CRITICAL EMBODIMENT: INVESTIGATING THE INTERSECTION OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND EMBODIMENT FOR THE PREVENTION OF EATING DISORDERS IN SCHOOLS

by

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Abstract

Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Currently schools address eating disorders through prevention programs and health education courses that have shown to be ineffective in terms of changing behaviors of students in the long run (Piran 2005). This qualitative study explores the use of critical pedagogy as a mechanism by which teachers and students can address body-related issues (i.e. gender, sexuality) in schools. The medical term eating disorder, in this study, is replaced by the perspective of embodiment that helps expand the notion that eating disorders happen exclusively in response to the thin ideal. This study investigates, through semi structured interviews, the perspectives of 5 teachers to understand a) the ways in which educators address critical perspectives on gender and embodiment in their classrooms, and b) The implications of using critical pedagogy in the field of eating disorders prevention.

Keywords: Critical Feminist Pedagogy, Critical Literacy, Critical Pedagogy, Developmental Theory of Embodiment, Embodiment, Eating Disorders, Health Curriculum
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Dedication

I want to dedicate my research to my mother Elizabeth. You are the reason why I was able to do this work in the first place. You have given me the opportunity to find my own path through your unconditional love and support. You inspire me everyday with the work that you do in your school. I will never be able to explain how deep my gratitude goes. Thank you.
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Chapter I
Overview

The first chapter of this thesis includes the introduction to the study, the purpose, the research questions, and the researcher's background and interest for conducting this study. Chapter II contains a review of the literature on Eating Disorders Prevention and feminist-informed prevention programs, and a review of the literature on Critical Pedagogy. The literature review also includes an overview of the theoretical frameworks that inform this work, drawing on post structural views of gender and sexuality, finishing with the Developmental Theory of Embodiment. Chapter III provides the methodology, an overview of the participants and process of data collection, as well as the analysis and the limitations of the study. Chapter IV presents the findings of this study and a brief analysis divided into two sections: a) the curriculum and b) teachers' body experiences. Chapter V includes the discussion of the findings in connection to the literature as well as the implications of this work to the fields of education, eating disorders prevention, and for my own research and practice.

Introduction

The incidence of Eating Disorders (ED) (Anorexia nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa), especially among adolescents and emerging adults, has been increasing significantly since the 20th Century (Keel & Klump, 2003; Levine & Smolak, 2010, in Levine, McVey, & Piran, 2014). The number of eating disorder cases that appear every year amongst pre pubescent and young adults in schools, in the majority girls and young women, is an indicator of the unsuccessful attempt to address students' embodiment issues. Addressing students' embodiment would involve looking at the life experiences of young men and women while having conversations with them in relation to sexuality, gender, sexism, racism, classism, and other issues of social power that intersect with
risk factors considered in the field of eating disorders (e.g. thin-ideal idealization, body dissatisfaction, dieting, negative affects, and body mass concern) (Piran, 1995, Piran, 2010, & Stice & Shaw, 2014). My research suggests the need to investigate how critical pedagogy can be a means of addressing issues of embodiment, such as eating disorders in schools.

Currently, schools address issues of embodiment such as eating disorders through prevention programs and health education courses that have shown to be very ineffective in terms of changing behaviours of students especially in the long run (Piran 2005 as cited in Piran & Thompson, 2008). Most eating disorder prevention programs intended for school children are guided by positivist and social theories that focus on: “pressure for thinness”, healthy weight management, and weight variations, as well as media literacy, but lack a focus on contextual factors that shape the lives of students, as well as on their knowledge and experiences (Piran, 1995 in Piran, 2001, p. 3).

On the other hand, teachers witness students' life-concerns in the domain of the body everyday in and outside the classroom and in relation to the curriculum. Critical educators use their classrooms to interrogate functions and processes of power in relation to dimensions of social location such as race, gender, and social class with the goal of creating the conditions for some kind of social change. How might critical educators address issues of embodiment in their classrooms?

This thesis explores, through interviews, the practice of teachers who work under a paradigm of social justice education, in particular critical pedagogy. Through the investigation of teachers’ practices, this research suggests that critical pedagogy can be a mechanism by which teachers and students can address issues of embodiment in schools. Their stories will help inform the field of eating disorders prevention about future interventions in schools while introducing a perspective of embodiment vs. body image. The perspective of embodiment expands the notion that eating disorders happen
exclusively in response to the thin ideal. It explores eating disorders as expressions of disrupted embodiment anchored in experiences a person may have in their social environment (Piran, 1995 in Piran, 2001). Piran (2010), suggests the term embodiment to consider the "complex impact of structures of power and privilege related to gender and other social variables on individuals’ experience of social power and worth and on their self and body experience" (p. 183).

In this study I explore how schools can become spaces in which students can critically address concerns about their bodies. This work looks at the intersection of embodiment as a construct derived from the Developmental Theory of Embodiment by Piran and Teall (2010), and critical pedagogy, an approach to education that aims at the attainment of social justice (Stanley, 2007).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers address issues of embodiment including gender and sexuality, using a critical lens in the classroom. Wishing to understand how critical pedagogy can help students "make meaning" of their experiences living in their bodies, or their embodiment, this work provides a framework under which prevention specialists (in the field of eating disorders prevention) and teachers can address their students' experiences in a critical and empowering way (Freire, 2006). I intend to utilize the findings of this project as a pilot study to develop further research in the field, more specifically, to design a tentative curriculum and observe teachers as they practice under this paradigm.
Research Questions

This study explores the existing implications of critical teaching for addressing issues of embodiment. I analyze data drawn from interviews with five educators using a critical literacy framework, understanding literacy as embedded in the world (Freire & Macedo, 2004; Kress, 2003; Jewitt, 2005), looking at the relations of cultural, economic and social power and understanding how these relationships are explored by educators (Beck, 2005, p. 210).

This research is guided by the following questions:

1. In what ways do educators attempt to address critical perspectives on gender and embodiment in their classrooms?

2. What are the implications of critical pedagogy for the field of eating disorders prevention?
Background of Researcher

My first research experience was participating in a PhD study by Gloria Angélica Martínez, a Doctor in Design for Science and Art at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Xochimilco (UAMX) in Mexico. Dr. Martínez’s thesis was entitled “Perception and its Relevance when Creating Tactile Designs for People with Visual Impediments”. After being involved with and collecting data from kindergarten students, we (the research team and myself) examined young children’s drawings as they practiced critical literacy in the classroom, examining the extent to which their designs, using multimodal literacies (see Kress, 2003 and Jewitt, 2005), made meaning for a population of blind and visually impaired people.

My second involvement in a research project as an assistant was in an ongoing investigation led by Dr. Niva Piran in the department of Psychology and Human Development at OISE. Working on the Developmental Theory of Embodiment brought me closer to my own research interest. The theory of embodiment informs the theoretical framework of this current study.

My interest in this subject also comes from my own experience developing Anorexia Nervosa at the age of 16. Going through the hardships of such a complex disorder affected my health dramatically and brought deep suffering to everyone around me including myself. Fortunately, with the help of my family I received professional help, which allowed me to recover.

Aside from my Eating Disorder, I followed my interest in history and sociology. I completed a BA in International Relations in 2005, then volunteered as an ESL teacher and further began to work full-time as a teacher assistant in Eton School (Mexico City). My teaching experience informed me of the possibility to transform others through education, which is why I decided to pursue a Masters of Arts in Education. My first encounter with critical pedagogies was in Dr. Rob Simon’s class New Literacies at
OISE where I reflected on the need to help students find and express their voices as a means to empowerment and social change. Working as a research assistant to Dr. Niva Piran exposed me to feminist theories that helped me understand my own experience of subjectivity as a woman going through an eating disorder. After having understood, from experience, the powerful implications of recovery under a deconstructive lens, I now hope to help transform the possibilities for girls to realize their own power and space in the world.
Chapter II
Literature Review

This literature review first incorporates a review of research on eating disorders and their alarming prevalence amongst women. It also examines the need to consider a feminist critical pedagogy approach for the prevention of eating disorders in schools. Finally, it includes an overview of the theoretical frameworks that inform this work; first, conceptualizations of gender and sexuality and second, by reviewing the Developmental Theory of Embodiment by Piran and Teall (2012).

Eating Disorders

Traditionally eating disorders have been considered mental health issues with the highest mortality rate of any mental illness, between 18-20% (Cavanaugh, 1999 as cited in Hopewell Eating Disorders Support Centre, 2013). When defining eating disorders (ED), the American Psychiatric Association (1994) focuses on Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, or Eating Disorder Otherwise Not Identified (EDONS) (Striegel-Moore & Steiner-Adair, 1998). Eating Disorders are known to affect adolescents and young adults; however, cases of eating disorders can appear as well in middle and elderly age women, in men and in children (Reel, 2013). Unfortunately, the incidence of Eating Disorders (ED) (Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa), especially among adolescents and emerging adults, has increased significantly during the 20th century in many countries (Keel & Klump, 2003; Levine & Smolak, 2010, in Levine, McVey, & Piran, 2014). According to a survey done in 2002, 1.5% of women in Canada between the ages of 15-24 have an eating disorder (Government of Canada, 2006). In another study, it was found that 28% of girls in grade nine and 29% of girls in grade ten engage in weight loss behaviours (Boyce, 2004). A study on 14–15 year old adolescents, showed that girls who engaged in dieting practices were more likely (18 times) to
develop an ED within six months than girls who didn't diet; they showed to have 20% chance of developing an ED within a year; and were five times more likely to develop an ED than girls who didn't engage in diets (Patton et al. 1999).

**Prevention**

The statistics reflecting the prevalence of ED are alarming, however most relevant for this research is how to prevent EDs from occurring. The field of prevention of ED has grown in the past two decades offering the field an extensive body of literature. One of the main concerns for the prevention field is the lack of support for eating disorder prevention research in relation to other domain, such as obesity that have been considered public health issues (Neumark-Sztainer, Levine, Paxton, Smolak, Piran, & Wertheim, 2006).

The upsurge of theory and research concerning the prevention of eating disorders came to prominence in the 1990's. Proponents of prevention looked at the need to incorporate efficient prevention programs with the stance that the early intervention made recovery more possible and was also likely to reduce the cost of treatment (Piran et al; 1999). On the other hand, other professionals have not embraced the goal of prevention, believing that outcome data, especially with youth, has not been promising (Neumark-Sztainer, et al., 2006).

The most positive outcome in the eating disorder prevention field have been found among programs that target individuals over 15 years old who have been identified as at risk for developing an eating disorder, (Wislksch, 2014). However, if the purpose is to prevent disordered eating behaviours from appearing at all, then "[...] primary prevention efforts should be directed at girls (and boys) who have not yet internalized the slender ideal and who have not addressed the developmental challenges of puberty
which increase the risk for negative body image and disordered eating” (Kater, Rohwe, & Levine, 2000, p. 6).

**Prevention in schools**

Prevention Programs have been incorporated into schools for quite a long time. Initially, the prevention programs offered in schools focused on the delivery of information about anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa and the problems that these conditions presented to individuals’ health. In the last decade research has shown that it is more effective to focus on reducing risk factors and boosting protective factors than to simply inform about the existence and consequences of ED (Striegel-Moore, 1998, p. 224; Patton, Selzer, Coffey, & Caitlin, 1999).

Most prevention programs have focused on addressing nutritional aspects; self-esteem; coping strategies; body image and role of the media. In general, universal prevention programs with school children have shown to improve the overall knowledge of what eating disorders are, however, long term attitudinal and behavioural changes have been found less often (Piran, 2010). Piran (1995) has attributed to the limited impact of early prevention interventions on behaviours of students to a) the gap between the content of prevention programs and the experience of students; b) the narrow focus of prevention programs that excludes a discussion of the complex social issues involved with embodiment; c) the didactic process that excludes students’ experiences, active participation and knowledge, and d) the exclusive emphasis on the individual rather than on systemic changes, which according to McKinlay (1997, as cited in Piran, 1992) are essential to behaviour change.

One of the most common limitations found in research about prevention programs in schools is the lack of follow up. When these programs are being delivered at schools through a curriculum that is separate from the mainstream curriculum, students are not
exposed to these programs enough to 1) show results and 2) have a real impact in students’ lives.

Is it possible to include the principles of prevention programs into the mainstream curriculum? What might that look like?

**Feminist informed research on prevention**

Feminist-informed perspectives on eating disorders recognize the complexity of women’s experiences in the body domain. Feminist-informed prevention programs offer an approach that "... consider[s] the complex impact of structures of power and privilege related to gender and other social variables..." and the way they affect individuals’ experience of themselves and their bodies (Piran, 2010, p. 183). Piran (2010) suggests looking at cases of eating disorders through a lens that situates issues of social power (gender, sex, race, class) that intersect with the wide variety of risk factors considered in the field of eating disorders.

Feminist approaches to eating disorders, similar to Piran's approach, consider that the power imbalances between men and women can contribute to the development of eating disorders (Striegel-Moore et al., 1998). Striegel-Moore et al. (1998) argued that in order to understand eating disorders, the socio-cultural values and norms within the contexts where eating disorders develop (i.e. the local political perspectives of gender difference) should be addressed as well. A feminist stance on the prevention of eating disorders is resistant and it requires the critical exploration of how scientific knowledge is being produced, what interest it is serving, and if/by whom it is being funded (Striegel-Moore, 1998). Feminist-informed prevention programs aim to attain equity through the transformation of social systems, emphasizing on the body's agency, rights, and freedom to counter patriarchal and other systems of privilege (Striegel-Moore et al., 1998).
For instance, many traditional prevention programs wish to address girls' desire to follow the "thin ideal" and they do so through media literacy programs, assuming that the pursuit of the "thin ideal" is mainly shaped by the consumption of media messages. Piran, Levine and Steiner-Adair (1999) explained that the etiology of eating disorders is more complex than exposure to thin models on the media. Feminist authors further recommend focusing on social processes that shape vulnerability to the influence of media (Piran, Levine & Steiner-Adair, 1999). For instance, they suggest looking at the meaning of beauty and slenderness as ideals that that symbolize ‘successful femininity’ and that provide girls and women with social power. These ideals are attained through the control and transformation of the body by engaging in diets, exercises, and other beauty-related practices (e.g; waxing, make-up) (Piran, Levine & Steiner-Adair, 1999). Contrary to this ideal, fat tends to represent in Western countries a lack of personal responsibility, weakness and failure (Piran, Levine & Steiner-Adair, 1999).

Piran (2010) explained that feminist perspectives on eating disorders prevention emphasize in engaging participants, as active and expert creators of reflective knowledge. Murnen and Smolak (2009), for example, found in a meta-analysis that feminism as an ideology protected women from disordered eating behaviours and distorted body image. Kinsaul et al. (2014) argued that by questioning traditional gender roles, young women may feel more empowered to challenge sociocultural expectations about appearance and therefore develop internalized confidence or self-efficacy. Feminist preventive perspectives focus on local theories about the experiences that participants have of their bodies that emerge when knowledge of those experiences become a collective understanding in the community (Piran 2001, in Piran, 2010). This approach highlights the need to explore themes in participatory dialogues where knowledge can be voiced and where transformative actions can occur (Belenky et al., 1986 as cited in Piran, 2010).
Critical Pedagogy

Based on my reading of the eating disorder literature, I suggest that incorporating the pedagogical theoretical framework and practice of critical pedagogies can be useful in the prevention of ED in schools. Taking from feminist informed prevention research we know that effective prevention requires: 1) students to critically address issues of social power such as gender, race, sexuality, social class, ability/disability, etc. (Piran, 2010); and 2) there must be a systemic transformation of the institution's socio-cultural norms and values in order to counter oppressive views about students' bodies (Piran, 2010; Striegel-Moore, 1998).

A successful prevention program should be that which creates the opportunities for students to redefine their identities as they empower others to do the same. Critical pedagogy may serve as the mechanism by which female students can address concerns about their bodies in a critical way. Critical pedagogues make use of histories, discourses and students’ work in the classroom to challenge social injustice. Critical educators use their classrooms to interrogate functions of power and identity markers such as gender, sexuality, race, social class, and ability/disability with the goal of creating the conditions for social change. Investigating the practice of critical pedagogy when addressing issues of embodiment in schools can provide an opportunity for students to challenge the marginalization of their bodies in a critical and empowering way. McLaren (1997) describes critical pedagogy as:

A way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation state. (p. 1)

Risner (2008) describes critical pedagogy as an approach to teaching that helps students question and challenge dominant or taken for granted practices and assumed truths that
marginalize and limit human agency and freedom. Critical pedagogy can help prevent students from engaging in discourses that harm their bodies. Drawing from Latin American theories of liberation (Paulo Freire, 2006) the sociology of knowledge (i.e. Émile Durkheim, 1893; Marcel Mauss, 1924), the Frankfurt school of critical theory (i.e. Theodor W. Adorno, 1944, 1970; Erich Fromm 1950; Herbert Marcuse, 1958), feminist theory (i.e. Simone de Beauvoir 1952, Susan Bordo 1989; Luce Irigaray, 1985; Judith Butler, 1990), and neo-Marxist theories (i.e. Karl Marx, 1848; Frederich Engels 1884), critical pedagogy rose as a form of countersocialization to promote democracy and social justice (Stanley, 2007). Wishing to protest against the use education to legitimize and proliferate the dominant social norms and order, critical pedagogy questions the limitations to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge (Stanley, 2007). Bartolome (2007) explains that critical pedagogy is concerned with bringing educational theories and practice that can encourage students and teachers to grasp an understanding of the connection that lies between ideology, power, and culture.

Feminist critical pedagogy, which is also concerned with social transformation through education, is a practice that incorporates into the curriculum the questioning of authoritative knowledge that produces hegemonic perspectives on gender, sexuality and feminism (Oberhauser, 2002). Accordingly, students and teachers can resist dominant ideologies by creating discourses that counter oppression (Darder, Torres, & Baltodano, 2002 in Bartolomé, 2007). By applying critical theory to education, critical pedagogy examines the ways in which educational institutions contribute to the reproduction of inequalities and injustice (Beck, 2005). Through critical engagement, critical pedagogy can be practiced in schools and students can be encouraged to interrogate their conditions and to actively participate in developing social change through education (Beck, 2005). Critical pedagogy can be a useful framework for addressing concerns related to students’ embodiment by questioning and transforming the social norms and
discourses that shape social expectations and processes related to diverse students’ bodies. Students can make use of critical pedagogy to feel empowered and to voice their concerns and experiences in their social environment, while forming and encouraging a healthy and accepting relationship with their bodies. A relationship of this nature can lead to decline the incidence of issues such as eating disorders.

**Implications**

This literature review involved a search of various themes. First I reviewed all the literature available on the prevention of eating disorders, particularly focusing on the literature that involved a critical perspective to the prevention, including feminist approaches to it (e.g. Levine & Smolak, 1998; Levine, McVey, & Piran, 2014; Murnen & Smolak, 2009; Coplen, 2013; Kinsaul, Curtin, Bazzini, & Martz, 2014; Striegel-Moore & Steiner-Adair, 1998; Piran, 1996, 2001). While the search aimed to find school-based studies, for the most part, programs have not shown any significant improvements overall and in the long term (Stice & Shaw, 2014). None of the studies revealed the existence of programs incorporated to the mainstream curriculum. The programs that involved a critical approach to the conceptualization of eating disorders have not yet showed effects on the actual behaviour of students (K. Kater et al., 2000). Piran (2007) explains that the majority of studies for schoolchildren are designed within a positivist/ scientific framework that grants very little time to the exploration of students' lived experience, while isolating eating disorders as a phenomena and not as part of a destructive discourse that fosters hurtful relationships with the body (Piran, 2007).

The second section of the review involved looking for articles and literature on critical pedagogy. I aimed to look for studies on critical pedagogy practice addressing embodiment. The literature revealed, that for the most part, gender specific curriculums
are taught in universities (e.g. Smulyan, 2004; Davidson, et al., 2009; Oberhauser, 2002). I found that there are preschool programs that target identity formation issues (e.g. Sandström, Stier, & Sandberg, 2013). Regarding middle and high school instruction related to gender and sexuality, the literature reveals vast reviews on the exploration of media to explore issues of gender (e.g. Baker-Sperry, Behringer, & Grauerholz, 1999). I found very little studies that incorporated the analysis of gender and sexual identity into the grade K-6 curricula. My literature search confirmed Winslow's (2013) findings; that the coverage of women's history on women and gender-related topics, for the most part are undermined in high school courses (Winslow, 2013).

This literature review exposes the need for more research on successful school-based eating disorders prevention programs. There is a need to fill a research gap between feminist informed research on prevention and school-based feminist prevention programs showing long-term effects. There is no existing literature that suggests using the practice of critical pedagogy for the prevention of eating disorders in schools; nor is there literature that reflects on the similarities between feminist-informed prevention programs and critical pedagogy or critical feminist pedagogy.

To uncover the complexity of gender relations in a middle and high school classroom would require teachers to engage in a form of countersocialization that is not taught in current teacher education programs. However, to examine the current practice of expert teachers who work under a critical pedagogy framework will allow us to closely understand how we can begin to merge the fields of prevention and critical pedagogy into one, possibly, successful curriculum.
Theoretical Frameworks

Gender and Sexuality

Conceptualizing gender is necessary in order to understand the nature of this study. First, it will help illustrate the normalized idea of sexuality or sexual identity; which assumes to be invoked by gender. While gender is understood in terms of binaries, sexuality is assumed to be "compulsory heterosexual", a term explored by Adrienne Rich (1980), which makes explicit the assumption that heterosexual relationships are normal and all others are not (in Kehily, 2002).

Foucault (1976) understood sexuality as a historical construct brought to society through discourses developed in the fields of medicine, law, religion and education (in Kehily, 2002). He described modern sexuality as the product of a discursive practice developed in modern western societies to regulate and administer the sexual conduct of a population (Foucault, 1976, in Kehily, 2002). Discourses, as defined by Foucault (1976), are "ways of operating and understanding the world" (in Kehily, 2002, p. 26). When discourses are enacted in society, they function as "regimes of truth" (Kehily, 2002, p. 38). Hence, sexual identities are produced through the deployment of discursive strategies in relation to sexuality (Kehily, 2002).

Concerned with the importance of conceptual clarity in discussing gender identity, McGrath (2013) stresses the necessity to understand the danger in naming collective identities which can create binary oppositions; instead, she agrees with the social constructivist framework and cites Cerulo's (1997) definition that gender is "an identity continually renegotiated via linguistic exchange and performance" (p. 386 in McGrath, 2013, p. 96). For instance, an essentialist way of looking at gender is through the understanding that there is a male and a female body and that both bodies are genetically determined to hold physical, emotional and psychological characteristics
(Kehily, 2002). On the other hand, a constructivist way of looking at gender would suggest that gender is socially constructed, it is culturally specific and it is relational (i.e. what is female is determined in relation to what is male) (Kehily, 2002). According to Kehily (2002), the gender identities, correspondingly define masculinity and femininity in terms of binary opposites that invoke stereotypes such as: strong/weak; masculine/feminine; active/passive; rational/emotional.

Butler (1993) explains that gender norms operate through the embodiment of feminine and masculine ideals, tied to the idealization of a heterosexual bond. She explains that gender is not a choice or a "construction that one puts on", which implies that there is a subject who exists before gendering happens (Butler, 1993, p. 21). Butler (1993) suggests that gender is performative as subjects repeatedly produce the norms that constrain the regime of gender in both differentiation and hierarchy. The subject is produced and produces the norms that delimit gender through repetition (Butler, 1993). When naming "a girl", femininity begins to form, allowing the "one" to exist, an idea contrary to saying that the "one" becomes the girl (Butler, 1993). "Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment" (Butler, 1993, p. 23).

**The Developmental Theory of Embodiment: Touching on Gender, Sexuality, Race, and social class**

Piran and Teall's (2012) Developmental Theory of Embodiment, broadens the discussion on eating disorders (ED) as they are commonly understood, developed as means to attain thinness; and it presents it as the manifestation of how one lives in the body while relating with the outside world. Piran and Teall (2012), like other feminists, argue that individuals in society discipline their bodies to conform to expectations of
social institutions. In the social construction domain of the Developmental Theory of Embodiment, Piran and Teall describe the impact of different social discourses on girls’ and women’s embodiment. For example, they describe girls’ and women’s control of their desires and appetites, accepting submissive and docile roles, such as acting “nice”, “demure”, and not taking too much physical or relational space. Another way through which women inhabit docile bodies is by inhabiting their bodies while maintaining an objectifying gaze on their bodies (Bordo, 1997 in Piran and Teall, 2012).

Piran and Teall (2012) incorporate into their construct of embodiment the Objectification Theory by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), which articulates; "women learn to appraise their body from an outsider's, typically male, gaze ... when objectified, women are treated as bodies- and in particular, bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others" (p. 175 as cited in Piran & Teall, 2012). As a consequence, when women become aware of the gaze, they begin to monitor their appearance as a way to make themselves "presentable"; this is described by the authors as a practice of self-surveillance; one that leads to the strict control of the body (Piran & Teall, 2012).

Suggesting embodiment to explain ED and other mental health issues goes beyond the concept of body image; it encompasses a discussion about gender, sexuality, race, and social class. Piran and Teall suggest that the construct of body image is problematic in that it implies an objectified gaze towards one’s body, where the “internalization of the external gaze may be considered a disruptive experience to one's positive embodiment (even when body image is positive) as it implies an objectified perspective of the body” (Piran & Teall, 2012, p. 175). Bartky (1997) emphasizes, in the same manner, that "disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine are related to gender oppression (p. 132 as cited in Piran and Teall, 2012). This work emphasizes the nature of eating disorders as an issue of gender oppression.
The Developmental Theory of Embodiment

The Developmental Theory of Embodiment proposes to look at the complexity of the lived experience in terms of gender, sexuality, race, and social class to understand to what extent individuals experience agency and power as they live in the world with their particular bodies. The Developmental Theory of Embodiment allows us to evaluate ED not only from the field of psychology but also sociology (Piran & Teall, 2012). As defined by Merleau-Ponty (1962), embodiment is the "experience of engagement of the body with the world" (Piran & Teall, 2012, p.171). This definition helps illustrate what the authors consider as essential to their theoretical contribution: that "social experiences shape individual's body experiences" (Piran & Teall, 2010, 171). The Developmental Theory of Embodiment explores social-body experiences through a physical, a mental and a social power domain (Piran & Teall, 2012). Drawing on Piran and Thompson's (2008) Model of Adverse Social Experiences, Piran and Teall (2012) consider the following dimension for the analysis of embodiment: ‘violation of body ownership’ (physical domain), ‘internalization of constraining social labels’ (mental or social construction domain), and ‘exposure to prejudicial treatment’ (social power domain) (Piran, 2001 as cited in Piran & Teall, 2012).

Piran and Thompson (2008) suggest exploring the association between sexual and physical abuse and ED, and the association between exposure to prejudicial treatment on weight, sex and ED. This research follows the line of investigation from various studies asserting that both sexual and physical abuse can be considered as risk factors for the development of psychiatric symptomatology (e.g. Danskyetal, 1997; Folsometal, 1993; Palmer & Oppenheimer, 1992; Welch & Fairburn, 1996) (Piran & Thompson, 2008). In a different study, being a victim of sexual harassment was found to be a risk for the development of negative body image and disordered eating behaviours (i.e.
binging or dieting) (Harned 2000; Harned & Fitzgerald 2002 as cited in Piran & Thompson, 2008).

The model of Adverse Social Experiences proposed that experiences related to violations of body ownership such as childhood sexual and physical abuse, and adult sexual and physical violations have a direct impact on the development of eating disorder patterns (Piran & Thompson, 2008). In the same way, they proposed that experiences of exposure to prejudicial treatment such as weightism and sexism have a direct impact on the development of eating disorder patterns (Piran & Thompson, 2008). The original model also suggests that the internalization of gender-based social constructions have an impact on the development of eating disorder patterns (Piran & Cormier 2005 as cited in Piran & Thompson, 2008). Piran and Thompson (2008) argue that these range of adverse social experiences be considered as meaningful dimensions that influence the development of eating disorders.

The contributions of the Developmental Theory of Embodiment are to the etiological foundation of ED but also to the treatment and prevention of the condition. In this discussion, embodiment, or as defined by Allan (2005), "the experience of engagement of the body with the world" helps the authors understand a range of experiences; from positive experiences or experiences of embodied agency such as self care, joy, attunement and agency, to negative experiences or experiences of disrupted embodiment such as negative body image (Piran & Teall, 2012), and dissociation (Briere, Kaltman, & Green, 2008) (as cited in Piran & Teall, 2012, p. 174). Piran and Teall (2012) wish to consider the construct of embodiment to explain and address a wide range of issues related to women's health and well-being such as substance abuse, self-harm, sexual intercourse without protection or desire, and lack of involvement in physical activities, as well as eating disorders (see Gadalla & Piran, 2007; Lewinson, Rohde, & Seeley, 1991; Biddle, 1993; Richman & Shaffer, 2000; Bradley, Deng,
In their work, Piran and Teall (2012) wish to move away from the concept body image, which is commonly used to assess ED claiming that body image "entails an evaluation of oneself from the outside, and therefore reflects the internalization of the external gaze towards one's body" (p. 175). Body image would not be able to explain those cases of a developed ED, which are not related to the "pursuit of thinness" but to other social conditions (Piran & Teall, 2012). For example, Katzman and Lee (1997) discussed a case of Chinese women who developed ED but not as a desire to follow the thin ideal; the women reported "feelings of powerlessness, oppression, and experience of sexual abuse [...] but not fat phobia" (p.390 as cited in Piran & Teall, 2010, 176). They suggest to utilize the concept embodiment instead, to disclose an "inside perspective", one that comes from a place of awareness and sensory perception (Piran & Teall, 2012). The authors explain that the construct of embodiment also helps reflect the relationship between the body and social structures that may cause to disrupt the body, like patriarchy (Piran & Teall, 2012).

This work proposes that eating disorders should be addressed in schools as an issue of embodiment, an issue that is grounded in how the social institutions operate, their assumed norms of normalcy, the ways in which power is enforced, the available texts, hierarchies of knowledge and the availability of space given for different voices to speak.
Chapter III

Methodology

This work involved conducting qualitative research using phenomenology, understood by Creswell (2013) as a “study (that) describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon ... describing what all participants have in common as they experience (it)” (p. 76). This phenomenological study explores the phenomenon of critical pedagogy and embodiment through the perspectives of several experienced educators, and how these two intersect.

In this work I explore the phenomenon of critical pedagogy and embodiment while studying what is the current practice of teachers who identify themselves as working under a critical lens and how they approach issues of embodiment in their classroom when working under that discourse.

This study explored 1) the knowledge of 5 teachers in the Toronto Greater Area through face to face interviews, and 2) the literature review in the field of eating disorders prevention, specifically feminist informed prevention programs, critical pedagogy, the Developmental Theory of Embodiment, and theories on gender and sexuality.

Literature Review

The reviewed literature helped inform this project by 1) providing a broad background on the field of eating disorders prevention including prevention programs in schools, feminist informed prevention programs as well as contested views and advancements in the field; 2) by introducing critical pedagogy; and 3) helping introduce the theoretical frameworks informing the research: on gender and sexuality and the Developmental Theory of Embodiment. The literature review helped define the structures needed for this particular study, for instance I was able to define the kind of
language I was going to use throughout the study (i.e. embodiment vs. body image); I was able to define the kind of discourses I was going to use to ground the study (i.e. disempowered/disembodied vs. sick); I was able to find the connection between feminist-informed prevention programs and critical pedagogy (i.e. they both aim for social justice through empowerment, guiding patients/students to voice their experiences as means of knowledge that can initiate change). The literature review also helped inform the questions I used for the interviews (see Appendix B- interview questions).

The sources reviewed were mainly peer-reviewed academic articles, eating disorders prevention programs, and books.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected from 5 individual semi-structured interviews. Interview questions (see Appendix B-Interview Questions) were open-ended, and interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. Questions invited teachers to share information about their background, the contexts in which they work, and their practices using critical pedagogy as they address the discourses in their classrooms concerning the body, sexually, racially, in terms of weight, shape, or gender. Teachers were asked to reflect on experiences where issues about embodiment arose in the classroom. They also shared their hopes for future curricula that addressed embodiment issues. The questions served as a guide for the interviews. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed afterwards. The interviews aim to surface the experiences, beliefs, motivations and views of teachers when exploring issues of gender, sexuality, body shape and weight concern, race, and body image with their students and how they question the discourses behind those issues.
I had 3 interviews in a private space at OISE. The other remaining two interviews were conducted in the participants' schools in a private classroom. I used a digital Sony voice recorder to record all the interviews. Then, I fully transcribed all interviews using a software program called TranscribePro. The transcriptions were first read through to outline emerged and repeated themes. The first emergent themes were categorized according to the interview questions (see Appendix B) using different colors schemes in Word software. Themes touching on teachers' background were highlighted blue; themes touching on schooling and embodiment of students were highlighted in red; themes touching on teachers' approaches were highlighted in green, and themes touching on curriculum were highlighted in violet. Afterwards, the transcriptions were transferred to NVIVO software where 5 codes were created: curriculum, students' embodiment, teachers' approach, teachers' body experiences, and teachers' practice. The analysis of the coded transcriptions in NVIVO followed. Finally, I organized the data in 2 main themes and subthemes: Curriculum (official curriculum, taught curriculum and outside of the curriculum), and Teacher body experiences (student experiences, teacher experiences, power and privilege, and teaching philosophy and practice).

**Participants**

The teachers participating in the study were contacted based on their experiences addressing issues of gender, sexuality, and embodiment in their classrooms as well as their critical approaches to their own practice. Three professors in OISE, Prof. Rob Simon, Prof. Niva Piran, and Prof. Ruben Gaztambide helped me identify teachers whose work they are familiar with. For instance, Prof. Gaztambide contacted two dance professors who work under his supervision and who are graduate students at OISE; their work is relevant to this study because dance teachers interact with students' bodies through movement. After they agreed to participate, Prof. Gaztambide shared their
emails with me and I was able to share my proposal and set a time and day for the
interviews to happen. The same happened when Prof. Rob Simon suggested that I send
an email to one of his students who he knows is doing critical pedagogy in her practice.
Her work takes a very critical stance especially since she encourages students to speak
about their everyday conflicts in a safe space where they can find solutions together as a
group. Prof. Piran also suggested that I reached out to one of her research assistants
whose research interest is in queer and feminist theories particularly when trying to
understand physical education and athletes' experience of gender norms. It was assumed
that all participants were familiar, to different extents, with critical pedagogy
frameworks.

I gave every participant a pseudonym to protect his or her identities. The first
participant I interviewed was Will. Will is in his thirties; he is white, and male. He
currently teaches Science and Media courses in a small, alternative middle school in
downtown Toronto, and he has a background in forestry. He has been involved in
teaching for the last 6 years.

The second participant was Paula. She is in her late twenties; she is white and
female. She is currently doing her Masters of Teaching at OISE and is doing her
practicums at a school in Toronto. Paula decided to pursue education after she was
asked to teach educational and dance workshops in schools.

Ila was the third participant I interviewed. She is originally from Japan; she
identifies herself as queer and is in her thirties. Ila has been studying in North America
for the last decade. She did her Bachelor and Masters degrees at Ohio University in
Physical Education where she had the opportunity to teach as part of her program
requirements. Ila recently finished her PhD dissertation at OISE; her main focus was
Japanese women and "trans" athletes' subjectivity negotiating gender, sexuality and the
concept of Nation.
I interviewed Tony next. She is white, in her forties and female. Tony is currently supervising Bachelor and Master students in Teaching at OISE as they complete their practicums. She finished her PhD and focused her dissertation on the ways in which students make sense of "gender based violence". Before completing her PhD, Tony owned and ran her own arts studio where she taught kids and parents visual arts, drama, dance, etc.

Alex was my last interview. She is white, female, and in her thirties. She is currently teaching a Social Justice and Leadership class in an urban High School setting in Toronto where she has taught for the past 11 years. She is also completing her Masters in Arts of Education at OISE. She comes from a background in Ornithology doing outdoor and alternative education with children in the prison system.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

All teachers in this study signed a formal letter of consent (see Appendix A-consent letter) stating: the participant’s right to withdraw at any time; the participant's permission to have their interview audiotaped; the purpose of the study and the data collection procedures; the confidentiality and protection of their identities; the risks associated with the participation in the study; the participant's permission to be contacted a second time in case a follow-up interview was needed; and the expected benefits of participating (Creswell, 2013, p. 153).

**Limitations**

The main limitation of this research is the fact that I only looked at the *phenomena* of critical pedagogy and embodiment through the experiences of the teachers I interviewed. Because I do not have access to schools in the Toronto District School Board I was not able to observe classrooms, nor did I have access to interview
the students themselves to hear their experiences.

A second limitation to this study was lack of time. I would have liked to have a second interview with participants to clarify themes that emerged and to discuss their practices' in more detail. Because of my lack of experience conducting interviews, the third limitation to the study was my difficulty to clearly state my questions and goals with participants.
Chapter IV

Findings

In this chapter I discuss my findings after interviewing 5 teachers from diverse backgrounds. I found that there are two different "teaching" spaces that intersect when it comes to addressing students' embodiment issues related to gender and sexuality in schools. The first is a curriculum space that is explored at three different levels: 1) the official curriculum; 2) the way that the curriculum is taught; and 3) what happens outside of the curriculum. The second space that intersects with the curriculum is teacher's own body experiences which were reflected in various levels: 1) their own body experiences as students; 2) their body experiences as teachers; 3) their understandings of power and privilege; and 4) their practice or teaching philosophy and agenda. I explore each of these themes and subthemes that emerged from my data analysis in detail in the remainder of this chapter.

Curriculum

In this section I explore teachers' perception of the Curriculum through three different perspectives. First, I touch on teacher's ideas and understandings of what the official curriculum of Ontario offers in terms of teaching students about gender and sexuality. I wanted to understand where in the curriculum issues about gender and sexuality are addressed in schools. Then I touch on how teachers make use of their specific curricula to address issues of gender and sexuality in the classroom without it being explicitly written. Finally, I explore the conversations that teachers have with students regarding their bodies in terms of gender and sexuality outside of the official curriculum, but within the structures of the school.
Official Curriculum. Teachers described the Health Curriculum as the space where issues of gender and sexuality are formally addressed in schools in Ontario, with the exception of one teacher, Paula. She is currently doing her teaching practicum while getting her Masters in Teaching degree at OISE, but has been doing dance workshops in various schools. Paula referred to her own sex education in a Catholic school as being part of a class named "fully alive".

Teachers expressed different opinions regarding the success or efficiency of this curriculum. For instance Will, who has been teaching science and media at a Toronto middle school for the last two years, expressed that the "health curriculum is pretty good". He mentioned that issues concerning students' embodiment are addressed in the health class, such as eating disorders, body image and self-esteem. On the other hand, Tony, a former dance studio owner and teacher, who is now supervising both BA and MT students from OISE in their teaching practicums while doing her PhD, commented on the health curriculum as being the place where sexuality is "supposed" to be addressed. Tony expressed that sexuality in the health curriculum is "not addressed very much or very well" and that it really depends on the teacher.

Alex, who has been teaching in a school in Toronto for the last 11 and a half years, and now is teaching Social Justice and Equity courses in high school, showed concern when she found out that all the students in the 9th grade physical education class had failed their anatomy test of the male and female reproductive parts: "they could not label the diagrams ... they didn't know what was a testicle, what was a penis". Alex explained that gender and sexuality, at a compulsory level in the school, comes as part of the physical education curriculum. However, as part of the new Ontario curriculum, there are new courses offered for the social sciences department such as a course on gender, a course on genocide, and courses on social justice and equity. Alex mentioned that when talking about gender and sexuality with students she is lucky
because she is in a place where it is in the curriculum. However, she explained, a class like "Gender" is only taught in three high schools in all Ontario because it is a new course; and in order for a new course to be offered, another course must be taken out of the curriculum. As Alex noted:

There's politics around what courses you offer at schools…. Teachers are often territorial over the courses that they teach and if you're not a teacher who’s comfortable with teaching a course all on gender, no school is going to offer it.

As Alex’s comment suggests, and what was implied in other participants’ responses' is that the question of how the curriculum is taught is more important than where (grade level or subject) it is taught in schools. Alex mentioned that the teachers who feel comfortable talking about gender and sexuality are the ones that will bring it into their curriculum regardless. Ila explained that even in OISE, where she did her PhD in education and worked as a TA, "the Phys Ed and health teachers, they admit Sex Ed is the hardest subject to teach". All of teachers' comments and stories about the official curriculum helped me understand that no matter whether the curriculum is specifically designed to touch on matters of embodiment with students or not, teachers' willingness to make a change in students' lives is needed. As Alex put it, "there needs to be this group of teachers that want to have these courageous conversations with kids around these issues around gender, around sexuality from a critical standpoint". Ila also put it plainly:

I tried my best to what I found is a problem of gender norms but I know that some of my colleagues who are teachers, don't really think about that and if the students are stuck with those teachers it's only a reinforcement of the social norms.
While doing her teaching practicum at an independent school, Paula chose to think of the curriculum as an instrument that helped her "stay on track". She shared with me that she tries to find the connection between the curriculum and what she is doing with students. Curriculum, she expressed, helps her narrow down or solidify exactly what it is that she wants students to learn. Finally, Will explained that the curriculum is designed in a way that teachers have an opportunity to explore issues with students in their own way. He said: "as far as resources, we are kind of left up to our own on how we want to do it; which is good".

**Teaching the Curriculum.** Teaching the Curriculum is another prominent theme that emerged from my data. Teachers' reflections helped me understand the extent to which they incorporate critical approaches about the body with students in the curriculum handed to them.

Ila taught different courses at Ohio University when she was doing her Masters degree in Physical Education. Some of the courses she used to teach as a TA were swimming, weight training, and Taekwondo. While teaching Taekwondo to university students, as Ila shared in her interview, she made a big effort to try and challenge students' normative ideas about the gendered body in terms of strength. She achieved this by participating in students' matches in order to have them see that even though she was a female and small in size, she could compete against bigger men:

> It was easy for me to get some points quickly against these male students. I saw some female students as well and smaller sized men, were happy watching that and also bigger men recognizing that it's not all about power, right, martial arts is not, it's more about technique and skills as well as many other aspects.
In this quote Ila emphasizes that it was important for her to teach students beyond what was written in the Taekwondo curriculum. By choosing to participate in the matches, Ila deconstructed the normative perspectives on physical power as being predominantly masculine and coming from a big-strong body. Ila shared that she used to participate in matches fighting bigger male students and that other smaller male students as well as female students would observe the matches eagerly, as she presented herself as a non-normative body/figure with strength and power.

When following the swimming curriculum, Ila felt uncomfortable with the way in which the curriculum evaluated the body. She explained that for instance in "the swimming classes, the condition to pass the beginners class was to be able to swim 25 meters without standing up in two different strokes". She believed it was a lot to ask from beginner students. She did not want them to feel like they had failed if they had to take a break while swimming because it could affect their confidence. She said, "I really don't agree about measuring people's body and it's movements based on the one standard and in one day because people come with different conditions". Ila shared that she would tell her students not to worry about the exam, that she would observe them throughout the whole term and that she would evaluate their improvement over time. Comments like these suggest that Ila questions the curriculum guidelines for evaluating students' performances, especially those that were used for beginner students. In order to address what she considered inadequate assessment, she chose not to evaluate her students based on the final exam.

Alex, another teacher, reflected on the way that she brings up conversations about the body with students into the "Leadership" and "Social Justice" courses she teaches. She explained that she focuses her teaching on making it personal. Alex tries to "make [students] look at their own identity, which creates a really vulnerable place [for them]". In her teaching she talks about gender as a performative aspect of identity, and she tries
to connect the curriculum to students' interests. As an example of the kind of work she does, Alex talked about a movie she played that her students really enjoyed. It was about a family of 5 boys who all performed gender very differently. The movie that took place in Quebec in the 80's when the society was ultra-catholic. Alex explained: "there was a boy who was a nerd, one was the jock, one was the drugee, one was the younger brother and then one was questioning sexuality and his identity". The students had great conversations about the different representations of the characters and they had to connect this to their own bodies. She mentioned they had to "force themselves to think about who they are and what they're really good at, how they learn, how they move, and how do they sit in their body". This moment that Alex shared with me suggested that her main purpose as a teacher is to encourage students to be critical of the social norms and structures that try to define what a person is or should be. With this example she demonstrated that she pushed students to think outside of the norms and to consider different possibilities for themselves.

While doing her teaching practicum at an independent school Paula chose to think of the curriculum as an instrument that helps her "stay on track". Curriculum, she expressed, helps her narrow down or solidify exactly what it is that she wants students to learn. She mentioned "I see the dance curriculum as very vague and broad in some ways [...]. What is dance? Bringing it into my own, what I think would be engaging". Dancing involves using the body, which is why Paula explained that she chooses to interpret the curriculum and teach her students in a way that can be more meaningful. The grade 1 dance curriculum talks about the body, but Paula explained that the focus was more directed towards using different parts of the body. She does not tell students, "Ok now we're going to use our arms". Rather, Paula helps students explore movement and be conscious of their bodies, sometimes by engaging them in stories: "I always start by telling a story". She mentioned as an example that she had introduced Brazilian
dances of Oshnu, which are the Gods and Goddesses. She talked to students about the God or Goddess that they are going to represent and what their characteristics were. Paula shared that in that dance:

Boys and girls are depicting opposite sexes sometimes, a very masculine character or a very feminine character. I have to explain that in this dance, both men and women are these characters or these Gods and Goddesses and it's considered to be a great dancer if you are able to have those feminine and masculine aspects of your dance.

Later Paula mentioned that sometimes the boys make fun or mock being the feminine Gods and that unfortunately she doesn't have enough time to address these instances with students. Paula's reflection of the dance curriculum is important because it reflects how teachers make decisions on how to implement it. This works positively for her because she is able to introduce elements that invite students to think of gender as a more fluid element that can be explored through dance, like she did with the Brazilian dance. At the same time it showed me how difficult it is for teachers who teach non-academic subjects, like the dance workshops that Paula teaches or the physical education classes that Ila taught at Ohio, to have meaningful conversations with students in the short periods handed to them.

In the interview I had with Tony, another participant in my study, we discussed the health curriculum. She reflected her concern for the curriculum's deficiencies. Tony said:

I don't think people think so much about the body. I feel like sort of the whole aspect of the actual body you know that we live in that body that has that makes meaning of the world, the body that is gendered and raced and all of those pieces that we have, that makes us who we are, a lot of times that gets ignored in the
actual official curriculum unless you have a teacher that is really… social justice or equity driven.

She was certain the body was underutilized in the curriculum and that it is ignored in terms of "just generally getting students up and moving and using their bodies…. But it's also about, who are we? What do we bring to the classroom? So really, what are our own experiences and knowledge that are within our bodies?" Tony believes that the official curriculum does not explore the body enough and her concern about this is that students often explore their sexual, gendered, raced bodies in unsafe spaces that may turn to be negative experiences. She found "that the sort of hidden curriculum, that's what comes out in the playground, that's what comes out in the hallways, that's what comes out in the bathrooms, that's what comes out when you are sitting besides somebody whispering in their ear".

Tony named the space where students experience their feelings struggling through adolescence, the hidden curriculum. Tony’s description of the hidden curriculum fits the notion of Gerald Campano's "second classroom". Campano (2007) described it as the alternative pedagogic space where students' interests and expressions take place. He calls it "second classroom" because it is an alternative space between periods and classrooms where the sense of time is different, improvisational, opportunistic and creative (Campano, 2007). Tony wondered: "What are students feeling at this stage in their life? What are they struggling with?" She expressed her desire to give students the opportunity to talk about their lived experiences—"what they don't know, what they do know and what they wish they knew”—and to listen to their questions. For Tony, the main concern she had for students was:

They are really struggling in life and I would rather we spend so much more time on the person, so much more time on who they are and how they are developing ... and that they are developing in the way ... [that doesn't push] to fit in these
boxes, [and] all of these norms so that students [can] feel like they can see themselves somewhere in it, and that [we offer] a safe place to explore that understanding ... [to help them] develop a greater love for themselves, more empathy for others, ... in all aspects of their lives.

Tony was able to offer a very valuable perspective about the overall idea of embodied curriculum. She spoke about the lack of space that exists for students' bodies to be recognized and reflected upon within the curriculum. This presents a concern for students' wellbeing, Tony acknowledged. The way in which Tony spoke about the "hidden curriculum" points to the missed opportunity in schools for addressing what happens outside of the classroom. So much is left to the individual teacher to tackle alone within the constraints of time and assessment in the curriculum.

**Teaching outside of the curriculum.** Findings in this study reflect the ways in which teachers interact with students outside of the curriculum. Some of the teachers reflected on instances where they had addressed students' concerns with their bodies in spaces outside of the formal classroom.

In the conversation I had with Tony, she shared her experience observing grade 7 students for her PhD dissertation; she wanted to understand how gender-based violence is enacted. There was one case, Tony recollected, where boys in a grade 7 class created the "ideal body shape" or the "ideal girl". The students were talking amongst themselves, saying, "The ideal girl would have so and so's breasts, and so and so's bum, and so and so's hips". In her focus groups, Tony explained, "I could really follow through on things that happened in the classroom and that were applicable to my research and really get them to ask more in depth questions". In this space Tony was able to talk to one of the girls who had been included in that "ideal body shape", who felt really embarrassed about her body. The girl was really self-conscious about having
large breasts and for being named by the group of boys for this. Tony explained that these kinds of situations often happen without the teacher's knowledge. She shared:

I never heard the boys do that in front of me, I think that was never something that was done in front of an adult. I was told that in an interview; when she told me the story of how they had created the perfect girl, I said to her that must have made you feel really uncomfortable and she said "yes". I felt that in smaller groups students could elaborate more and help me understand.

Drawing from the last section, where Tony first mentioned the concept of "hidden curriculum", this particular case provides an example of the kinds of conversations that take place outside of the classroom. The talk that Tony had with that particular student in the focus group was indeed an opportunity to address students' wellbeing in the second classroom (Campano, 2007).

Alex mentioned talking to students about gender norms outside of the space of her classroom in everyday conversations and also within the space of a book club: "books to movies". In this book club they were reading *Hunger Games*, which is a very popular series of movies and books. Alex explained to me how these books give her an entry to discuss gender and sexuality issues students from a point of view that interests them. For instance, in the *Hunger Games* there are two male secondary characters that both want Katnis, the female main character. Pita and Gabriel represent different versions of males: Gabriel is the archer; he is very physical and has a more typical macho or masculine way of being. Pita on the other hand is more sensitive, he is kind, he paints, and he bakes bread. Alex said:

What's fascinating is within this group like two of the girls really wanted her [Katnis] to end up with Gabriel the other three really like Pita, and so it was this really interesting conversation to actually engage, where there's a sensitive caring man or the masculine übel masculine kind, fitting into the gender roles.
Alex stated that these conversations with the students were very interesting; especially for boys that don't identify themselves as being masculine:

I think the boys all liked the Pita character; the boys who weren't super masculine or super athletic like the Pita character because the Pita character showed them the multidimensional aspect of a person vs. the Gabriel character which was more like he worked in a factory, a hard job he also like was an archer he was a hunter and he way he was described in the book was more around more kind of his masculinity.

Alex was able to talk to her students in ways that were related to their own interests and their experiences going through adolescence. Alex shared that her students recognize the fact that she is talking to them in a very personal way. Her students often tell her things like "Ms. you're the only teacher that talks about these things". Alex's relationship with her students outside of the classroom is an opportunity for her to get to know them, and to get to talk about things that she knows are meaningful to them and that also fit into her teaching agenda. Through this second classroom she has a point of entry to conversations that in a more formal manner might not had taken place.

Similar to Alex's book club, Will shared with me that he is an advocate of an ice hockey program in the school and that he really tries to encourage girls to come out and play hockey. "I would like to think I am very encouraging of non-traditional gender roles", he said. "I think a lot of [girls] never considered [hockey] because they don't see women. So they don't even consider it, which is a problem." Will explained to me that the way he sees is that "If you don't see [people like you], you don't assume yourself to be in that roll". He explained: "It's important for them, I think, it makes them know that they can try anything they want and not just what they see. And that's one example, like I think some of them never thought they would be on a hockey team".
Will tried to bring girls who played hockey in the years before to encourage the younger ones to join the team. He explained; "a lot of girls don't have the equipment" and then pointed towards a table in his science classroom for me to see that underneath the table he had at least seven bags full of hockey equipment. Will said to me: "that is all hockey equipment. A lot of people will say ‘I don't have hockey equipment.’ I'm like, ‘I have hockey equipment’". I asked him why it was important for him that girls joined the hockey team and explained that it was important because by trying a new sport like Hockey that is often identified as a masculine game, girls can learn to try new things, build up their confidence, and enjoy school. It was important for Will that girls learned how to play hockey as a way to help them become lifelong learners.

I found this story to be an example of a second classroom experience where Will makes use of a sport like hockey to challenge traditional gender norms with students. The purpose of encouraging girls to try such a masculine identified sport was to give them the possibility to explore different ways of being in their bodies. Will’s effort to include the girls in the team is one valuable approach to helping to break down the gender stereotypes in the school environment, as well as provide girls with a sense of empowerment and freedom. Often girls will exclude themselves from participating in sports and physical activities because these activities are perceived as not fitting with an acceptable feminine comportment (Ewing & Seefeldt, 1996 in Piran & Teall, 2012). This exclusion can be problematic according to Theberge (2003) because participation in sport and other leisure activities has been known to provide girls and women with a sense of empowerment, and the freedom to take space (as cited in Piran & Teall, 2012).
**Teachers' body-experiences**

In this section, I explore how teachers' personal experiences inform their practices. First, I present teachers' body experiences when they were students. Participants spoke about some of the challenges they had when they were younger, and reflected on how they felt in their bodies at that time, what their school environment was like, how they performed gender at that age, and how this shaped their experiences as learners. Second, I present participants' experiences working in their different school environments. Teachers reflected on how they feel in their bodies when they teach and the ways in which gender and sexuality get negotiated within the school environment. I touch on two participants' reflections on power and privilege as they share their own understanding of how these aspects of their identities get played in their practice. Third, I present teachers' notions of students' relationships with their bodies. I explore teachers' concerns about the ways in which students enact gender and gender roles. Finally, I share the ways in which teachers explore and understand their own practices, their purposes in teaching and their personal agendas.

**Teachers' body-experiences as students:** I asked teachers to share some of their experiences when they were students themselves. Their reflections helped me understand how teachers used to live in their bodies when they were younger and how those experiences inform their current practice.

Paula thought about herself as a student and she remembered being a little bit shy in the classroom. She also mentioned, "I was a bit on the heavier side too as a child, so feeling self-conscious about that sometimes. I wasn't the most active, I wasn't very physically active in gym, and I didn't really like those kinds of subjects. Even just outside on the yard I wouldn't choose to play a sport". She remembered feeling a little "unsure" in her body. Paula's reflection makes me think about her current practice
teaching dance workshops and getting her Masters in teaching. Her experience as a student is different to her experience living in her body as an adult. Paula's decision to teach a subject like dance that involves so much confidence in the body, is very interesting. I would have liked to understand how exactly she came into dancing but I assume that in dancing she found a place of reassurance.

Alex on the other hand remembered being in high school and deciding not to shave her legs anymore. She had read a book about a very strong female character that decided to stop shaving her legs and she wanted to be like her. Alex also remembered being really good at school and able to function in the school system. She said:

The only class I would get phone calls from the teachers would be the teachers who called my parents in my religion class. I was raised catholic, roman catholic, and I was at a catholic school. The teachers used to call home saying -tell Alex to stop asking questions tell Alex to stop questioning religion-.

Alex's reflection of herself as a student tells me that she formed her political and critical stance from a very young age. She also shared that at that age she faced a lot of criticism on her appearance from family members who did not know how to perceive her nonconforming way of living in her body. Later she would share that she still faces the same kind of criticism from people in her workspace regarding the way she choses to present herself.

Ila narrated the difficulty she experienced living in Japan and having her masculine identity emerge very early in her life. She explained that at the time she didn't know how to define herself, but that she sensed that she preferred to be recognized as a boy. She used to borrow clothes from her brother, which made her happy because she felt more comfortable in them than in girls' clothes. She had short hair and liked to play outside "acting tomboy", she expressed. Ila shared an incident that happened to her when she was in grade 4:
It was grade 4 and there was a new young teacher who came to fill in my previous teacher, who went to maternity leave. When she first went through the class roster [...] she said my last name is [I...] Kun which actually means a boy; it's like a Mr. or Ms. in Japanese, so she said [I...] Kun which means she recognized my face as a boy. All my classmates laughed at it and that was the first moment that I felt that I was embarrassed. On one side I was happy that she recognized me as a boy because that's where my identity was going, but when the class laughed at me for being misrecognized that way, it was a moment of embarrassment. That was my first recognition of the social dynamic.

This experience for Ila marked the beginning of many years living in a misunderstood body. She shared with me that she only came out when she turned 23. From the time she was in grade 5, she became a competitive athlete, which helped her avoid people from questioning her masculinity. She shared, "it’s like kind of an interesting Japanese culture where female athletes are expected to be especially if you are competing in a masculine sport; you are supposed to look masculine because you are training hard you are not thinking of anything but competition". Ila's body- experience in school having a queer body was challenging especially because, as she mentioned to me, teachers never mentioned the existence of terms such as LGBTQ, which to her would have been extremely helpful at that time.

Will shared that he constantly thinks of himself when he was in grade 7 and 8. He explained that it informs his practice. He thinks of himself having the age his students are now and it helps him remember what was important to him at that time. He remembered being very good at school but having more troubles in the social aspect. He shared: "it felt uncomfortable, at this age. I was really uncomfortable as a student. I was socially not as mature as many of the kids. I guess I was a late, they call it like a late bloomer, so I think I was a little immature". He also recalled being one of the
richer kids in his neighbourhood and not spending time with those kids who did not come from affluent families. Will said:

Just based on my own ideas of poor people, I think a lot of it was my parents' idea of poor people. I didn't associate with the poorer kids. I think I looked down on them and I thought I was better, just because my family was better off. Now I look back on that and I have a lot of regrets. I could've had some really good friends and there were some really great kids but I just never gave anybody the chance. I recognize that bias in me when I was younger. It's important that everybody is kind of in the same footing when I teach, so that, that informs a lot.

This passage is relevant because it describes a past body-experience that he remembered as problematic. Will's reflection of his younger body helps him understand his students' lives with more knowledge. In this example, through teaching, Will was able to look back at his adolescent body-experience and reflect on it from a critical perspective.

**Teachers' body-experiences in the school environment.** One of the findings in this study led me to understand that teachers' experiences in the school environment where they work is a very important piece that contributed to my understanding of their teaching practices. On one hand, I was able to learn the ways in which teachers' experiences dealing with issues of gender and sexuality informed the conversations that they had with students; On the other hand, I was able to understand the extent to which the school's environment either limits or helps teachers to critically explore these themes with students.

I asked Ila to reflect on the body that she used to bring to the classroom when she taught in Ohio University and also as a Teacher Assistant in the University of Toronto. Ila shared:
I was always very anxious at the beginning of the class especially in my first years because of, I think, 3 major reasons: one was the language. I speak English ok now, and I feel like I can communicate better, but at that time, it was my 5th year in the U.S. and I was speaking not as fluent as many of my students expected me to be. As soon as I introduced myself, you know: -hi, this is [I…}, I'm your instructor--; they quickly realized that I'm not a native speaker. I can see that they are judging me, but it not only happens at the level of my accent, but also as soon as I walked in, especially into lecture courses; I think that as soon as they find that I'm Asian, female, and I was very young, I look younger than I am so a lot of times my students who are actually older than me or I look too much younger than them, and female, and talking about coaching to mostly male students who have been playing masculine sports for a long time.

Ila's experience standing in front of a classroom where she taught at Ohio University reflects the great challenges that non-native English speaker teachers face. Ila explained that Ohio University's environment is predominantly white. Her experience also allows me to see that physical education courses are by nature gender normative with a majority of male students. Ila shared that she struggled to have a presence as the instructor and teacher because of these aspects. She explained: "My gender and my ethnic identity combined gave me quite a lot of anxiety, and the language didn't help of course". She finally explained that one of the most challenging aspects of bringing her body to teach was the fact that she identifies as queer. She explained:

Because I am a gender queer and I present myself with my short hair, I don't wear makeup, and I am teaching PE courses so that's another thing that gives me anxiety. Of course students were not going to say anything; I was the instructor and they didn't want to upset me right (laugh)? I have the power to mark them. Yet at the same time I was worried about how they think about me, how they
categorize me, like what kind of teacher they think I am. I wasn't comfortable in terms of where I was as a teacher.

Ila's "anxiety" makes me think again about the gender normative environment of the school, and I wonder what kind of support would have been helpful for her to have before beginning to teach. The fact that Ila was so nervous about presenting herself with her body in front of students makes me assume that there weren't many other Asian, female, or queer Physical Education teaching assistants in the university.

Will, shared his experience bringing his body into the classroom. His experience is different from Ila's because he is a Canadian, white, English speaking male. I'm a white guy who is in his mid thirties". He mentioned: "It's a difficult question; I am very aware of the difference between men and women in the school; the men teachers and the female teachers and I'm also very aware of the female students and the male students.

Will's comment suggests to me that he finds himself constricted by his gender and sort of confined in the way that he interacts with students of the opposite gender. He explained: "I find it's easier for me to talk to the male students and kind of be buddy-buddy with them. The female students, I keep, I don't have, I'm not buddy buddy with the female students in the same way that I am with the guy students". This quote makes me think about the way in which gender roles get played in schools, especially since most teachers are women. Will reflected:

In the school I'm very, I'm very aware of the differences between the guy teachers and the women teachers too. As much as I, we've tried to say -everyone is the same-, there are still differences between. I have lots of generalizations about men and women too, which is something that I am aware of; some of them are right and some of them are wrong. I find it easier to joke around with the guy teachers at school than I do with the female teachers. If I walk into a room and it's all
women teachers that's the first thing I will notice. Like there are no guys in here. I'm the only man in here; and maybe it doesn't go any further than that but I'm very aware of that.

In his reflection, Will has given me a glimpse into how it feels to be in his body when he is in school. In the interview, I interpreted the body that he presented to me as a body that feels very self-conscious, maybe inadequate, or perhaps a body that is constantly reminded that it is male and that it is expected to behave in a certain way. Will was the only male participant that I interviewed, but I would like to investigate this notion of the male teacher in future research.

Alex shared with me her body experience as a teacher in terms of how her body is treated in the school environment where she works. She explained that she gets a lot of critique and comments from some of the female teachers working in the school. They often comment on her looks and on her choice of clothing. She commented:

I'm constantly being faced with teachers saying -oh you should really get your upper lip threaded, you should really do your eyebrows- in a way that it's not the teenagers saying -oh Ms. you look good in purple - or something like that. I've had teachers that come up to me and say -you know, you really should blow dry your hair before you come to school as opposed to come with it wet out of the shower, you know you should wear make-up, you know you looked better when you were 10lb. lighter. -So I feel like I also bring that body to the space ... that I replicate a lot of the issues that the students are dealing with in the classroom right? There's still the "in crowd", the "out crowd", "the bullies" the whatever. That happens forever, it happens within the profession.

This passage is about a teachers' body experience in the school setting. Alex's reflection on her own experience is very interesting because she compares her own experience of being criticized by other colleagues to students' experiences being bullied by other
classmates. When I think of Alex's practice I like to think back to this quote because what I find valuable about her own reflection is the capacity to empathize with her students' experiences navigating through the world while living in their bodies. This example also made me reflect on the possibilities that exist for teachers to explore their practice in a critical way with students and to what extent their own experiences come into play or help them get to a place where they "get" their students.

This section helps me understand that through the reflections of three teachers (Ila, Will, and Alex), schools have a long way to go in terms of becoming spaces that can help students critically reflect on their bodies. In these three reflections, I can see that schools are still places where normative gender roles are reproduced both amongst teachers and students. Teachers may have the courage and capacity to explore issues of gender and sexuality with students in the classroom, but if they want their lessons to become real life changers, schools must take part in those transformations.

**Teachers' reflections on power and privilege.** The following passages reflect the experiences of two teachers who explored, through their interviews, their own sense of power and privilege in the world and how it has affected their practice. Alex reflected on the different bodies that she, as a teacher, brings to the classroom. She spoke about the power and privilege that comes with her body and explained:

> I am a white educated woman. I have 3 university degrees; I come from a different way of speaking and a different way of holding myself because of my power and privilege. My parents knew how to navigate the education system so they instilled in me a confidence and a way of moving in [it]. I'm very aware [of how] my students and their families operate the system. I'm always aware that there is a power and privilege and with that come lot of responsibility. I find that the conversations I have with students in my classroom are the same
conversations that I'm having with my kids. If I can spend time with my kids talking about these issues around body or gender and sexuality and who people are, then again that means that I come from a place of a lot of power and privilege. Alex explained that she has a lot of transparency in the way that she leads her practice. She will always bring up her position of privilege with her students when they have certain conversations because she understands that some of them might not feel comfortable sharing some of their experiences with her. She shared how difficult it was to practice teaching in this way:

I'm always checking myself and checking my intentions and my privilege. I'm constantly questioning which makes it not necessarily easy to be an educator, makes it not easy to be a parent, makes it not easy to be kind of living in this world because I can't just, you know, be.

Alex shared with me that many of her students' parents are struggling in Canada and that she feels that because of her power and privilege, because of her skin tone, her education, and the socio-economic class she grew up in, she has a responsibility to push things through with students in a way that is critical but also sensitive to where they come from.

Similar to Alex, Tony also reflected on the power and privilege that comes with her body. Tony shared that she had a breakthrough in her practice after coming to OISE to do her PhD:

It wasn't until I came to OISE that suddenly it was really clear that I am a woman who has come from great privilege. It's not that I would never have admitted it, but it wasn't something that felt as glaring. I came to OISE and I took courses on like critical pedagogy, looking through that lens, and I was like -oh my goodness what do I do with this? How do I move forward now that it's so obvious that I'm so privileged-?
When Tony began to explore the extent to which she had been living and teaching in a privileged body without awareness, she felt a great sense of disappointment looking at the work that she had done in the past. She said to me:

I felt like everything I had done in the past was so privileged and wasn't as great as I wanted it to be. I had to really move through that, having the awareness and really seeing it for what it was. Now I can continue to do good work and even take it to the next level moving forward because I am that much more critical and I really do look at the world. Once your lens changes, once you have been opened up to that way of thinking you can't really ever think differently right? The work I do with teachers now I'm so ever present and aware of the nuances and how people engage, the language that we use, the way that we approach a topic, the way in which I want to teach and again teach and connect but in a way that is now with this full awareness.

Tony realized that her teaching became challenging as she became more aware of the world. She had to pay more attention, she could no longer make assumptions, and had to really listen and learn about people and their stories. She said: "I do find that it takes a lot of work to think that way, I guess I just never thought that way before". She reflected on the range of different life experiences that a group of students in a classroom may have had. She mentioned, "there could be people in the room who have always lived in an inner city environment and will never look at privilege in the same way as people coming from a non-urban environment". She explained that students come from with very different ideas about things and having conversations about different things that, like for instance sexuality, may have implications in students' lives. Tony's real challenge and goal is to navigate with students through conversations, connecting them to theory, taking risks, but being careful in this process.
Alex's and Tony's reflections on power and privilege helped me understand a layer of teachers' journey in finding the place of criticality with which they practice. Talking about teachers' own body experiences helped me think about the ways in which teachers come to a place of critical exploration with students and to what extent their awareness of their own privilege is essential to their growth as educators.

**How do teachers understand students' concerns living in their bodies?**

One of the questions I asked participants in the interviews was to reflect upon instances where they had noticed or heard students' "body discourses". I wanted to know about teachers' notions of students' struggles with gender, sexuality, and other body-related identity markers. I noticed that teachers' observation of students' relationships with their bodies did not explicitly happen in the classroom, but that emerged in spaces outside the formal curriculum. Teachers' responses allowed me to understand their own assumptions of the kind of students' behaviours and language that are problematic.

Will recalled a time where he prepared a class on different female representations in the media. He began the class by presenting students with the problem. He was surprised at girls' lack of interest. He said to me "it was really weird, I tried to be like this is a problem we need more representation but they were like they didn't care and that really surprised me". Will could not understand why girls didn't find that to be an issue: "I guess this isn't an issue that's important to you: how women wear next to nothing and how they are sexualized. I was really surprised by their lack of interest and that they didn't care that they didn't see a problem with it". Will said "I tried to tell them that there was a problem but they just didn't see what is wrong with this in terms of standards of beauty, based on how they are represented and judged". Will was
very surprised with how the girls reacted: "I thought they would be outraged and would want equality but they weren't demanding it; it was weird".

Will's perspective on this particular passage lets me know that he made assumptions of how girls felt which is why their reaction was so surprising and in a way disappointing to him. Will might not have touched on the subject with students before this lesson, but he obviously wanted to bring that conversation forward with his students, particularly female students. I asked him if he had come back to that conversation again and he said no. I wonder if this conversation would've turned out differently if Will had had a different kind of relationship with his female students. In a previous passage, Will mentioned not feeling as close with his female students as he was with his male students. This might be something worth considering if he wanted to come back to this lesson about women's representation in the media.

Alex explained that she's very conscious of the way that people interact with younger kids referring always to boys' ability and girls' appearance. She mentioned that it's something she is very conscious of and tries to avoid doing herself. Alex told me of an instance that bothered her deeply. She was with her daughter and nephew one day playing in her parents' backyard; "my sister's boy played on the swing set the entire time while my girl and I were out raking all the leaves in my parents massive yard". Then she said that her nephew picked up the rake just one minute before a neighbor came by and said to her daughter, who had some braids in her hair; He said, -Oh you're so beautiful with your braids and you're nice jacket - she only commented on her appearance and then said to my nephew - oh you're such a strong man, look at all these leaves young man, you're helping your aunt-. And he had done nothing.

Alex mentioned that it's something she has become very conscious of now: "I don't know if I would've noticed that seven years ago but I notice it a lot now with my kids. I make sure I don't comment on a girl's appearance. I comment on her ability
because it's far more important to comment on their ability". This notion of commenting on girls' appearances is something that Alex considers important to apply in her practice. I find it interesting to hear that her personal experience with her daughter helped her recognize that something was inequitable about the way that girls and boys are treated. I think back to Alex's experience being criticized by her female colleagues and I find interesting that there's a way in which society considers it acceptable for the female body to be under evaluation.

Alex shared a story in which her female students spoke about their bodies in an "evaluative" manner. Alex said that some of her students were talking about wanting to have a baby before they turned 25 because, they explained: "-if you have a baby older your body doesn't bounce back as quickly-". To that Alex responded: "yeah that's right, so you have to be comfortable in whatever shape that you are in, to do that". The girls answered, "-how can we? It's all around us to be a certain way when we have people like Beyonce that are out there, super thin after they had a baby". This section illuminates female students' concerns about their body appearances based on what they hear and see from the media.

In another passage, Alex shared with me something that happened in a trip she made with her students of the leadership class. She mentioned that some of the girls were wearing beaded belts around their waists, which she thought was beautiful. Later she heard one of her students say: "oh it's too tight I got to lose some weight". Alex was surprised to find that students were using the belts to get a hint on whether or not they had gained weight. The girls explained to her: "so we put these on so that if we gain weight and if they are too tight on us that's how we know that we have gained weight". Girls were using these beads as a weight measurement tool. One of the girls' beaded belts broke because the students were doing all kinds of activities in the trip, but it was still viewed by the girls as a negative sign: "oh you've put on weight, you're getting fat".
This passage again reflects girls’ experiences evaluating their bodies and making it public.

Ila spoke about her experience teaching Taekwondo at Ohio University. First, she noticed that there was a difference between how female and male students practiced. In doing some of the exercises that require whole body movements, like hitting or kicking the pads, Ila noticed that some of her female students did not go out in a very strong way, but they would hit the punching bags in more of a normative "feminine" way. Ila tried to make sure that she presented herself to them as a female, but demonstrating very strong kicks: "I made sure I was very loud, I kicked really hard, so that if women, if they felt like that they might hesitate to do that, you know at least instructor is encouraging to do that". The second incident Ila recalls from the Taekwondo class was that she had to constantly remind her male students the purpose of martial arts. Her main struggle was dealing with male students that were in the class because they wanted to learn fighting skills to be strong in the street. Ila emphasized: "Taekwondo is art and then this is meant to be a training for yourself to discipline yourself". One day a student of hers got into a bar fight outside of school and broke some other person's ribcage; he got his nose broken and blamed Ila for teaching him how to fight. She expressed:

I feel like I failed [...], I didn't want the martial arts to be a masculine activity to make the men stronger. I thought it's about discipline, learning about your body and defending yourself if you have to, so that's why I wanted women to be more strong to defend themselves, that they are able to defend themselves if they need to.

Ila's story reflects students' gender normative behavior. The female students acted with less power and restricted their voice in the space of the class; while the male students made use of the skills and strength learned to act in an aggressive and more masculine
manner outside of the class’ space. This example helps me picture the complex role of the martial arts teacher in terms of challenging normative gender roles while teaching students how to fight.

Paula noticed in her dance workshops that many of her students don't feel very comfortable in their bodies. For instance, she noticed that students doubt themselves and say: "I can't dance, I can't do that" or that they don't move their bodies comfortably in the space of the classroom. In terms of gender, Paula explained:

Definitely boys feel sometimes uncomfortable doing certain movements, especially things related to the hips or using their arms in a certain way. Then boys also feel way more comfortable, like I've done things in a circle where each student comes into the center. These are young kids, maybe 6, 7 years old. Boys feel way more comfortable coming in and doing their version of break dancing. Whereas girls stay more on the upper level and they do more kind of flirty things maybe that they've seen in music videos. A lot of them are very shy to come into the center too and to do something. I often have to help them along.

Paula noticed a certain power dynamic between boys and girls; she explained:

Girls feel shy to express themselves when it's just them or them and a friend in the center. If we're doing something they will do the movement at the minutest level; they don't do anything big. They are often holding themselves, either holding their arms or often they stand at the back.

It is interesting to see that in Paula's class, girls restrict the kind of movements they make and that they don't like to do anything big. This reminds me of Ila's experience teaching her female students Taekwondo. She also reported noticing female students' kicks and screams being less powerful or smaller than males'. These two last examples exemplify how gender roles occupy physical spaces within the body of
students. Dance and martial arts teachers are challenged to address students' body-gender limitations by incorporating into their practice different possibilities to occupy space and perform gender within the space of the class.

**Teachers' Practice.** One of the first things I asked the participants in their individual interviews was to please describe their practice to me. My intention was for them to tell me right off what they believed was their philosophy in teaching. All the participants asked me to explain what I meant by "practice", which led me to think that my question was either vague or that maybe teachers had never been asked to think about that. After explaining to them that I was looking to understand their philosophy, their lens or their purpose, teachers responded in the following ways:

Alex said:

I don't think I have the notion of myself as a teacher necessarily, but more as a facilitator of students exploring their own knowledge. I don't think I'm a teacher in terms of the transmission model, of the teacher at the front that needs to tell all the kids everything. I help create the framework to help them make sense of their knowledge, I help put the language, help put the words to their own knowledge and then kind of add new ideas to it.

Alex made clear that her concept of "teacher" was non-normative. She explained, "The role of the teacher is not to change minds, I don't believe we change minds or mold minds, I believe really it's for me it's about planting seeds". This made me think about something Alex mentioned later in the interview, when she referred to critically discussing gender and sexuality with students. She had mentioned that it was important to "open doors" for students as a way to open up possibilities. She explained:

I think teaching is about opening the doors to new ideas. If they chose to walk through that door and explore further then they do but they need to know that door
is there to open. I think it's the teacher's responsibility to show them that there are
different ways of being, there are different archetypes, there are different ways of
moving in the world and I think that's really important.

Ila shared with me her purpose of teaching and why she had chosen the path of a
physical education. She explained that she wanted to provide students with a different
experience than her own:

The primarily reason I wanted to become PE teacher in a different way was to
make sure my students don't experience what I experienced. So I wanted to be
sensitive about different gender expression and be able to communicate that with
my students, to break the gender stereotypes.

Ila's main concern, as a physical education and health instructor, is to talk about the
different ways in which people experience their gender and sexuality. She expressed
that she wants to put terms like LGBTQ out there for students: "Saying these words
send the message, the instructor is knowledgeable and open about speaking about these
issues even for elementary students. I believe the sex ed has to include non heterosexual
relationships and gender". Ila explained that she never heard terms like gay, lesbian, or
trans from any of her instructors or teachers in Japan and that no textbooks mentioned
anything about the way she felt: "Myself was something that I felt shouldn't exist. I felt
I am, was completely wrong. I just should be heterosexual, gender women, but I
couldn't, so that was my struggle". She shared with me that she had no place to go and
that she struggled in her middle and high school years to the point where she was having
suicidal thoughts. Ila's desire to speak about gender and sexual possibilities with
students is something she considers important, and the purpose of her practice.

Paula spoke about what she thinks is important for her students to learn and also
what she considers her practice to be like. She mentioned that she was interested in
exploring the notion of embodiment in education because she believes in fostering the use of the body as a way of learning. She explained:

I think one of the biggest things for me is to empower students; whether it is in academics or in something else, to give them a sense of confidence and security that they're able to do something well. For me as an educator that requires that I'm constantly reflecting on my practice to bring out the best in students.

Paula's main struggle as a young girl was feeling like she didn't know what to do with her body. In her practice, Paula tries to remember how it felt to be a student. She believes in the importance of having students explore their bodies in terms of what they do rather than how it looks. She explained that she wants her students to feel like they are "awakening that inner energy in your body, rather than being so aware of what you're doing or how they appear to other people". Paula's own experience helps her relate to how students are experiencing their bodies.

Tony explained that the most important aspect of her practice is to foster relationships of trust and respect with students:

Part of my practice is that I really believe in connection and relationships for everything I do. It doesn't matter what I'm teaching or who it is that I am working with, that's the key thing for me is that I want you to really feel like you can trust me and that I have great respect for you. I think that you can teach, you can teach all kinds of things but if you don't have that connection then those that are there to learn may not engage in the same way as if they felt that you see them and that they matter to you.

Tony discussed with me her desire to see all subjects integrated and allowing for more dialogue to happen within the space of the classroom. She believes in bringing in books that can open conversations about gender, for instance, she said, "I just think there are so many ways that we can utilize the curriculum that can allows us to have a lot more
deeper conversations with students, where they can start to think about themselves”. Tony's agenda is to make her practice a safe place to explore things with students to help them develop a greater love for themselves and more empathy for others in all aspects of their lives.

Will described encountering his younger self when he is teaching. He mentioned that to him, what was most important was to help students enjoy school so that they can continue with their education:

I think of my self in school at this age in grade 7 and 8. The thing that informs me the most about my practice is thinking about myself and what was important to me when I was this old. I think that teacher role modeling could be one of the best things we could do. Especially at this stage, we see teachers we see more of these kids than their parents most of the times. We are pretty prevalent in their life when they are during the school year; so we can model, we can have a great influence on them without even necessarily teach it right there in the curriculum.

Teachers' responses varied. For Alex, her practice is about opening doors while to Ila, it's about breaking gender stereotypes. For Paula it's about helping students have confidence, for Tony it's about building relationships, and for Will it's about having a good influence on students. All these answers were similar in the sense that teaching has a purpose to them and that the purpose was connected to students' wellbeing in whichever way they thought they could contribute. Their responses were supported by their own body experiences and their reasons for wanting to teach in the first place.

**Conclusion.** This chapter helps illustrate two different but intersecting spaces of teaching. On one hand I have presented a series of conversations and thoughts about the curriculum in terms of addressing gender and sexuality: how it is structured, how it is taught, and what are the spaces where teaching can happen outside of the curriculum.
On the other hand, I have revealed teachers' body-experiences as students in their teaching environments; I have exposed the ways in which teachers understand their power and privilege, their notions of students' body-discourses, and finally their practice or teaching philosophy.

These two teaching spaces come together to inform and help me understand how teachers address issues of embodiment with students and if there is an opportunity in the curriculum for gender and sexuality concerns to be critically explored in the classroom.
Chapter V

Discussion

In this thesis I have explored the range of different ways that teachers have attempted to address embodiment issues through critical pedagogy. The findings reveal that there are two spaces where issues of embodiment get addressed in schools: the curricular and the experiential. In this section I present an overview of the purpose and significance of this work. I then read across the data to discuss central issues that emerged through the research process and place these findings in conversation with the literature.

Critical Embodiment is a project that hopes to investigate the possibilities for using critical pedagogy as a mechanism to address issues of embodiment with students. The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers address issues of embodiment including gender and sexuality, using a critical lens in the classroom. Currently, schools address issues of embodiment such as eating disorders through prevention programs and health education courses that have shown to be ineffective in terms of changing behaviors of students especially in the long run (Piran 2005 as cited in Piran & Thompson, 2008). The significance of investigating the practice of critical educators is to inform experts in the field of eating disorders prevention of the possibilities that exist in education to prevent issues like these from arising. The significance to the field of education is to explore the outcomes of what I call a critical embodied pedagogy and the effects it can have on the wellbeing of students. This approach hopes to address the knowledge and the contextual factors of the lives of students and their embodied experiences.
The questions that guided my research were:

1. In what ways do educators attempt to address critical perspectives on gender and embodiment in their classrooms?
2. What are the implications of critical pedagogy for the field of eating disorders prevention?

**Written curriculum.** The first space where issues of embodiment get addressed in schools is the space of the curriculum. Teachers expressed their opinions and their knowledge of the Health Curriculum in Ontario. All of my participants stated that in terms of their own practice, the curriculum does not cover themes related to gender or sexuality with the exception of Alex's Social Justice curriculum. Within the Social Sciences Curriculum in Ontario, there is a new course on gender; however, this course is not being taught in every high school in Ontario. It was revealed to me through the interviews that there are several structural and political contexts that impact how and in what ways issues related to gender and sexuality enter into the sanctioned curriculum.

I learned that there is flexibility in how the Ontario curriculum is taught. Participants reflected that teachers' personal practice is key to teaching the curriculum with a critical lens. For instance, Paula shared in her interview that the dance curriculum helps her to "stay on track". Alex mentioned that the teachers who feel comfortable talking about gender and sexuality are the ones that will bring it into their curriculum regardless, but that in terms of teaching about gender, she is lucky that it is in the curriculum. The flexibility of the curriculum allows educators to have agency in their practice. This reality raised concerns for me. If teachers want to address issues of gender and sexuality with students in a curriculum that does not include it, their options come down to either 1) the teacher having to creatively incorporate aspects into the existing curriculum; or 2) to create spaces outside of the classroom where they can explore their
own agendas. In both cases, the attempt to address issues of embodiment with students comes down to the initiative, agency, comfort level, and experience of the individual teacher. Currently, there is no formal professional development for teachers to support them in their practice as they discuss and incorporate gender and sexuality issues. My analysis of the data and exploration of the literature suggests that it is of critical importance for teachers to have the necessary support in order to incorporate a pedagogy that addresses embodiment issues with students, whether it is in the form of resources, institutional support or through teacher education.

Through my conversations with these teachers, I also learned that there are subjects that are deemed to have more relevance than others in the structure of the education system. In both Ila’s and Paula’s interviews I noticed that the main limitation they had as teachers functioning within public schools was lack of time. Their practices revealed that there is a great opportunity to work with students in deconstructing gender stereotypes through physical activities like dance or martial arts. Both teachers found that through movement they could demonstrate alternative possibilities to gendered normative behaviours. However, they both revealed that although the potential to do meaningful critical work with students is there, the constraints of time often prevent them from doing so. Paula, for example, challenged students to dance like the Brazilian Gods, depicting both the female and male representations. Through this activity she was able to open a door for students to be able to use their bodies in non-gender normative ways though dance. Ila also challenged students in the weight training class to make use of all the equipment: weight lifting for women and floor work for men, which are less common practices.

In reflecting on her martial arts class, Ila mentioned "I felt like I failed" when one of her students broke his nose in a bar fight and broke someone else's ribcage; he blamed her for teaching him how to fight. This particular example raises questions
regarding the support given to teachers to handle the wide range of students’ embodiment issues they encounter. The curricular constraints of Ila’s course (related to length, content, and time) unfortunately did not allow her to get into deeper conversations about the responsibilities that come with learning martial arts, which may have helped this student avoid the bar fight from happening in the first place. This suggests several questions, among them: To what extent are teachers responsible for students’ physical wellbeing? What is the risk of teaching a course like martial arts without the proper institutional support to engage students in critical conversations about power dynamics and the body? In what ways is the institution, reinforcing violence amongst students when not addressing stereotypical gender performativity? What kind of institutional support could have helped prevent an instance like this from occurring? According to Ila, she did not have enough time to talk to students about the general gendered notion given to martial arts of being a masculine sport.

This example points to the issue of accountability in education. We are facing a discourse in our education system about the need to promote and measure the quality of education through assessment. The effects of having structural measures that evaluate students' performance is that teachers often feel a need to redirect their efforts to teach for achievement scores, undermining other aspects of teaching and learning, such as ensuring students' wellbeing. We cannot hope to have an embodied pedagogy without addressing the discourse of accountability in education. Unfortunately so much of the accountability for quality education has been directed towards the teacher while the rest of the educational components are unobserved (Cordero et al., 2013).
**Teaching the Curriculum.** In the process of this research, teachers shared challenges in their practice, when addressing the curriculum. Will shared an incident that happened in his classroom where he had introduced some material on female representations in the media. He was disappointed when girls seemed not to be affected nor interested in his lesson. In the Findings chapter, I reflected a little on the fact that Will's relationship with his female students was not close in the way that it was with his male students. Why was Will surprised when his students were not interested in female representations in media? How do girls make sense of the images and messages portrayed by the media in regards to the female body? Does it affect the way that they feel about their bodies? It's important to make sense of Will's students' responses to the larger experience of being women. As Carmen Luke (1994) articulates:

> Women’s complex and multiple identities experienced in and through the discourses that define feminine gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, class, or culture, suggest that an understanding of women and the concept of femininity cannot be articulated in universal principles, but must come from women’s individual voices articulated from specific social and cultural locations. (p. 33)

In terms of the concern there is for women to consume media content, feminist eating disorder specialists recommend focusing on the psychological processes that push the motivation to consume content and extract media messages; in other words, the vulnerability to the influence of media which needs to be defined in contextual and personal levels (Piran, Levine & Steiner-Adair, 1999). For instance, they suggest looking at the meaning of beauty and slenderness as ideals that tend to represent a woman's success or achievement in society. These ideals are attained through the control and transformation of the body by engaging in diets, exercises, and other beauty-related practices (e.g., waxing, make-up) (Piran et al., 1999). Contrary to this
ideal, fat tends to represent a lack of personal responsibility, weakness and failure (Piran et al., 1999).

How could have Will talked about gender with students differently? Luke (1994) argues that it is critical for feminist pedagogues to focus on the positionality of voice and experience of students. Critical pedagogy takes from postmodernism which rejects master narratives while arguing for multiplicity, difference, heteroglossia, and specificity; teachers must address the politics of identity formation, reading positions and difference/differences in their classrooms (Luke, 1994). Feminist preventive perspectives focus on local theories about the experiences that participants have of their bodies that emerge when knowledge of those experiences become a collective understanding in the community (Piran 2001, in Piran, 2010). This approach highlights the need to explore themes in participatory dialogues where knowledge can be voiced and where transformative actions can occur (Belenky, 1986 as cited in Piran, 2010).

Will's course on female representations in the media was a first step towards exploring dialogues with students that connect women's experiences to knowledge. His attempt to bring forward a discussion about media and the sexualisation of the female body might have been more successful if Will had connected to students' life trajectories and to the differences amongst them that go beyond gender and sexual identity. However, although there is an opportunity to engage in participatory dialogues in middle schools grade classrooms like Will's, there is also a need for teachers' support and preparation to help them get to a place where these conversations can happen.

**Teaching outside of the Curriculum.** The third area of the curriculum that was discussed by teachers was the space that exists outside of the curriculum. Tony was able to capture students experiences outside of the classroom in her focus groups; Will explored a space with students in the hockey team where he could challenge traditional
gender roles, and Alex was able to discuss different possibilities of performing gender through a book club. The spaces outside of the curriculum exposed conversations about students' real life concerns.

**Teachers' body experiences.** The second section in the findings is composed of the body-experiences of teachers. This section discusses the ways in which teachers' body-experiences help shape their practice and agendas. I will draw on teachers' reflections from when they were students themselves and as teachers in the school environments where they work. I will also look at teachers' reflections on power and privilege, their notion of students' relationships with their bodies and their own practice and teaching purpose. In this section, I make use of Piran and Teall's (2012) Developmental Theory of Embodiment to connect some of their theoretical constructs to the experiences of teachers. The Developmental Theory of Embodiment suggests the importance of looking at the complexity of lived experiences in terms of gender, sexuality, race, and social class, with the goal of understanding the extent to which individuals experience agency and power as they live in the world with their particular bodies. The definition of embodiment as the "experience of engagement of the body with the world" illustrate that body experiences are shaped by social experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1962 as cited in Piran & Teall, 2012, p. 171). In this section, I make use of a set of constructs developed from the Developmental Theory of Embodiment, which explore, on one hand, the experience of positive and connected embodiment, and on the other hand the experience of disrupted embodiment (Piran et al., 2002, 2007, 2009; Piran et al., 2010 as cited in Piran & Teall, 2012). As Piran and Teall (2012) reveal, positive and connected embodiment refers to experiences such as "feeling" at one with the body, embodied power and agency, as well as body functionality and competence". Positive and connected embodiment is also intended to describe the experience of being free to act,
move in space, to challenge external standards, to feel positive and have clarity related to one's own needs, desires, and rights (Piran & Teall, 2012). Comparably, the experience of disrupted embodiment reflects the body as a site of disempowerment, vulnerability and constriction in space, where the body feels disconnected and concerned by external gaze (Piran & Teall, 2012). The disrupted embodiment experience is also associated with negative feelings and inability to identify needs, desires, and to acting in a self-harming/neglecting way (Piran & Teall, 2012).

I was interested to hear about Tony's focus groups. As part of her PhD research, Tony wanted to understand how students made sense of gender based violence. Through the process of collecting her data, Tony observed a few high school classrooms and then she would form small groups with students to discuss things that came up in the classroom, with more detail. These focus groups helped her identify things that were happening amongst students that had not come to the attention of the classroom teacher or herself. In this space students would engage in conversations that were related to gender and sexuality. One of the stories Tony shared with me was that of a student whom her classmates had targeted for having large breasts. This student was able to speak about her feelings in the space of the focus group. Tony mentioned that teachers rarely know about things that happen to students outside of the classroom, which makes me question the structure of the education system as a whole. If education is to take action to help improve students' wellbeing, then structural changes are required. These changes may begin by looking at the spaces where teachers and students interact outside of the classroom so that in-school spaces can mirror out-of-school interactions. This case is emblematic of the many instances where teachers might have missed students’ discomfort in their bodies. It also signals the immense opportunity that exists for teachers to not miss these experiences, but rather address them with students through a lens that creates the conditions for them to feel empowered.
Will's hockey team is another example of the role that the educator can have in challenging sociocultural expectations of gender roles. Kinsaul et al. (2014) argue that by questioning traditional gender roles as feminist ideology suggests, young women may feel more empowered to challenge sociocultural expectations about appearance and therefore develop internalized confidence or self-efficacy. Will's effort to incorporate girls into the hockey team shows us that the role of the teacher can go beyond teaching lessons, but can be the instrument by which discourses that define feminine/masculine gender identity can be challenged. Luke (1994) explains that the role of the teacher in the feminist classroom is to acknowledge the socialized differences that from a very early age genderize girls and boys through interests in games and play, leading up to adult behaviours. I consider Will's use of the space outside of the curriculum a critical pedagogy practice because he used it to open new possibilities for students. As Risner (2008) puts it: "critical pedagogy is an approach to teaching that helps students question and challenge dominant or taken for granted practices and assumed truths that marginalize and limit human agency and freedom" (p. 2).

In Alex's interview I was able to appreciate the value of the relationships she built with her students through the book club "books to movies". By becoming interested in the kinds of books and movies that students felt passionate about, Alex found an entry point into conversations about gender and sexuality. She described how her students began to "open their eyes" to the world. Alex explained that her role as a teacher is to open different doors for students. When reading *Hunger Games* in the book club, students were able to deconstruct the social discourses that make up masculinity by analyzing the two male secondary characters Pita and Gabriel. Alex noticed how her male students who did not perform stereotypical masculinity were fond of the Pita character because he presented an alternative representation of being male. I regard this example as an instance of critical literacy because, as Beck (2008) explains, teaching
critical literacy involves bringing provocative and controversial issues into student-centered discussions that encourage students' self reflection about their experiences in order to bring change themselves and the world surrounding them. The most significant piece about Alex' narrative was her own attempt to deconstruct the traditional power relationship that exists between teacher and students. From my perspective, Alex practices critical pedagogy by challenging the "banking method" of teaching, which as Risner (2008) explains is an approach to education that Friere critiqued, in which students are viewed as empty vessels to be filled by teachers’ expertise and knowledge. When Alex challenges the asymmetrical power relationships that come with her teaching position, makes her own identity visible to students, including her age, race, gender, class, and positions herself as one more reader in the book club rather than its leader, she allows for more democratic relationships to develop between her and her students.

Is it possible to have a critical embodied pedagogy? According to Risner (2008), there are three power shifts that need to occur in order for teachers to develop a critical practice. Risner (2008) suggests that teachers first learn where students are and move forward with what they want to know, balancing student input and faculty guidance in an approach that is dialogical. This was evident in the examples that many of the teachers shared. For example, Tony was able to learn about students' experiences through focus group that taught her how to move forward in dialogue with them. Second, Risner (2008) suggests that teachers explore connections between teaching and knowing, where knowing is always in relation to others' perspectives, experiences, contexts, and histories. For example, Will found a way to connect his teaching practice to hockey. He found that he could expand students' possibilities living in female bodies and provide opportunities for them to create their own knowledge based on the experience of playing a "masculine" charged game like hockey. Finally, Risner (2008)
talks about risk taking, which involves teachers presenting themselves as vulnerable, imperfect, and questioning. This was evident in how Alex presented herself to her students as vulnerable and questioning, which allowed her to challenge traditional power relationships between student and teacher, opening up the possibility of discussing gender through the lens of students' interests.

**Teachers' body experiences as students.** The interviews revealed that teachers' experiences as youth affected the ways in which they lived in their bodies as adults, and further, that their lived body experiences guided their present practices. For example, Alex and Ila shared two very different memories of how they felt living in their bodies going through adolescence. Alex remembered being very good at school and knowing how to navigate the system without problems. She spoke about her background, being white, and coming from parents who were second or third generations Canadians who had been educated in Canada. She explained that from a very young age she questioned structures of knowledge such as her religion. She also felt like she did not want to conform to social norms that constructed her femininity, which is why she decided to stop shaving her legs. In her reflection, Alex described how she formed her critical and political stance from a very young age, in great part due to the opportunities presented to her in her upbringing. I regard these experiences as an example of positive or connected embodiment.

In contrast to Alex's experience, Ila shared the difficulty she had living in her body in Japan when she was in school. Ila's experience living in a female body but wanting to be recognized as a boy was a lonely journey. The structures of her school and society did not present Ila with alternative ways of being or with alternative language that would have allowed her to express herself as queer. She found shelter in competitive sports where she avoided society's questioning of her non-conforming
femininity. Ila mentioned feeling embarrassed, confused, and being made to feel "wrong" when she was adolescent. Her experiences reflect disrupted embodiment.

Alex and Ila's contrasting experiences tell us a lot about the social structures that influenced participants' lives. Alex had a lot more physical freedom to act within her body in a non-conforming way than Ila. Nonetheless, both teachers' experiences reflect how the female body is expected to enact femininity and how necessary it is for adolescents to know that there are other possibilities. Both participants' student body-experiences are reflected in their current teaching practices. Alex continues to challenge social expectations about gender with her students through conversations both within and outside of the curriculum. Ila's desire to become a physical education instructor comes from her aspiration to help students who may have experiences like her own to know that they are not alone. She makes an effort to instil in her pre-teacher service students the necessity to be aware of the language they speak, and to include LGBTQ terms in their practice. Ila explained that when she was in school, teachers never mentioned the existence of terms such as LGBTQ, which could have helped her avoid feeling misunderstood and alone.

**Teachers' body-experiences in the school environment.** When discussing teachers' body experiences in the school environment I noticed that participants experienced disrupted embodiment a lot of the time. I also learned that gender is an important aspect of defining the kinds of behaviors expected from teachers. Alex finds that her body is under constant criticism by her fellow female colleagues. She receives negative comments from other teachers related to her appearance, her choice of clothing, her weight, and for not removing her facial hair. Her experience can be situated within the physical domain of the Developmental Theory of Embodiment where Alex's body ownership is being violated through criticism and harassment.
Similarly, I noticed that Will's body experience as a teacher in the school is somehow restricted by his gender. Will's description of his interaction with female teachers and female students seemed to be distant and precarious. I could sense that Will's body experience in the school felt constricted and maybe even evaluated by others. Will gave me insight into the experience that other male teachers might have in schools when attempting to address issues of embodiment and sexuality with students. Through the lens of the Developmental Theory of Embodiment, this example suggests how an oppressive social discourse that identifies the male body as *predator* may result in teachers like Will feeling a need to limit their experiences of freedom in school environments.

Correspondingly, Ila explained that she feels very anxious presenting her body in front of students because she is a self-identified queer female who is a physical education specialist and an immigrant. She worries about what her students may think of her. For example, she stated, "my gender and my ethnic identity combined gave me quite a lot of anxiety, and the language didn't help, of course." Ila's ethnicity and gender locate her in a non-privileged and inequitable context that contributed to the difficulty of accepting one's body.

The examples I mention above reflect that schools have a long way to go in terms of becoming democratic, equitable, humanizing and self-empowering educational spaces. Teachers shared their experiences of discrimination and harassment in schools and how those experiences affected their embodiment. In order to instil in students a critical consciousness that can help them navigate the world with more power and agency, teachers must first experience themselves what Bartolome (2007) calls "political clarity". According to Bartolome (2007) political clarity refers to:
The ongoing process by which individuals achieve ever-deepening consciousness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape their lives and their capacity to transform such material and symbolic conditions.

(p. 264)

This research suggests that teachers who have political clarity, are more likely to denounce discriminatory and harmful practices and conditions in schools. The critical educator, as Batolome (2007) suggests, can better instruct, protect, and advocate for their students' wellbeing.

**Teachers' reflections on power and privilege.** Tony and Alex reflected on the power and privilege that they bring to the classroom. Alex explained that she tries to make her practice very transparent and that she brings up her own positionality and privilege with students. Alex referred to the fact that she is always checking herself and her intentions, which makes it difficult to be a teacher and a parent. She expressed, "I can't just, you know, be". Likewise, Tony shared that she had a breakthrough in her practice when she came to OISE to do her Ph.D. There, she realized that she was very privileged. She explained that after realizing her privilege, her practice became much more critical and she began to act with fuller awareness. As Tony put it, "Once your lens changes, once you have been opened to that way of thinking, you can't really ever think differently".

Teachers' reflections allowed me to understand what a critical practice actually is. Their work suggests that in order to do critical pedagogy, teachers must first understand where they come from and what they bring to the classroom. Teachers' reflections of their own bodies and the power and privilege that lies within them helps them shape their practice everyday. A critical conception of “reflective practitioner” suggests that there are opportunities for critical pedagogues to incorporate the concept of embodiment. According to Stanley (2007), "the history of critical pedagogy is rooted
in theories that recommend education as a form of counter socialization to promote democracy and social justice” (p. 371). The critical teacher works to challenge systems of oppression based on class, gender, ethnicity, and cultural status (Stanley, 2007).

Similarly, feminist-informed prevention programs aim to attain equity through the transformation of social systems, emphasizing individuals’ agency, rights, and freedom to counter patriarchal and other systems of privilege (Striegel-Moore, 1998). The findings of this research suggest that critical practitioners encounter, in their own lives, moments where they examine the power and privilege that lie within their own bodies. This realization is essential to critical educators’ journeys, as they later can use the classrooms to interrogate functions of power and identity markers such as gender, sexuality, race, social class, and ability/disability with the goal of creating the conditions for social change. Creating such conditions, as Piran and Teall (2010) suggest, can help improve students' experiences of embodiment in adolescence.

**Teachers’ Practice.** It was revealed to me through the interviews that teachers' practice and philosophies of teaching are connected to their own experiences. I also found that all teachers expressed a desire to address students' overall wellbeing. Teachers shared their central concerns related to students' embodiment. Alex shared her concern for the way that people take note of boys' abilities on one hand but girls' appearances on the other. She also spoke about the ways in which female students talk about their bodies and how concerned they are with gaining weight and having a “thin” body. Ila noticed that male and female students used their bodies differently in martial arts and weight training classes. Ila was concerned because female students acted with less power and voice than male students, and males used their skills to feel stronger in the streets. Paula's concern was for the way that female students restricted their movements and avoided being in the center.
Teachers described themselves as trying to be more than the traditional notion of educator. Teachers' responses about their concerns for students reflected that, for them, being a teacher means much more than being a knowledge provider. Teachers found that they have a certain responsibility to help students experience wellbeing. Alex explained that her purpose in being a teacher is to open doors for students to have various possibilities; Ila shared that her purpose was to help break gender stereotypes; Paula illuminated that the purpose in her practice is to help students find confidence and security in themselves; Tony stated that part of her practice is to help students develop a greater love for themselves and more empathy for others; Will described that in his practice he tries to serve as a role model for students.
Chapter VI

Implications

This research emerged with the purpose of exploring whether critical pedagogy could be a mechanism by which embodiment issues such as eating disorders can be prevented in schools. The interest in this work comes first from my own experience developing anorexia nervosa, and secondly from a deep interest in merging the fields of education, particularly critical pedagogy with the field of mental health. After being a research assistant to Dr. Piran and working on the Developmental Theory of Embodiment, I suggest that the concept of embodiment could be the piece that connects these two fields. The problem this thesis attempts to tackle is whether critical pedagogy could contribute towards the goal of lowering the incidence of eating disorders among adolescents and that have the highest mortality rate, between 18-20%, of any mental illness (Cavanaugh, 1999 as cited in Hopewell Eating Disorders Support Centre, 2013).

Prevention specialists have struggled to prove that prevention programs actually work and unfortunately, there is not enough economic support to fund research around successful preventative programs (Striegel-Moore, et al. 1998). Schools currently address issues of embodiment such as eating disorders through prevention programs and health education courses that have shown to be ineffective in terms of changing behaviors of students especially in the long run (Piran 2005 as cited in Piran & Thompson, 2008).

This work suggests that both educators and eating disorder prevention specialists should work to integrate a critical embodied pedagogy that involves 1) incorporating critical pedagogy's ideology to prevention programs in schools, and 2) integrating the theoretical constructs in the Developmental Theory of Embodiment into the mainstream curriculum.
A critical embodied pedagogy: Incorporating critical pedagogy in prevention programs in schools. Findings suggest that eating disorder prevention specialists would do well to incorporate critical pedagogy into their approaches. As my participants’ work suggests, critical pedagogy can be a means of addressing issues of power, privilege, race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class with students in conversations that look at the contextual factors of the lives and their embodied experiences. The idea of empowerment that comes from critical pedagogy suggests that a critical stance involves consciously examining power structures in society and can encourage individuals to resist harmful ideologies. As this suggests, critical pedagogy can be a powerful mechanism for preventing eating disorders and could be applied in prevention programs in schools.

This work suggests that a critical embodied pedagogy should incorporate the kind of conversations that happen in what Campano (2007) has called the second classroom into the general curriculum. Findings from this study suggest the importance of policymakers examining the value of the second classroom as a space where teachers can invite students to speak about their concerns and their lives and support them through the process. This work invites policymakers to rethink standardized evaluation which makes teachers accountable to students' outcomes and which limits the capacity of teachers to help students address real-life concerns. Teachers who want to incorporate such conversations with students can attempt to address these issues and look after students’ wellbeing in the process. However, they often lack time and the resources needed for such practice. In order to be effective, teachers need to be supported by policymakers, as well as administrators, to be able to incorporate a critical embodied pedagogy into their curricula.

One of the most important findings in this study revealed that teachers'
reflections on power and privilege helped them look at their practices through a more critical lens. This finding illustrates the need for teachers and teacher educators to incorporate discussions on power and privilege in their lessons with students. Researchers in the fields of eating disorders may consider implementing principles of critical pedagogy into prevention programs. A successful prevention program with a critical embodied pedagogy should aim to create opportunities for students to redefine their identities as they help others to empower themselves to do the same.

A critical embodied pedagogy: Integrating the theoretical constructs of the Developmental Theory of Embodiment into the mainstream curriculum. This thesis adds to the Developmental Theory of Embodiment as it reflects the significance within education of using the concept of *embodiment* and to consider teachers' and students' body-experiences. This work supports the claim that social experiences shape body experiences. It also reveals that teachers' life experiences shape their practices. The concept of embodiment was used to help identify teachers' experiences in their bodies and to determine their own criticality or "political clarity" (Bartolome, 2007).

This work has implications for teacher education. My findings suggest that the concept of embodiment should be introduced in pre-service teacher education programs to help teacher candidates understand their own experiences of subjectivity to later help support students. Thus teachers can explore with students their experiences of positive or connected embodiment versus their experiences of disrupted embodiment and connect those experiences to external social structures of power through a critical embodied pedagogy. A critical embodied pedagogy ultimately aims to help students develop confidence and self-efficacy (Kinsaul et al. 2014).

Teacher educators can begin to help teacher candidates reflect on their own experiences as a way to inform their future teaching practices. The professional
development of teachers should also prepare candidates to explore issues of gender and sexuality with students. This research points to a need for researchers to explore teachers' practices as they incorporate a pedagogy that addresses students' issues with gender and sexuality and the effects that this has on their wellbeing.

This work reveals the opportunity to expand the connection between the phenomena of critical pedagogy and embodiment. There is also an opportunity to add the constructs of the Developmental Theory of Embodiment onto the literature of critical pedagogy and critical literacy. The existing literature on critical pedagogy can also make contributions to the Developmental Theory of Embodiment. This work reinforces the possibilities that exist within critical pedagogy to offer possibilities for students to live in this world with more freedom, a condition that is parallel to experiencing positive and connected embodiment.

This research should bring hope to researchers, like myself, who desire to see schools become spaces that can transform possibilities for students. I hope to further explore students and teachers engaging in conversations about the body through a critical pedagogy lens. I wish to research how critical pedagogy can be the mechanism by which students' experiences of disrupted embodiment can be reduced while experiences of connected embodiment can be reinforced.
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Appendix A: Letter of Informed Consent for Participants

Dear Teacher,

My name is Tania Grinberg-Panchuk and I am an MA student in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at OISE in the University of Toronto. For my Master’s thesis I am conducting a study that explores what are the experiences, beliefs, motivations and views of teachers when exploring issues of gender, sexuality, body shape and weight concern, race, and body image and how they engage with their school students in questioning the discourses behind those issues.

This research is an opportunity for you to reflect on your own teaching practices, your beliefs and experiences regarding your own body and how your students experience theirs. This study can help explore the ways in which your students and yourself engage in conversations that aim at girls’ empowerment and agency over their bodies to avoid falling into disordered eating behaviours as they go through puberty and adolescence. The data collected through the interviews will be used to inform broader understandings of learning, teaching, as well as the ways in which eating disorders might be prevented in and out of schools, and in and out of the classroom.

There are no known risks associated with this study and it will in no way negatively impact the quality or content of your classroom instruction. You are free to decide whether you wish to participate or not and you are also free to withdrawal from the study at any point in time even after you have given consent to participate. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study before or after your participation as I will be happy to share all findings associated with this research; however, note that your name or identity as a participant will not be disclosed or associated in the research findings.

Please check the boxes if you agree to the following

☐ I agree to have my interview recorded on audiotape (all recordings will be stored in an OISE office under lock and will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed in paper using pseudonyms to protect your identity).

☐ I agree to be contacted a second time in case follow up questions are in need; it might be the case that I asks to have a second interview to which you can agree or refuse at that time with freedom and without any consequences.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature of the procedures and if there is any part of the interviews that you do not want disclosed, please let me know. You can contact the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273 at any time if you have questions. Further questions and concerns may be addressed to Professor Rob Simon who is supervising this research: rob.simon@utoronto.ca

Sincerely,

Tania Grinberg
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
University of Toronto/OISE
252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, ON, Canada M5V 1J6
tania.grinberg@mail.utoronto.ca
Name_______________________________________________________________

YES I agree to be interviewed and for examples of my teachings to be included in this research. I understand all recordings and work collected will be kept confidential and stored in a locked cabinet at University of Toronto, or secured digitally on a private, encrypted hard drive, and will be disguised in any written reports.

Signature ___________________________________________________________ Date _________________________

Email ____________________________________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Journey and History
- Background Info
- Can you tell me a little bit about you and the work you are doing as a teacher.
- How do you describe your practice?
- How do you find you relate to your body?
- How do you experience your body when you are in school?

Embodiment and Schooling
- What is the current curriculum, approach or place in your schools where issues about student's sexuality and gender identities are addressed?
- What challenges do you foresee for young adolescents in terms of how they experience their bodies?
- In which ways does the school help or hinder students to address those challenges?
- What discourses do you hear students engage with when they talk about their bodies? (what are some of your impressions in terms of how students talk about their body image, or gender or sexuality?)
- Can you give me a specific example of something that happened in your classroom related to how your students experience their bodies (e.g. bullying due to weightism, or sexual orientation; or students engaging in weight loss practices; the use of sexual language)
- How did you address that specific instance? What were students' reactions?

Embodiment: Experiences of uninvited instances
- What kind(s) of body discourses do you see girls engage with in your classroom? (e.g. are they involved in any way with weight related practices, starting to use make up, clothing, enacting their sexuality)
- Can you give me a specific example of an instance in your classroom in which girls or a girl engaged in a practice or dialogue about her body image? What happened?
- How did you approach that particular instance? How did the student/s respond to you approach? Did you notice any changes in the way they expressed, acted, or interacted with each other?

Curriculum Studies on embodiment issues: Hopes for the future
- How do you help your students enact and navigate gender in your classroom and in school?
- How do you make use of the curriculum available; do you find it helpful to address the kinds of issues you mentioned before?
- What differences do you find between the official and the hidden curricula (your own and students' agendas) in terms of how these two interact with issues concerning gender, sexuality, body image, and other intersecting identities such as race and social class?
- How do you think that teachers/schools could help address some of the challenges that young adolescents face in terms of how they experience their bodies?
- Is there anything you would like to add?