledgement is a necessary step on our way to identifying an adequate philosophy of sexuality education, but it is by itself insufficient. We must go beyond this to explore how, in a society characterized by a diversity of sexual ideologies, sexuality education in the schools can, in a reasonable, fair, and constructive manner, contribute to the socialization of youth so that it reflects the interests and needs of the individual and his/her peer group, family, community, religious-ethnocultural tradition, and society as a whole. All of these groups have something at stake when the form and content of sexuality education in the schools is established. In order to proceed with this line of inquiry we need to step back, at least for a while, from addressing specific issues of disagreement (i.e. the
morality of teenage sex, homosexuality, etc.) and examine the larger issue of how our society can accommodate a pluralism of often conflicting sexual ideologies. We need to grasp the opportunity, as Weeks (1992) suggests,

...to reinvent or rediscover values that help us to live with what seems to me the only irreducible truth of the contemporary world: the fact of human and social diversity, including sexual diversity. This is the real challenge of living with uncertainty (p. 393).

As Rawls (1993) puts it, "This is a problem of political justice, not a problem about the highest good" (P. xxv).

In Political Liberalism, Rawls (1993) explores how, in a democratic society, the concept of political liberalism can provide an overarching political framework that is consistent with the ideals or "very great values" of democracy. When we, as ideologues of all reasonable stripes, are willing to commit to this overarching framework, we reach, according to Rawls, an "overlapping consensus" which serves to allow people with different and opposing beliefs to live together in a free and democratic society and yet maintain the integrity of our respective beliefs.

In Political Liberalism, Rawls (1993) uses the term comprehensive doctrines to demarcate different and opposing belief systems. Comprehensive doctrines are roughly analogous to ideologies in that comprehensive doctrines entail conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship and of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit to our life as a whole. A conception is fully comprehensive if it covers all recognized values and virtues within one rather precisely articulated system; whereas a conception is only partially comprehensive when it comprises a number of, but by no means all, nonpolitical values and virtues and is rather loosely articulated (Rawls, 1993, p. 13).
Within this schema, sexual ideologies tend to constitute a component of a comprehensive doctrine. That is, as we have seen, beliefs about sexuality, including the moral domain, are often part of a wider ideological view of the world. Nonetheless, the central problem facing a democratic society where social and political life is based on the principles of justice (i.e., liberty, fairness, equality), freedom of belief and the liberty to follow a conception of the good life consistent with those beliefs so long as they do not abrogate these principles is the same whether we are considering comprehensive doctrines in general or sexual ideologies in particular. Rawls (1993) states the problem and indicates the basic approach to the problem taken by political liberalism.

A modern democratic society is characterized not simply by a pluralism of comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines but by a pluralism of incompatible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines. No one of these doctrines is affirmed by citizens generally. Nor should one expect in the foreseeable future one of them, or some other reasonable doctrine, will ever be affirmed by all, or nearly all, citizens. Political liberalism assumes that, for political purposes, a plurality of reasonable yet incompatible comprehensive doctrines is the normal result of the exercise of human reason within a framework of free institutions of a constitutional democratic regime. Political liberalism also supposes that a reasonable comprehensive doctrine does not reject the essentials of a democratic regime (Rawls, 1993, p. xvi).

A doctrine is considered reasonable, according to this view, because it acknowledges the right of all persons, no matter their ideology, to enjoy the rights and freedoms of a democratic society including the freedom of belief. So, for example, the attempt by the adherents of a particular sexual ideology to force their beliefs on others or society as a whole is in conflict with the essentials of a democratic regime. A political conception of justice supports democratic living in that it affirms and mediates between opposing
philosophical beliefs.

Briefly, the political conception of justice is defined by its three characteristic features, each of which contributes to a basic conception of justice as fairness. The first feature is the political nature of this conception of justice. That is, it applies to "the ‘basic structure’ of society, which for our present purposes I take to be a modern constitutional democracy" (Rawls, 1993, p. 11).

The initial focus, then, of a political conception of justice is the framework of basic institutions and the principles, standards, and precepts that apply to it, as well as how those norms are to be expressed in the character and attitudes of the members of society who realize its ideals (Rawls, 1993, p. 11-12).

The second feature of a political conception of justice is that it is "presented as a freestanding view" (Rawls, 1993, p. 12). That is, the political conception of justice is derived from the shared fundamental values upon which democracy is based. It is not derived from a particular comprehensive doctrine, or in this case, sexual ideology. In this sense, a political conception of justice is conceived of as apart from, although hopefully not in conflict with, a particular ideology.

The third feature of a political conception of justice is that it is expressed in terms of the fundamental social ideals implicit in the public culture of a democratic society.

Comprehensive doctrines of all kinds - religious, philosophical, and moral - belong to what we may call the "background culture" of civil society. This is the culture of the social, not of the political. It is the culture of daily life, of its many associations: churches and universities, learned and scientific societies, and clubs and teams, to mention a few. In a democratic society there is a tradition of democratic thought, the content of which is at least familiar and intelligible to the educated common sense of citizens generally. Society’s main institutions are seen as a

It is on the basis of this political conception of justice, and our affirmation of it, that the overlapping consensus of political liberalism is achieved.

Such a consensus consists of all the reasonable opposing religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines likely to persist over generations and to gain a sizable body of adherents in a more or less just constitutional regime, a regime in which the criterion of justice is that political conception itself (Rawls, 1993, p. 15).

Are the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies amenable to an overlapping consensus based on a political conception of justice? The answer can be affirmative to the extent that citizens themselves, within the exercise of their liberty of thought and conscience, and looking to their comprehensive doctrines, view the political conception as derived from, or congruent with, or at least not in conflict with, their other values (Rawls, 1993, p. 11).

Each ideology must respect the core values of democracy. It must not call for the coercive imposition of a particular vision of sexuality. In other words, the proponents of a particular sexual ideology, regardless of whether it is Restrictive or Permissive, violate the spirit of democracy when they successfully implement public school-based sexuality education programs embodying only that ideology. It must, however, be continually re-emphasized that the overlapping consensus of a liberal democracy does not preclude the adherents of particular sexual ideologies from presenting their case to society or engaging in dialogue intended to win new adherents,

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13 In Political Liberalism Rawls (1993) does not address the applications of this theory for sexuality. However, in A Theory of Justice, Rawls (1971) does, according to Ruse (1988, p. 248) remark "tangentially that the principles of justice do require the state to tolerate sexual relationships which some find degrading or shameful".
provided, of course, that the dialogue between sexual ideologies is fair and equal. As I shall discuss in Chapter Six, the same principle holds for the form and content of sexuality education.

In Political Liberalism, Rawls (1993) presents a detailed account of the structure and content of the overlapping consensus that allows deeply opposed belief systems to, more or less, peacefully coexist within the political structures of a democratic regime. I will focus, here, on those components of Rawls' framework that are immediately relevant to the issue of conflicting sexual ideologies and how those components may provide an initial justification for looking towards a democratic philosophy of education as a means of identifying an overlapping consensus on the sexuality education of youth in the schools.

In regards to the question of which sexual ideology is superior, the issue over which most of the ideological battles over sexuality have been fought, Rawls' conception of political liberalism suggests, as one of its fundamental principles, that the attempt to verify, once and for all, the truth claims of particular ideologies as they pertain to such things as ideals of personal character and the values that guide these ideals, misses the point and purpose of democracy. We saw that the social constructionist perspective on sexuality shows that the truth of sex is available only through ideological lenses and I have suggested that this presents not just an epistemological problem but a political problem as well, leading us to the dilemma of how to shape the form and content of sexuality education. The view of political liberalism, in regard to such questions, is compatible with my analysis of sexual belief systems in that it suggests that a democratic society,
with multiple ideologies, is unlikely to arrive at an agreed upon irrefutable "objective" truth in moral matters. In any case it is not appropriate within a liberal democracy to impose even an objective truth or, as is more likely the case, a particular version of the truth. Political liberalism does not deny ideologies their versions of the truth as being valid within their ideological world views. But neither does it see any of them as the uniform foundation of a democratic society. Political liberalism sees only the basic principles of the commonly agreed to overlapping consensus as democratic society's foundation.

Political liberalism does not attack or criticize any reasonable view. As a part of this, it does not criticize, much less reject, any particular theory of the truth of moral judgements. In this regard, it simply supposes that judgements of such truth are made from the point of view of some comprehensive moral doctrine. These doctrines render judgements, all things considered: that is taking into consideration what they see as all relevant moral and political values and all relevant facts (as each doctrine determines). Which moral judgements are true, all things considered is not a matter for political liberalism, as it approaches all questions from within its own limited point of view (Rawls, 1993, p. xx).

Following this line of reasoning, there is justification for the assertion that since, as we have seen from the social constructionist analysis, any search for the "truth" about sexuality is unavoidably linked to ideology, social policy, including sexuality education policies, ought to, in a democratic society, be made from a point of view consistent with the overlapping consensus of political liberalism. In other words, when faced with radically opposing points of view on issues such as sexuality, we must turn to those few commonly held principles that bind us together as a society.

To the ideologues of sex, the affirmation a pluralism of
sexual ideologies has not been an appealing idea. The growth or persistence of one ideology has been intolerable to the other. Yet this prevailing view is at odds with political liberalism. Indeed, pluralism is the essence of democracy.

This pluralism is not seen as disaster but rather as the natural outcome of the activities of human reason under enduring free institutions. To see reasonable pluralism as a disaster is to see the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom itself as a disaster. Indeed, the success of liberal constitutionalism came as a discovery of a new social possibility: the possibility of a reasonably harmonious and stable pluralist society (Rawls, 1993, p. xxiv-xxv).

It might be objected that the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom is fundamentally in conflict with Restrictive sexual ideology which is seen as relying more on faith and obedience to moral absolutes than it does on an individual’s free exercise of reasoned deliberation. However, with respect to sexual ideologies, as I have conceptualized them, the demand for the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom refers only to individuals being given the opportunity to exercise their reason in the process of developing their ideological perspective. This demand does not, however, set the ground rules for ethical decision making from within the world view of the critically appropriated sexual ideology.

The way in which a society based on liberal democratic principles properly addresses the issue of the relation between the demand for the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom and its implications for the way each ideology deals with sexual morality can be clarified by making a distinction between what may be called lower order and higher order ethical issues. Lower order issues relate to the substance of particular questions of sexual
morality. How do I, as an individual, know if a particular sexual behaviour is right or wrong? As we have seen, this type of question is inevitably answered through the lens of sexual ideology. Our individual and communal socialization, including our education, provides each of us with an ideological framework that enables us to conceptually organize and answer this type of question. Lower order issues, then, relate to specific questions of sexual morality and the sexual ethics we employ to answer them. They fall within the realm of comprehensive doctrines. That is, lower order issues relate to the specifics of how particular sexual ideologies answer moral questions. Political liberalism has little or no interest in how each sexual ideology answers these questions. For example, political liberalism is not concerned with the question of whether premarital sex is always immoral or not. That is a question for which each sexual ideology has an answer.

Higher order issues are categorically distinct from lower order issues. Higher order issues relate to how the public institutions of the liberal democratic state fairly accommodate a diversity of sexual ideologies, each with its own set of lower order perspectives, in a manner that is consistent with the overlapping consensus. In other words, higher order issues relate to the limited regulative function of political liberalism. Higher order issues are concerned only with creating and maintaining a political and social environment that affords us the freedom to deliberate between divergent ideological perspectives. To use party politics as an analogy, political liberalism is not interested in dictating a political party’s policy platform. This is a lower order issue. Rather, political liberalism is interested only in preserving the
right of individuals to exercise their reason under the conditions of freedom to deliberate between different party platforms in making the choice of which party to vote for. This is a higher order issue. With respect to sexual ideology, political liberalism is interested in higher order, but not lower order, issues. To return to the example of premarital sex, it is a higher order issue only in so far as people are permitted the freedom to deliberate between different points of view in drawing their own conclusions about whether or not premarital sex is immoral.

The overlapping consensus of political liberalism implies something quite different than does the incorporation of liberal ethics by Permissive sexual ideology. The adoption of the ethics of the secular liberal tradition by Permissive sexual ideology constitutes an element of the broader ideology. Where this ideology, including its specific guidelines for the moral evaluation of sexual behaviour, is imposed on citizens it constitutes an unreasonable doctrine. Political liberalism makes no judgements about the morality of specific forms of sexual belief and behaviour except to say that within a democratic society, individuals and groups must respect the rights and freedoms of those who take a different position. Political liberalism does not endorse Permissive sexual ideology any more than it endorses Restrictive sexual ideology. Political liberalism takes the larger view that sexual ideologies are components of comprehensive doctrines, none of which, in a truly democratic society, rules the boundaries social life.

In the case of Restrictive sexual ideology where a morally virtuous life is attained by the adherence to moral absolutes and not through individually defined moral priorities, political
liberalism's insistence on the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom appears to refute Restrictive sexual ideology and place a stamp of approval on the ethics of Permissive sexual ideology. However, this conclusion misconstrues the nature of political liberalism. Political liberalism makes no judgements on the validity of believing in or living one's life according to the moral absolutes of Restrictive sexual ideology except in those cases where it extends itself into the realm of unreasonable doctrines. Indeed, political liberalism affirms the right of Restrictive sexual ideologues to express their views to their families, communities, and the public at large. Political liberalism is not interested in infringing on these rights. Political liberalism is interested only in affirming the right of others to arrive at and hold contrary views. It is only when Restrictive sexual ideology interferes with the right to consider alternative ideological perspectives does it run afoul of political liberalism.

It is in this sense that the limited scope of political liberalism allows belief systems that appear to be in conflict with the free exercise of reason to persevere. In essence, this is because political liberalism does not recommend a specific or comprehensive view of the ends to which an individual's perception of the good life must lead. Although it often seems paradoxical, political liberalism allows individuals to adopt belief systems that rely on faith and obedience to authoritative rules rather than on liberal concepts of making individually deliberated free choices as a means of attaining the good life. Political liberalism demands only that the essential elements of the overlapping consensus of democratic society be respected in order to accommodate moral
pluralism. Aside from this minimum, and presumably agreed upon, commitment to democratic values, individuals are free to think and behave as they wish. Moon (1993), articulates this basic aspect of political liberalism when he writes that

Because political liberalism seeks to provide space for moral diversity, it does not offer a comprehensive view of the human good or a particular ideal of human excellence. In order to provide justifiable rules governing the public aspects of our lives, and to define the scope of liberty within which individuals can pursue their different visions, political liberalism must be committed to a limited, but widely shared, set of values and principles. These common values will be incomplete: a full moral life will necessarily have to incorporate other aims besides those of political liberalism. The common values will be based only on a "thin" conception of the self, one that abstracts a set of common elements from the contrasting views of the person held by different members of a society (p. 9).

It is this "thin" conception of the self, the common values of the overlapping consensus, that is related to the higher order issues of political liberalism. A full moral life is reached through our individual appropriation of the lower order concepts of our respective sexual ideologies. In other words, lower order issues are part of what Rawls (1993) calls the background culture of the social world, whereas higher order issues involve the political culture and the fundamental values upon which it is based.

Thus, the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom need not necessarily be seen as a disaster by the proponents of ideological perspectives that do not rely on reasoned deliberation in the process of doing sexual ethics. For political liberalism, the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom does not apply to the internal workings of specific ethical systems. Rather, the exercise of reason under political liberalism refers only to the higher order opportunity for individuals to differentiate and choose
between different ideological frameworks. Pluralism is respected when individuals exercise their reason to distinguish between and freely evaluate differing ideological perspectives. As Moon (1993) puts it, "...political liberalism holds that democratic individuality is essential to create political community in the face of moral pluralism" (p. 99). Seeing the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom as a disaster is strongly indicative of an ideological world view that is in conflict with the basic values of democracy as defined by political liberalism. It suggests an ideological perspective that is intolerant of moral pluralism.

Where sexual ideology does extend itself to the point of prescribing its particular vision as compulsory for all people, it is rejected by political liberalism. According to Moon (1993), in such a case, "...one side claims a privileged access to truth and so refuses to engage in a search for ways of living together peacefully. Conflicts involving certain kinds of religious beliefs may be of this nature, and they are deeply troubling" (p. 9). Situations of this kind are what Moon (1993) calls the tragic conflicts of political liberalism.

On some issues, we may face tragic conflicts, conflicts in which all parties justify their positions in terms of what they regard as fundamental moral considerations, which are opposed in ways that do not permit reconciliation. Under such circumstances, political community must give way to imposition: whatever decision is taken, some will experience the outcome as unjust but will be constrained to abide by its terms. Moreover, and more significantly, the institutions and practices that political liberalism supports or even requires may unfairly burden some citizens, leading them to experience those norms as impositions (p. 98).

Thus, it is possible that from some ideological perspectives, the exercise of freedom under the conditions of freedom, as I have described them, may be seen as offensive. Here, political liberalism
does force an ideology into retreat, but only to the point where the ideology must reconcile itself to acknowledging, under the terms of the overlapping consensus, the right of opposing ideological perspectives to enter into public discourse.

With respect to sexuality, this problem is perhaps the most apparent with some religious perspectives toward sexual morality. However, it is also likely that the public expression of certain views related to sexuality will also be profoundly offensive to the proponents of some versions of Permissive sexual ideology. For example, it may be intolerable to some proponents of Permissive sexual ideology that we might entertain in public forums the notion that homosexuality is immoral or that traditional gender roles are beneficial. In some cases, political liberalism will place unappealing burdens on Permissive sexual ideology just as it will for Restrictive sexual ideology in other cases.

These unappealing burdens are necessary if we are to adequately and fairly address the fact that "In the contemporary world we face the often difficult - and sometimes tragic - tasks of living with moral pluralism and managing moral conflict" (Moon, 1993, p. 35). The burden that acknowledging the right of opposing views to be expressed places on the proponents of various ideological perspectives is a constraint that is basic to the fundamentals of democracy. Such a constraint fairly regulates interactions between individuals and groups whose moral beliefs differ in significant ways.

Conclusion

As the history of sexuality shows, the affirmation of
ideological pluralism - a respect by all parties for the overlapping consensus of democracy - has been, in the sexual arena, particularly hard to come by. As Weeks (1992) observes in an essay titled *Values in an Age of Uncertainty*, "Many writers seem to want to give up the struggle altogether as they assert the impossibility of agreeing on values whatsoever" (p. 397). Weeks (1992) correctly points out that we need "to achieve a new style of debate about values" and that "sexual values are the supreme challenge of the recognition of difference" (p. 403). "Is it possible, then, to construct a common normative standard by which we can affirm different identities and ways of life? Can we balance relativism and some sense of minimal universal values?" (Weeks, 1992, p. 405).

In answer to this question, Weeks (1992) proposes that the supreme challenge of addressing sexual values in a society characterized by value conflict can be met through what he calls *radical pluralism*. In crucial respects, Weeks' (1992) radical pluralism is compatible with Rawls (1993) conception of political liberalism in that "radical pluralism draws on central values in the liberal tradition: its commitment to toleration and individual autonomy above all" (Weeks, p. 406). According to Weeks (1992),

the achievement of a radical and plural democracy is a project to be constructed, a set of values to be worked for against the institutional barriers that inhibit the possibilities of its realization. Radical pluralism is an argument for a more open and democratic culture which does not assume any historic inevitability nor any a priori justification in "the nature of human kind" (p. 407).

Whereas in a culture drawn from radical pluralism the individual and groups of persons bound together by common beliefs have the right to toleration and autonomy with respect to their sexual values, they are limited by their obligation to accord these same rights to
others with contrary beliefs. Within such a culture, "many truths would flourish" (Weeks, 1992, p. 406). Weeks (1995) expands on this position somewhat by calling for "democratic autonomy" (p. 65) as a means of democratizing sexuality, enabling individuals "...equal opportunities to pursue one's choices and life chances without blocking the equal rights of others..."(p. 66). In other words,

Democratic autonomy puts the obligation on the individual to express his or her desires in ways which respect the claims of the other in forms which are moral for that individual, and which acknowledge and attempt to deal with the inequalities which inevitably intrude between social actors (Weeks, 1995, p. 66).

In these respects, Weeks' programme for sexual values appears compatible with the central goals of political liberalism. Given the importance of sexuality in shaping our culture, this approach to sexual values can play a significant role in creating and maintaining a democratic society.

In Chapter Four, I attempted to show that no one "truth" about sexuality is universally established within Western culture. Our divergent beliefs about sexuality are contained within a variety of subjectively derived sexual ideologies. In this chapter, relying on Rawls' (1993) conception of political liberalism, I have outlined a basic philosophical framework for accommodating opposing sexual ideologies within the context of a democratic culture.

It has been suggested that a plurality of reasonable yet incompatible sexual ideologies is the normal result of the democratic right of freedom of belief. A democratic culture assumes a collective acceptance of moral pluralism. In turn, a democratic culture assumes a collective acceptance of the existence and flourishing of a plurality of reasonable yet incompatible sexual ideologies.
Further, within the context of a democratic society, the existence of a plurality of sexual ideologies is to be tolerated and affirmed by the public institutions of a democratic regime. Specific sexual ideologies are to be tolerated and affirmed provided they are reasonable in that they remain faithful to the overlapping consensus of a democratic society. Here, being reasonable does not mean being logically consistent with a particular sexual ideology. Here, being reasonable means respecting the right of all people to freedom of belief. This infers that the proponents of specific sexual ideologies are to refrain from imposing their beliefs on others, a principle that, as we saw in Chapter Three, is often not adhered to in sexuality education in the schools.

Central to the theory of political liberalism is the contention that the overlapping consensus itself is not derived from a particular ideology, but is drawn from the basic moral principles affirmed by all people who willingly accept and affirm democratic living. This, in theory, contributes to the placing of divergent and opposing sexual ideologies on a level playing field.

In the search for a reasonable, fair, and coherent philosophy of sexuality education in the schools, political liberalism offers a theoretical framework for sexuality education that is consistent with the essential values of democracy. Given the highly divisive and ideologically laden nature of the debate around sexuality education in the schools, a broad base of at least reluctant support for a democratic philosophy of education may provide the best hope of providing our young people with a meaningful and effective sexuality education that is appropriate to a democratic society characterized by moral pluralism.
In most cases, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education implies a radical alteration of existing sexuality education practice. Most importantly, it encourages students to think about sexuality not simply in the context of their own ideological perspective or simply in the context of whatever happens to be the dominant ideological discourse of the day. Rather, it encourages students to think about sexuality within the context of democratic values. Just as importantly, a democratic sexuality education provides students with the opportunity to deliberate between different ideological perspectives in forming their own value positions related to sexuality. As Manely-Casimir and Sussel (1987) aptly put it, for rights-based democratic societies "...being able to make informed decisions between conflicting values forms a central feature of political socialization" (p. 172). In the next chapter, I will discuss the implications of a democratic theory of education for sexuality education in the schools in more detail.
CHAPTER SIX

SEXUALITY EDUCATION: TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

To date, the generally accepted view of education has been that young people should be challenged intellectually in school, that they should be taught to think critically, to solve problems, and to use their judgement and imagination. Concomitant to this is the belief that as these skills are developed, a respect for the opinions of others should be fostered. Barbara Spindel and Deanna Duby. (1994). Attacks on the freedom to learn: People For the American Way’s report on school censorship. SIECUS Report, 23(1).

The primary goal of sexuality education should be substantially the same as that for education in all subjects, that is, to provide the individual, over the course of the K-12 school experience, with knowledge and thinking skills necessary to understanding self and society, and the relationship between the two, as well as skills to make positive contributions, however minute, to the shaping of this society and the course of its history....It is of great importance that students learn something of the values and world views which different groups have held historically and currently hold along with conflicts generated by opposing views. Sexuality education devoted to critical inquiry should strive to increase historical consciousness not contribute to historical amnesia. Carol Pollis. (1985). Value judgements and world views in sexuality education. Family Relations, 34.

Introduction

The battle over sexuality in both the school and society has been shaped by the question of whether it is the values of Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology that should be supported as the sexual ethics of our culture. To use Rawls’ (1993) terms, this debate has not focused on reaching an overlapping consensus consistent with the principles of political liberalism, but rather, as the debate is currently set up, it is focused on seeing which comprehensive doctrine (sexual ideology) will emerge victorious. In other words, the goal of the debate is not a resolution that respects either democratic procedures or individual rights within
a democracy. Rather, the goal for the debaters seems to be to establish social and political supremacy for their respective sexual ideology.

The ideological nature of the debate about sexuality education, in particular, is often masked by the tendency to deny that one's own views are ideologically based. It is noteworthy that when the proponents of particular approaches to sexuality education criticize their opponents, they typically do so by referring to the opposing point of view in terms of the ideology that it reflects. We are quick to label those who disagree with us as ideologues. The proponents of comprehensive sexuality education are sometimes accused of, for example, "...ideologically pushing religious humanism via sex-ed" (Gardiner, 1992, p. 262) or it is suggested that "The unifying core of comprehensive sex education is not intellectual but ideological" (Dafoe-Whitehead, 1994, p 70). The proponents of abstinence-only sexuality education are frequently described in terms of their adherence to a "fixed world view" (e.g. Yarber, 1992) or "far-right" (e.g. Sedway, 1992) ideology. I have tried to show that there is some credibility to the view that various perspectives on sexuality education are instrumentally informed by a larger sexual ideology. It is striking, however, that we rarely use the concept of ideology to refer to, and assess, our own point of view. This is because within the discourse on sexuality and sexuality education the concept of ideology is frequently employed as a rhetorical tool to denounce opposing points of view. In other words, a critical conception of ideology with a negative connotation is more likely to occur in this discourse than is a neutral conception of ideology which focuses on, in a less
judgemental fashion, the normative structure of systems of belief.¹⁴

The tendency to employ a critical conception of ideology in the discourse on sexuality education is problematic in that it obscures how each of us, as a proponent of a particular point of view, approaches the debate on sexuality education. It is only those who are on the wrong side of the debate who hold ideologies. To hold an opinion derived from ideology is to hold an unworthy opinion. A critical conception of ideology inhibits us from seeing that we, no matter what point of view we, also, consciously or unconsciously, have an ideology of our own. Unless we are ready to engage in the necessary self-reflection to recognize and acknowledge the tenets of our own sexual ideologies, an overlapping consensus upon which a truly democratic sexuality education in the schools can be created will be out of reach. As Pollis, (1985) puts it, we need to find

...a vehicle for understanding why debates on the content and methods of sexuality education are frequently like ships passing in the night with participants talking past, rather than with, one another. What is put forward as a reasonably impartial, value-free analysis based on facts and theories is more or less burdened by value judgements flowing from a world view which remains unarticulated (p. 285).

An analysis of these debates that contextualizes differing perspectives from within the point of view of sexual ideology may provide such a vehicle. Such an analysis, because it is concerned not with establishing the correctness of particular ideologies but rather with seeking to find points of convergence in the affirmation and respect for the core values of democracy, needs to employ a neutral conception of ideology.

¹⁴ I refer the reader back to p. 39-40 for a more complete distinction between a critical and neutral conception of ideology.
We can only hope to reach a workable solution to the debates about sexuality education when, at the larger social/political level, policy makers and the public at large see the debates not as a battle between good and evil, but as a discourse between two very different groupings of ideological thought, each with its own distinctive ethical perspective and each with a well-established presence in Western society. A philosophy of sexuality education derived from an overlapping consensus of reasonable, yet conflicting, sexual ideologies offers a framework for the form and content of sexuality education programs that accommodate moral pluralism. This overlapping consensus is to be abstracted from that limited or "thin" set of values that we presumably all share by virtue of our collective endorsement of the right to freedom of belief, conscience, religion etc.

This does not mean that the fundamentalist Christian needs to give up her belief that homosexuality is morally wrong and against the laws of nature, any more than it means that the secular psychologist needs to give up his belief that gays, lesbians, and bisexuals can be as psychologically healthy as heterosexuals. The Jehovanist still believes in God and The Naturalist still believes in science. The Romanticist still believes that no teenager should have sex and the Libertarian still believes that it is permissible if it’s consenting and protected. Commitment to the overlapping consensus of democracy as guide for educating youth about sexuality does not mean the sacrificing of one’s own beliefs. It also does not mean that we must share our opponents beliefs, particularly as they pertain to moral issues, but simply that we accord them the opportunity for expression within the context of a democratic
culture and that this occurs also in education.

Some people lament the fact that we live in a time where our culture is not possessed by a single rigid vision of the truth. However, the absence of a consensus on an absolute truth perhaps pushes us to embrace the core values of democracy: the right to believe what we believe, to live, within reasonable limits, as we wish to live, and to respect the right of others to do the same in an equal and autonomous fashion. In political terms, this means

...our exercise of political power is fully proper only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse in light of the principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason (Rawls, 1994, p. 137).

In a democracy these principles and ideals are expressed through the values of "...equal political and civil liberty; fair equality of opportunity; the values of economic reciprocity; the social bases of mutual respect between citizens" (Rawls, 1993, p. 139).

To the extent that we, as a democratic society, share a commitment to these values, not everything is subjective. We have a free-standing view, a kind of objectivity if you will, that provides a basis for social life, including sexual life as it pertains to these freedoms and responsibilities. This is the overlapping consensus of democratic societies "without which political liberalism would merely be a doctrine, not a conception providing for political legitimacy and stability" (Hoffman, 1995, p. 54).

The great advantage of living in an age of uncertainty is that it can be highly conducive to a democratic political, intellectual, social climate. The admission, or even affirmation, of a lack of a collective consensus or certainty makes the encouragement of freedom
of belief more tenable. The totalitarian is often characterized by his utter certainty that he knows the truth or that he is certain that objective truth does not exist. If I am certain that I have a grasp on matters of truth, I may have less hesitancy to impose my beliefs on others. After all, I'm introducing them, albeit coercively, to the way things really are or should be. When armed with absolute certainty, one may have the tendency to favour "education in the right values." As Haydon (1995) suggests,

This is a view, of course, that can only be put into practice by those who believe they know what the right values are. This means already that the authoritative answer view faces difficulties in a context of moral pluralism. Not only is there not unanimity on what the right values are, but there is disagreement on what it means to call certain values the right ones, and on what kind of enquiry - philosophical, theological, or even anthropological or biological - is relevant to establishing any such claim (p. 56).

The embracing of one truth, one ideology, is often the gist of sexuality education in our public schools. As I have tried to show in Chapter Three, students are typically introduced to one ideology's version of the nature of human sexuality and sexual ethics. Indeed, it is fair to say that sexuality education is often ruled by a comprehensive doctrine rather than by an overlapping consensus of limited but shared values. In this respect, it may be argued, with considerable justification, that much of contemporary sexuality education in the public schools is profoundly undemocratic.

The undemocratic nature of contemporary sexuality education has a number of disturbing implications. Sexuality education programs tainted by ideological dominance or controversy are unable to fulfil young people's inalienable right to freedom of belief and the opportunity to critically deliberate between competing
ideological perspectives. In the face of our continuing ideological strife around sexuality, such programs also do little to contribute to a democratic social/political culture. Finally, sexuality education programs that replace the critical exploration of sexual ideology with the promotion of one particular ideological perspective are less likely to help students who do not share that perspective to protect their own sexual health.

The Meaning of Democratic Education

Theodore Kaltsounis (1994) writes that "...social studies, as a subject in the school curriculum, lacks a solid foundation, and is therefore in a state of crisis" (p. 176). Kaltsounis (1994) also observes that attempts to state a clear purpose for social studies have either been ineffective or "At their worst, they reflect the philosophical or ideological biases of those advancing some particular solution" (p. 176). Sexuality education, which might well be considered a type of social studies, suffers from a similar malaise.

Although it is certainly fertile ground for philosophical discourse, academic philosophers of education have largely avoided the subject of sexuality education (Diorio, 1982). Aside from highly generalized statements regarding sexual health, few sexuality education curricula contain clear philosophical statements offering a rationale for the program's content (LaCursia, Beyer, & Ogletree, 1994). And, as I have tried to show, sexuality education has been guided, more often than not by ideological bias rather than a solid philosophical foundation.

Kaltsounis (1994) offers a solution for the philosophical
crisis afflicting social studies.

American social studies educators do not need to look far for a strong foundation. They have only to stop taking democracy for granted and make its content, principles, practices, and history the main source, inspiration, and substance of social studies. I mean here that democracy should be offered not occasionally as a separate subject or unit, as is often the case, or only within its political manifestations; it should determine and underlie all aspects of social studies education. Everything in the program should actively advance understanding of democracy and the values and behaviors associated with it. American schools must stop doing things in social studies because of habit or tradition, and must provide America's youth instead with a truly democratic citizenship education (p. 180).

Kaltsounis' observations seem particularly applicable to sexuality education which often seems to have been formulated and implemented with little regard for either democracy or a democratic philosophy of education.

Any substantive discourse on the nature of a democratic sexuality education must be grounded in a clear understanding of the meaning of both democracy and a democratic philosophy of education. In attempting to establish the foundations of a democratic theory of education, most philosophers of education have been keenly aware of the need for such a definition even though the term democracy is...fraught with vagueness and ambiguity, the philosophical literature on the concept is immense. In many cases the use of the word "democracy" functions as a slogan, as a word whose meaning is not clear but whose purpose is to gain assent by attaching it with favorable connotations to a program that is being put forward. To get beyond sloganering and to say something plausibly defensible in a limited space is a daunting requirement. But it is necessary (Pearson, 1992, p. 83).

Through John Rawls' (1993) conceptualization of political Liberalism, some key aspects of democracy were identified. Primarily, we saw that democracy has far less to do with identifying the moral or empirical validity of certain beliefs and practices
than it does with mediating between different beliefs and practices so that each belief system is respected in accordance with the overlapping consensus that constitutes the essential elements of a democratic society. The commitment to an overlapping consensus of all reasonable belief systems is the basic constitutive element of democracy. It limits the acceptability of imposing ideas upon others, preserving the cherished democratic value of freedom of belief. No claims need necessarily be made regarding the a priori status of the core values of democracy: only that they constitute the shared, agreed-upon values by which we in democratic societies profess to live.

Indeed, central to the notion of democracy itself is the idea that it is through the free expression and deliberation between competing points of view that society progresses toward greater wisdom. As Rawls (1993) suggests, inherent within the principles of political liberalism is the belief that pluralism of competing points of view, rather than being a disadvantage to society, is the engine of an advancing culture. Or as John Ralston Saul (1993) puts it,

One sign of a healthy Western civilization is that within a relatively integrated moral outlook - for example, agreement on democratic principles - a myriad of ideas and methods are brought face to face, through civilized conflict the society's assumed moral correctness is constantly tested. This tension - emotional, intellectual, moral - is what advances the society (p. 135).

To the extent that formal education reflects and contributes to this vision of society, we can infer, as do Mosher, Kenny, and Garrod (1994) that education modelled on democratic principles is important because, among other things,

(1) democracy is vitally dependant on a responsive,
educated citizenry; (2) children educated in democratic groups benefit personally as well as in terms of social development; (3) democratic participation contributes to the growth of minds; and (4) democracy has to be recreated in the understanding and behavior of each new generation of citizens or it is jeopardized (p. 24).

The emphasis on mediating between competing points of view is shared by philosophers of education interested in how the educational process can contribute to democracy on both an individual and societal level. Philosophers concerned specifically with a democratic philosophy of education have focused on the necessity for individuals to acquire the ability to deliberate critically between competing points of view (e.g. Guttman, 1987; Weinstein, 1991). This enables them, as individuals, not only to freely choose between competing conceptions of the good life but also to participate in society as a democratic citizens. In other words, the principle that education, if it is to be considered truly democratic, must facilitate the ability to critically deliberate between competing conceptions of the good life is important for two reasons. First, it contributes to the individual's democratic right to freely choose a conception of the good life. Second, it contributes to the conscious social reproduction of democratic values thus helping to create or maintain the democratic nature of society. As Amy Guttman (1987) puts it her book Democratic Education,

it would be an illegitimate pretension to educational authority on anyone's part to deprive any child of the capacities necessary for choice among good lives. The pretension would be illegitimate for two reasons. First: even if I know that my way of life is best, I cannot transform this claim into the claim that I have a right to impose my way of life on anyone else, even on my own child, at the cost of depriving her of the capacity to choose a good life. Second: many if not all of the capacities necessary for choice among good lives are also for necessary for choice among good societies. A
necessary (but not sufficient) condition of conscious social reproduction is that citizens have the capacity to deliberate among alternative ways of personal and political life. To put this point in more liberal language: a good life and a good society for self-reflective people require (respectively) individual and collective freedom of choice (p. 40).

According to Weinstein (1991),

Guttman takes the "core value" of democracy to be "conscious social reproduction" (p. 14, 42). In addition to the core value, she identifies two "principled limits on political and parental authority over education" (p. 44). These are the principle of nonrepression which "prevents the state, or any group within it, from using education to restrict critical deliberation of competing conceptions of the good life and good society" (p. 44) and the principle of "nondiscrimination" preventing "the state, and all groups within it, from denying anyone an educational good on grounds irrelevant to the legitimate social purposes of that good (p. 45)" (p. 10).

Mark Cladis (1995), in an essay examining the sociologist/philosopher Emile Durkheim's thoughts on the relationship between education and democracy, states that "Through moral education, youth become autonomous and develop the skills in reflective and critical thought that are so important to flourishing democracies, as they are nurtured in society's shared 'ideas, sentiments, and practices'" (p. 37). In sum, democratic moral education promotes autonomy and critical thought within the context of the shared beliefs and practices of society.

As we have seen, autonomy as conceived by political liberalism, entails that people think of themselves as free in that they are able to independently form a self-authenticating conception of the good life. In other words, the individual is free from either explicit or implicit bias or coercion in forming value positions. However, arriving at a genuinely autonomous conception of the good life requires the ability to think critically. Autonomous judgement is the end product of the critical thinking process.
Indeed, the ability to think critically can justifiably be seen as the single most essential ingredient of moral education appropriate for a plural democracy characterized by divergent moral perspectives. This is because critical thinking gives us "...the ability to make rational judgements relevant to political life, and thus, can be seen as essential for the preparation of citizens in a democracy" (Weinstein, 1991, p. 9). Critical thinking enables us to freely and rationally differentiate, evaluate, and choose between competing conceptions of the good life. "The purpose of critical deliberation is to maximize the possibility of reconsidering what constitutes good lives and good societies by maximizing the available alternatives" (Weinstein, 1991, p. 11). Critical thinking helps students intellectually process different points of view, particularly in regard to socially and politically sensitive issues.

In a society which affirms democratic pluralism,

...there is a need for education, not just in morals, but about morality: an education that will give people some knowledge and understanding not just of a variety of moral positions in the world, but of various ways in which moral values enter into people’s lives and some knowledge, too, of the kinds of arguments that have been used to support moral positions and, unavoidably, of the existence of various sorts of scepticism about morals (Haydon, 1995, p. 62-63).

A democratic education clearly must try to create conditions amenable to autonomy and critical deliberation. However, although their presence is necessary, in of themselves, autonomy and critical deliberation are insufficient for addressing the moral implications of learning to live in a democratic society. In order to be fully democratic in its function, education must help people reflect upon their rights and responsibilities as they relate to the overlapping consensus of a pluralistic democracy. This constitutes a very
limited, but highly substantive, claim about the nature and purpose of moral discourse within a democratic education.

This is a limited claim because it has little or nothing to say about the real or precise nature of morality itself. Consequently, a democratic education avoids teaching students to accept any one vision of the nature of morality. To make such an attempt would involve invoking a comprehensive doctrine as the preferred philosophical basis for understanding morality. So, for example, introducing into the classroom moral theories drawn from theism or atheism as the most valid or only acceptable way of doing ethics violates the overlapping consensus of democracy by imposing a comprehensive doctrine. As Haydon (1995) suggests in his discussion of the implications of democratic pluralism for moral education,

...both theism and atheism would be parts of different comprehensive doctrines; political liberalism is not part of comprehensive doctrine, but is that set of principles, of an explicitly political sort, on which different comprehensive views can converge. This "overlapping consensus" will be philosophically minimalist, since it will not include any metaphysical or theological underpinnings (p. 55).

Although minimalist in its framework for moral discourse, addressing moral issues in a democratic education can be an intellectually challenging endeavour, purposefully directed at learning, among other things, to negotiate different moral perspectives within the context of the assigned rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship. This is the substantive moral element of a democratic sexuality education.

In order for students to engage in this process of democratic moral reflection, they must acquire a reasonably thorough understanding of differing sexual ideologies including the world
views that support them. This kind of understanding is important because ideological perspectives "...color the way in which each of us approaches a particular political, economic, or moral issue, as well as the way we reach decisions about sexual issues and relationships" (Francoeur, 1989, p. xix). It requires an understanding by the student of his/her own moral perspective as well as those of her/his peers, family, religion, and community. Most importantly, bringing a substantive moral element to a democratic sexuality education requires the examination of one’s own personal sexual ideology, its history, its sources of moral knowledge and wisdom, and its behavioural norms in relation to the values that make up the overlapping consensus of democratic society.

This type of sexuality education, however, is bound to be disconcerting to many people. Encouraging students to critically deliberate between competing points of view in sexuality education is something that is more than likely to be greeted with considerable opposition. For example, parents who hold a particular sexual ideology and have raised their children to follow that same ideology may well be highly uncomfortable with the idea of having their children exposed to alternative value positions. As Haydon (1995) suggests,

Parents who have tried their best to instil in their children the values which they believe to be right may reasonably be suspicious that an education that gives their children knowledge of different values held by others, and teaches their children to reflect critically on these values, may only succeed only in unravelling the good work that they have done (p. 54).

From the standpoint of a democratic philosophy of education two points need to be made in regard to this concern. First, young people need, in order to become truly democratic citizens, a
knowledge and understanding of moral perspectives that differ from their own familial, religious, ethnic, and social traditions. Because democracy requires a basic minimal respect and toleration between peoples holding different moral doctrines, an equitably organized peaceful co-existence of diverse perspectives in society requires some understanding of beliefs that differ from one's own. As Cladis (1995) notes,

Future citizens of democracies need to know about styles of belief and practices other than that of their family or local group. Otherwise a child, a future adult who had been held captive to a highly particular moral point of view, could find it difficult to respect those holding other worthy views (p. 40).

A second, and equally important, point in regard to this question relates to the manner and conviction with which we hold our values. It is often assumed by both the proponents of Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology that the mere exposure to "offensive" sexual values will weaken young people's belief in the "right" values which may have already been communicated to youth by parents or other authoritative sources. A democratic sexuality education, therefore, according to this view, becomes a corrupting force.

From the standpoint of a democratic philosophy of education, this view reflects a misunderstanding of the dynamics in which citizens in a democracy are invited to form their beliefs. As Haydon (1995) puts it, "Genuine attachment to a particular set of values does not come through uncontested blind acceptance but rather through the critical appropriation of those values when rigorously compared to alternative value systems" (p. 61). In other words, genuine attachment to the lower order set of values specific to a particular sexual ideology is less likely to occur through explicit, unadulterated imposition, but rather, genuine attachment to a sexual
ideology is more likely to occur through a positive evaluation of that ideology in comparison to others. Compared to the direct inculcation of particular beliefs, the opportunity for critical deliberation between differing points of view better enables people to fully understand, articulate, and defend their own views. According to Kelly (1986), strict partisans of a particular point of view who employ the educational methods of exclusive partiality,

...preclude the opportunity for realizing an informed and defensible position. Hence, by failing to expose students to the best alternative arguments and how presumably these can be effectively rebutted, the strict partisan is essentially fabricating intellectual straw people vulnerable to the serious challenges from competent adversaries. In a tightly closed society where conflicting perspectives are suppressed or nonexistent, the strict partisan's approach to preserving allegiance is perhaps feasible. In a more pluralistic culture, however, a cocooned existence is constantly in jeopardy; as a result, the presumption that individuals can be protected from multiple influences is dubious, if not myopic. More likely, the fragile proteges of the strict partisan face any of several ominous futures: defensive dogmatism, disillusionment and paralysis, ethical relativism, or defection to the enemy camp. While the most appealing of these, dogmatism, may look and feel familiar to the strict partisan, it is an improbable strategy for durably seducing or converting an inquiring mind (p. 119).

In sum, for strict partisans of both Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology, the educational methods of exclusive partiality have a strong potential for self-defeating failure. Recipients of exclusively partial sexuality education have a greater vulnerability to confusion in society characterized by a plurality of often conflicting sexual value systems. In addition, they may be more likely to reject the value system that they have uncritically inherited from their familial, ethnic, religious tradition or from their formal education. As difficult as it may be for true believers in particular sexual ideologies to fathom, their respective
ideological interests may be best served by advocating for an education that exposes young people not only the best arguments of the true believers' ideology but also to the best arguments of contrary points of view. If the true believer's ideology is defensible when subject to rigorous critical deliberation, as few true believer's would deny, then an education that provides the opportunity for such deliberation should be encouraged and not rejected.

Striking a balance between a public education system founded on the politically secular principles of democratic education and the interests of religious traditions has been highly precarious. It is a highly contentious issue when viewed in the context of sexuality education in the public schools. It is a commonly made complaint that sexuality education which fails to inculcate religious values constitutes an assault on those values. In turn, sexuality education becomes a platform for indoctrinating students into an acceptance of secular sexual morality. The rejoinder by defenders of comprehensive sexuality education that their programs promote "universal human values" has been insufficient to quell the concerns of Restrictive sexual ideologues.

This type of dispute is born as much out of a misunderstanding of the principles of political liberalism as it is out of a genuinely rational conflict of perspective. Here, the doctrine of comprehensive liberalism - a comprehensive doctrine like any other - which is generally compatible with some major strands of Permissive sexual ideology is mistaken for political liberalism which is the basic underpinning of a democratic philosophy of education. Ideally, a democratic education neither subverts
religious values nor promotes secular ones. But it does educate young people on the values that must be respected as requirements of democratic citizenship. The fact that these values, although not antagonistic to reasonable religious doctrines, are primarily secular in their justification can indicate a bias, in the view of some defenders of a religiously based education, in the direction of secularism. Rawls (1993) notes this problem when he writes that

Here it may be objected that requiring children to understand the political conception in these ways is in effect, though not in intention, to educate them to a comprehensive liberal conception. Doing the one may lead to the other, if only because once we know the one, we may of our own accord go on to the other. It must be granted that this may indeed happen in the case of some. And certainly there is some resemblance between the values of political liberalism and the values of the comprehensive liberalisms of Kant and Mill. But the only way this objection can be answered is to set out carefully the great differences in both scope and generality between political and comprehensive liberalism (p. 199-200).

In responding to this concern, a clear distinction must be made between a sexuality education derived from political liberalism and a sexuality education derived from comprehensive liberalism. Sexuality education derived from comprehensive liberalism is likely to resemble many existing forms of permissive sexuality education. In other words, it employs the lower order moral precepts of Permissive sexual ideology, often based on secular liberal philosophy, as the over-riding philosophical context for addressing sexual issues in the classroom. In contrast, a sexuality education derived from political liberalism is based on the higher order principle of accommodating a diversity of lower order ideological perspectives. This suggests that neither particular religious or secular liberal conceptions of sexual ethics are accorded a privileged position. Indeed, this principle is at they very heart
of democracy in general and of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education. Within such an education any reasonable doctrine is afforded an equal opportunity, through critical deliberation, to be appropriated by those students who see virtue in it.

Thus, it is indeed the case that a democratic sexuality education encourages students to choose their own sexual ideology within the overlapping consensus of the higher order values of freedom of belief and critical deliberation. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that within the confines of a democratic society, education of this kind is biased against Restrictive sexual ideology and in favour of Permissive ideology. This assumption only holds true if sexuality education programs take their cue from the lower order precepts of Permissive sexual ideology. In such a case, sexuality education would rightly be seen as undemocratic. However, to assume that democratic sexuality education, a form of sexuality education that does not directly inculcate Restrictive sexual ideology is, by its very nature, necessarily and unfairly biased against Restrictive sexual ideology, is to assume that the principles of freedom of belief and critical deliberation must also be incompatible with Restrictive sexual ideology. Where it is the case that one maintains this assumption, one is forced either to argue against democratic education or to recognize that the assumed incompatibility between democratic sexuality education and Restrictive sexual ideology represents what Moon (1993) calls a tragic conflict of political liberalism. In the latter circumstance, the Restrictive sexual ideologue who holds this assumption must accept, if he or she is to remain faithful to the overlapping consensus in support of freedom of belief, what he or she will
perceive as an unreasonable burden.

In sum, the participants in the discourse on sexuality education, whether they be parents, teachers, or policy makers, need to keep in mind the distinction between the relative and appropriate roles of both religious and secular interpretations of sexual morality and the overarching higher order structures of political liberalism when putting forth proposals for the form and content of sexuality education.

Conclusion

If it can be agreed that the guiding principles of democracy and democratic education, as I have articulated them here, should replace sexual ideology as the guiding force behind sexuality education in the schools, then a broad picture of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education begins to emerge.

First, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education begins not with truth statements about the nature of human sexuality, but with a commitment to promote the values of democracy. Indeed, because issues related to sexuality such as homosexuality, gender relations, and teen sexuality are among the most significant and divisive social issues of our time, sexuality education may be the ideal forum for young people to contemplate the meaning and implications of democratic principles for the way in which our society addresses sexuality.

Second, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education does not suggest that there is a single moral ideal of human sexual conduct. Rather, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education acknowledges and affirms the existence of a diversity of sexual
moral truths. Students need to acquire a basic knowledge and understanding of the various ideological perspectives toward sexuality in our culture.

Third, in addressing student's own personal beliefs about sexuality, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education provides the opportunity for students to recognize and reflect upon their own values and those of their peers, families, communities, and society at large. This approach is essential if young people are to be accorded their inalienable right to freedom of belief, conscience, religion etc.

Fourth, in addressing the social aspects of human sexuality, students are encouraged to reflect upon their own values and those of others in the context of the overlapping consensus of a democratic society. This constitutes the most explicitly moral component of the process of sexuality education. It makes clear the sexual rights and responsibilities of individuals in a democratic society. It invites reflection by students on the degree to which different beliefs may or may not be compatible with the overlapping consensus of common democratic values.

Fifth, in teaching the information and skills to prevent unwanted pregnancy and infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education stipulates that such education fully respects the needs and values of all students. In other words, a democratic sexuality education must, if it is to remain democratic, teach the information and skills to avoid sexual activity in order to respect the needs and values of those students who choose to be abstinent and it must also teach the information and skills to practice safer sex in order to
respect the needs and values of those students who choose to be sexuality active.

Because sexuality education is often burdened by ideological influences, it rarely meets the conditions of a democratic philosophy of education. When programs are dominated by either Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology, the resulting approach of exclusive partiality clearly impinges on the right of individuals to freely choose a conception of the good life. In addition, programs that exclude any controversial material through an approach of exclusive neutrality fail to address sexuality in any meaningful way and therefore curtail the opportunity to critically appropriate a sexual ideology.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, programs that address moral issues related to sexuality by promoting a particular sexual ideology, or by saying nothing at all via exclusive neutrality, fail to prepare students for democratic citizenship. As I have suggested, facilitating the ability to deliberate between divergent points of view is a fundamental component of political socialization in a plural democracy. When one sexual ideology is put on a superior footing in relation to others, not only is critical deliberation shut down, but also, in a fairly direct way, understanding and a democratic respect for differing ideological conceptions is undermined. In sum, instead of critical deliberation and an exploration of how different beliefs about social practices related to sexuality can be adjudicated by democratic values, we are left only with indoctrination. Such an approach does little in terms of the moral development of individual students. Nor do such programs meaningfully contribute to a democratic alleviation of the
often paralysing social and political strife that surrounds one of the most significant aspects of our culture. In effect, these types of programs violate individual rights and contradict the educational goal of promoting a democratic culture.

The recently published Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education (Health Canada, 1994) offer, I believe, a representative example of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education. I was fortunate enough to contribute to the creation of this document which represents one of the few cases in the Western world where a national government has issued guidelines for sexuality education. Because Canada is generally held by its citizens and government to be a pluralistic and democratic state, the working group mandated to create the guidelines were committed to an approach to sexuality education that accommodates moral pluralism. In other words, the Canadian guidelines "... were formulated to embody an educational philosophy that is inclusive, respects diversity, and reflects the fundamental precepts of education in a democratic society" (McKay & Barrett, 1995, p. 65).

Among the introductory statements to the guidelines is the following:

The terms "sexual health" and "sexual health education" mean different things to different people, depending on their experiences, values and customs. This document recognizes and welcomes such diversity. In spite of such diversity, however, there are common principles, aspirations and expectations upon which to build national Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education (Health Canada, 1994, p. 4).

This statement makes two points supportive of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education. First, it acknowledges that sexuality has different meanings for different people, suggesting a recognition of the divergent sexual ideologies that exist in
Canada. Further, the guidelines suggest that "Sexual health educators should remain open to the range of meanings and understandings associated with the term 'sexual health'" (Health Canada, 1994, p. 29). Second, the above statement refers to "common principles, aspirations, and expectations", to guide sexuality education, suggesting that there are common values that can be abstracted, with respect to human sexuality, from the diverse background culture of Canadian society.

Of the ten philosophy statements that accompany the guidelines, three are particularly salient in their compatibility with a democratic philosophy of sexuality education. "Effective sexual health education enhances sexual health within the context of an individual's values, moral beliefs, religious or ethnocultural background, sexual orientation or other such characteristic" (Health Canada, 1994, p. 8). This statement acknowledges and affirms that individuals are to have their values respected in the delivery of sexuality education, supporting the democratic principle of freedom of belief. The guidelines further support this principle through the statement that "Effective sexual health education is structured so that attitudinal and behavioural changes arise out of informed individual choice and are not imposed by an external authority" (Health Canada, 1994, p. 8).

These statements in support of freedom of belief are balanced by another statement which states that, "In addition, effective sexual health education provides, within the domain of its subject matter, accurate information that counters misunderstanding and reduces discrimination based upon race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnocultural background or disability" (Health Canada,
This statement can be reasonably interpreted as functioning, within the context of sexuality education, as a remedy to one of the key dilemmas of liberal democratic cultures. In this particular case, the guidelines identify the principle of nondiscrimination to mediate a clash of beliefs and rights where one set of beliefs comes into direct conflict with another set of beliefs. The principle of nondiscrimination is introduced to challenge beliefs that, when put into practice, infringe on the rights of others. In this case, beliefs supporting discriminatory acts constitute an unreasonable doctrine, falling outside the boundaries of the overlapping consensus. Although the guidelines support the principles, consistent with the freedoms inherent in a politically liberal culture, that sexuality education should take place within the context of an individual's moral beliefs and that attitudes and behaviour arise out of informed individual choice, these freedoms are limited by the principle of nondiscrimination. If the principle of nondiscrimination is held to be part of the overlapping consensus of basic values abstracted from the common culture, the balancing of freedoms in this approach to sexuality education is consistent with the theory of political liberalism.
CHAPTER SEVEN

A DEMOCRATIC APPROACH TO KEY ISSUES IN SEXUALITY EDUCATION:
HOMOSEXUALITY, GENDER EQUALITY, AND PREGNANCY/STD PREVENTION


Introduction

It is not my intention here to map out in detail what a democratic sexuality education looks like from beginning to end. Nearly every topic area in sexuality education is shrouded in controversy. My focus has been to articulate the basic philosophical parameters of a democratic sexuality education. However, the implications of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education for classroom practice can be made clearer by explicating, in some detail, how several of the most controversial subject areas in sexuality education can be conceptualized in the context of a democratic sexuality education. The subjects of homosexuality, gender equality, and pregnancy/STD prevention are perhaps the most controversial. Thus, these are the three subject areas I will address in more detail.

Addressing the Issue of Homosexuality

Homosexuality is, without doubt, among the most divisive social issues confronting Western culture today. There is no other issue which so clearly divides Restrictive and Permissive sexual
ideology. What issues related to sexual orientation should be taught in the schools and how they should be taught are perhaps the most volatile of the debates surrounding sexuality education. In some places in the United States, discussion of the topic is banned from the formal curriculum. For example, in South Carolina, legislators have banned discussion of homosexuality in the formal curriculum except within the context of a class discussion about AIDS (Sears, 1992, p. 139). Homosexuality is, perhaps, the litmus test for how our society approaches sexuality, particularly in terms of the degree of diversity that we will tolerate. The debate over homosexuality is highly complex and, I believe, its appropriate parameters are commonly misunderstood. I will, therefore, devote considerable space to addressing the following questions: How should the issue of homosexuality be dealt with in a democratic society? Subsequently, how should it be dealt with within a democratic sexuality education? Answering questions of this sort requires, as Michael Ruse (1988) points out in Homosexuality: A Philosophical Inquiry, "an investigation into values; an ethical inquiry" (p. 236). In this exploration, we are asking basic questions about how we, as a society, ought to address a specific aspect of identity and sexual expression. Inherent in these questions is the issue of how we interact, both personally and collectively, with those individuals who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Although these questions immediately raise moral issues, it is specifically in the moral domain that the debate over homosexuality has run amok.

If we think that the solution for the social debate over homosexuality has, as its focus, the question of whether or not homosexual behaviour is immoral or not, we are asking the wrong
question. Such a question is relevant to the world of sexual ideology but not necessarily to the world of political and social democracy. We cannot answer the question of the moral validity of homosexual behaviour without an appeal to sexual ideology. In a liberal democracy characterized by the existence and affirmation of ideological diversity, no amount of moral debate will lead us toward a resolution of issues such as the moral validity of homosexuality. In such a circumstance we must turn to the principles of democracy to mediate between conflicting ideologies.

An approach to the issue of homosexuality that is consistent with the fundamental precepts of democracy, and therefore appropriate to a democratic sexuality education, can be clarified by examining differing ideological positions toward homosexuality in terms of their acceptability as a basis for education or social policy in a society governed by the overlapping consensus of a liberal democracy.

In Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality, Andrew Sullivan (1995) sketches four different positions on homosexuality - the prohibitionist, the conservative, the liberationist, the liberal - each with a "distinct solution to the problem of gay-straight relations" (p. 20). As we might infer from these labels, the prohibitionist and conservative positions are encompassed by Restrictive sexual ideology and the liberationist and liberal positions reflect Permissive sexual ideology. Each of these perspectives, perhaps with the exception of the liberationist, are often proposed as an appropriate moral framework for addressing the issue of homosexuality in sexuality education. Sullivan describes and critiques each perspective from a philosophical position that
is essentially consistent with the conception of democracy explicated by Rawls.

The first perspective that Sullivan delineates is the prohibitionist argument. Its contours are now familiar to us. It is synonymous with the Jehovanist ideology described by Davis (1983) in that it argues on the basis of divine revelation and/or natural law "that homosexuality is an abberation and that homosexual acts are an abomination" (Sullivan, 1995, p. 20). Thus, homosexuality, in this view, requires legal punishment and social deterrence.

Because this conceptualization of homosexuality has enjoyed a relative hegemony throughout most of the history of Western culture, its moral prescriptions have been codified in law and have permeated our culture, including formal and informal attempts at public education about sexuality. In terms of the law, the hegemony of this perspective towards homosexuality has resulted in the codification of a particular sexual ideology into the legal regulation of sexual behaviour. Ruse (1988), equating the prohibitionist perspective toward homosexuality with the tenets of the Christian tradition, summarizes this marriage of a specific moral world view with the legal regulation of society.

I doubt that anyone has wanted (or today would want) to equate moral law exactly with legal law. Nevertheless, in the past many have clearly seen a close connection between sins (violations of moral laws) and crimes (violations of state laws). People have felt that inasmuch as possible the state law ought to uphold the moral law, legislating against sin, and in turn being supported by the moral law. Furthermore, in the west moral law has been seen in turn to be part and parcel of the Christian tradition (Ruse, 1988, p. 241).

In sum, Restrictive sexual ideology, at least with respect to homosexuality, has been, and to a considerable extent continues to be, the law of the land. If we transpose this dynamic to sexuality
education we can suppose that the substance of the moral law (homosexual acts are an abomination) is merged with the content of sexuality education with the result that students are unequivocally told that homosexual acts are immoral.

For some fairly clear reasons, this approach, in both its legal and educational implications, is at odds with Rawls’ (1993) conceptualization of democracy and with a democratic philosophy of sexuality education. Given that the prohibitionist view is strongly tied to religion, Sullivan (1995) critiques prohibitionism on the grounds that a liberal democracy and the rules that guide it are characterized by a separation of church and state.

This is not to say that the political is prior to the religious or that the faithless have nothing to learn from the faithful. It is simply to say that one of the first principles of liberal societies, as they have emerged from the theocracies and dictatorships of the past, is that the religious is not the same as the political; that its very discourse is different; and that the separation of the two is as much for the possibility of a vibrant faith as it is for the possibility of a vibrant polity (p. 24).

In Rawlsian terms, the prohibitionist perspective toward homosexuality, as a moral belief, constitutes part of a comprehensive doctrine. To the extent that the prohibitionist view is imposed on the members of society, either in terms of law or the process of education, it constitutes what Rawls (1993) calls an unreasonable doctrine. It is in violation of the overlapping consensus upon which democratic society is based.

The second perspective that Sullivan (1995) describes that falls under the rubric of Restrictive sexual ideology is the conservative approach to homosexuality. Sullivan’s (1995) conservative category mirrors, in many ways, Seidman’s (1992) description of Romanticist sexual ideology which stresses the ideal
of mature heterosexual unions. According to Sullivan (1995), conservatives disapprove of homosexuality because homosexual sex cannot partake of the uniquely heterosexual union of procreation and emotional commitment that loving straight marital sex can partake in; and because its simulation of such an act is simply a delusion on the part of those involved. And because this in itself is an assault on heterosexual union: "The deliberate genital coupling of persons of the same sex is repudiated [because]...it treats human sexual capacities in a way which is deeply hostile to the self-understanding of those members of the community who are willing to commit themselves to real marriage in the understanding that sexual joys are not mere instruments to, or mere compensations for, the accomplishment of marriage’s responsibilities, but rather enable the spouses to actualize and experience their intelligent commitment to share in those responsibilities, in that genuine self-giving" (p. 99-100).

In short, in this view, homosexuality is psychologically unhealthy and constitutes an affront to mature heterosexuality. According to Sullivan (1995), although conservatives share a basic respect for democratic principles, they advocate the guiding of public life to reflect their view of healthy sexuality.

Conservatives combine a private tolerance of homosexuals with public disapproval of homosexuality. While they do not want to see legal persecution of homosexuals, they see no problem with discouragement and disparagement of homosexual behavior in the abstract or, more commonly, a carefully sustained hush on the matter altogether (p. 97).  

Social policy, then, is geared toward discouraging "all public messages that undermine the exclusively marital, heterosexual, and loving deployment of sexual desire" (Sullivan, 1995, p. 101).

Although the conservatives, unlike the prohibitionists, do not

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15 It is worth noting, on this point, that the Sex Respect and Teen-Aid sexuality education programs, both informed exclusively by Restrictive sexual ideology, are largely silent on the subject of sexual orientation. Homosexuality and homosexual behaviour are only discussed in the context of HIV transmission. Perhaps this is reflective of the conservative strategy of "a carefully sustained hush on the matter" described by Sullivan.
favour legal measures to prevent homosexual acts from occurring, conservative social policy still constitutes an unreasonable doctrine. We can assume that a conservative sexuality education would actively seek to promote "the exclusively marital, heterosexual, and loving deployment of sexual desire." It is difficult to imagine that sexuality education of this sort could possibly avoid being justifiably labelled as indoctrination. As Rawls (1993) emphasizes, categorizing a doctrine as unreasonable does not imply that the doctrine's stance on a particular moral issue is invalid, but rather it is the attempt to impose that moral stance that may render the doctrine unreasonable. Clearly, on these grounds, the conservative social policy towards homosexuality, and, by extension, its approach to addressing homosexuality in sexuality education, constitutes an unreasonable doctrine.

The third approach to homosexuality described by Sullivan (1995) is the liberationist. The point of departure for the liberationist approach is a strain of the social constructionist analysis of sexuality that was outlined in detail in Chapter Four. In its more extreme forms it suggests that our prevailing concepts of gender and sexual orientation are nothing but socially created categories; "a particular way of being as defined by a particular culture" (Sullivan, 1995, p. 58).

For the liberationists, homosexuality as a defining condition does not properly exist because it is a construct of human thought, not an inherent or natural state of being. It is a "construction," generated in human consciousness by the powerful to control and define the powerless. It reflects not the true state of human affairs, but a crude and arbitrary ordering imposed upon them. As with many prohibitionists, there are no homosexuals, merely same-sex acts; only unlike the prohibitionists, even these acts are dependant on their social context for their meaning (Sullivan, 1995, p. 57).
As I suggested in Chapter Four, the social constructionist analysis can lead us to an acknowledgement, and perhaps affirmation, of a plurality of sexual meanings. However, the liberationists described by Sullivan (1995) attach to the social constructionist analysis a politics that seeks to promote a version of Permissive sexual ideology. In other words, rather than affirm diversity by placing existing categories of gender and sexual orientation on an equal footing, the liberationist prescribes that these categories must be obliterated. The elimination of these categories reflects Permissive sexual ideology because those groups who suffer oppression under prevailing categorizations, particularly women and homosexuals, will presumably enjoy greater sexual freedom once gender and sexual orientation no longer exist as meaningful categories. When this view is translated into a prescription, insisting that public institutions must preside over the destruction of prevailing constructions of gender and sexual orientation, it becomes an unreasonable doctrine. It is in fact a proposal to impose a particular conception of the human condition on people, many of whom may not think it possible or even desirable, including, it should be noted, many women and homosexuals.

The fourth perspective toward homosexuality outlined by Sullivan (1995) is the modern liberal interpretation. This perspective is best described as modern because it strays from, and in many ways contradicts, the principles of traditional liberalism. This distinction is important and worth articulating in some detail because it allows us to see that the modern liberal approach to homosexuality violates the principles of liberal democracy articulated by Rawls (1993). It is also reflects how a modern
liberal sexuality education may skew instruction in favour of Permissive sexual ideology.

Sullivan (1995) describes the evolution of traditional liberalism as follows.

In the religious wars and schisms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the European state discovered within it a way to protect the lives of its citizens from the horrific consequences of religious, moral, and philosophical conflict. The most important matters in life - the meaning of the universe, the fate of the soul, the means to salvation - were deemed outside politics. The state was subsequently to remain neutral in religious matters; it was to respect the private practices of citizens, so long as they respected public norms of obedience to law. Gradually, as the liberal idea unfolded, it grew to protect whole swathes of private life: it allowed citizens to produce and sell goods freely, to associate with whom they wished, and to express themselves even in ways that offended others and the state (p. 187-138).

Further, and directly in line with the overlapping consensus of democracy,

there is a line over which a liberal citizen will not cross; he or she refuses to see the state as a way to inculcate virtue or to promote one way of living over another; the state has no role in promoting understanding or compassion or tolerance, as opposed to toleration, or indeed to celebrate one set of "values" over another; and where the state and the individual conflict, the liberal will almost always side with the individual (Sullivan, 1995, p. 139).

For example, in order to combat discrimination against racial minorities, traditional liberals favoured political remedies such as ensuring voting rights, equal protection of the law, and equal access to education and public services.

But insofar as they were subject to more elusive social pressures - social prejudice, snobbery, racial bigotry, ridicule, nonviolent sexual harassment - liberals were content to illuminate the injustice, persuade others not to practice it, and to make their case relentlessly in the forums of liberal society: in literature, journalism, theatre, and the visual arts, in the mass media, and elsewhere. Injustice in the state, liberals believed, should be abolished; injustice in civil
society should be admonished (Sullivan, 1995, p. 146).

In its contemporary incarnation, however, Sullivan (1995) detects that liberalism has strayed from these principles. This deviation was, according to Sullivan (1995), well intentioned. It was a consequence of the fact that abolishing injustice in the state and merely admonishing it in civil life was largely ineffective. Despite the hopes of a liberal society, inequality and injustice stubbornly persist as features of western culture. In response to this reality, according to Sullivan (1995), liberalism began to betray itself by breaching the principle of public neutrality. Toward the end of the twentieth century, "liberalism extended itself into other, more far reaching areas of morals and social meaning" (Sullivan, 1995, p. 141). To promote liberty and equality in these private spheres required that limitations were to be put on what once were Liberalism's sacred principles.

According to Sullivan (1995), antidiscrimination statutes informed by this contemporary incarnation of liberalism reveal a contradiction. That is, in order to create an environment of equality for minority groups, liberals were forced to, sometimes severely, curtail the majority's right to liberty. In other words, these statutes are designed not simply to protect the rights of a minority, but to educate a backward majority in the error of its ways. It is perhaps no wonder that in the arena of public debate, liberals have found themselves increasingly undermined by their own tradition (Sullivan, 1995, p. 137).

"In its original, ideal formulation, liberalism could always assert that it was completely neutral in its dealings between citizens....But now the state was becoming intimately involved in the details of private life" (1995, p. 143).
According to Sullivan (1995), in relation to its goal of promoting equality for homosexuals, contemporary liberalism has fallen victim to this paradox. Sullivan (1995), argues that "the modern liberal is so concerned to overcome the visceral hostility toward homosexuals in the society that he wishes to reduce all of these emotions to a binary bigoted-tolerant axis, and legislate in favor of the tolerant" (p. 151). Further, laws designed to accomplish this goal are "forced into being a mixture of moral education, psychotherapy, and absolution. Liberalism was invented specifically to oppose this use of the law" (Sullivan, 1995, p. 151).

To the extent that Sullivan's critique of modern liberalism is correct, that approach contradicts Rawls' (1993) conception of political liberalism. The contemporary liberal approach to homosexuality, as described by Sullivan, constitutes an unreasonable doctrine in that it attempts to legislate away the beliefs of those who oppose homosexuality. While this approach is clearly noble in its aspiration to achieve a general standing of equality for homosexuals in society, the means by which this goal is to be achieved runs afoul of the principles of political Liberalism.

This concern, articulated by Sullivan, about the intrusiveness of contemporary liberalism has implications for how sexuality education addresses the issue of homosexuality. Many sexuality educators are keenly aware of the discrimination, hatred, and violence faced by homosexuals by virtue of their sexual orientation. Some may tempted to respond to this state of affairs by condemning as incorrect the expression of any view opposed to homosexuality. In other words, the response may be to teach from a position of
exclusive partiality, insisting, for example, that homosexuality is both psychologically healthy and morally valid. While well meaning in its intent, this approach to teaching about sexual orientation in sexuality education is undemocratic.

Sexuality education that takes this contemporary liberal point of view by categorically rejecting, in the classroom, the belief that homosexuality is immoral is, perhaps unintentionally, thwarting democracy on several accounts. It should be self-evident that it subverts critical deliberation, threatening the capacity for students to autonomously form their own moral conclusions. It is an approach to education informed by sexual ideology rather than the principles of democracy. Because the overall aim of such an approach is to affirm the principle of equal rights for homosexuals it is perhaps less self-evident, but no less true, that this approach to the issue in fact misses the point of political liberalism. It also misses the point of a democratic sexuality education. The aim of a democratic sexuality education is not to establish which values are objectively superior in regard to homosexuality, but rather to have students consider different moral positions in the context of democratic society. In this respect, contemporary liberalism as it applies to the political and educational spheres needs to be reconstructed.

If unreconstructed secular liberals, in order to understand others, need education and need to exercise critical thinking which may involve modifying some of their cherished assumptions, this is a need for everyone in our society. The religious person to whom it is simply obvious that abortion equates with murder will not, without critical reflection, even understand the point of view of one to whom it is entirely a matter of a woman’s right to choose - and vice versa; similarly, for the heterosexual person to whom the very idea of a homosexual act is anathema, and the homosexual who feels that something central to his identity is being denied
Greater understanding will not generate moral conclusions of itself. It may make the issue seem more problematic than it was - in a sense, it will make it no longer the same problem - and it will be still further thought that is needed if an answer to the problem in its new light is to be found (Haydon, 1995, p. 62).

In this respect, the issue for a democratic sexuality education is not whether homosexuality is right or wrong. Rather, the objective is first to understand differing perspectives and second to think about how such views can co-exist in a democratic culture that not only respects freedom of belief but also promotes democratic values of liberty, justice, and equality. In effect, sexuality education becomes a forum for participatory democratic discourse.

All four of the positions described by Sullivan are representative of sexual ideology. They reflect ideological positions on both the moral validity of homosexual relationships and on appropriate social policy toward those relationships. A democratic sexuality education will make students aware of differing ideological positions on homosexuality. For example, young people need to have knowledge that according to some religious traditions homosexuality is seen as a sin, and just as significantly, they need to learn that the overwhelming consensus of contemporary psychology is that homosexuality is a healthy sexual orientation. A democratic sexuality education will provide a reasonably thorough explanation of the ideological traditions that are at the root of these various perspectives toward homosexuality. Here, sexuality education is part history, part sociology, part psychology, and part philosophy.

How students interpret this information will be dependant on many factors including the values that they have already brought with them to the classroom. The family, peers, religious authorities, the media and other sources of knowledge and value
perspectives will have inevitably informed students' knowledge and opinions about homosexuality. In terms of the knowledge that it provides, sexuality education will correct misconceptions and provide basic information on the topic. One of the functions of providing such information is to combat homophobia: the irrational fear of gays and lesbians. In most cases, homophobia is rooted in myth and ignorance. For example, some homophobes seem to believe that gays and lesbians are interested in "recruiting" heterosexuals into the homosexual fold or that homosexuality is "contagious" or that gay men are more likely than heterosexual men to be child molesters. Since none of these beliefs are accurate, a democratic sexuality education, by providing basic information about the topic, can help dispel these myths, contributing to a reduction in homophobia.

A democratic sexuality education will encourage students to clarify their own value positions toward homosexuality and compare them to the best arguments put forth by various ideological perspectives. This process of critical deliberation can meaningfully contribute to the knowledgable critical appropriation of a value perspective toward homosexuality.\footnote{It might be argued that to discuss and debate the moral validity of same-sex sexuality is itself a form of discrimination since the moral validity of heterosexuality is rarely, if ever, seriously contested. Although this position may have some merit in a philosophical sense, the moral validity of homosexuality needs to be addressed in a democratic sexuality education because, whether one likes it or not, it is an issue that divides our society. Refusing to allow the issue to be brought up for discussion on the grounds that it constitutes discrimination to do so will not make the issue go away. It will only leave prevailing moral norms, some of which are clearly discriminatory, unexamined. Further, a democratic sexuality education can, and should, address issues such as "compulsory" heterosexuality.}
A democratic sexuality education asks students to consider various points of view toward homosexuality in relation to the principles of the overlapping consensus of democratic living. For example, students can look at the conceptual distinction between the moral disapproval of homosexuality and the discriminatory treatment of gays and lesbians. To morally disapprove of homosexuality is to believe that sexual acts between members of the same sex are wrong in an ethical sense. Discrimination is the negative differential treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, class, disability, religion, gender, and sexual orientation, and it is clearly contrary to the principles of democracy. However, moral disapproval does not necessarily imply, particularly in a democratic society, a desire or logical necessity to discriminate against people whose actions we may find morally wanting. This distinction is important because while a genuinely democratic society encourages respect for diversity and formally prohibits discrimination, it does not dictate moral values (McKay & Barrett, 1995).

According to some people, to express disapproval of homosexuality is tantamount to racism. Claiming equivalency between the expression of a moral disapproval of homosexual acts and bigotry perhaps reflects a haphazard and imprecise expression of the idea of gay and lesbian equal rights in the familiar language of contemporary political discourse. To equate the two is, however, to mistake a moral belief with an act of discrimination, an important distinction from the standpoint of liberal democracy. On the other side of the coin, to translate a moral disapproval of homosexuality into an argument to justify discriminatory actions is equally
untenable from a democratic perspective. This type of antidemocratic reasoning has a long history in our culture, particularly in regard to issues such as homosexuality. A democratic sexuality education encourages students to use the criteria of the overlapping consensus of democracy in critically evaluating various perspectives toward homosexuality.

Where do some perspectives on homosexuality cross the line between moral disapproval and discrimination? How can any society protect the rights of all people, including gays and lesbians, if that society is divided on the moral validity of homosexual relationships? These are, of course, very complex questions with no readily available answers. The point is not that students should be expected to arrive at definitive solutions to these dilemmas. Society at large as been unable to agree on a just approach to the issue of sexual orientation. Rather, the point is that students be encouraged to consider these issues, to constructively participate in this important social discourse. This is the manner in which a democratic sexuality education addresses the moral aspects of human sexuality.

Finally, it is important to stress the obligations that educators providing a democratic sexuality education have in regard to meeting the needs of gay and lesbian youth. It indeed constitutes discrimination when educators address developmental and relationship issues entirely in a heterosexual context. Sexuality educators need to make every effort to ensure that the educational needs of gay and lesbian youth are accorded equal respect and appropriate attention. Secondly, educators must recognize that gay and lesbian adolescents face extraordinary challenges not faced by heterosexual teenagers.
They are frequently the targets of harassment and violence by their peers. They often have difficulty dealing with disapproving parents. They face the often disconcerting, if not outright terrifying, prospect of revealing their identity to others. In short, as Martin (1988) puts it "The truth is that gay and lesbian youth are not like other adolescents. Their difference stems from their status as members of one of the most hated and despised minority groups in the country" (p. 59). While educators cannot eliminate hostile beliefs toward homosexuals, it is their duty, as part of the responsibility of providing a democratic sexuality education, to do their best to ensure that gay and lesbian adolescents are accorded an equal dignity and respect in the classroom.

Promoting Gender Equality Through Sexuality Education

Given that our society categorizes and defines us along lines of gender, there can be little doubt that the social organization of relations between the genders has a monumental impact on each of our lives and on the nature of society itself. Clearly, sexual behaviour is gendered behaviour, including "...expectations about how men and women are supposed to behave in sexual situations" (Byers, 1991, p. 16) and this may be particularly the case in adolescent relationships (Mackie, 1987).

As I suggested in Chapters One and Two, there are deep ideological divisions about the sources of male-female differences related to sexuality and what constitutes an appropriate organization of gender relations within society. For example, Restrictive sexual ideology, with the exception of Radical feminism, tends to favour what can best be described as traditional gender
roles, whereas Permissive sexual ideology tends to argue for a more progressive and transformative approach to gender relations. However, prevailing ideological divisions related to gender cannot be reduced to a straightforward opposition between the Permissive and Restrictive sexual ideologies. It is evident that within the feminist movement itself, there are also deep divisions related to the desired transformation of gender relations within society (e.g. McCormick, 1994). The link between gender and sexuality, combined with intense ideological divisions over the proper direction of gender relations, raises important issues for the form and content of sexuality education.

First, we need to be clear on the extent to which gender relations are shaped by ideology. A number of social scientists have proposed that many gender attributes related to sexuality are the products of biological and psychological adaptations acquired through the processes of human evolution (e.g. Buss, 1994; Symons, 1979). Be that as it may, there is little question, even among psychobiologists, that the arrangement of gender relations within a given society entails a series of social constructs. These social constructs result from ideologically based assumptions about what it means to be a man or woman, the roles each plays in society, and how men and women ought to relate to each other. That these assumptions are socially constructed is made evident by the fact that they are the subject of considerable variation and elasticity from one historical period to another and from one culture to another. As Connell (1987) aptly puts it,

Social-scientific theories of gender are a Western invention, as far as I know, and definitely a modern one. Other civilizations have had their own ways of dealing with human sexuality and the relations between
the sexes. As Indian eroticism and Chinese family codes illustrate, these can be as sophisticated and elaborate as anything the West has created. But they are different kinds of cultural formation (p. 23).

In particular, it is the relationship between the genders that is determined by a given society's social structure. In Connell's (1987) words, "Gender relations involve the structuring of social practice around sex and sexuality" (p. 245). I have argued that the structuring of social practice around sexuality, and our beliefs about it, are dependant on our ideological predispositions. In this respect, the issues surrounding the debate on gender equality are issues of ideology. For example, as Connell (1987) notes, when 19th century feminist Mary Wollstonecraft advocated for the rights of women "...it was mainly questions of ideology she had in mind: morals, manners, education and religion" (p. 241).

If the interconnection between sexuality and gender relations is a matter of ideology, we might expect that sexuality education in the schools would, at the very least, make students aware of an ideological analysis of gender relations. Sexuality education, at virtually any grade level, that invites students to consider the role of gender in sexual relationships without reference to differing ideological assumptions related to gender relations is either highly deceptive in its own ideological bias or reflects an extreme exclusive neutrality.

The manner in which most prevailing forms of sexuality education in the schools approach gender relations is suggestive of what Connell (1987) calls "...the cognitive purification of the world of gender" (p. 346). In other words, gender relations, when they are discussed at all, are not presented as something subject to social construction and transformation, but rather patterns of
gender relations are presented as accepted but unquestioned facts. As Connell (1987) notes, "The interpretation of gender relations as natural facts is extraordinarily widespread" (p. 245). In addition, these "natural facts" of gender relations tend to reflect very traditional assumptions about the gendered aspects of sexual relationships. As I have noted, many feminists identify these traditional assumptions as important factors in the oppression of women.

A number of authors have observed that contemporary sexuality education presents a traditional picture of gender relations that remains largely uncritiqued (Fine, 1988; Lenskyj, 1990; Sapon-Shevin & Goodman, 1992; Szirom, 1988; Whatley, 1988). For example, Fine (1988), in her study of sexuality education in urban American schools, observed that programs often address adolescent female sexuality solely in terms of the threat of aggressive male sexuality. This kind of sexuality education presupposes as "natural facts" the traditional gender scripts of male sexual aggressiveness and female sexual passivity. The Sex Respect and Teen-Aid curriculums have been criticized on the grounds that they perpetuate a stereotypical and male-biased pattern of gender relations (Trudell & Whatley, 1991; 1993). In sum, sexuality education often reinforces traditional patterns of gender relations by implicitly, if not explicitly, encouraging young women and men to view themselves as living embodiments of the "natural facts" of gender relations.

It is unlikely that sexuality education based on the "natural facts" of gender relations can contribute to the understanding of the social construction of gender relations or to the critical deliberation between differing ideological perspectives toward
gender and sexuality. If these are necessary ingredients for the promotion of gender equality in sexuality education, prevailing forms of sexuality education are likely to contribute little to this endeavour.

Szirom (1988, p. xii) argues that

Neither the theories advanced by the proponents of sex education, nor the most used teaching materials on which these courses are based, have addressed the fundamental issues of sex differences in socialization and the repression of women's sexuality; they are still therefore, inherently sexist in orientation.

Assuming that a purposeful quest for gender equality in sexuality and other realms is a widely shared and justifiable goal in a democratic society, it is necessary to conceptualize the manner in which a democratic sexuality education addresses this issue. When we speak of promoting gender equality in sexuality education we are, by definition, talking about bringing a feminist perspective to the classroom. It is the feminist movement that promotes women's interests with the aim of achieving equality with men. However, this begs the question, how can a feminist approach to sexuality education avoid the imposition of ideological assumptions related to gender and gender relations? This question is particularly vexing since the feminist movement itself encompasses a wide range of ideological perspectives.

I will focus here on the issue of ideological diversity within the feminist movement, and not on an opposition between feminist and antifeminist perspectives, because I am presupposing that a feminist approach to sexuality education is legitimate in so far as feminism is, broadly speaking, devoted to promoting the interests of women in a world that has been, and is, largely ruled by men. It is, however, important to specify how a feminist sexuality education can
remain consistent with the principles of a democratic sexuality education.

The feminist movement as a whole encompasses a variety of ideologies. For example, when we think of Radical feminism, Liberal feminism, or Socialist feminism, we are thinking of specific feminist ideologies, each with their own world views and distinctive analyses of gender relations. However, it may also be said that all feminist ideologies are united in their shared belief in the need to work for and achieve gender equality. It would be a mistake, then, to associate feminism with a specific ideology. Feminist philosopher Janet Radcliffe Richards (1980) proposes a conceptualization of gender along these lines. She suggests that the essence of feminism is the claim that "...women suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex" (p. 13-14) but that "The conflation of the idea of feminism as a particular ideology with that of feminism as a concern with women's problems..." (p. 15) is problematic because it runs the risk of subsuming feminism generally under the rubric of a particular feminist ideology, casting aside other feminist perspectives.

If feminists themselves think of feminism as the movement which defends women's interests and also as being ideologically committed in a particular direction, the effect will be to fossilize current feminist views...however committed any feminist may be to her ideology she must allow that there is a difference between maintaining the ideology and accepting more generally that women are unjustly treated...(p. 16).

In effect, according to Richards, the broader definition of feminism, distinct from particular feminist ideologies, makes it more plausible for feminism generally to accommodate and be inclusive of a variety of specific feminist ideologies. This is, I think, a useful distinction to make because it provides a way of
conceptualizing feminism so that our approach to incorporating issues of gender equality into sexuality education is compatible with a democratic philosophy of education.

With respect to specific feminist ideologies, this implies that no one feminist perspective should be superimposed on the promotion of gender equality in sexuality education. To do so promotes neither critical awareness nor genuine freedom from oppression. From the standpoint of a democratic philosophy of education, replacing the "natural facts" of gender with a specific feminist ideology merely entails the substitution of one set of "facts" for another. If genuine freedom requires the ability to recognize and choose among alternatives, sexuality education cannot be said to promote gender equality in a democratic fashion if it imposes a particular feminist ideology. With respect to feminism generally, Richards (1980) states this approach as follows.

The true liberator can always be recognized by her wanting to increase the options open to the people who are to be liberated, and there is never any justification for taking a choice away from a group you want to liberate unless it is demonstrable beyond all reasonable doubt that removing it will bring other, more important, options into existence. To give women freedom we must give them more choice, and then if they really do not want the things they are choosing now, like homes and families, those things will just die out without our having to push them (p. 100).

From a democratic point of view, promoting gender equality through sexuality education involves not imposing a particular ideological perspective of what constitutes gender equality in the sexual realm or how it can be individually or collectively achieved. Rather, promoting gender equality in a democratic sexuality education involves expanding students' critical awareness of the wide range of ideological perspectives on the meaning of gender
equality and the best means to reach it for both individuals and society. Fostering critical deliberation in this area represents a rejection of gender relations as "natural facts". A "natural facts" approach or conceptualization of gender relations inhibits freedom of belief because it cannot offer alternatives to itself. It is limited to only offering its own presuppositional lens for thinking about gender relations.

Both the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies offer a wide range of ideological perspectives on gender relations including very different perceptions of the nature of gender, appropriate gender roles, and the meaning of gender equality. This is fertile ground for young people, both men and women, to critically deliberate between competing ideological perspectives toward one of the most important social issues of our time. What do democratic values imply about the current, past, and future shape of gender relations? Unless educators foster critical deliberation on these issues, they not only discourage freedom of belief, they neglect their obligation to develop in young people the capacity to participate, as citizens of a democracy, in a fundamental issue of social justice. As with other issues, social justice related to gender relations is not something that occurs outside the lived experiences and practices of individuals. As Connell (1987) suggests, it "...is about change produced by human practice, about people being inside the process" (p. 144). A democratic sexuality education facilitates the ability of young people to become part of the process of achieving gender equality.
Addressing the Issue of Pregnancy/STD Prevention

Of all the controversial issues surrounding sexuality education, the question of how to best help adolescents avoid unwanted pregnancy and infection with STDs, including HIV/AIDS, is perhaps the most widely debated. Indeed, within the contemporary public and professional discourse on sexuality education, the ability to effectively influence teenage behaviour for the purposes of pregnancy/STD prevention is the gold standard by which sexuality education programs are ultimately judged.

Like other aspects of health education, sexuality education has become increasingly driven by a behaviour modification agenda. Morris (1994, p. 15-23) argues that many sexuality education programs, in response to the growing awareness of problems of teenage pregnancy, STDs, and especially AIDS, have been reduced to an exercise in crisis-resolution. According to Welle, Russel, and Kittleson (1995), perspectives favouring a "...behavior change philosophy in all types of health education settings have inundated professional journals for the past 15 years" (p. 327). They define a behaviour change philosophy as one that "emphasizes behavioral modification....Program objectives are quantifiable and measurable" (Welle, Russel, and Kittleson, 1995, p. 327). In regard to pregnancy prevention, Frost and Darroch Forrest (1995) note that

...preventing unintended births to adolescents is politically and socially appealing to everyone. But each time the issue arises, people voice the same questions: "Which interventions work?" "Which programs are the most effective in preventing unintended teenage pregnancies?" "How effective is each program?" "Given different levels of effectiveness and different costs, which programs will give the biggest bang for the buck?" (p. 188).

In this respect, sexuality education has become a means to an end.

Rarely do we hear in the public and professional discourse on
adolescent pregnancy/STD prevention questions about whether such programs respect the principles of democratic education: Do these programs impartially encourage students to critically deliberate between the various avenues to pregnancy/STD prevention and their complementary, often value laden, ideological underpinnings? Do these programs genuinely foster the critical appropriation of the often ideologically based decision to be abstinent or to practice safer sex? From even a cursory glance at public school sexuality education in North America it is abundantly clear that these considerations are very often cast aside, sacrificed at the altar of behaviour modification strategies promoting, first and foremost, the Restrictive ideological message that abstinence is best.17

In many respects, this approach to sexuality education is understandable. Unwanted pregnancies and STDs present a major threat to the health and well-being of all people, including teenagers. And, as many social critics are at pains to point out, these problems inflict considerable social and economic costs on society. It is certainly a legitimate objective for sexuality education to attempt to provide young people with the means to prevent themselves from suffering the consequences of unwanted pregnancy and STD infection. Despite the propensity for exclusively partial or exclusively neutral sexuality education in our schools, young people have a right to a meaningful education in this area.

However, from the perspective of a democratic sexuality education, when a behaviour modification approach is subject to direction from sexual ideology, disturbing questions arise. For

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17 I refer the reader back to the footnote on p. 96 where the association between the "abstinence is best" message and Restrictive sexual ideology is more fully examined.
example, it now seems clear that if educational programs are to have any meaningful positive impact on sexual behaviour, they must provide opportunities to acquire the relevant information, motivation, and behavioural skills to avoid sexual health related problems (for example see Fisher & Fisher, 1992). For obvious reasons, a presentation of this information, motivation, behavioural skills package, based solely on either Restrictive or Permissive sexual ideology is exclusively partial and therefore undemocratic. Such a presentation is an attempt to influence behaviour, not on the basis of legal rules of conduct, but on the basis of a sexual ideology. Furthermore, as I will explain, by attempting to impose the behavioural codes of a particular sexual ideology, such programs may be counter-productive to the goal of pregnancy/STD prevention.

There can be no doubt that a variety of biological and psychosocial factors influence adolescent sexual behaviour. In particular, the emotionally laden dimensions of sexual activity may play havoc with rational deliberation about appropriate sexual conduct. As Kelley (1983) notes in her discussion of adolescent sexuality,

When attempting to make a personal decision about whether to engage in a sexual activity or to use a specific contraceptive, they usually operate spontaneously and emotionally rather than coldly and calculatingly.... Even when questions of morality enter the picture, the quick, first reaction based on feelings about the matter can outweigh the unemotional facts of the situation.... To the extent that questions of morality concern very important matters for adolescents like whether to engage in a first sexual experience, or to initiate sex with a new partner, or to take steps to avoid an unwanted pregnancy, more emotional, less reasoned, and more self-interested thinking would probably prevail (p. 134-135).

It is reasonable to speculate that those young people who have critically appropriated their sexual values, particularly in regard
to adolescent sexual behaviour, will be better equipped, both psychologically and philosophically, to successfully employ the appropriate information and skills to protect their sexual health. If critical appropriation leads to a greater likelihood of a meaningful commitment to a particular set of values then it follows that people with such value commitments are likely to incorporate those values into their decision-making. In a culture where people, particularly adolescents, are constantly subjected to a melange of often contradictory messages about sexuality, it should not be surprising that the ready-made behavioural scripts provided by sexuality educators are not easily incorporated into one's life. Without a critically appropriated commitment to the values underlying one or another of the pregnancy/STD prevention behavioural scripts, the failure to practice these scripts becomes more plausible. Successfully negotiating the emotion laden, often conflicted world of interpersonal relationships requires at least some sense of self-efficacy as well as some degree of confidence that what one is doing is congruent with one's own critically appropriated values. Perhaps Fisher (1990, p. 3) is at least partially addressing this point when he suggests that in order for adolescents to effectively learn and practice ways to prevent pregnancy and STDs they must, as a first step in the educational process, come to accept their own sexuality.

Kelly (1995) points out that

Sexual desire is surely one of the most complicated and least scientifically studied human motives; people often do not understand their own motives concerning sexual behavior and frequently have ambivalent feelings concerning whether or not to have sex at a given time with a given individual. These ambivalent feelings may stem not only from motivations related to sex but also from romantic, emotional, and other feelings concerning
the other person. Apart from issues of how to behave assertively in refusing unwanted sexual coercions - a skill that can be taught and practiced... - is the often more difficult issue of helping individuals identify and evaluate their values concerning when they want to become sexually intimate with some other person (p. 113).

In other words, it may be crucial for individuals to identify and evaluate their values in relation to these issues before they can make a genuine and realistic commitment to engage in behavioural scripts that will help them to avoid STDs and unwanted pregnancies.

From the perspective of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education, the abstinence-only approach provides a particularly illustrative example of the problems associated with an exclusively partial approach to pregnancy/STD prevention. On one hand, such an approach attempts to indoctrinate students into accepting the behavioural codes of Restrictive sexual ideology. On the other hand, such programs may not provide the relevant information, motivation, and behavioural skills for students who do not share that ideology or cannot be convinced of its virtue. This tendency is

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18 It may also be argued that while having sexually restrictive attitudes is correlated with more conservative patterns of sexual behaviour, for example having fewer sexual partners, since this correlation does not hold, in many cases, for age of first intercourse, abstinence-only sexuality education may not be fully relevant even to those students who maintain a Restrictive sexual ideology. For example, Laumann et al., (1994) note in their survey of American sexual behaviours and attitudes that many Americans disapprove of teenage sex - "even if the respondents themselves reported an early onset of sexual intercourse in their own lives. These views are, apparently, increasingly inconsistent with the actual pattern of behavior" (p. 322). Janus and Janus (1993, p. 252) found in their survey that although there is a negative correlation between religiosity and the likelihood of having premarital sex, of their respondents who described themselves as "very religious" only 29% reported that they had no sexual experience before marriage. Allgeier (1983) argues that such people may have "ideological barriers" to the use of contraceptives, resulting in an increased likelihood of unintended pregnancy once they become sexually
particularly alarming given the fact that a majority of people become sexually active before the age of 20 (see King et al., 1988; Centers for Disease Control, 1995).

The abstinence-only approach to sexuality education shuts down the opportunity for critical deliberation. It seeks to impose a behavioural script for adolescent behaviour that is consistent with Restrictive sexual ideology. Because these programs obstruct the process of critical deliberation and subsequently the critical appropriation of behavioural scripts for pregnancy/STD prevention, including those focused on abstinence, it is reasonable to speculate that this tendency may play some role in the apparent failure of abstinence-only programs to have any meaningful impact on adolescent sexual behaviour. As we have seen, values can only be critically appropriated when they are freely chosen from the best arguments of competing points of view, something the abstinence-only approach fails to do. Existing peer-reviewed published data suggest that rigorously evaluated abstinence-only sexuality education programs have been ineffective in prodding students to delay first intercourse (Christopher & Roosa, 1990; Jorgensen, Potts, & Camp, 1993; Roosa & Christopher, 1990). This despite the fact that immediately after exposure to programs such as Sex Respect and Teen-Aid, some students are willing to endorse, on a questionnaire, abstinent values (Weed & Jensen, 1993) or agree that they have learned things such as "how to stay away from things that could

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active. Given the apparent frequency of an inconsistency between ideology and behaviour as it relates to premarital sexual activity in particular, from a pregnancy/STD prevention perspective, it can be reasonably argued that abstinence-only sexuality education is not fully relevant even to those students who hold a Restrictive sexual ideology.
cause problems for me later" (Olsen et al., 1992, p. 374).

It is worth noting that although very few school-based sexuality education programs of any kind have been shown to modify adolescent sexual behaviour, those that have been successful provided information and skills relevant for students who are sexually active and those who are not. In other words, they provided behavioural scripts that were amenable to both Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology. Whether or not people who have critically appropriated their sexual values, as opposed to simply absorbing them, are more likely to take constructive measures to protect their sexual health needs to be more fully researched.

The debate around pregnancy/STD prevention in the schools brings us back once again to the question of whether or not sexuality education that presents ideological perspectives that may be in opposition to the sexual ideology of many parents will unduly influence young people to reject the moral counsel of their parents. This concern is often stated in the context of a claim that the mere exposure to contraceptive/safer sex information will inevitably destroy the resolve of teenagers from families with Restrictive ideological beliefs, resulting in a quick initiation into premarital intercourse. Accordingly, a young person's ability to choose Restrictive ideology and adhere to its principles will be vanquished by the seductive powers of a few classroom hours devoted to the knowledge and skills needed to consistently practice contraception/safer sex if or when a person becomes sexually active. For behaviour, this assumption appears to be unfounded. Young people

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19 For a comprehensive review of this literature see Kirby et al., 1994.
who have been exposed to contraceptive/safer sex education are not more likely to become sexually active than those who have not (for example see Dawson, 1986; Furstenberg, Moore, & Peterson, 1985; Ku, Sonnenstein, & Pleck, 1992; Marsiglio and Mott, 1986; Zelnik & Kim, 1982). The architects of one the few behaviourally effective school-based pregnancy prevention programs write in their evaluation report that

...some parents and educators have wondered whether giving young people information about contraceptives along with support for postponing sexual involvement is too confusing a message. Our data suggest that the two messages are not incompatible. Young people who received instruction from family planning counsellors about human sexuality, including family planning, and advise from student leaders about postponing sexual involvement used information from each component of the program. Students involved in the program were more likely to both postpone sexual involvement and to use contraceptives when they did have sex than were the no-program group (Howard & McCabe, 1990, p. 25).

The literature and public discourse on sexuality education in the schools is preoccupied with the question: Do our STD and pregnancy prevention programs work? Perhaps we need to reinvent the discussion and begin by asking another question: Do our STD and pregnancy prevention programs promote or inhibit the basic freedoms of democracy? It may be the case that the end result of such a discussion will be sexuality education programs that are not only compatible with the basic values of democracy, but are also better able to help people transform their critically appropriated ideological beliefs about sexuality into effective sexual health

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20 It should be noted that the data I have presented in regard to these questions may be disputed by some people on the grounds that these research studies are based on research paradigms that are biased in support of Permissive sexual ideology (For example, see the Davis quote on p. 118). Nevertheless, this should not prevent this body of evidence from being introduced into the public policy debate on sexuality education.
problem prevention behaviour.

Conclusion

Our ideological presuppositions related to human sexuality inevitably colour our perspectives toward homosexuality, gender equality, and pregnancy/STD prevention. Thus, it should come as no surprise that these same presuppositions influence what we would like to see taught about these issues in sexuality education in the schools. The issue of homosexuality provides a good example of how a wide array of differing ideological presuppositions results in an equally wide array of social policy positions. Because these social policy positions are often drawn from what I have called the lower order tenets of specific ideologies, as opposed to the higher order concerns of a liberal democratic society, approaching the issue of homosexuality in sexuality education exclusively from one or another of these positions is inconsistent with the principles of a democratic sexuality education.

Discussion of issues such as homosexuality and gender inevitably give rise to questions of equality. Assuming that democratic societies are concerned with promoting equality, and that education ought to reflect our vision of a just society, we may also assume that educational institutions are similarly interested in promoting equality. Using the example of gender relations, I have argued that unless education raises awareness of different interpretations of the meaning of equality and fosters critical deliberation between these divergent points of view, education inhibits rather than promotes genuine equality.

Because a major goal of sexuality education is to promote the
health of those who receive it, unwanted pregnancy and STD prevention is a central focus of most educational programs. In recent years, HIV/AIDS prevention has become a major priority for sexuality education. As I have tried to show, the objective to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy and STDs, particularly HIV/AIDS, has often occurred without meaningful consideration of the democratic principle of freedom of belief. Furthermore, I have speculated that the health promotion aspects of sexuality education may become more behaviourally effective if students are helped to critically appropriate their chosen path to sexual health.

My analyses of these three major content areas of sexuality education contain a common thread. There is a fundamental philosophical inconsistency between the overlapping consensus of common values basic to a liberal democratic society and the typical approaches to sexuality education in the schools. A democratic philosophy of sexuality education will help us to significantly reduce or eliminate this inconsistency.
CONCLUSION: SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

A key litmus test for any philosophy of education is whether or not its principles and practices contribute to the social development of society. Ozmon and Craver (1986) suggest that "A philosophy of education becomes significant at the point where educators recognize the need to think clearly about what they are doing and to see what they are doing in the larger context of individual and social development" (p. x). In other words, a philosophy of education has implications that extend beyond the classroom. When a philosophy of education becomes the operating framework from which the socialization of youth into the broader culture takes place, it takes on a significant role in shaping the fabric of the culture itself. Thus, it is logical and legitimate to evaluate the degree to which a given philosophy of education is consistent with the ethos of the culture that it perpetuates and, at times, transforms. This is, ultimately, a question we must pose about any proposed philosophy to guide sexuality education in the schools.

I have tried to make clear that our beliefs and customs related to sexuality are crucial defining characteristics of our culture. I have also suggested that the socialization process of young people in regard to sexuality, through the public education system, must inevitably reflect, to some extent, our attitudes towards sexuality in the larger culture. In other words, how we educate youth about sexuality reflects how we believe people should conduct themselves as members of society. In short, our philosophy of sexuality education reflects our vision of a just society.
As I attempted to show in Chapter Two, in terms of sexuality, Western culture is fractured by deeply seated ideological conflict which I have generalized into the opposition between the Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideologies. Given my assumptions about the basic ethos of a democratic society, as I articulated it in Chapter Four, this clash of ideas is to be expected as the natural outcome of reason under the conditions of freedom in a democratic culture.

However, if education is to reflect and contribute to our vision of the good society, that is our commitment to the democratic ethos, the current state of sexuality education in the schools should give us cause for concern. As I tried to show in Chapter Three, prevailing forms of sexuality education typically do not respect the core democratic principle of freedom of belief and they also typically do not provide an intellectual framework for democratic citizenship in the sense of helping students develop the capacity to participate, in a fashion consistent with the ethos of democracy, in the ongoing debates and conflicts around sexuality that will persist into the future. As Mosher, Kenny, and Garrod (1994) point out, there is a longstanding and widespread agreement that public schools have a duty to foster "...the development of youth who understand, value, and enact democracy" (p. 25). Or as John Dewey succinctly put it,

Whether the education process is carried on in a predominately democratic or nondemocratic way becomes, therefore, a question of transcendent importance not only for education itself but for its final effect upon all the interests and activities of a society that is committed to the democratic way of life (Dewey cited in Mosher, Kenny, & Garrod, 1994, p. 36).

If it is true that "as sex goes, so goes society", providing a sexuality education based on democratic principles is an extremely
important endeavour.

In response to the pervasive ideological conflict surrounding sexuality and sexuality education, I have proposed a philosophy of sexuality education based on the overlapping consensus of very limited but common values abstracted from the background culture of a society that affirms moral pluralism. Specifically, I have focused on the commonly held overlapping consensus in support of the right to freedom of belief, something I have tried to show is often not respected in contemporary forms of sexuality education in the schools. By implication, I have argued that a philosophy of sexuality education based on political liberalism contributes to a just society.

Thus, it is perhaps necessary to discuss why, given the many critiques recently launched against the liberal tradition in politics and philosophy, a democratic theory of education informed by political liberalism is, at this point in history, an approach that contributes to social justice. Will a democratic form of sexuality education contribute to the common good? After all, for example, scores of postmodernist scholars have argued that the modernist tradition, out of which liberalism emerged, has failed to deliver on its promises of liberty and equality for all. Instead, they argue, the liberal conception of democracy has, in fact, fostered economic, racial, ethnic, and gender oppression in the interests of a capitalist patriarchy. This is so, at least in part, because the principles of modernity have, according to Aronowitz and Giroux (1991), "been largely drawn from cultural scripts written by white males whose work is often privileged as a model of high culture" (p. 58) and that these principles represent "expressions of
particular discourses embodying normative interests and legitimating historically specific relations of power" (p. 58). In sum, according to some postmodernists, the concept of liberal democracy is a ruse, employed by a privileged few in order to maintain power. 

Feminist and gay and lesbian scholars have quite correctly pointed out that the liberal modernist tradition has yet to bring them full liberty and equality. Indeed, they often argue, it is the structures of philosophical and political liberalism that have helped perpetuate, not combat, centuries of injustice, particularly as they pertain to gender and sexual orientation. For example, in philosophical terms, it is clear that political liberalism relies heavily on the desirability and presumed capacity of individuals to reason autonomously. As Rawls (1993) suggests,

citizens think of themselves as free in three respects: first, as having the moral power to form, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of the good; second, as being self-authenticating sources of valid claims; and third, as capable of taking responsibility for their ends. Being free in these respects enables citizens to be both rationally and fully autonomous (p. 72).

However, from the perspective of many feminists, "Throughout the history of western philosophy there is a demonstratable alignment between the ideals of autonomous reason and the ideals of masculinity" (Code, 1991, p. 117). Gilligan (1982) argues that the

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21 It is difficult to generalize about whether or not postmodernism is anti-democratic. According to Rosenau (1992, p. 98-100) the more sceptical of postmodernists have been labelled as anti-democratic by virtue of their contention that the structures of the democratic political tradition are fallacious, whereas the more affirmative of postmodernists call for a "deepening of democracy". I have argued elsewhere (McKay, 1994) that to the extent that postmodernism rejects the validity of key modernist principles such as justice and equality, it has the potential to violate the fundamental precepts of democratic living, and therefore may provide an inadequate framework for the theory and practice of moral education.
preferred conceptualizations of moral reasoning, focusing on abstract autonomous reasoning, that have emerged from this philosophical tradition are suited to stereotypically masculine ways of sorting out moral dilemmas. This suggests, from some feminist perspectives, that as a philosophical tradition, liberalism has a limited potential to contribute to gender equality including its explicitly sexual elements.\(^{22}\)

Sears (1992) asserts that,

> In the United States, the social construction of gender and sexuality (i.e., the transference of biological divisions of maleness and femaleness into social categories), the delegation of human roles and traits according to conceptions of femininity and masculinity, and the proscription of certain sexual activities rationalize a particular way of organizing society - patriarchy (p. 144).

Here liberalism is seen as severely limited in its capacity to disrupt patriarchy. Because it generally restricts itself to the public domain and its institutions - remaining neutral in regard to the private realm of beliefs and social arrangements - political liberalism can do little to directly influence the social construction of gender and sexuality: It was never intended to do so.

Gay and lesbian critiques of liberalism have been argued along similar lines. Kitzinger (cited in Sears, 1992), in analyzing the social construction of lesbianism, contends that

> Our "inner selves" - the way we think and feel and how we define ourselves - are connected in an active and reciprocal way with the larger social and political structures and processes in the context of which they

\(^{22}\) This view is, of course, in contrast to liberal feminism which seeks to further the goal of gender equality on the basis of traditional liberal conceptualizations of equality, liberty, and justice. For a critique of liberal feminist theory and politics see Jagger, 1982, p. 185-203.
are constructed. It is for this reason that, as many radical and revolutionary movements and oppressed peoples have argued, "the personal is political" (p. 145).

Because it is not directly concerned with the personal, political liberalism circumvents the connection between the inner self and larger political structures. Thus, according to this view, the integrity of a given inner self, particularly the integrity of sexual minorities, cannot be protected from the hostility of those who, because of their ideology, disapprove of them. As Sullivan (1995) remarks,

Indeed, the true liberal doesn't even pretend that his or her laws will solve the deepest problems of the human heart; liberalism is not, after all, designed to counteract hostile feelings, but hostile acts. Liberalism at its best can stay aloof from the troubling problems of human sexuality, but still insist that a person not be fired for something utterly unrelated to his work, or evicted simply because he is homosexual, or subject to violence primarily because of his sexual orientation (p. 157-158).

These critiques reveal what are simultaneously both the strengths and weakness of political liberalism as the constitutive ethos of democratic society. In the private sphere, political liberalism cannot compel a bigot to mend his or her ways. Political liberalism cannot force a person to convert his or her hatred of homosexuals into love or to believe that women are not a subordinate sex. Political liberalism can only insist that in the public sphere, homosexuals and women must be accorded full equality, enjoying the same freedoms and rights as any other individual in society. But if this is a weakness it is also a strength. The strength of political liberalism is that by insisting that the private sphere be regulated by the principle of freedom of belief it allows oppressed groups such as women and homosexuals to enter their concerns, as persons
deserving of freedom and equality, into public and political discourse. Thus, it is a positive attribute that Political liberalism does not legislate the shape of an individual’s moral beliefs other than to seek his/her respect for the overlapping consensus of a democratic society. While this limited scope of political liberalism, particularly as it applies to the private realm of individual moral belief, is clearly seen as a weakness by some, political liberalism has enjoyed some success in bringing greater social justice to the public realm. For example, although no one would argue that contemporary Western society is free of racism, the progressive struggles for racial equality that have occurred during the twentieth century have had a considerable measure of success in terms of modifying public institutions for the purposes of reducing racial discrimination. In legislating against discrimination in hiring practices, housing, educational opportunity, etc., the struggle for racial equality was, and is, being fought on the basis of the fundamental liberal principles as they apply to the public sphere.

Similarly, with respect to discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, political liberalism has been at least modestly successful in addressing these problems in the public sphere. For example, feminist attempts to use the structures of political liberalism in order to bring about changes in the public sphere have not been entirely futile. As Jagger (1982) notes,

Primarily through the efforts of liberal feminists, the legal status of women in most of the industrialized nations has improved considerably in the last fifteen years. In the United States, many kinds of sex discrimination have been outlawed, new forms of discrimination, such as sexual harassment or denial of maternity leave, have been legally recognized, affirmative action programs are often required by law,
the legal right to abortion has been established, although it remains under attack and in some areas the right to express one's sexual preference is legally protected (p. 185).

In terms of sexual orientation, there can be no question that the legal status of homosexuals has improved significantly in recent years. And, as Sullivan (1995) suggests, "Without the liberal tradition, homosexuals - and most other minorities - would not enjoy the discussion which now ensnares them in Anglo-American politics, let alone the historically rare toleration that is now afforded them" (p. 133-134).

None of this is intended to suggest that political liberalism is a cure-all for social injustice, capable of delivering full sexual equality to oppressed groups. The above examples do, however, I believe, auger well for a persuasive argument that a democratic philosophy of sexuality education, modeled on the overlapping consensus of political liberalism, provides a reasonable way of adjudicating the unreasonable amount of ideological bias in existing sexuality education in the schools.

First, given our dependence on subjectively derived ideology to inform our thinking on sexuality, the higher order objective of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education in the public schools is not to cleanse young minds of sexual ideologies that we may disagree with. Rather, the higher order objective of a democratic philosophy of sexuality education is to provide a learning environment in which different beliefs are respected within the context of the overlapping consensus of democracy. Whereas the private sphere of individual beliefs about the nature and moral aspects of human sexuality is not legislatively prescribed by political liberalism, a democratic sexuality education does not
attempt to dictate an individual's beliefs about sexuality. Where the public actions of individuals conflict with the basic freedoms of others, political liberalism seeks to legislate against discrimination. Conversely, a democratic sexuality education teaches respect for freedom of belief and respect for the overlapping consensus of reasonable doctrines in a democratic society. In sum, in learning about sexuality students are learning about democracy.

What the examples of gender and sexual orientation show is that while political liberalism cannot deliver a society in which everyone agrees with each other, it does appear to be equipped to provide an environment in which marginalized or oppressed groups can make a claim for equal rights in the public sphere of society. A liberal democracy is no longer democratic when these claims are silenced. While it can be argued with convincing evidence that neither women nor homosexuals have attained a position of equality, it would be much more difficult to argue that in contemporary public discourse their voices are not heard. In regard to this point, I have tried to show that one of the fundamental inadequacies of sexuality education in the schools is that due to ideological bias and political expediency, some of the many voices of differing perspectives on sexuality have been silenced.

Among the chief complaints against liberalism is that it represents a status quo with a tarnished history. However, the applications of liberal democratic philosophy to sexuality education hardly represents the status quo. To the contrary, the modern history of sexuality education is, as I have tried to show, replete with examples of how the basic principles of democracy have often been flouted. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine how, in its
present incarnations, sexuality education can be inclusive of identity politics, the idea that our political beliefs and goals can and should be rooted in our identity based on sexual orientation, gender, etc., in its classroom discourse. Sexuality education, as it stands, is largely dominated by ideological perspectives that exclude identity politics. A democratic philosophy of sexuality education offers an opportunity for these voices to be expressed and to be subsequently either critically appropriated or rejected by individual students. A democratic philosophy of sexuality education represents a conscious effort to disrupt the status quo in teaching about sexuality in the schools. It is a philosophy aimed at teaching young people about sexuality in a way that is consistent with societal respect for the different sexual ideologies that co-exist in our culture and that is consistent with the basic values of society.

At its genesis, the debate about sexuality in general and sexuality education in particular is between the divergent ethics emerging from opposing sexual ideologies. An ethical theory which seeks to characterize or define the nature of human sexuality and to propose concrete criteria for judging sexual behaviour must, by its very nature, be rooted in a subjective sexual ideology. A pluralist democracy cannot remain true to itself if it allows its public institutions to favour or impose a particular sexual ideology on its people. Unfortunately, the public education system, perhaps the most potent of socializing agents, has often allowed itself to become a propagandizing platform for various sexual ideologies.

In order to rectify this, we must turn to the principles of democracy itself to both remove the evil of ideological
indoctrination in the schools and to educate young people of their rights and responsibilities in democratic society as they pertain to sexuality. In other words, sexuality education should not only be based upon a democratic philosophy of education in terms of its structure, but in content, sexuality education should be education that supports the ideals of democratic living.

For some time now our society has been engaged in a series of social, scientific, and moral reformations and counter-reformations related to sexuality. None of these transformations have been remotely close to being socially monolithic. As we have seen, with sexuality, our society is clearly divided along ideological lines. The lines of division are not always consistent or clear-cut: Each ideology has its internal permutations that may, at times, overlap with other ideologies. On occasion, most seemingly opposed sexual ideologies are in agreement on specific issues. For example, nearly all the variants of both Restrictive and Permissive sexual ideology are currently united in their condemnation of sex between adults and children. However, more often than not, we can find little to agree on. Sexuality divides us as a culture, and these divisions are not trivial. They often relate to fundamental aspects of who we are and how we relate to each other, both as individuals and as a society. Thus, with so much at stake, our disagreements about sexuality are a serious concern.

In terms of sexuality education in our schools, the central question I have been trying to address is what do we do with this ideological diversity? Rather than affirming diversity, or at least tolerating it, as we might expect a democratic culture to do, our cultural discourse around sexuality has pitted one ideology against
another in a battle for cultural supremacy. As this battle ebbs and flows, the result is a society and a people deeply ambivalent about a fundamental part of themselves. In the case of sexuality education this discord and ambivalence has paralysed the school in its ability to provide youth with a meaningful education about sexuality. Because our sexuality shoulders the burden of immense individual and social significance, a meaningful sexuality education is the right of all people.

With beliefs about human sexuality currently in the grips of such widely divergent meaning systems, political Liberalism with its allegiance to the most basic and uncomplicated of democratic principles, is, I believe, at this stage of our development as a culture, the most appropriate philosophical framework to broker these differences. This may be particularly the case for public institutions such as the school which must guard against choosing sides in social debates of this kind.

In my own research, I have found evidence of support for the type of philosophy of education that I have proposed here. I have recently surveyed several hundred parents in a community in Ontario, Canada on their opinions and attitudes towards sexual health education in the schools (McKay, 1996). Over 90% of the parents I surveyed believed that sexual health education should be provided in the schools. Eighty percent of the parents agreed with the statement "It is important for sexual health education programs to recognize and respect the different moral beliefs about sexuality that may exist in the community." Just over 12% were unsure, while only 7.3% disagreed with this statement. Over 70% of parents in this survey expressed their approval for the topic "Moral beliefs about
Sexuality" being included in school-based programs. In addition, a majority of parents approved of the inclusion of such controversial topics as sexual orientation and birth control.

Although the public discourse on sexuality education has been characterized by intense ideological conflict, this survey suggests the possibility that most parents, who may not typically express their opinions about sexuality education publicly, are less ideologically partisan in their beliefs about the form and content of sexuality education in the schools than are the vocal minority who dominate public discourse. The parents I surveyed supported neither exclusive partiality or exclusive neutrality in the delivery of sexuality education in the schools. They expressed support for sexuality education in the schools that engages moral issues and respects moral diversity related to sexuality. In these respects, I believe that these parents' opinions are consistent with a democratic philosophy of sexuality education.

The commitment to pluralism as one of the constituent values of a just society, at the very least, strongly implies that there is no single universally right or true account of the good person or good life. Since sexuality is so fundamentally imbued with personal and social significance, the affirmation of a pluralism of sexual ideologies, each with their own conceptions of the good person and the good life, is a necessary aspect of a society whose commitment to pluralism is genuine. If we believe that an affirmation of pluralism and democracy are inseparable, as the liberal tradition holds, if follows that public institutions such as the school have an obligation to affirm and respect diverse sexual ideologies in their attempts to educate young people about
sexuality. Where ideological disputes about the form and content of school-based sexuality education exist, a democratic philosophy of sexuality education ought to prevail.
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