

Sexual Health and Sexuality Education in Child and Youth Care Curriculum

by

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Bachelor of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, 2016

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Abstract

In higher education, sexual health and sexuality education (SHSE) topics are clearly absent from the curriculum in the human services field. With many competing priorities in these fields to offer rich and broad educational opportunities for developing practitioners, SHSE is often not prioritized. This thesis seeks to understand how SHSE is being taken up in the Child and Youth Care (CYC) undergraduate curriculum. The CYC undergraduate program develops practitioners that work with children, youth, and families across the lifespan, often working in schools, recreation centres, and social services. The inclusion of SHSE content in their program will help support competencies in these emerging practitioners. An intersectional, feminist, queer orientation informed the lens in which this research was undertaken, employing a qualitative, multilayered approach to analysis. Findings show strengths in the curriculum in areas of gender and sexuality, and identify gaps in discourses of pleasure, a continued focus on the risk factors associated with youth sexual activity, and identify many opportunities for enriching the curriculum to align more closely with UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. Supporting the inclusion of sexual health and sexuality education content in the CYC program will help practitioners fill in potential gaps in their own learning, and increase their ability to support the SHSE needs of their clients.

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Dedication

To all who seek pleasure, connection, and acceptance

both within and outside of themselves.

We see you. We celebrate you. We love you.

Chapter One: Introduction

Since its inception, the primary focus of sexual health education in North America has been on the prevention of disease, with abstinence before marriage a primary protective factor (Carter, 2001; Gleason, 2001; Sethna, 2010). Sexual health education has maintained discourses that assume near-exclusive heteronormative understandings of relationships and sexual attraction (Gleason, 2001), and continues to offer the abstinence-based education that espouses the best ‘protection’ against the dangers of sexual activity, even today (Cameron-Lewis, 2016). Fine (1988) identified the absence of a “discourse of desire” (p. 33) in sexual health education; sex education was being delivered, but it lacked any conversations about the experience of pleasure among youth at that time. Nearly 20 years later, Fine and McClelland (2006) revisited Fine’s previous inquiry and found that although there were data available on average age of first sexual intercourse, teen pregnancy, and abortion rates, there was *still* very little research that identified the presence of conversations about consent, desire, or pleasure within the sexual experiences of youth. The inclusion of conversations about pleasure also responds to the “gender-based power inequities [that] shape, define and construct experiences of sexuality (Fine, 1988, p.41). This suggestion was born from a vision of critical sexuality studies, where research into youth sexuality can occur within the thick milieu that demands access to experiences of pleasure as well as protection from sexualized violence (Fine & McClelland, 2006). Fine’s (1988) suggestion that the inclusion of these discourses invites youth to freely explore their own sexuality to determine for themselves what fits for their personal needs and desires, thus providing youth with a point of reference and a language with which to engage in satisfying, consensual, sexual dialog, and experiences. Fahs and McClelland (2016) reflect on the fallacy of

consent as a dichotomy, recognizing ‘pseudoconsent’ as problematic within this discourse, and understanding the importance of sexual refusals as an essential aspect of sexual freedom.

Current inquiry into the complexity of pleasure and consent in youth culture has been taken up in many ways. Setty (2021) explores consent among youth as a grey area: rejecting the affirmative consent model (no means no, yes means yes), miscommunication model (non-consensual sex occurring due to miscommunication/interpretation of indirect and behavioural cues), centering instead the gendered sexual scripts especially identified in heterosexual interactions (men want sex, women accept or refuse, communication is confusing and easily misinterpreted). These gendered ideas offer some insights into contemporary navigations of sexual interactions, but they are far from inclusive.

So, what are we to gain by exploring and understanding the role of sexuality education and pleasure for youth? Cameron-Lewis (2016) underlines the need for sex-positive sexuality education for female youth specifically, suggesting that “embracing discourses of desire and pleasure in the classroom would empower young women to positively enact their sexuality” (p. 495). This shift would attend to the current trends that position young women as either sexual objects or potential victims of sexualized violence, both options stripping young women of their agency as sexual citizens. This change also directly addresses attitudes that have dominated sexual health education programs, which continue to focus on promoting abstinence, preventing pregnancy, and protecting against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

To address the ongoing lack of education in this area, youth have taken to social media to push back against the policing of their bodies and to explore their own ideas of sexual expression and bodily autonomy. In 2009, Jessica Yee founded the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) (<http://nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/>), whose continued mandate is to engage youth in

leadership and advocacy in areas of sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice (Native Youth Sexual Health Network, n.d.). Shareable memes with messages of solidarity and resistance address these issues in an accessible way, which may facilitate opportunities for youth to move in and out of these political spaces in a safer and self-mediated way (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2019).

Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller (2019) argue that youth are using social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to gain understanding of rape culture through a feminist lens, utilizing both public accounts and private chat functions as avenues to advocate for change in discriminatory policies (e.g., dress codes directed specifically at female bodies), all while enduring online harassment precisely designed to silence their critical voices. Despite the risks, youth are increasingly willing to engage in these digital spaces, carving out a place in a cultural hotbed while simultaneously growing up, and into their own personal, sexual, and political identities.

1.1 Purpose and Rationale

My perspective is that sexual health and sexuality education that is not rooted in fear/danger-based narratives is perpetually absent in Child and Youth Care (CYC) higher education curricula. In my academic experience, educational discourse focuses predominantly on the sexualization of children and youth, the gross discrepancy between rates of sexual assault and convictions of offenders, risk factors and outcomes for teen moms, as well as high rates of sexualized violence experienced in the queer community. As one of five facets that support the ‘queering’ of CYC identified by Vachon (2020), “sexuality care” (p. 74), especially outside heteronormative bindings, is often confounded with our desire to protect, stating that:

Understanding how “care” has been used as a way to oppress young people, families, and particular communities, while normalizing these oppressions, forces CYC to reflect upon our complacency at one end and active perpetuation of harm at the other. Through particular historical lenses of CYC practice, the notion of interdependency starts to seem more parasitic than symbiotic. Queering CYC requires looking at the implications of “caring,” considering how it fosters and how it resists, in all its many helpful and destructive ways. (Vachon, 2020).

Reflecting on how reductive, and outright offensive it is to focus on the dangers of youth sexual exploration and engagement without equally inviting conversations of pleasure, consent, and autonomy, the queering of CYC curricula offers us a path forward.

Many CYC undergraduates go on to be youth and family counsellors in schools and communities. They lead parenting programs, work in the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), or work with parents and children through many non-profit groups. Having conversations about sex, and delivering sexual health education, either formally or informally, is an important duty in these roles. I believe it is important to understand how youth sexual health is currently portrayed/talked about in CYC literature, how it shows up in CYC educational programs and how curriculum may be shaped in order to fill this educational gap. As stated above, scholars such as Fine, Fine and McClelland, and Cameron-Lewis (1988; 2006; 2016) have repeatedly identified that pleasure discourses are glaringly absent from school-based sex education. These conversations may also be absent from the homes and communities in which youth reside, leaving youth to seek out information from peers and the media (Peter, Tasker, & Horn, 2015). I hope to contribute to the body of CYC literature by addressing these gaps and propose to investigate the topic through a sex-positive lens.

With this in mind, I begin by asking: Where and how does sexual health/sexuality education show up in the University of Victoria's (UVIC) undergraduate curriculum in Child and Youth Care? What role, if any, does pleasure play in these curricular materials? Analysis of curricular content in select core courses will offer insights into the current focus and priorities of the undergraduate program in these areas. I am hopeful that my research can contribute to a shift in public discourse around sexuality education to include pleasure in our conversations with youth, as well as within the scholarship and professional practice in the field of Child and Youth Care.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature in this review was read through an intersectional feminist, queer lens in an effort to attend to complex intersectional identities, disrupt cis-heteronormativity, and centre the diverse bodies, ideas and experiences that have been lost or forced into the margins of sexuality research. Broadly, it reviews three areas: sexuality education for young people, critical perspectives on sexuality education, and pedagogy and curriculum development in higher education. Various themes within each area became clear. Sexuality education content, delivery, and effectiveness were described, with youth speaking clearly on their experiences, gaps in learning, and desired changes. The absence of pleasure discourses and a focus on heteronormative behaviours and identities typically forces youth to seek out information from outside sources. Finally, the stark reality of the absence of sexual health education topics in curriculum in higher education, and specifically Child and Youth Care, are illustrated and inspire this research on developing pedagogy to address these gaps.

2.1 Sexuality Education for Young People

2.1.1 Challenges with Comprehensive Sexuality Education. It has been well established that traditional school based sexual health education (SHE) is not meeting the diverse needs of youth (Wood et al., 2021). While Canadian parents may not have reached consensus on what age certain SHE topics should be introduced, 85% agree that SHE should be taught in school. This traditional, school based SHE approach, dubbed “plumbing and prevention,” covers basic biological processes (e.g., menstruation and erections), as well as the risks of sexual activity (e.g., STIs and pregnancy) (Bialystok, 2018). Abstinence-only (AO) education has dominated in the US, largely driven by a doctrine of American Christian morality and an effort to police youth bodies, while across Canada schools have employed a prevention-based

curriculum, focusing on avoiding pregnancy and reducing STI transmission (Bialystok, 2018). There has been a gradual shift away from this prevention framework, towards a comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) framework, defined as “an evidence-based, secular curriculum that covers sexual and physical development, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, gender and sexual diversity, sexual decision making, and healthy relationships, *at a minimum* (emphasis added)” (Bialystok, 2018, p.16).

Educators and youth across settings are united in their frustration with a lack of training and preparation for teaching sexuality and sexual health. Bruce (2021) suggests that the challenges of sexual health education are largely due to a lack of standardization and federal guidance in Canada’s SHE programming, disconnect and inconsistency in regard to content and delivery, and lack of oversight or monitoring. When teachers are left without a clear curriculum, they are subsequently responsible for pedagogical decision making in isolation. Surette (2019) asked youth to share their impressions of why their teachers avoid talking about gender and sexual diversity in school. Youth identified several significant factors, particularly the influence of heteronormativity. They also perceived that their teachers feared the professional and social repercussions of addressing these sensitive topics, that they felt ill-equipped due to a lack of education and training themselves, and apathy. Educators have similarly spoken of their challenges in addressing heterosexism in their classrooms. In early years, Bruce (2021) found that out of 30 early childhood education (ECE) post-secondary programs they evaluated, none had any content on sex and gender development, leading to ECEs in the field feeling unequipped to addressing gender diversity in their classrooms.

Despite the challenges faced by educators in delivering SHE in schools, there is a desire to continue to move towards CSE across Canada. Bruce (2021) articulates the major factors stifling the momentum towards CSE, asking:

If the aforementioned educators are eager to be better trained to deliver effective lessons surrounding sexual health and identity, and the students are crying out to learn more than they are currently being taught; who is responsible for the slow progress being made in this area of education? In short, the policy makers and the parents (p. 393).

Grace (2018) describes “parentism” as the belief of some parents that parental choice should always be prioritized over children’s rights to information and social inclusion. Acknowledging and addressing the tension between parental rights to choose and children’s rights to CSE is one of the challenges faced when moving away from “plumbing and prevention” towards “pride, power and diversity” (Bialystok, 2018, p. 19). Further, Grace (2018) suggests that even with improvements to curriculum, minority youth continue to lack the necessary SHE to build sexual knowledge and agency, in part because of a lack of consistency and quality of delivery, but also through the impact of parentism.

Currently SHE is not compulsory in Canada, and parents are free to opt their children out of these classes with no requirement to explain the reasons for their choice to the school. Much of parent’s resistance to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) has been found to be rooted in homophobia and heterosexism (Bialystok, 2018). Bruce (2021) found that the absence of queer identities in SHE is detrimental not only to children who identify as queer, but also to their heterosexual counterparts. With upwards of 10% of people not identifying as heterosexual and/or cisgender, there is an obligation to expand and diversify SHE regardless of parental discrimination and discomfort. In part, this is in recognition of the reality that children are

exposed to sexual content via social media and the internet from increasingly younger ages (Bruce, 2021). As Bruce (2021) states, “We must ensure that the level of education they are receiving matches this increase in exposure if we want to ensure their physical and mental well-being” (p. 394). Policy makers and educators must then weigh the risk of making CSE a mandatory part of a school-based curriculum, and thus angering a small yet vocal number of parents, with the rights of children, especially girls and gender minority children, to a SHE that meets their personal needs and supports their sexual autonomy (Bialystok, 2018).

Grace (2018) makes an argument for compulsory comprehensive sexual health education for all Canadian student grades seven through twelve. Lack of clear and consistent provincial legislation and policy leaves schools, teachers, and students without direction and oversight for providing SHE, and students, especially sexual and gender minorities (SGM) and other minority groups, without reasonable access to comprehensive SHE that attends to their diverse needs. Bringing these cases to court is beginning to provide some clarity on the role of parents in SHE curricula, finding that, “Parents may disagree with what their children are exposed to in school, but they may not insist that all materials meet their approval, as long as the curriculum is not morally prescriptive” (Bialystok, 2018, p. 22). When considering the purpose and function of CSE to *inform* and not to *prescribe* aspects of identity and behaviour, “It can be shown that parents’ rights are not being violated by making such a curriculum mandatory, whereas children’s rights may be violated by leaving the teaching of sexuality to the discretion of their families” (Bialystok, 2018, p. 14). These findings echo the 2002 ruling of Chief Justice Beverly McLaughlin, who when faced with the challenge of determining if educational content that included same-sex parented families was appropriate in the BC K-1 curriculum took up the fight

for diversity and inclusion, stating that “tolerance is *always* [emphasis added] age-appropriate” (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No.36, 2002).

The fears, feelings of inadequacy, and apathy of teachers tasked with delivering SHE in their classrooms present a significant argument for the development and consistent implementation of compulsory CSE that employs qualified educators for delivery of SHE in the classroom (Surette, 2019). Opt-out culture is a symptom of right-wing populism in the “post-truth” era, which has the potential for significant impacts on SHE curriculum. The most significantly devastating impacts of this are experienced by sexual minority youth, whose whole existence and identity have the potential of being written off as “fake news” (Bialystok et al., 2020).

2.1.2 Youth Experiences of Sexuality Education. The content and socio-political context of SHE is contentious and lacking a cohesive and comprehensive approach, with the quality of delivery not guaranteed and little oversight. Understanding the experiences and perceptions of youth is an essential part of understanding what is working, and what is not. Waling and Bellamy et al. (2020) found that 69% of participants rated their experiences of school based SHE as negative, citing issues with content, timing, delivery, and environment, with participants relying on self-learning to fill in the gaps. Conducting a study in the USA, Astle et al. (2021) reported that nearly 95% of their participants described the SHE they received in school as not helpful, inadequate, and/or awkward. The teachers and coaches tasked with delivering SHE often resorted to scare tactics in efforts to “promote” abstinence, strongly suggesting the inevitability of pregnancy and STIs as the likely outcomes of pre-marital sex. Interestingly, age, sexual orientation, and sexual experience seems to play a role in youth satisfaction with their school based SHE. SHE was rated negatively by older, queer, sexually

active youth, while youth rating their experiences positively were younger, heterosexual, and not currently sexually active (Waling & Bellamy et al., 2020). This may indicate that older youth are more aware of the gaps in their knowledge and have the skills to seek out information to fill those gaps, while younger students may feel satisfied, or even overwhelmed, by their SHE perhaps due to their more limited personal experiences or readiness for engaging in their own sexual exploration. Corcoran et al. (2020) found that as well as age, gender and content influenced perception of SHE. Male identified youth reported significantly higher satisfaction with SHE than their female identifying counterparts, with this study offering no data on the experiences of youth identifying outside this gender binary (Byers et al., 2017). Topics often reported as most satisfactorily covered were the biology of sex, pregnancy prevention, and STIs, while youth reported that topics such as talking about sex with partners, masturbation, pornography, and sex work as insufficiently addressed or entirely absent (Byers et al., 2017).

Seiler-Ramadas et al. (2021) consider the ability of youth to navigate SHE, suggesting that Emotional Literacy (EL) is a significant factor in a youth's participation in SHE, and that without investment in EL, even comprehensive sexual health education may not lead to desired outcomes. The authors define EL as "the ability to recognize one's own feelings and those of others, regulate one's behaviour, as well as prevent or restore emotional damage in different social contexts." (p. 495). Brown and McQueen (2020) found that the perception of young men's engagement in SHE is often framed as immature, where they are often laughing and joking, perhaps performing to expected forms of masculinity. This study also suggests that young men are often uncomfortable and disengaged during standard SHE due to the focus on content that often feels female-focused and irrelevant to them (e.g., contraception, pregnancy prevention). Seiler-Ramadas et al. (2021) suggest that implementing strategies to increase EL has the

potential to decrease embarrassment and anxiety when engaging youth in SHE, increasing readiness to see themselves as implicated in their own experiences, and considering their impact on others. Alternatively, Waling and Fisher et al. (2020) found that youth are very well equipped in understanding the complexity of holistic and comprehensive sexuality education. In this case, developing emotional literacy may prove a redundant component in sexual health education. These arguments illustrate the importance of youth engagement in SHE; not only *if* they engage, but how, and to what end?

In a different context, Fraser et al. (2021) considered how and where young Australians access sexual health education, how they assess the accuracy and applicability of the material in their own lives, and how they then apply it in practice. The authors found that a key factor identified was, “The importance of distinguishing fact from opinion or experience” (p. 5). They described this as the “collateral reality of epistemic citizenship” (p. 6), or the responsibility of the individual to seek out, evaluate, synthesize, and determine what information is relevant and appropriate for them. Youth identified a number of challenges in this area. While there was a general consensus that the information was reliable, it often lacked in detail and depth, necessitating expanding their search for information to different sources to fulfill their desire for comprehensive, meaningful SHE (Fraser et al., 2021).

2.1.3 Youth Identified Gaps/Recommendations for Sexuality Education. Multiple studies have sought to identify youth experiences of SHE and what they see as gaps in knowledge and challenges in delivering and receiving SHE. Many aspects of SHE were identified as needing improvement and updating to be relevant and useful to today’s youth such as STIs, contraception/pregnancy options, timing (appropriate age/stage for subject), learning environment, instructor characteristics, and methods (Byers et al.,2017; Corcoran et al.,2020;

Fitzpatrick et al., 2021). It is important to note that abstinence-only SHE was significantly lacking in these topics, while CSE provided more thorough coverage overall.

Youth have made their desires clear regarding the need for accurate information to protect their health when engaging in partnered sexual activity. Their health is a priority, but lack of information and stigma are barriers to quality information (Corcoran et al., 2020). While STI prevention is generally covered in traditional SHE, STIs are often framed as a dire consequence and introduced in a fear-based way (Astle et al., 2021). Youth are asking for more depth of information on transmission, prevention, treatment, and long-term impacts of STIs and blood-borne viruses (BBV) such as HIV, including up to date statistics of transmission rates (Astle et al., 2021). There is also an appetite to disrupt heteronormativity when talking about STIs; suggesting that the focus must be centered on the sexual activities themselves and not the gendered bodies of the participants (Waling & Fisher et al., 2020). Contraception and pregnancy options were identified as heteronormatively framed and insufficiently discussed; access to updated, quality information about pregnancy prevention must be inclusive of diverse bodies and sexualities (Corcoran et al., 2020).

Appropriate timing of subject delivery is essential for its relevance to youth. If delivered too early, information may be dismissed or forgotten; if delivered too late, the information may be deemed moot, or consequences and impacts of lack of knowledge are already being felt (Waling & Bellamy et al., 2020). Age at onset of puberty varies greatly between biologically female and male bodies; on average, girls experience physiological changes two years before boys (Byers et al., 2017). This is significant as the timing of SHE programming is the same for all youth. Sexual debut (defined in this study as participating in partnered penetrative or oral sex) is identified as a significant factor in timing of topics related to sexual activity. Grasso and

Trumbull (2021) explored the influence of CSE or AO education on safer sex communication and behaviour and found that there was little difference in contraceptive use or safer sex communication. They also found that AO sexual debut was significantly later (18.42 years) than their CSE counterparts (17.14 years), which was an unpredicted outcome as it is not in alignment with other studies on age of debut, which found that CSE programs did not result in earlier sexual debut (Rabbitte & Enriquez, 2019). These differences may be due to demographic variance and external factors not controlled for in the study, such as religious affiliations and parental expectations, or the focus on risk and consequences in the AO camp (Grasso & Trumbull, 2021). While the literature shows that information on reproductive, preventative, and comprehensive topics are most useful and effective when delivered prior to sexual debut, these subjects are often not covered in school-based SHE until after the youth are already sexually active (Corcoran et al., 2020). Gaps in timing can be addressed by starting SHE programming at a younger age, and offering consistency and repetition to allow for variation in stages of sexual development, and the evolving needs of youth as they navigate these changes (Astle et al., 2021). Renold et al. (2021) suggest reframing to “developmentally appropriate” from “age appropriate” when considering introduction of specific topics so that SHE is more relatable and useful, highlighting the expansive diversity of existing youth knowledge and experience.

Quality of the learning environment also contributes to the gaps identified by youth. While some students suggested that having their classrooms separated by biological sex would improve their comfort and experience, others stated that dividing cohorts in this way was problematic, with students concerned about missing out on important content in the other group deemed not relevant to them (Corcoran et al., 2020). Queer youth were even more significantly impacted by this separation, with not only concerns about the relevance of the content, but also

the lack of attending to diverse identities, bodies, needs, and desires (Waling & Bellamy et al., 2020). This gap not only highlights the absence of attention to the needs of queer youth but erases trans and nonbinary youth from the equation completely. Finally, youth also described the need for the learning environment to be non-judgemental to reduce stigma by normalizing sexual activity among youth to create a safe and inclusive learning environment (Corcoran et al., 2020; Laverty et al., 2021).

High quality SHE is described by youth as interactive, offering opportunities for engagement with the material beyond lectures and videos, delivered by educators that are ideally young, knowledgeable, and come from outside their school environment (Astle et al., 2021; Byers et al., 2017; Corcoran et al., 2020). Interactive activities such as condom demonstrations, group discussions, and role-playing allowed youth to feel like participants in their education while learning relevant and practical skills (Byers et al., 2017; Laverty et al., 2021). The qualities of the educator are as important as methods of delivery. Some youth find educators who are closer to their age to be more relatable, especially if they bring with them some lived experience that they can share (Corcoran et al., 2020). Most importantly, youth describe an ideal sexual health educator as an expert in sexual health, who comes from outside the school context, to ensure accurate and comprehensive information they can trust, without the risk of social consequences (Waling & Bellamy et al., 2020; Waling & Fisher et al., 2020).

Other aspects, more closely associated with CSE, have been found to be insufficiently addressed or entirely absent from the SHE programs most commonly being delivered. These include the mental, relational, and emotional aspects of sex, diverse identities and behaviours, and the mechanics of sex (Astle et al., 2021; Claussen, C., 2019; Laverty et al., 2021; Waling and Fisher et al., 2020).

The relational aspects of sex have been identified as a gap and an area of interest with youth. Consent is a hot topic in the media, but the focus tends to lean towards refusal skills, which are often directed towards girls (Thiessen et al., 2021). This emphasis on female refusal perpetuates gendered sexual scripts that position boys as initiators and girls as gatekeepers to heterosexual sex, reinforcing and exacerbating patriarchal and heteronormative ideals (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2018; Thiessen et al., 2021). Young people in the early exploration of their sexual identities also need to develop the skills needed to know when they are ready to begin exploring sex, how to negotiate specific conversations around consent in practice, and how to communicate their emotional needs within a relationship. These skills not only support the traditional goals of reducing sexualized violence, but also empower youth to feel like they are ready to navigate rich, satisfying, healthy relationships that may or may not include sex (Lavery et al., 2021; Thiessen et al., 2021; Waling & Fisher et al., 2020).

Within SHE, these relationships continue to be overwhelmingly framed as heterosexual. To address the diverse needs of students and ensure SHE is relevant, information must be inclusive of diverse identities and behaviours (Aster et al., 2021). Queer and trans youth not only feel invisibilized relationally, but also physically. With penile-vaginal sex continuing to dominate the discourse of behaviours in SHE, individuals and couples with different configurations of genitals, including intersex youth, need to know how to engage in sex in a safe and healthy way (Lavery et al., 2021). Assumptions are often made that young people are inherently “horny,” but desire, like aspects of identity, also exists on a spectrum. Youth may experience low or no desire for sex. Asexuality is often not discussed in SHE, leaving these youth feeling different than their peers, and lacking a normative understanding of their experience (Lavery et al., 2021).

Readiness for partnered sex also varies even when desire is high. Topics such as masturbation (solo or partnered), manual sex (i.e., fingering, hand jobs), or use of sex toys is mostly or entirely missing from SHE (Astle et al., 2021). Waling and Fisher et al. (2020) found that youth are looking for explicit information on the mechanics of sex. Lack of high-quality resources that actually teach youth how to have sex safely and pleurably are entirely absent in SHE. This leads youth to seek out information from alternate sources such as peers, pornography, and through trial and error (Astle et al., 2021; Byers et al., 2017).

2.1.4 Underrepresented Young People and Sexuality Education. Based on this review of the literature, young men, young people with disabilities, and Indigenous youth are underrepresented and have specific unmet needs within the realm of mainstream sexual health education.

Young men often feel excluded or negatively framed in SHE discussions. Claussen (2019) found that there is an assumption that sexual activity defines when boys become men, and that expectations of “assertive heterosexuality” reinforce social norms and gender scripts, with performance of these norms as both celebrated (“you’re a man now”) and stigmatized (e.g., being a sexual aggressor). Specialized programming addresses the issues of compulsory heterosexuality and limited definitions of masculinity, illustrating challenges unique to young men:

Sexual health programmes that ignore traditional gender ideologies linking masculinity with heterosexuality, high sex drive, sexual prowess, and lack of emotional involvement in relationships disadvantage boys by stigmatising their emotional needs and vulnerabilities in relationships and leave them less prepared to have fulfilling and meaningful intimate relationships” (Claussen, 2019, p.117).

If we are to effectively engage young men in SHE, we must attend to their unique and specific challenges related to socialization and narrow understandings of masculinity.

Comprehensive sex education is based on an ableist epistemology that values neoliberal notions of agency, autonomy, and human rights (Davies & Kenneally, 2020). Campbell et al. (2020) found that people with disabilities encounter an extra layer of discrimination when it comes to the accessibility of SHE in comparison to their able-bodied counterparts. Activists looking to “crip sex ed” seek to challenge assumptions of disabled sexuality by challenging “ableist approaches to pleasure, desire and sexual practices” (Campbell et al., 2020, p. 362). Davies and Kenneally (2020) state that “to crip is to find value in that which is devalued while problematising taken-for-granted norms and ideologies that reproduce ableism” (p. 368). This disruption of ableist assumptions attends to the erasure and desexualization of people with disabilities, once again invisibilizing and positioning a minority identity as vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and without sexual desire and agency (Campbell et al., 2020). By uncovering and making explicit ableism in SHE there is an opportunity to disrupt assumptions of people with disabilities as not in need of CSE.

Indigenous youth in Aotearoa (New Zealand) petitioned for changes in school based SHE, seeking broader and more comprehensive topics relative to their own social, personal, and political contexts (Fitzpatrick et al., 2021). Integration of Indigenous knowledges and rights-based frameworks in a whole-school model was found to address bullying, inclusion, and diversity in a way that values student leadership and activism. Decolonizing Indigenous sexualities has become a priority in Aotearoa as a way to improve health outcomes and make SHE relevant to youth (Fitzpatrick et al., 2021). The Indian Act is the foundation of colonial racism in Canada and is deeply and profoundly implicated in the ongoing genocide of Indigenous

peoples, most notably Indigenous women and girls (Coburn & LaRocque, 2020). Research has shown that Indigenous youth are more likely to be sexually abused, abuse substances, become pregnant, and have higher rates of STIs than non-Indigenous youth (Grace, 2018). Bourassa et al. (2021) suggest that a systematic dismantling of colonial structures and beliefs is essential to decolonization of sexual health, and thus creating opportunities for Indigenous resurgence of traditional teachings of gender and sexuality. A potential strategy for Indigenization of sexual health education may include linking families and communities with schools and educators in recognition of Indigenous ways of knowing and being that support connectedness over individualized programming (Grace, 2018).

2.2 Critical Perspectives on Sexuality Education

There appears to be almost as much written about what is included in sexual health education as what is invisibilized. While there are many nuanced facets of sexual health education that individuals desire to be included in their learning, three overwhelming voids in formal SHE became abundantly clear in the literature: the “pleasure gap,” heteronormativity, and a desire to know how to “have sex.”

2.2.1 The Role of Pleasure in CSE. Pleasure has been clearly identified as the primary influence and driver for sexual activity and is defined by the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) as “the physical and/or psychological satisfaction and enjoyment derived from shared or solitary erotic experiences, including thoughts, fantasies, dreams, emotions, and feelings” (2019, n.p.). Pleasure is experienced differently over lifespan and is impacted by diverse intersections of identity and experience (Ford et al., 2019). Mark and Vowels et al. (2018) found that when people have access to high quality SHE that includes pleasure, they experience higher levels of sexual satisfaction and healthier sexual relationships throughout

adulthood. Experiences of sexual pleasure are often linked to rates of orgasm. Mahar et al. (2020) found that cis women in heterosexual encounters experience significantly less orgasms than their cis male counterparts. Previous research suggesting that the orgasm gap exists due to female-bodied orgasms being “complicated and elusive” (p. 25) due to not being “designed” to have orgasms at the same frequency of men was debunked, citing non-biological, sociocultural factors such as lack of knowledge of female anatomy (specifically the clitoris), an overvaluing of penis-in-vagina sex, prioritization of male pleasure, and cognitive distraction during intercourse.

Research is showing that SHE that includes pleasure increases overall knowledge and satisfaction of comprehensive SHE, including an increase of safer sex behaviours (Ford et al., 2019). Mark & Corona -Vargas et al. (2021) found that by including pleasure in SHE, outcomes could be improved in areas such as sexual rights, diversity, consent, empowerment, relationships, and traditional risk-reduction. Levin and Hammock (2020) found that pleasure based SHE provided better sexual violence prevention messaging and has been positively correlated with reduction of sexual coercion by empowering the individual to consider how they feel both physically and emotionally when engaging in sexual behaviours (Kantor & Lindberg, 2020).

If pleasure is to have an impact on sexual health in these ways, there must be an investment in discourses of pleasure in CSE. Improving sexual satisfaction requires increased communication of sexual desires and sexual self-awareness, skills that must be included in comprehensive sexuality education for youth (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2018). Kantor and Lindberg (2020) support a call to educators to include a pedagogy of SHE that engages students and attends to diverse identities. By moving away from SHE as a proscriptive, risk/danger avoidance model towards a rights-based approach, we begin to address the puritanical, heteronormative, ableist values that increase discrimination and sexualized violence, and decreased sexual health

outcomes (Ford et al., 2019). Addressing the pleasure gap begins with not only educating on reproductive organs and functions, but anatomy related to pleasure including clitoral knowledge for people of all gender identities and expressions, regardless of their own physical anatomy. This also requires rewriting current sexual scripts to include communication of desired sexual behaviours alongside sexual refusal skills (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2018; Mahar et al., 2020).

Ford et al. (2019) argues that change in social norms is essential in prioritizing pleasure and highlights the importance of “promoting sexual pleasure as a means of promoting sexual health and sexual rights” (p. 225). By protecting sexual rights, sexual pleasure becomes increasingly possible. The WAS (2019) Declaration on Sexual Pleasure urges all partners and participants, from governments to individuals, to address these challenges by centering sexual pleasure through changes in policy and legislation. Government and institutional oversight is essential to ensure accountability and monitoring, and to secure access to high quality SHE that evolves with the needs of diverse identities and bodies (Ford et al., 2019; Kantor & Lindberg, 2020).

2.2.2 Heteronormativity. The absence of queer identities and bodies in SHE is well documented in the literature (Astle et al. 2021; Bruce, 2021; Diez et al. ,2021; Fraser et al., 2021, Ringrose et al., 2020). Heterosexual, cis, binary identities dominate the discourse, often framing anyone outside these descriptors as “non-normative” in their development and identity (Formby & Donovan, 2020; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2018). This “hidden curriculum” privileges heteronormative presentations and puts queer youth at risk, most notably for higher rates of STIs and sexualized violence (Formby & Donovan, 2020; MacAulay et al., 2021).

Sexualized violence (SV) is a significant issue among youth, and disproportionately experienced by queer youth (MacAulay et al., 2021). With violence prevention education and

applied consent skills lacking in school-based SHE, these issues are often addressed at a university level with consent and intervention training focused on decreasing the alarming rates of coercive and forced encounters among students (Thiessen et al., 2021). When addressed at a high school level, students identified that information on SV is offered too late and in a gendered way that does not attend to the needs of diverse identities. School misconduct at its foundation is often unregulated, with peer-based harassment not taken seriously; a “boys will be boys” attitude is an assumptive part of “normal” school culture (MacAulay et al., 2021).

Consequences of neglecting to address queer identities in SHE also includes shame from being excluded, with individuals believing something was “wrong” or “other” about their identity. These feelings have been found to lead to hesitancy to engage in same-sex relationships, participating in unenthusiastic heterosexual sex, discrimination and slut shaming, and poor mental health due to internalized homophobia (Hobaica & Kwon, 2017). Riggs and Bartholomaeus (2018) found that when diverse identities are addressed in traditional SHE, it is often with a nod to lesbian and gay relationships. Transgender youth speak about the persistent lack of sexual health and intimacy information provided during SHE, experiencing an outright exclusion of conversations pertaining to their own embodied sexual experiences, as well as a lack of support in navigating intimacy and dating outside cis binary. Intimate relationships are overwhelmingly framed as potential risk for violence for trans youth, devoid of any conversations on communication and building healthy, consensual relationships. While this is in alignment with the experiences of youth in general, trans youth have the additional complexity of their unique experience with their identities (Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2018).

Many researchers have considered possible changes in SHE to attend to minoritized identities and address the specific challenges of queer youth. Their findings include a

decentralization of gender to attend to the reality that not all girls have vulvas and not all boys have penises, increasing relevance by including diverse identities in conversations about relationships and intimacy, and implementing content related to pleasure that is reflective of individual desires and minoritized bodies (Hobaica & Kwon, 2017; Mark & Vowels et al., 2018; Riggs and Bartholomaeus, 2018).

O'Quinn and Fields (2019) critiques these seemingly progressive, evidence-based improvements to SHE in favour of a queering of evidence to move away from the “here and now” to a utopian “there and then” that disrupts and interrogates “evidence” as a driver of progressive SHE. They consider the uniqueness of queer temporalities, rejecting “normative” heterosexual trajectories. Disrupting the dominant discourses of risk and danger for queer youth exploring their sexual identities, they reject this paradigm of “queer misery” (p. 181) that offers little more than expectations of violence and fear. This queering of SHE rattles at the self-imposed cages of “progressive” politicians whose efforts may be beginning to drag SHE into the present but fail to envision a future that truly disrupts racist and heteronormative discourses of sexual health, development, and embodied sexuality.

2.2.3 Sources of Sexual Learning Outside the Classroom. The well documented inadequacy of traditional school based SHE leaves young people feeling unprepared for exploring and experiencing their sexual selves (Charest & Kleinplatz, 2021). This reality is amplified in queer and trans youth populations and self-directed education is frequently used by youth to fill in the gaps. Failure to cover topics of interest lead students to seek out information from parents, peers, media, and pornography (Bleakley et al., 2018; Byers et al., 2017; Formby & Donovan, 2020; Narushima, et al., 2020).

Parents and caregivers are an essential yet complex source for sexual learning. Bleakley et al. (2018) found that learning about sex from parents is closely connected to family values and expectations, and focuses primarily on cis-biology (e.g., menstruation, reproduction) and the potentially negative consequences of hetero sex (e.g., STIs, unintended pregnancy). Mark and Vowels et al. (2018) query how sexual values are formed in sexually diverse populations. They found that though sexual values may begin to form in late childhood and adolescence, they are also changeable, and are especially impacted by romantic relationships in adulthood. This suggests that while parents may be a foundational factor in early sexual learning, this self-directed education continues across the life span.

Peer influence on sexual learning moves away from values, biology, and risk, fulfilling the desire to learn more about the relational and embodied aspects of sex. Narushima et al. (2020) found that discussions with peers had pros and cons: youth appreciated the safety and interactive nature of peer-to-peer learning but recognized that the information may not always be accurate or reliable. Additionally, observational learning has been found to have a significant impact on sexual behaviour, and these observations are not limited to interpersonal relationships (Bleakley et al., 2018). Bleakley et al. (2018) found that “learning from peers and media may be interchangeable in regard to the association with sexual activity and support research demonstrating that media may be a “substitute sexual peer” (p. 21), and a primary source for social norms.

One of the identified reasons for self-directed education is a lack of representation of diverse identities in SHE. Formby & Donovan (2020) found that a lack of queer role models in the media left queer youth uncertain of relationship and sexual expectations, leading these young people to the internet to find information. The onus is then on the youth to fact and quality check

this information through multiple sources to ensure accuracy and relevance, as these sources have the potential to be laden with misinformation (Byers et al., 2017; Fraser et al., 2021).

The power that “Big Tech” has over the SHE content on their platforms is nearly absolute (Perez, 2021). Corporately generated algorithms are driven by advertising dollars that put money in the pockets of Big Tech and mute the efforts of social media based sexual health educators’ efforts to provide quality information to youth on the platforms they are accessing. Moderation policies deem much SHE content as porn, deleting the content and placing the onus on content creators to fight blanket censorship, which they have few resources to do. When youth, especially queer youth, rely so much on the internet to provide them with SHE, it is particularly problematic that “click-bait”, potentially inaccurate content tops the search results. While Perez (2021) holds Big Tech responsible to change this, they neglect to implicate legislators and policy makers in their role to ensure the oversight of corporate responsibilities.

Despite the challenges presented by corporate policy as it relates to online sexual self-directed education, there is a necessity to persevere in efforts to make quality information available online. Diez et al. (2021) assessed the reliability, useability, and quality of the sexual health information found on websites commonly utilized by youth seeking SHE online. Hobaica and Kwon (2017) draw attention to the caveat that not all youth have access to private and reliable internet, especially queer youth. Online sourcing of SHE was found to reduce barriers to accessing information, and has shown to increase knowledge of sexual risks, sexual communication, and delays sexual debut. Diez et al. (2021) suggest that to increase eHealth literacy, the ability of youth to assess for themselves the quality and reliability of online resources, sexual health educators must also be well informed about the websites accessed by youth and be intentional in their practice by offering direction to high quality sources.

Manduley et al. (2018) highlight the importance of by-and-for, community driven social media realms to address the SHE needs of queer, trans, and racialized communities who continue to be invisibilized in the current SHE spaces online. Queer and Black youth are utilizing media and the internet as a sexual learning resource at higher rates than their heterosexual, white peers (Bleakley et al., 2018; Hobaica and Kwon, 2017). These by-and-for sex education initiatives address the gaps and the damage done to marginalized communities, levelling the playing field through the use of social media.

2.2.4 How-to/Porn as Pedagogy. As youth augment their sexual health education to include pleasure and find relevance in their intersectional identities, they are influenced greatly by outside forces and what is easily accessible to them. Along with personal relationships, media has been found to be an exemplar of social scripts about how to talk about sex but fall short of content that portrays sexual behaviours in action (Bleakley et al., 2018). In short, youth want to know *how* to have sex.

Porn is produced for the sole purpose of sexual arousal, but it also commonly used for education. Dawson et al. (2019) found that watching porn was not correlated with dissatisfaction with sexual health education; young people will consume porn regardless of the quality of SHE. Rather, porn use indicated a desire to know more about sex, especially the nuances (e.g., specific acts, pleasure) not covered in classes. This is especially true for queer youth. Philpott and Singh et al. (2017) found that in both geographical and social communities with increased use of internet and decreased access to sexual health education access porn as an educational tool (e.g., youth, sexual minorities, folks from rural areas, and countries with a lack of SHE).

There is a significant lack of research that seeks to understand the positive and beneficial aspects of porn, and its potential for being an avenue for safer sex education online (Philpott &

Singh et al., 2017). This supports broader SHE research that identifies sex as a risk to young people, and avoids any conversations about the benefits, pleasure, and fun of sex. SHE goals continue to focus on improving health outcomes and reducing violence, which is often depicted in mainstream porn by an absence of observable condom use, sexual hostility and violence, as well as sexist and racist content (Crabbe & Flood, 2021; Philpott & Singh et al., 2017; Ringrose et al., 2020). Some youth concur, describing their experiences with porn as unrealistic depictions of sex as it relates to performativity and expectations, a potential gateway to deviant/unwanted sexual behaviours, and citing concerns about the potentially exploitative nature of the porn industry (Goldstein, 2020). Again, these complexities are amplified among queer youth.

Crabbe and Flood (2021) propose a whole school approach and framework to address the widespread exposure of children and youth (both accidental and intentional) to porn. Sexual attitudes and behaviours have been found to be both positively and negatively influenced by porn, offering a source of sexual pressure as well as inspiration, and being cited as a source for understanding sexual norms and expectations. A whole school approach to pornography education may take the shape of sequential curricula that focuses on the development of critical media literacy that does not necessitate the mention of pornography itself but offers “education to address pornography’s influence” (Crabbe and Flood, 2021, p. 7) that is adapted to be developmentally appropriate at each level.

Porn education is defined as “education that seeks to support young people to critically evaluate and respond to pornography’s influence to minimize its harms and equip them for relationships and sexuality that are safe, respectful, mutually pleasurable, and consenting” (Crabbe & Flood, 2021, p. 7). This development of porn literacy has the potential to promote critical engagement with topics like consent and pleasure (Dawson et al., 2019). Safer sex porn

(e.g., *Modern Loving: The Ultimate Guide to Sexy Pleasure, Make Love not Porn*) and sexy sex education (e.g., *The Pleasure Project*, *Safe Sex is Hot Sex Porn*, *The Kama Sutra for Sexy Safe Sex*) will help bridge the gap between the needs and desires of self-educators, porn producers, and formal sexual health education arenas (Philpott and Singh et al., 2017).

2.3 Pedagogy and Curriculum Development in Higher Education

2.3.1 The Need for Expanded Sex Education Pedagogy. In order to understand the role of sexual health education in higher education it is necessary to consider the current climate on college and university campuses. Research on sexual health education within higher education is slim. Manduley et al. (2018) found that in 1999, only 15.5% of Faculties of Education across Canada required sexuality training, and that as of 2018, no more recent data are available. This is a significant finding when considering the fact that teachers are tasked with delivering sexual health education in schools.

Absence of SHE within core curriculum tasks students with seeking out personal and academic educational opportunities outside of their programs. Hobaica and Kwon (2017) found that specific sexuality education courses in higher education were a source of self-education for young adults. Authors importantly noted that access to this resource is not equitable; there can be significant barriers for sexual and racial minorities to pursue advanced education. Violence prevention programs on college and university campuses are often the most observable educational resource for young people seeking information on consent and relationships, filling gaps for young adults who may feel unprepared by school-based SHE in their youth (Thiessen et al., 2021).

2.3.2 The Need for Sex Education in CYC. In this literature review Child and Youth Care as a discipline was referenced only twice, in a single publication. With CYC, graduates are employed in many contexts involving children and youth, thus sex education in the CYC curriculum is vital for the ability of our graduates to function well in practice. Hillock (2021) clearly defines two components of this education: the need for personal exploration, and the acquisition and honing of practice skills.

Personal reflection and understanding of sexual values and beliefs by practitioners who are tasked with delivering SHE to youth is crucial to their ability to offer quality SHE. Hillock (2021) suggests that open and honest conversations in the classroom are vital in supporting students to engage with their own experiences and understandings of sexuality in an effort to attend to:

[F]rank sexual talk, diverse content, and terms; reflect on their own sexualities, identities, attitudes, fears, desires, beliefs, and behaviours; deepen their understandings of the dynamic, intersectional, and diverse nature of sexuality; for some, feel more comfortable and less alone; and speak about private and sometimes uncomfortable things (p. 22).

If we expect CYC graduates to meet their clients “where they are at”, we must ensure that we support their own personal development and learning in the area of sexuality.

Frontline, on the ground, relational work with youth is the foundation of CYC practice. Hillock (2021) thoroughly describes the practice outcomes made possible through quality sex education in higher education:

[Q]uality sex education also teaches students how to develop nonjudgemental attitudes and skills; identify scope of practice and know when to make referrals and to whom;

work with sexual assault survivors[sic]; feel more comfortable hearing language that some service users use, especially in terms of abuse investigations (e.g., cunt, fuck, pussy, and cock); do a proper sexual assessment and take a sex history; prepare to do individual, family, and couple counselling; and practice necessary skills (p. 22).

These practice skills, along with personal reflection and development, are essential to engaging in a holistic approach to care that is at the core of CYC practice.

There is little to be found within disciplines such as CYC, social work, and nursing when seeking resources to engage with sexual health and sexuality pedagogies in the higher education classroom. What is available continues to frame youth and sex in a negative, risk-based way (Hillock, 2021). Hillock (2021) has identified this gap and calls us in, citing contributors from expansive fields (e.g., psychology, public and community health, sexuality, porn, disability, queer, and gender studies) offering direction in pedagogical resources, stating that “now is a very good time for educators to assess and evaluate the quality and quantity of the sexuality(ies) discourses and curriculum in their programs (or to add sexuality content, if there is none)” (p. 8).

This literature review has illustrated the ways in which sexual health and sexuality education have been taken up in the academic realm. Young people’s experiences of SHE have been found to be overwhelmingly framed in a heteronormative way, invisibilizing diverse identities and focusing on prevention of risk and protection from danger. Moral conservatism, parentism, and underrepresentation of youth in the margins have directly contributed to gaps in SHE that are essential for the wholistic health and wellbeing of youth sexual development. These significant shortfalls have put the responsibility on youth to seek out, evaluate, and integrate information and ideas to support their learning. The inclusion of discourses of pleasure and resources that offer explicit information on how to engage in partnered sexual activity continues

to be absent from SHE curriculum, despite calls from youth to enrich basic “plumbing and prevention” education to include these topics. Higher education is lacking in both content and context for educating and inspiring sexual health pedagogy across faculties of Education, Social Work, Child and Youth Care, and beyond. This reality leads back to the question: how is sex and sexuality taken up in the CYC undergraduate curriculum and what steps can be taken to increase the capacity of graduates to have better conversations with youth on this topic? To answer this question, an analysis of the Child and Youth Care undergraduate program curriculum is a necessary and vital step towards supporting youth and practitioners in engaging in conversations about sex that disrupt dominant, patriarchal, heteronormative frameworks, and support the comprehensive, inclusive, high quality sexual health education that all young people deserve.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Method of Analysis

This method of analysis is informed by intersectional, feminist, queer perspective that seeks to explore how sexual health and sexuality education are taken up in the Child and Youth Care undergraduate curriculum. Collins et al. (2019) conceptualizations of intersectionality offered two thoughtful ideas that helped inform this research: a reminder that intersectionality supports a both/and, relational lens through which to view the data; and disrupts the “standard ways of reading that seek to mine intersectionality for what a reader can take *from* it [and] give way to dialogical engagement that respects what each has to offer *to* the project of intersectionality” (p. 694). Appreciation and respect towards the data is essential when considering the thoughtful contributions of curriculum developers whose work consistently strives towards a rich, comprehensive offering to the students in CYC. Vachon (2020) articulates queer theory not only as a way to critically analyze the often deficit-focused issues faced by queer individuals and communities, but also as a way to “look at, understand, and reveal existing binaries, norms, and systems in order to show how these function” (p. 64). Disrupting the pervasive fear and danger paradigm of sexual health and sexuality education is a central goal that resides at the heart of this research. Queering intersectionality requires researchers to highlight intersectional experiences and consider how interactions with cultural dominance impact diverse identities (Longoria, 2021).

Johnston (2018) articulates what is required of a queer and feminist intersectional approach, suggesting that “to understand the diversity of genders and sexualities alongside other axis of difference, feminist and queer geographers must continue to talk about, for example, genders (beyond binaries), sex, sexualities, bodies, erotics, emotions, race, indigeneity,

pleasures, power, spaces and places” (p. 560). It is for these reasons that this approach was consciously constructed, and intuitively generated, as an orientation and lens through which the data from this research were examined.

3.1.1 Analysis. The UVic Child and Youth Care undergraduate program aspires to support students in “developing the skills and knowledge needed to enhance children, youth, family and community well-being” (University of Victoria, 2020a). Sexuality and sexual health have been found to be a significant aspect of overall health and wellbeing (Sladden et al., 2021). In order to address this aspiration, it is vital to undertake an evaluation of where sexuality and sexual health show up in the current curriculum, what gaps are found when the curriculum is measured against identified sexual health and sexuality topics, and what an ideal curriculum might include. These three stages of inquiry are seemingly separate and prescriptive in their order of completion. Logically, I began at the beginning, assessing the presence of course content related to sexual health and sexuality. Beyond that, the path is not so clear. This analysis takes a multilayered approach, beginning at the beginning, and moving inward and outward, back and forth between what is known and documented, and what is assumed. This methodological approach can often create more questions than answers. Rosenblatt and Wieling (2018) suggest that “qualitative social research is, in many ways, haunted by scientific ideals of objectivity” (pp. 61). Fortunately, in this research, this ideal of objectivity is wholeheartedly rejected, embracing instead the delicious messiness and complexity offered by subjectivity as an analytic resource as opposed to a methodological vulnerability.

At the early stages of data analysis, the UNESCO International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education was used as a way to organize and detect the presence of comprehensive topics in sexual health and sexuality education in the CYC curriculum. This framework was

chosen for the clarity and comprehensiveness of its guidelines, and because it offers specific ideas and learning outcomes tailored to learners in different age groups. For the purpose of this analysis, key ideas presented by UNESCO as topics and learning objectives for people ages 15-18+ are used to highlight strengths in the existing curriculum, identify potential gaps, and note potential opportunities to address these gaps. UNESCO (2018) guidelines acknowledge the potential gaps in sexual health and sexuality education content of young adults and suggests that these key ideas may be useful in higher education to address these gaps in knowledge. Referring to Table 1, the following topics and concepts are addressed in the CYC undergraduate curriculum: (1) Relationships; (2) Understanding Gender; (3) Violence and Staying Safe; and (4) Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour. The concepts of (5) Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality; (6) Skills for Health and Well-being; (7) The Human Body and Development; and (8) Sexual and Reproductive Health are much less developed, or entirely absent. Analyzing what is currently included in the curriculum, highlighting what is absent, and identifying potential opportunities for enriching the sexual health and sexuality education content in the CYC curriculum will support the development of recommendations to enhance student capacity to engage with children, youth, and families with comprehensive sexual health and sexuality education.

This research is temporal, situated in a post #MeToo, post-truth era that simultaneously believes survivors and gaslights them. The findings and analysis are inherently subjective, coloured by the lens of a CYC undergraduate alumna, now CYC graduate student, with deep personal connections and values that are closely aligned with the shared goals and beliefs of child and youth care. This research, from start to finish, would look entirely different at a different time, in a different place, with a different researcher. Jamison (2018) reminds us that “in qualitative data analysis, the researcher is the analytical tool, which has notable advantages in

terms of untangling the complexity of lived experience, but it also has drawbacks because we bring imperfections into the data analysis process” (pp. 154). This research offers a snapshot in time through the lens of a singular person, who cannot be separated from the implicit and explicit biases, priorities, hopes, and dreams of a curriculum that supports the sexual health and well being of the emerging practitioners in child and youth care and their clients. A curriculum is a living document, designed to evolve over time in response to the changing priorities, politics, and investors devoting their time, experience, and scholarship to the development of future knowledge. Airton and Woolley (2021) recognize that school climate interacts with curriculum and pedagogy in a significant way. This is an important factor to consider when undertaking this analysis.

This overall snapshot offers a limited view on the content offered and received in reciprocity between students and instructors; syllabi can only ever offer a partial view of how teaching and learning takes place in the classroom. The gaps, though anecdotally glaring to some, are benignly absent to others. Identifying what is missing helps us delineate between “the current state and the ideal or preferred state” and is found to be useful when the “desired outcomes or objectives are known” (Fater, 2013, p. 102). In this research, the desired objectives are clear: to make these gaps explicit in order to present the school of child and youth care with practical, research-informed offerings that allow for the curriculum to be more inclusive of sexual health and sexuality as a foundational aspect of the human experience.

3.1.2 Combining Research Literacy with Personal Development. Developing competencies in identifying, evaluating, summarizing, critiquing, and applying high quality research into scholarship and practice has been identified by The Undergraduate and Practicum Operations Committee (TUPOC) as a high priority (TUPOC, 2021). Suri (2013) identifies three

potential guiding principles for synthesizing research: “purposefully informed selective inclusivity, audience appropriate transparency, and reflexivity and informed subjectivity” (p. 42). These principles are well aligned with the goals and values of CYC.

The first principle of purposefully informed selective inclusivity speaks to the field’s “explicit commitments to anti-racism, de-colonization, and youth engagement” (TUPOC, 2021, p. 1). This is an important aspect of queering CYC curriculum by thoughtfully offering diverse resources and opportunities for students to learn from a breadth of material that opens up their world view. These pedagogical decisions support social justice work in research as well as practice.

Audience appropriate transparency can be applied both in the classroom and practice settings. First, as CYC practitioners and educators we must continue to push back against the status quo through critical engagement with research material in the classroom. Calling out bias, critiquing limiting and exclusionary research traditions, and highlighting the absence of marginalized people in research are essential to upholding the CYC commitments. Second, we must remember to support students’ abilities as knowledge translators in practice. If we hold true to the adage “research informs practice, practice informs research” we must be able to support a depth of understanding with our clients to the purpose of our interventions and supports by demystifying the theory and research that informs our practice.

The final principle of reflexivity and informed subjectivity is foundational in our work with children, youth, and families. As a research method, informed subjectivity requires researchers to ensure that their choices that are closely connected to their purpose, focusing less on objectivity, and more on considering the investment of various proprietors of knowledge in the field (Suri, 2013). These principles can support research literacy across the curriculum by

offering opportunities for those striving to diversify and “queer” child and youth care to with an inclusion of sexual health and sexuality in the undergraduate program.

3.2 Integrous Scholarship

When engaging in higher education, the term ‘academic integrity’ is predominantly used when referring to the expectations and consequences for students in relation to plagiarism and cheating (Macfarlane et al., 2014). Qualitative research asks us to thoughtfully attend to trustworthiness as it intersects with the positionality of the researcher, supporting the development of a subjective shared reality where the writer seeks to engage in conversation with the reader (Stahl & King, 2020). Through establishment of trustworthiness, in relationship with deep ethical consideration, integrous scholarship becomes attainable in qualitative research.

3.2.1 Trustworthiness. Criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research requires researchers to attend to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability throughout each step of the research (Stahl & King, 2020). This research was undertaken with the goal of being trustworthy enough to support the ongoing development of the CYC undergraduate curriculum, in hopes that its findings and recommendations demonstrate usefulness to the School by supporting the increased capacity of students to engage in conversations about sexual health and sexuality in a more comprehensive way. In order to reach this goal several strategies were employed: extended engagement with the data; peer and mentor feedback; critically engaged, thick description; and ongoing reflexive auditing (Stahl & King, 2020).

These strategies, though thoughtful and essential to inquiry, are often messy, invisible, and undocumented. Trustworthiness is established through efforts to make meaning of the data in

a clearly articulated way. Cloutier and Ravasi (2021) suggest that the use of tables can aid in efforts to “ensure—and reassure—readers about the trustworthiness of their research process and the robustness of the data backing the conclusions they draw” (p. 114). Organizing and containing the data for this research through the use of tables is a useful strategy to display and describe the process of inquiry, supporting transparency and offering a sense of credibility in the chaos.

3.2.2 Ethical Considerations. Seeking out new understandings of sex is never a simple and straightforward process. Every individual who has ever experienced, or even contemplated, sexuality as an embodied experience has their own deeply personal story that they carry with them. The thoughtful consideration that must be undertaken to do this kind of research in a ‘good way’ is considerable. I know that my own liberal, western, sex-positive, feminist values are strongly shaping the kind of research questions I am planning to ask. Research has continued to show that discourses of pleasure are absent in our conversations with youth regarding their own sexual health and wellbeing (Allen, 2011; Fine, 1988, Fine & McClelland, 2006), which is enough to continue to fuel my desire to contribute to this body of literature. This research often neglects to incorporate the experiences of youth sexuality or elevate youth voices on issues that directly impact their own bodies. Acknowledging the importance of incorporating young people’s perspectives is an issue of social justice; including their expertise on their own experiences and desires is vital to improve their experience of sexual health education, and reduce the risk of harm from its absence. These considerations do not go unchecked, and deserve to be supported through a thoughtful, engaged, and collaborative process. What I endeavor to offer with this research may be a jumping off point from which a study may be born that addresses and highlights the humanness that is the embodiment of sexuality.

3.3 Procedure

The data for this analysis included the 2020/21 syllabi from the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. The initial data bundle consisted of 65 syllabi. Twenty-eight unique courses were identified within this data set. Each course had between 1 and 3 versions of the syllabi, depending on how many sections were offered. For simplicity, the A01 version for each course was selected for initial analysis.

The next step was to determine which syllabi contained relevant content. To identify these documents the word “sex” was searched. This term was chosen as it would cover sexuality, sexual health, and other sex related content. Selection criteria allowed data artifacts to be included from any aspect of the syllabus: course description, overview, course level outcomes, course material modules and themes, and assignments. Supplemental content was excluded, as it is instructor dependent and not required reading for the course. Nineteen syllabi had at least one “hit”, outside the two generated from UVic policy links to sexual harassment policy and sexualized violence prevention and response resources. One syllabus was eliminated immediately due to the “hit” being found in a supplemental resource. The content from each of these “hits” was then reviewed and organized into a table to illustrate its relationships to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education 8 key concepts: Relationships; Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality; Understanding Gender; Violence and Staying Safe; Skills for Health and Well-being; The Human Body and Development; Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour; Sexual and Reproductive Health (UNESCO, 2018). The UNESCO key concepts were selected as the first level of analysis, representing the gap between “what is” and “what should be” included in the CYC curriculum. This framework was selected for its perceived usefulness as a springboard

towards a comprehensive sexual health and sexuality framework for the curriculum.

Additionally, UNESCO’s three domains of learning (knowledge, attitudinal and skills-building) are in alignment with the elemental CYC praxis model of knowing, doing, and being (White, 2007). The spiral approach to UNESCO’s curriculum is thus congruent with the reflexivity required in, and aspired to, engaged and collaborative work with children, youth, and families.

UNESCO categories	Relationships	Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality	Understanding Gender	Violence and Staying Safe	Skills for Health and Well-being	The Human Body and Development	Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour	Sexual and Reproductive Health
110			x				x	
120			x				x	
166a			x				x	
166b			x				x	x
171			x				x	
205				x				
265			x				x	
338		x	x	x		x	x	x
350			x	x			x	
356	x		x	x			x	
364			x				x	
370							x	
382	x		x				x	
410	x		x				x	
470			x				x	
471							x	
475	x		x				x	
481							x	

Table 1. UNESCO categories represented in syllabi

The next step required a return to the 19 syllabi to search for data identified in the literature review as significant yet underrepresented sexual health and sexuality education topics: pleasure, pornography, and heteronormativity. To uncover as much related data as possible, “queer” was subsequently added as a category, bolstering the efforts of to interrupt heteronormativity through a centering of queer theories and feminist pedagogies. The search

terms “pornography” and “heteronormativity” were shortened to “porn” and “hetero” to allow for the most opportunities to identify content.

Literature review categories found in syllabi	Pleasure	Heteronormativity	Porn	Queer
110				x
120				
166a				
166b				x
171				x
205				x
265				
338		x		x
350				
356				
364				
370				
382				x
410				
470				
471				
475				
481				x

Table 2. Feminist and queer-oriented categories found in syllabi

Following this, the data tables were combined. This allowed for elimination of any course syllabi that had fewer than three categories represented.

UNESCO and literature review categories combined	Relationships	Values Rights Culture and Sexuality	Understanding Gender	Violence and Staying Safe	Skills for Health and Well-being	The Human Body and Development	Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour	Sexual and Reproductive Health	Pleasure	Heteronormativity	Pornography	Queer
110			x				x					x
120			x				x					
166a			x				x					
166b			x				x	x				x
171			x				x					x
205				x								x
265			x				x					
338		x	x	x		x	x	x		x		x
350			x	x			x					
356	x		x	x			x					
364			x				x					
370							x					
382	x		x				x					x
410	x		x				x					
470			x				x					
471							x					
475	x		x				x					
481							x					x

Table 3. Combined data tables (UNESCO and Feminist/Queer Contributions)

With these high-level reviews of the data completed, the syllabi that provided the most substantive coverage across all categories were identified. Nine courses represented in three or more categories were selected: 110, 166b, 171, 338, 350, 356, 382, 410, 475. To allow for representation across each year of the four-year program, 205 was selected to be included in this next level.

My final step was to organize the actual artifacts of the syllabi into categories as they appear in the syllabi themselves: course descriptions, learning outcomes, assigned readings, assignments, optional topics given for assignment, readings not required of whole class (e.g., assigned to one small group). These artifacts can be found in Table 4 (Appendix A).

3.4 Limitations

The limitations of this study are contextual, and also by design. Conducting this research in Canada immediately assumes a western stance on families, relationships, and sex. The laws of

this country are shaped by the Constitution of Canada, regulating its citizens rights and responsibilities. This land has been known as Turtle Island to Indigenous Peoples for many thousands of years before colonization; the complexities of this statement alone is beginning to inform research in a deeply significant way. With the research being conducted on the traditional territory of ləkʷəŋən speaking peoples, and the current, unceded territory of the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ nations (known commonly as Victoria, British Columbia), I feel a responsibility as a settler to engage thoughtfully in this work, in this place, at this time. This area of research may be underdeveloped, but it is far from seminal. There is a body of work, across many disciplines, that I can draw from, reflect on, and build upon to further our collective understandings in CYC.

By design, this research has a narrow scope. The focus on a curriculum analysis excludes the experiences of the students participating in these courses, as well as the instructors delivering the course content. This reality leaves a piece of me wanting, but the structure and process of this examination creates an opportunity to really get down to brass tacks, limiting the background noise of the diverse positionalities and educational experiences of learners, and neutralizing the delivery style, and individual investments and divestments in the course content by a wide range of instructors. This is additionally challenging when considering difference between the known curriculum (what is documented in the formal syllabus) and the living curriculum (what is taught) (Magrini, 2015). These tensions are precariously held in an effort to contain the research scope, but are also simultaneously the contexts that inspire future understandings of CYC praxis and pedagogy.

A final consideration is the impact factor. With a goal of comprehensive, functional, palatable, and readily implementable recommendations, there is a risk that the findings from this

study will remain unheeded, and the recommendations will remain unfulfilled. Regardless of the intentions of curriculum committees and developers to create a curriculum that “attend[s] to the social, physical, cultural, spiritual and emotional needs of children, youth and families” (University of Victoria, 2020b), personal biases and priorities, budgetary constraints, and sheer lack of time may leave this research collecting dust. Despite this possibility, this research is useful in and of itself to me as a clinician, sessional instructor, parent, and community member who is inspired, empowered, and dedicated to engaging with children, youth, and families on the subject of sexuality and sexual health education.

All of these methodological, theoretical, relational, and personal aspects of this research informs a process of analysis that supports a thoughtful inquiry into the content of the curriculum. The findings and analysis attend to the spirit and lens set out in this chapter, in the hopes of offering a reliable, trustworthy, transparent articulation of what is, what it means, and what is possible when considering the infusion of sexual health and sexuality education into the CYC curriculum.

Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

The findings and analysis are presented as a descriptive narrative of the artifacts identified in Table 4 under the categories of learning outcomes, course descriptions, assignments, and course readings (see Appendix A). The complex intersections and overlapping aspects of sex, gender, and sexuality are so intertwined that some artifacts are included in multiple categories and are described and understood through the lens of each category. This intersectional, queer, feminist critical analysis aims to highlight what aspects of sexual health and sexuality are being taken up in the CYC undergraduate course syllabi, what concerns, gaps, and challenges are being exposed through this undertaking, and what surprises were encountered through the process of analysis. It is important to remember that the syllabus offers a framework of course content that informs instructors of learning goals and course outcomes supported by assignments, course readings, and other educational materials. It is an important piece of the educational package, but it does not offer a complete picture of the educational experience. Course instructors have opportunities to create learning activities, offer supplemental content, and inspire class discussions that enrich and deepen the learning and integration for their students that builds upon this framework.

This analysis drew on 35 artifacts consisting of two course descriptions (171, 475), seven learning outcomes (110, 171, 338, 382, 410), four assignments (110, 338), and 22 course readings (110, 166b, 171, 205, 338, 350, 356, 382). Of these artifacts 26 are found in core courses, while nine are found in specialization courses.

4.1 UNESCO Categories

4.1.1 Relationships

The key concept of Relationships encompasses several subcategories including families; friendship, love and romantic relationships; tolerance, inclusion and respect; and long-term commitments and parenting. Each of these subcategories have additional key ideas and learning outcomes articulate specific goals for learners to develop as they learn about how sexual health impacts relationships in a variety of ways. The main themes in this category include understanding the impact sexual health can have on relationships; identifying resources for support; learning how to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships, and develop skills to manage challenges while building healthy relationship skills; developing critical thinking skills to identify discrimination, seeking to understand difference, and promote diversity; understanding the complexity of long-term relationships, and the responsibilities of parenting (UNESCO, 2018).

Aspects of relationships as they relate to sexual health and sexuality appear in eight courses (166b, 171, 338, 350, 356, 382, 410, 475), with two references in course descriptions, four in learning outcomes, ten in course readings, and one in course assignments.

Course Descriptions. Within course descriptions, references to sex within relationships occurs twice, in 171 and 475. In 171, the course description states that “family issues are explored in terms of diversity (*sexual orientation* [emphasis added], race or ethnic affiliation/identity, *gender* [emphasis added], and socio-economic status)” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2021, p. 1). Similarly in 475 “students may focus their work on families who are experiencing a range of challenges (e.g., loss, depression, substance use), and these families can

reflect diverse configurations (e.g., single parent, *same-sex parents* [emphasis added], foster parents, etc.)” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020i, p. 3).

Learning Outcomes. In learning outcomes, sex is referenced three times in 171, 356, and 382. In each of these courses the learning outcomes were similar. Students are asked to: “demonstrate an awareness of the role of diversity—for example ethnic and racial, *gender*, *sexual orientation* [emphasis added]—in family life” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2021, p. 2); “demonstrate a critical understanding of how *gender and sexuality* [emphasis added] affect families within the context of CYC practice and within feminist frameworks” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020f); “learn how to support children and families inclusive of a *variety of sexual and gender identities/expressions* [emphasis added]” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020g).

Course Readings. Course readings and other materials offered the highest number of artifacts that relate sex with relationships, with 10 artifacts showing up in 166b (1), 171 (1), 338(1), 350 (1), 356 (4), and 382 (2). In 166b, the video “Growing Up Trans” (Navasky & O’Connor, 2015) explores the challenges and options for supporting trans children and their families as they navigate the joy and complexity of medical and relational aspects of transitioning. The blog post “4 ways Queer and Trans Parents are Raising Revolutionary Children During the Trump Era” (Powell, 2018, January 29) articulates the challenges experienced by queer and trans parents, and strategies used to resist and interrupt the discrimination and violence faced by minoritized families (171). Little (2001) explores challenges faced by youth navigating their gender and sexual orientation in schools, offering students in 338 strategies for supporting these students in practice. Alaggia and Kirshenbaum (2005) discuss the barriers experienced by children in disclosing sexual abuse, citing inflexible,

heteronormative gender roles, struggles with communication, and social isolation as factors. In 356, four articles explore gender and sexual diversity in families. Two of these articles explore diversity in family composition (Sheff, 2016; Shimoni & Baxter, 2019), while two offer strategies and frameworks for supporting queer families in a counselling context (Edwards et al., 2019; Lev & Sennott, 2020). The early years specialization course (382) offers two course readings that support queer families in early childhood education (ECE). The “Building Bridges Handbook” (Janmohamed & Campbell, 2009) is a resource guide that offers practical strategies for integrating queer families into the ECE curriculum. Secrett (2017), an openly gay mother and early childhood educator, offers insights into the experiences of queer families with children in ECE programs, and suggestions for creating inclusive learning environments.

Assignments. Across the curriculum, there is one course assignment in which sex and relationships intersect. In 410, the course assignment asks the student: “what type of family did you grow up in (nuclear, extended, blended, *same-sex* [emphasis added], interracial, adopted, etc.)?” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020h, p. 12).

Analysis. Understanding the impact and influence of sexual and gender diversity on relationships is one of the most comprehensively covered topics in the CYC curriculum. Specific strengths identified in the area of Relationships reflect the UNESCO subcategories of Families, as well as Tolerance, Inclusion and Respect. Meanwhile, the subcategories of Friendship, Love, and Romantic Relationships, and aspects of Log Term Commitments and Parenting have been identified as gaps in the curriculum. Optional topics offer opportunities for students’ personal growth and learning, as well as development of relational knowledge of gender and sexual diversity within their academic and practice settings.

Strengths. The syllabus material aligns with several aspects of the UNESCO key concept of Relationships. Aspects of diversity address how gender and sexuality manifest in family life. There is clearly an intentional engagement with the diversity and complexity of family issues, patterns, and processes, and diverse family configurations. The Child and Youth Care courses that are focus on families (e.g., 152, 475) place a strong emphasis on drawing on broad and inclusive definitions of families. Murry and Lippold (2018) found that families are becoming increasingly diverse, attributing this to a number of potential factors including a decline in marriage rates; an increase in in single parent households due to an increase in nonmarital childbirth; an increased number of queer couple households; diverse household configurations (e.g., multigenerational family homes, cohabitating parents, living apart/together families, grandparents/extended family raising children); and families formed through a variety of means (e.g., fertility treatment, surrogacy, adoption). This reality highlights the importance of the CYC perspective of maintaining an open and inclusive definition of family to allow students the opportunity to have their own experiences validated and honoured, as well as continuing to encourage a depth of understanding of the complexity and beauty found in diverse family configurations.

Another significant strength in the area of Relationships is found within the required readings. These readings require students to engage with course material that affirms queer and trans identities in children, interrogates heteronormative assumptions of family structures, highlights intersections of race and sexuality/gender, and articulates experiences of queer youth in schools. These important relational aspects of gender and sexuality are reflective of the subcategory of Tolerance, Inclusion, and Respect (UNESCO, 2018). The themes of the readings are strongly aligned with aspects of queer theory that “rejects static, fixed, and unifying identity

categories and is skeptical of their potential to empower, offering instead that identities also confine, discipline, and exclude” (Acosta, 2018, p. 470). This rejection creates openings for tolerance, inclusion and respect for diverse family and individual identities and experiences. Acosta (2018) also offers insights into how “queerer, intersectional family scholarship” can support diversity in sexuality and gender outside the predominantly white roots of family theory that “attends to what is missing when scholarship overlooks how oppression as experienced across intersecting identities leads to familial differences” (p.407).

These aspects of Relationships are key components that support the overall health and wellbeing of children and families that in turn creates thoughtful spaces to engage with sexual health and sexuality within families, as well as within Child and Youth Care practice.

Gaps. The UNESCO (2018) framework includes Friendship, Love, and Romantic Relationships as a subcategory of Relationships, which has been identified as a gap in the curriculum. Key learning outcomes acknowledge the importance of learning how to identify qualities of healthy and unhealthy sexual relationships as well as an understanding of how expressions of love and affection change over time (UNESCO, 2018). Byron (2017) found that “recent feminist and queer studies indicate the expanding social significance of friendship and the space it offers to negotiations of sex and relationships” and that “empirical studies note that the friendship role of sexual partnerships is increasingly prioritised” (p. 486). While the CYC curriculum may offer insights into the importance of peer relationships in other ways, it is not clearly linked in the curriculum to sexual health and sexuality. Bringing a more explicit understanding of how to support the development of healthy relationships, sexual or otherwise, into the curriculum would enhance a more comprehensive, holistic perspective on sexual health across the lifespan.

Another gap within the curriculum falls within the subcategory of Long-term Commitments and Parenting. This subcategory of Relationships includes three key ideas: (1) “marriage and long-term commitments can be rewarding and challenging”; (2) “many factors that influence if, why, and when people decide to have children”; and (3) “children have a variety of needs that parents/guardians have a responsibility to fulfill” (UNESCO, 2018, p. 44). The UNESCO (2018) guidelines offer a framework for comprehensive sexual health curriculum that is open to adaptation and interpretation based on the contextual needs of the population seeking to develop their curriculum. Since these particular ideas are suggested for students aged 15-18+, in one possible interpretation they appear to offer warnings to youth on the responsibility and weight of long-term commitments and parenting. Jorgensen-Wells, James, and Holmes (2021) suggest that:

As adolescents develop, creating meaningful relationships with others often becomes more important than it was previously because puberty begins and adolescents seek greater connection and acceptance outside the childhood home. The combination of these developmental processes allows romantic relationships to form and provide meaningful connection with a partner (p. 128).

This statement highlights the importance of romantic relationships among youth. Creating meaningful connections, navigating challenges, and experiencing the rewards and challenges for themselves will help inform their future relationships.

Deciding when and if to have children, and understanding the responsibility of parenting, is challenging regardless of a person’s age. Erfina et al. (2019) recognize that “a woman experiences heightened vulnerability and faces tremendous challenges when transitioning to

motherhood. This is exacerbated for young mothers and studies have shown that adolescent mothers experience an increased burden of responsibility during the transition to motherhood” (p. 222). This increased burden was found to be “mostly related to mourning for a life as it was with friends and school”, but teenaged mothers reported finding joy and happiness in the process of becoming mothers and experiencing love for their infants, resulting in high levels of commitment to embracing the responsibilities of parenting (Erfina et al., 2019, p. 226). This research highlights the importance of choice. Ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health care and information, including free and open access to birth control and abortion services, is essential to the overall health of birthing people of all ages.

Opportunities. Course descriptions, learning outcomes, and assignments offer opportunities to explore and address diverse identities in relationships as optional topics. This puts the onus on students to prioritize gender and sexual diversity in their academic work. It is possible that individuals may be more likely to focus on diversity if they identify as a sexual minority. Forbes and Ueno (2020) found that “allies’ engagement in equality movements to be driven by their moral values as well as personal relationships with queer people” (p. 160). Queering sex and gender in the syllabi, through any or all of Vachon’s (2020) five facets of “queer” (desire, identity, sexuality, theory, and politics), may offer a variety of opportunities for students with diverse identities to see themselves represented in the curriculum, and also offer all students a chance to challenge compulsory heteronormativity and gender identities outside the assumptive binary. Supporting students in developing awareness of various aspects of sex in relationships helps dismantle heteronormative assumptions, and also requires students to attend to the interaction between their own identity and the diverse identities of the individuals, families, and communities they encounter in practice. This could look like drawing in more

course content that highlights the richness of healthy sexuality in intimate relationships, or providing more nuanced and varied examples of historically problematized parenting realities (e.g., single parents, teen mothers). This would support the development of comprehensive sexual health and sexuality education in the context of relationships and take up Vachon's (2020) suggestion to queer CYC by "[striving] to hear the invitation to open the space in which things can be done differently" (p. 77).

4.1.2 Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality

The key category of Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality encompasses several ideas. Values inform sexual decision making through exposure to social and cultural norms. This exposure may lead to children and youth developing values that differ from the values of their parents. Policy and legislation regarding sexual and reproductive health varies by region, which requires critical engagement with a human rights perspective on sexual and reproductive health (UNESCO, 2018).

In this section, one artifact was identified in a single assignment in 338. There were no course descriptions, learning outcomes, or course readings found in the syllabi that addressed any aspect of Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality.

Assignments. The assignment in 338 that refers to sex as it relates to values, rights, and culture is located within a major case study assignment. This assignment states that students are:

Encouraged to explore the macro and chrono systems that have set and maintained certain *structures, practices, policies, and standards* [emphasis added] that may affect the child, youth, and family in less than optimal ways. For example, if a toy kitchen is set up

in one corner and a car track in another and the children are referred to as “boys and girls,” how might that affect a genderqueer child’s optimal development? (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d).

On the grading rubric, this aspect of the assignment is assessed based on the criteria of “Case Conceptualization, completeness and thoroughness” as “Mapping the ecology: conceptual framework” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d, p. 27). This ecological mapping is one of six parts that together total eight of the potential 20 marks allocated for the assignment.

Analysis. The key concept of Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality is a concept that could use some further development and integration into the CYC curriculum, as evidenced by the singular artifact identified in this category. The strength within the curriculum is found in the subcategory Culture, Society, and Sexuality. Values and Sexuality, as well as Human Rights and Sexuality were both identified as gaps in the curriculum. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum are offered by broadening the scope of the existing assignment, as well as proposing new possibilities that take up these concepts.

Strengths. The 338 assignment offers a good opportunity for CYC students to explore the impact of structures, practices, policies, and standards that are designed and driven by powerful social and political forces (e.g., colonization, capitalism, political climates). While not required to address sexuality specifically, this assignment is closely aligned with the UNESCO (2018) subcategory of Culture, Society, and Sexuality in that it asks students to attend to the macrosystems (cultural/societal norms) and chronosystems (temporal dimensions/place in history) influence on systems that privilege some and discriminate and oppress others (Shelton, 2019). Policies and legislation governing access to sexual health services and information vary

greatly across the globe (Ford et al., 2019). The CYC program welcomes students from around the world through on-campus and distance education, as well as supporting international practicum placements (University of Victoria, 2020d). This makes it important to offer opportunities for students to gain an understanding of international and global contexts outside the personal experiences from their own locale. Continuing to provide curriculum content that engages CYC students in expanding their understanding of the impact of cultural differences and societal expectations on the lived experiences of their clients, both locally and globally, will support the professional development of emerging practitioners.

Gaps. Values about sex vary greatly among and within families (Grossman et al., 2018). The UNESCO (2018) subcategory of Values and Sexuality highlights the importance of knowing one's own values and beliefs to support sexual decision making, and understanding that children's values may potentially differentiate or align with those of their parents. Abortion is often a contentious topic within families (Frohworth, Coleman & Moore, 2018). With the recent overturning of Roe vs Wade in the United States, equitable access to abortion and sexual health services are being systematically annihilated, disproportionately impacting low-income individuals, young people, sexual and gender diverse individuals, and people of colour (Lavery, 2022; Zhou & Zhou, 2022). Supporting an understanding of one's own values and biases is often addressed in CYC. Applying this self-knowledge to aspects of sexuality and sexual health will support students in understanding and advocating for these disproportionately impacted populations in accessing health services that are in alignment with their own values, beliefs and needs.

Human Rights and Sexuality is another subcategory that is not currently included in the written curriculum. While the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) Declaration of

Sexual Rights has no power of its own to hold legislators and policy makers accountable to its tenets, it does suggest that “increased recognition, understanding, and acceptance of the role of human rights in people’s lives can create further opportunities for comprehensive sexual health programs to improve [sexual] health and well-being” (Kismödi et al., 2017, p. 2). The UNESCO (2018) International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education has been designed to be adaptable to diverse needs of individual nations or regions, allowing for content to be attuned to specific context based on its values and cultural considerations, while also acknowledging the importance of fighting for human rights across the globe. Child and Youth Care’s commitment to social justice and human rights is clearly declared in its values, and demonstrated across practice settings (University of Victoria, 2020c). Aligning these commitments with the WAS Declaration of Sexual Rights will support a more comprehensive understanding of the sexual needs, desires, risks, and pleasures within a CYC context.

Opportunities. Within the topic of Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality, there are many potential opportunities to enrich the existing curriculum. The current 338 assignment offers a chance for students to reflect on the impacts of an imposed gender binary (boys and girls) and assumptively gendered activities sequestered to different play areas in the classroom (kitchen corner/ car track) on gender diverse children (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d). This example used within the assignment itself disrupts gender norms and heteronormativity in a way that supports all students contend with their beliefs and values around sex and gender by “[making] visible the restrictively gendered and cisnormative workings of gender that normally go unnoticed” (Neary, 2021).

4.1.3 Understanding Gender

In this UNESCO guideline, gender is understood as a socially constructed aspect of identity that is influenced by cultural norms. Key ideas support the need to identify and challenge an individuals' understanding of their own gender and biases; the impact of homophobia and transphobia on sexual minorities; the influence that discrimination, cultural expectations, and power dynamics have on gender-based and sexualized violence; and highlights the responsibility to be active in speaking out against this type of violence (UNESCO, 2018).

Across the selected syllabi, 22 artifacts were identified relating to gender. These were found in the statements of learning outcomes (2), assignments (4), and readings (12) and showed up in the following courses: 110, 166b, 171, 338, 350, 356, 382, and 410. There were no artifacts identified within course descriptions.

Learning Outcomes. In the course syllabi, learning outcomes are identified as either a course level outcome, or as a module or weekly learning outcome. Both learning outcomes relating to gender were described as a module/weekly learning outcome. In 110, the outcome within module one states that students will learn to: “describe the intersecting influences of *gender* [emphasis added], class, ethnicity, race, nationality, age, ability, and sexual orientation in shaping identities, opportunities and experiences” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a). The 338 weekly learning outcome is found within week 18: Focus on Sexual Development. This outcome states that students will be able to “articulate formation of *gender identity* [emphasis added] and sexual orientation by understanding LGBTQ* (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, Queer/Questioning) issues on individual development and community responses” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d).

Assignments. Of the four assignments that include gender in their description, two are found in the 110 syllabi. The 110 assignment “Social Location Map and Critical Reflection,” worth 20% of the course, asks students to “prepare a 1-page social location map that reflects your multiple and fluid identities across different identity dimensions and axes of privilege, including for example: age, *gender* [emphasis added], race/ethnicity, ability, class, sexual orientation, education, citizenship, cis/transgender, language, etc.” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a).

A second assignment in 110, “Reducing Racism and Colonial Violence/Promoting Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice for Children, Youth and Families” (30%), has several references to gender as options within a special interest topic of the student’s choice. Students are asked to identify a program or service that “focuses on promoting diversity, inclusion, empowerment, decolonization, and/or social justice for children, youth, families, and communities”, with an expectation of including at least one “dimension of diversity” as an explicit focus (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a, p. 14). An extensive list is offered for optional topics, including the following related to gender: gender violence; gender expression/fluidity/variance; queer identities; gender affirming care; queer youth; and gender non-conforming children (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a). Additionally, students are required to articulate their personal social location, including their gender identity, and how it may influence their praxis.

A self-reflection paper is offered as an alternative to a group project in the 338 syllabus. This assignment entitled “Integrating Development in Intersectional Praxis Part A: Social Location and Positionality” requires students to engage with their own gender in several ways. First, they are asked to “describe succinctly how your identity has been developed in the context

of the identity markers such as *gender* [emphasis added], socialization, sexuality, ethnic/white/immigrant/refugee/ mixed heritage/Indigenous ethnic identity, spirituality” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d, p. 30). Students are then asked several questions related to their positionality:

Describe your social position as it relates to power, privilege, oppression, influence and authority particularly as you consider your role as a professional practitioner. How might you apply your knowledge of identity development in CYC practice? How might your unique identity awareness within intersections of privilege and oppression influence you in your current or future praxis? (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d, p. 31).

Finally, the assignment asks students to identify a topic that was covered in the course content for further exploration. Potential topics that relate to gender include: gender variance/sexuality; diversity (e.g., queer/trans*); conceptualizations and outcomes of gender construction; hot contemporary issues (e.g., queer families, gender roles/identities); power/privilege (white, straight, class, cis-gender, ability, size, etc.) (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d).

The “Self Location and Positionality” assignment in 410 is similar to the 338 assignment. While articulating their social location in part A, students are asked: “How does your *gender identity* [emphasis added] and sexual orientation influence your work? Give clear examples of how this has influenced your practice experience” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020h, p.12). In part B, students are then again required to attend to their positionality as it relates to their practice:

Describe the diversity of your practicum setting and your position in that diversity (i.e., are you a part of the majority or are you a minority in some way). How does your body

inform others in terms of racialization, ethnicity, *gender identity and expression* [emphasis added], ability, age, etc.? How does it affect how you are seen and treated? How does this self knowledge affect you working with others who have historically and persistently been marginalized as a group? (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020h, p.12).

Readings. Artifacts relating to gender are found in 11 course readings in 110 (1), 166b (3), 171 (1), 338 (1), 350 (2), 356 (2), and 382 (1).

For example, Anderson-Nathe (2019) engages with binaries in nature and childhood, offering an opportunity to queer gender in the field of Child and Youth Care. Their article “Queering Gender and Sexuality in Child and Youth Care” is found in the course textbook for 110 and this chapter is a required reading

The four course readings offered in 166b and 171 focus on gender as experienced by trans youth. Dame (2004) offers insights into the experiences of trans youth within the healthcare system. Data from Canada’s first study focusing on the physical and mental health of trans youth informs the reading in 166b that offers students insights into the needs of trans youth and their families as they navigate educational and health care settings to reduce barriers and increase positive outcomes (Veale et al., 2015). Once again, Navasky and O’Connor’s (2015) video “Growing Up Trans” takes a look at the challenges and choices faced by children and their families as they navigate their gender transition, while Powell’s (2018, January 29) blog contextualizes these experiences within a right-wing, conservative US government regime. This video and blog were previously identified as artifacts in the key concept of Relationships and have been additionally included here as they also contribute to the curriculum under the

UNESCO category of Understanding Gender. Little's (2001) article on the experiences of queer youth in school-based settings is an assigned reading in 338 that was also discussed previously under Relationships but is relevant in this area as it explores identity development challenges of gender diverse youth. Shelton et al. (2018) and Mountz (2011) describe misgendering and presumptive heterosexuality as challenges faced by queer youth experiencing homelessness, and those living institutional settings, in the 350 course readings. The 350 course was previously a core course, but has been transitioned to a specialization course, thus exposure to these readings is now limited to supporting students' understanding of gender for those students pursuing a Child Protection Specialization designation. The National Centre on Parent Family and Community Engagement's (2020) guidebook "Healthy Gender Development and Young Children: A Guide for Early Childhood Programs and Professionals", draws on extensive research on child and gender development, and is a required reading in 382 but is only accessible to students in the Early Years Specialization stream.

A core course within the curriculum, 356, includes two readings that support learning about gender. Previously discussed under the category of Relationships, the readings by Shimoni and Baxter (2019) and Edwards et al. (2019) are also included in the category of Understanding Gender as these materials support an understanding of gender identity and highlight the lack of training in family therapy that specifically addresses the needs of gender diverse people.

Analysis. Gender has been taken up comprehensively in the CYC curriculum in alignment with the key ideas around Understanding Gender within the UNESCO (2018) framework. The syllabi content in this category touches on all three subcategories within Understanding Gender (The Social Construction of Gender and Gender Norms; Gender Equality, Stereotypes and Bias; and Gender-based Violence) and are included as strengths in this analysis.

Due to the comprehensive nature of the curriculum content in this area, identified gaps focus on structural challenges. Opportunities for addressing these gaps are presented to offer potential structural changes that support student learning in this area.

Strengths. The experiences of gender diverse youth are taken up in the curriculum primarily through course readings. In the CYC curriculum, trans identities are predominantly addressed through course readings touching on topics such as accessing health care (general physical health, mental health, gender affirming care), experiences of trans parents, gender exploration and development in children, and trans inclusive family therapy.

Despite the increasing acceptance of gender diversity outside the male/female binary in Canada, trans youth describe exceptional challenges with interpersonal violence, accessing mental and physical health care, managing emotional distress, and often avoid being visible in their communities for fear discrimination (Taylor et al., 2020). Child and Youth Care practitioners working in a wide range of practice settings (e.g., schools, hospitals, recreational facilities, youth shelters, etc.) can support youth in not only facing these challenges, but also affirming and celebrating their unique and fluid identities.

Davies et al. (2021) suggest that “educators can resist heteronormativity and cisnormativity by cultivating environments that expect gender and sexual diversity *before* [emphasis added] knowing which children and families are in their care” (p. 12). Thus, sexual health and sexuality education must include sexual and gender minority content that normalizes trans and/or non-binary identities, in a gender-inclusive setting to allow individuals to see themselves reflected in the content, create safety, and provide relevant information to address their curiosities and desires (Taylor, 2020). The CYC curriculum offers a diverse array of

readings that support the development of practitioners who will have a solid foundation for supporting gender diversity in their work.

Gaps. One challenge presented in the curriculum was a disconnect between a defined learning outcome, and the corresponding assignment. In order to satisfy the learning outcome in 338, students are required to come to an understanding of LGBTQ+ gender identity development. The assignment presents several challenges that may limit the students' ability to entirely fulfill this learning outcome. First, the social location assignment is optional. If the student chooses the group project over the individual assignment, they would need to intentionally take up gender as an aspect of their assignment. Second, the assignment asks students to describe their own identity markers, including gender, and attend to their own positionality. This may limit cis identifying students in their engagement with aspects of queer identity development. Finally, students are tasked with exploring a topic of their choice that may be drawn from any aspect of the course content. Several options relating to gender are explicitly offered to support the learning outcome, but with such a vast number of choices to focus on students may not take up these offerings. Somewhat unsurprisingly, Seifried et al. (2018) found that "students who seized optional learning opportunities would have better learning outcomes (i.e., performance and motivation) than students who did not" (p. 247). Developing the curriculum to align the learning goals with assignments will help enrich students' understanding of gender diversity while continuing to encourage them to meaningfully engage with gender.

The courses descriptions and learning outcomes are well supported through assigned readings, which is a clear strength within the development of the curriculum, but they do lack a direct connection to assignments that ask students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in this particular area. Wijngaards-de Meij and Merx (2018) state that "in order for learning

objectives to become actual learning outcomes, and therefore to optimize students' learning, it is important to make sure every activity helps to realize the learning objectives" (p. 221). This closer look at the data allows for a chance to highlight opportunities to align learning outcomes with course assignments across the curriculum, which may offer students opportunities to deepen, and more clearly articulate, their learning.

Opportunities. The CYC curriculum offers many opportunities for students to engage with gender across a number of courses. Individuals will bring with them their own experiences, biases, and interests in exploring and seeking understandings of their own gender identity, as well as learning how to engage with people of all genders in their practice. Students from smaller communities, countries with explicit discrimination policies and legislation against queer and trans people, will need to thoughtfully take up these learning opportunities to expand their knowledge of gender and sexual diversity. This may also be true for anyone facing challenges or differences in values or beliefs in their families and communities that continue to be influenced by compulsory heterosexuality and gender binaries. Pollitt et al. (2021) speaks to the necessity of these learning opportunities for any and all people, stating that "these messages are internalized by all people living in a heteronormative society and youth are particularly susceptible to these social messages as they begin to imagine their future lives. Many youth expect their futures to be heteronormative and learn to reinforce heteronormativity through social experiences" (p. 522). Continuing to push back against heteronormativity and disrupt these cultural norms will help support people of all genders explore their personal identities with more safety, and with a sense of curiosity of what is possible.

4.1.4 Violence and Staying Safe

The UNESCO category of Violence and Staying Safe includes ideas that support individual responsibility to address physical, psychological and sexual violence; understand the importance of practicing consent, including complex factors impacting the ability to freely give consent; and the benefits and challenges of social media and pornography as tools for self-learning (UNESCO, 2018).

Curricular artifacts that support learning about violence show up in two assignments (110, 338), and four course readings (205, 350). Additionally, two university policy links required in all UVic syllabi round out the artifacts in this category. Course descriptions and learning outcomes did not contain any artifacts related to any aspect of the Violence and Staying Safe category.

Assignments. The 110 course assignment “Reducing Racism and Colonial Violence/Promoting Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice for Children, Youth and Families” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a), first introduced in Understanding Gender, also offers opportunities for learning about violence. This special topic assignment, worth 30%, supports an exploration of a program designed to “reduce racism and colonial violence and/or promote equity, inclusion, social justice for children, youth, families, and/or communities” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a, p. 14). Optional dimensions offered as a focus that relate to the category of violence include gender violence, sexual exploitation, suicide prevention, Black Lives Matter, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and the Me-Too movement (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a). Sexual abuse is also included as an optional topic in the 338 assignment “Developmental Application & Analysis” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d).

This assignment requires students to apply theory to help understand the identity development of children experiencing a specific challenge. The social location paper in 338, described in *Understanding Gender*, also includes optional topics related to violence, including trauma-informed practice; trauma; intimate partner violence; colonialism/colonization; stereotypes/prejudice/ discrimination; suicide; social justice/injustice; deconstructing “at risk”; and *Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women* (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d).

Readings. Artifacts relating to violence are found in four course readings in 205 (1), and 350 (3). Clark (2016) centres anti-colonialism and Indigenous sovereignty through witnessing and resisting the discourses of risk. This reading provides students in 205 an opportunity to learn how “Red intersectionality” offers a critical perspective on the violence experienced by Indigenous girls, and how they resist this violence.

Several curricular artifacts relating to violence in the 350 course readings focus on child sexual abuse. As already discussed under *Relationships*, Alaggia and Kirshenbaum (2005) highlight the importance of identifying barriers to sexual abuse disclosures, with family violence being a significant factor impacting a child’s feelings of safety in speaking up about their experiences. Yuille et al. (2009) offer an updated version of this technique, which is utilized by various police departments and child protection agencies across Canada tasked with investigating child sexual abuse. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) is a similar protocol employed during forensic interviewing of child sexual abuse disclosures. Olafson (2012) offers a critique of this protocol and suggests the development of specific strategies to support “nondisclosing, partially disclosing, or recanting children, very young children, children with developmental disabilities, and children whose sexual abuse allegations are evaluated in the context of custody or visitation disputes” (p. 1).

University policies. Two links to university policy and resources are included in every UVic syllabus. Under the category of “Important Policy Information”, a link entitled “Discrimination & Sexual Harassment” (<https://www.uvic.ca/equity/discrimination-harassment/index.php>) leads to a webpage with an additional link ([Discrimination and Harassment \(GV0205\) \(uvic.ca\)](#)) (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a). This document articulates the UVic discrimination and harassment policy, including procedures for filing complaints (University of Victoria, 2015).

Under the category of “Resources”, the link “Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response at UVic” (<https://www.uvic.ca/sexualizedviolence/>) leads to information on prevention and support for people who have experienced sexualized violence, as well as information on consent (University of Victoria, 2021).

Analysis. Under the UNESCO (2018) category of Violence and Staying Safe, three subcategories are articulated: Violence; Consent, Privacy and Bodily Integrity; Safe use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Strengths in the curriculum are found within course readings that attend to Violence, while gaps are found in both the areas of Consent, Privacy and Bodily Integrity and ICTs. Opportunities for further learning are offered to students through university policy and resources addressing discrimination and sexual harassment.

Strengths. Indigenous girls’ resistance to colonial violence, the impacts of sexual abuse on families, and sexual abuse investigation protocols/guidelines are the focus of several course readings addressing issues of sexual abuse and violence in the curriculum. This is identified as a strength, and a specific asset to student learning that supports the lived experiences of many young people. In 2020 alone, 10 388 incidences of sexual violations against children were

reported to police (Moreau, 2021). If rates of police reports hold true, we can infer that the actual number is five times higher than what is reported: over 50 000 children sexually assaulted in a one-year period. Though data is often of poor quality, research consistently shows that rates of sexual abuse are disproportionately higher in Indigenous populations (Louis, 2018). Simard (2020) points to immense gaps in services and programming seeking to end sexual violence against children and youth and address the failure to acknowledge the overwhelming silence of sexual abuse against children on reserves. The intergenerational impacts of the Indian Residential “School” system and the ongoing commitment to colonization by the Government of Canada are directly responsible for this current reality. The sexual abuse suffered by generations of children forced from their homes, stripped of their culture, and stolen from their families has been identified as a significant factor responsible for disproportionately high rates of sexual abuse in Indigenous communities (Burrage et al., 2022). All Child and Youth Care students, and perhaps particularly students seeking an Indigenous or Child Protection specialization, benefit greatly from the offerings that broaden their perspectives on the violence that is disproportionately experienced by marginalized people as they grow in their practice.

Gaps. Consent, Privacy and Bodily Integrity and Safe use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are subcategories within the UNESCO (2018) key concept of Violence that are currently unaddressed in the syllabi. Learning about consent, social media, and pornography are entirely absent from the written CYC curriculum. Conversations about consent, including communicating sexual desires as well as sexual refusal skills, are well aligned to address the aforementioned realities of sexualized violence by promoting healthy sexual communication (MacAulay et al., 2021). Developing critical thinking skills around social media and pornography also help create safety and potentially reduce risk of violence through learning

how to discern high quality sexual health information sources (Astle et al., 2021; Byers et al., 2017). Integrating aspects of consent, social media, and pornography from the UNESCO Violence and Staying Safe category into the written curriculum will support sexual communication, self-led learning of sexuality and sexual health, and have the potential to decrease violence among students, as well as with the children, youth, and families that they serve.

Opportunities. University policy links provide students access to information on discrimination and sexual harassment, as well as resources for prevention and support for sexualized violence. As a student who has (nearly) completed two degrees at UVic, I can say from my own experience that I followed the links to these policies and resources for the first time during this research process. While it is important to support students with these resources, I am concerned that students in need of these resources may not gain access via the syllabi links. Recent statistics indicate that the highest rate of sexual assault across the lifespan is experienced by youth aged 15-24; more than half of perpetrators are known to the victim; less than half of perpetrators brought to trial are convicted. This reality makes it understandable that less than 20% of sexual assaults are reported to police (Government of Canada, 2019). This data is based on statistics from the general population. The violence experienced by the queer community is overwhelmingly disproportionate, with sexual minorities experiencing sexualized violence three times the rate of heterosexual people (Statistics Canada, 2020). Jeffery et al. (2022) found that among students at a Canadian university, “23.2% of women, 9.6% of men, and 16.7% of nonbinary students reported experiencing SV at least once in the past 12 months” (p. 1). Links in the syllabi that require a multistep process to access information and resources may be a well-meaning but potentially ineffective strategy to address sexual misconduct and violence. One

possible recommendation that may support students in taking up this opportunity could include the university taking steps to ensure that the policies, procedures, and resources available to students are clearly delivered during new student orientation. Like the syllabi link, this would not guarantee all students receive the information in this way, but it could potentially reach a number of students that may otherwise remain uninformed of these important policies and resources.

4.1.5 Skills for Health and Well-being

Skills for Health and Well-being support the development of healthy communication and decision making. According to UNESCO, topics under this category include: norms and peer influence on sexual behavior; decision-making; communication, refusal and negotiation skills; media literacy and sexuality; and finding help and support. These topics acknowledge the influence of social and cultural norms on sexual behavior, while also supporting autonomy in decision making. The skills highlight the potential consequences of personal decisions, interrogate the role of media on behaviour, and accentuate the importance of communication in relationships (UNESCO, 2018).

There were no artifacts identified that relate to this UNESCO key concept in the syllabi documents.

Analysis. Due to the lack of artifacts in this category it is not possible to acknowledge strengths within the written curriculum. The following analysis offers insights into the UNESCO (2018) category of Skills for Health and Well-being as opportunities for enriching the CYC written curriculum to support the key ideas.

Opportunities. The development of Skills for Health and Well-being is a foundational aspect of comprehensive sexual health and sexuality education. This UNESCO category articulates several key ideas that guide learning for students. The key ideas that support Skills for Health and Well-being include the following statements:

- “It is possible to make rational decisions about sexual behaviour.”
- “Decision-making consequences on oneself and others, including social and health consequences.”
- “Sexual decision-making can result in possible legal consequences.”
- “Communication is key to expressing personal needs and sexual limits.”
- “Negative and inaccurate media portrayals of men and women can be challenged to influence behaviour positively and promote gender equality.”
- “Everyone has the right to affordable, factual and respectful assistance that maintains confidentiality and protects privacy.” (UNESCO, 2018, p. 59).

Sexual decision-making is influenced by many factors. Research has shown that young people make choices based on relationship factors (e.g., duration of relationship, level of trust, to express love, deepen intimacy and connection) and physical factors (attractiveness of partner, to experience pleasure) (Carlson & Soller, 2019). When positioning the UNESCO key ideas against these identified factors for decision making, it is difficult to see how making rational decisions about sex is consistently attainable. While the claim that communication skills are a significant factor in negotiating sexual activity has been well established, research continues to equate sexual decision making with condom use (Strickland et al., 2020). This continues to perpetuate the heteronormative assumptions of gender and relationships that marginalize queer and gender diverse people, while also continuing to frame sexual activity as risky and potentially dangerous.

The deficit focus of these ideas highlights social, health and legal consequences; privilege needs and limits over desires and invitations; ascribe to gender binaries while promoting equality; and claim rights and access to support that are not equitably available to all people. Including discourses of consent and desire in the CYC curriculum will help support a more comprehensive view of sexual health and sexuality in their practice.

4.1.6 The Human Body and Development

The focus of this UNESCO category goes beyond basic anatomy and physiology, focusing primarily on reproductive health and sexuality over the lifespan, including the role of hormones in physical and emotional changes. Key ideas include the changing physical, sexual, and reproductive function of bodies, fertility challenges and options, puberty, and the impacts of cultural and gender stereotypes on body image (UNESCO, 2018).

Only one artifact was identified in the curriculum that relates to sexual health and sexuality within the category of The Human Body and Development, and this was a learning outcome in 338. No course descriptions, assignments, or readings were found to include any aspects from this category.

Learning outcomes. This artifact was identified in the 338 weekly topic “Focus on Sexual Development”, and states that students will “articulate *normative sexual development* [emphasis added] and sexual behaviour problems associated with age grouping” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d, p. 10).

Analysis. The UNESCO (2018) category of the Human Body and Development encompasses subcategories that include Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology,

Reproduction, Puberty, and Body Image. Although there is a single artifact that can be attributed to the area of Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology, it has been included as an opportunity instead of a strength. The subcategories of Reproduction, Puberty, and Body Image are absent from the curriculum.

Gaps. The UNESCO (2018) subcategory of Reproduction identifies the key learning outcome as gaining an understanding of fertility challenges, options, and ways to support people struggling with infertility. Child and Youth Care practitioners will inevitably encounter situations that would benefit from knowledge in these areas. It is also important to remember that just as CYC should not be transformed into a sexuality studies program, it is also not a biology program. Gaining a foundational understanding of the human body and sexual development is essential to their ability to understand and support challenges faced by their clients but is vital to recognize that “stories of infertility are constructed within a heteronormative lens” (Novotny, 2019, p. 124). While UNESCO does identify fertility issues as an aspect of this category, it neglects to include queer polyamorous relationships, couples or singles in their journey towards parenthood. Novotny (2019) recognizes that the “experience of infertility told as an embodied narrative impacts many—beyond those who identify as female and heterosexual” (p. 122). In order to support all family configurations, it is essential to not only offer students basic knowledge, but to also work towards a queering of The Human Body and Development.

The Human Body and Development is a foundational aspect of sexual health education across the lifespan. The UNESCO (2018) key learning under the subcategory of Puberty supports learning about the impact of hormonal changes over time. Learning about bodies and their growth and development ideally begins in the early years. Teaching children the correct names for genitals (e.g., vulva, vagina, penis, scrotum) instead of euphemistic names (e.g., privates,

down there, vajayjay, wiener, balls) is a strategy employed in child sexual abuse prevention programs (Kenny et al., 2020). Knowledge of the structure and function of the vulva and vagina can increase sexual pleasure and help decrease the orgasm gap (Andrejek et al., 2022; Mahar et al., 2020). Hormonal changes that begin with menarche and end in menopause have a significant impact on individuals. The symptoms of these changes can include “hot flashes and night sweats as well as genitourinary symptoms, mood and cognitive changes, sexual difficulties, and musculoskeletal pain” (Ellington et al., 2022, p. 22). These few examples help contextualize the importance of sexual health education on the anatomical and physiological structures and processes of the body through, and beyond, puberty. Supporting knowledge acquisition in these areas, as well as the development of skills that support engaging with children, youth, and families in practice about their body’s structures and functions, will help bolster the cultivation of intersectional values and understandings of what it means to be a whole human among CYC students.

Opportunities. The single artifact in this category refers to the articulation of “normative” sexual development as a learning outcome for this course (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d, p. 10), which offers some connection to the UNESCO (2018) subcategory of Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology. This invites the question: what is normal? Frank (2020) states that “due to the deep history and presumed “naturalness” of the gender/sex binary, non-normative bodies are marginalized for their state of “otherness”” (p. 373). In other words, any experience or expression that falls outside of this binary is traditionally understood to be unnatural. If we are to truly undertake a queering of sexual health, and CYC, by working towards “[destabilizing] normative understandings of bodies, health, and sexuality” (O’Quinn & Fields, 2019, p. 180) it is important to attend to language used to describe sexual development in our

curriculum to maintain an alignment with our CYC values. Riggs (2019) suggests a critical developmental approach that offers an opportunity to deconstruct these dated understandings of development by building a framework that is “both nonlinear and non-normative” (p. ix), that embrace diversity and side-steps the prescriptive nature of previous understandings of development. This framework was specifically designed to support working with transgender children and youth and their families, but also offers opportunities to view sexual development through a queer lens that supports any number of diverse experiences of sexual development. Drawing on the foundational work of Judith Butler, Burns (2014) explains that inflexible, prescriptive definitions of sex and gender creates a narrative that sends a message that “to have the wrong body, a body that falls outside the normative laws that govern gender, sex and sexuality, is to fail to have a human body. Humanness is thus always bound to normative models of sex and gender that register at the level of the flesh” (p. 91). Frank (2020) explores menstruation as it has been historically understood as a function of the “female” body, offering an understanding that this particular biological function ascribes gender. In order to attend to the diverse identities and bodies of all humans, creating openings for understanding sexual development through a critical lens offers opportunities to celebrate all bodies.

4.1.7 Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour

The UNESCO category of Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour encompasses the “biological, social, psychological, spiritual, ethical and cultural dimensions” (UNESCO, 2018, p. 70) of sexuality and sexual behaviour over time. It states that sex should be pleasurable, but also requires prevention strategies to avoid negative outcomes (e.g., unwanted pregnancy and STIs) (UNESCO, 2018).

Artifacts identified in this category were found in 110, 205, 338, 350, 356, and 382 showing up in the course learning outcomes (3), assignments (2), and course readings (6). No course descriptions included any aspect of Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour.

Learning outcomes. The learning outcome in 110 was identified within the learning module “Becoming a Critically Reflective CYC Practitioner” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a, p. 3). Upon completion of this module, students are expected to be able to “describe the intersecting influences of gender, class, ethnicity, race, nationality, age, ability, and *sexual orientation* [emphasis added] in shaping identities, opportunities and experiences” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a, p. 3). The 338 learning outcomes have been previously identified as artifacts in The Human Body and Development and Understanding Gender but are additionally included here as they also speak to aspects of Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour. The week entitled “Focus on Sexual Development” includes two artifacts requiring students to develop the ability to articulate “normative sexual development and *sexual behaviour problems* [emphasis added] associated with age grouping” and also the “formation of gender identity and *sexual orientation* [emphasis added] by understanding *LGBTQ** (*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, Queer/Questioning*) [emphasis added] issues on individual development and community responses” (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d, p. 10).

Assignments. The two assignments from 110 have been previously mentioned. This time the assignments are understood as they relate to sexuality. Revisiting the social location assignment, students are required to articulate various dimensions of their personal identity, including their sexual orientation (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a). The special topics assignment also asks for personal reflection on social location. “Dimensions of diversity” relating to Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour that are offered as optional topics for exploration

were limited, suggesting “queer identities” and “queer youth” as offerings (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020a, p. 14).

Readings. Three readings of relevance in this category are included in 205. Boatwright (2019) offers the only unique artifact within the category of Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour, providing students in 205 with an article highlighting resistance by queer youth of color to mainstream, heteronormative media that continues to invisibilize and silence their unique and diverse bodies and voices. Shelton et al. (2018) contends with asking about sexual orientation among homeless youth, while Mountz (2011) once again grapples with the challenges faced by youth with minoritized sexualities in the child welfare and youth incarceration systems fraught with systemic biases. Previously described under the category of Relationships, Sheff (2016) highlights the discrimination and stigma experienced by (queer) polyamorous families, citing the necessity of resilience when interacting with the legal, educational, and child welfare systems.

Minoritized sexualities in ECE programming is included as a pair of readings in the 382 course. Janmohamed and Campbell (2009) and Secrett (2017) offer opportunities for students to learn about the positive impacts of inclusive ECE curriculum not only on queer families, but for families of many configurations to disrupt heteronormative depictions of sexuality.

Analysis. The UNESCO topic of Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour support the development of two key ideas: the pleasure and responsibility of partnered sexual behaviours, and the importance of sexual decision-making in managing risk. The strengths found in the syllabi focus on sexuality as a dimension of identity. Concepts sexual behaviour and decision making are identified as gaps in the written curriculum. Opportunities in this category are

explored through the possibilities and challenges of self identification within self-location assignments.

Strengths. Articulating one's own sexuality as a dimension of identity, while also learning how to support diverse identities in practice appears frequently in the curriculum, offering students multiple opportunities to explore sexuality. One way that the curriculum supports this undertaking is through self-location assignments. Marquis et al. (2021) describes social location within an intersectional framework as “a product of multiple, mutually influencing social categorizations and views systems of oppression (e.g., those connected to race, sexual orientation, class, gender) as being part of one overarching ‘matrix of domination’” or their “particular constellation of intersecting social identities” (p. 1192). Providing students with the opportunity to define their personal social location is not only in alignment with the values of Child and Youth Care, but also with the learning outcomes identified in the syllabi. If the goal of articulating social location is to achieve the learning outcomes of building the capacity of students to engage with the complexity of their own lived experiences as well as those of their clients in practice, creating scaffolded opportunities to engage, question, consider, and adapt to the fluidity of identity. As a clearly articulated aspect of personal identity, sexuality and sexual behaviour can be revisited and understood by the student over time, across different courses with varying focuses, as they move their way through the undergraduate curriculum. Course assignments, though not focused on sexual diversity specifically, often require students to draw on course material to support their arguments. By offering course readings that highlight diverse identities and experiences and are also devoid of material that reinforces compulsory heteronormativity, students are then obligated to entangle themselves with diversity in way that allows for opportunities for critical thinking and the development of a deeper understanding of

sexual and gender diversity. Turner et al. (2019) suggests that “scaffolding an understanding of racial formation, intersectionality, and the historicization of power, privilege, and oppression, which provides students analytical means to understand how diverse identities, including their own, are formed and historically rooted” (p. 39). The course readings in the CYC curriculum provide many invitations for students to attend to sexual diversity in their academic work and offer foundational learning that promotes curiosity and thoughtfulness when working with sexually diverse populations.

Gaps. The inclusion of a “discourse of desire” first identified by Fine (1988) remains elusive in sexual health education for young people. This absence within the specific domain of sexual health education makes it understandable that it is also absent in the CYC curriculum. When middle school educators tasked with delivering sexual health content to youth struggle with their own discomfort, biases, and lack of confidence, it is not surprising that challenges would persist in higher education (Rose et al., 2019; Sobberi et al., 2022). Zaneva et al. (2022) found that incorporating pleasure in sexual health education has direct relationship with condom use, noting the implications for reducing HIV and STI transmission. While reducing health risks are important from a public health perspective, pleasure unto itself has significant positive impacts on overall health. Gianotten et al. (2021) found that sexual pleasure was associated with pain reduction (e.g., headaches), sleep improvement, improved immune system function, decreased cortisol (stress hormone), positively influencing mood/ reduced depression, and decrease cognitive decline in older adults.

Opportunities. The practice of articulating social location is thoroughly taken up across the entire curriculum. References to social location occur 45 times across the undergraduate syllabi, with six assignments focused on articulating the student’s social location either primarily

or as a significant component of the assignment. Social location can be defined as “the combination of factors including gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic location” (National Council on Family Relations, 2022, para. 3). The concept of social location began as a way to “deconstruct Whiteness”, but it does not inherently disrupt white supremacy, interrogate heteronormativity, or address structural power inequities (Heron, 2005, p. 344).

While not synonymous, social location can be understood as a foundational aspect on which an understanding of intersectionality may be developed by making explicit the complex interactions between identity and power as experienced by individuals. The term “intersectionality” was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in her efforts to create a framework that would highlight the impact of culturally systemic issues (e.g., racism, sexism) on Black and racialized cis women (Cole, 2020). Though there are many interpretations and definitions of intersectionality, Hankivsky (2014) suggests that:

Intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., ‘race’/ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments and other political and economic unions, religious institutions, media).

Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy are created (p. 2).

These concepts and ideas are thoughtfully supported across the entire curriculum as it speaks to the dedication of CYC to a “strength-based social justice approach [that] embraces diverse

perspectives and life experiences” (University of Victoria, 2020c), including sexuality and sexual behaviours.

When creating opportunities for self exploration of sexuality and sexual behaviour, it is vital that course instructors and curriculum developers attend to the risks associated with requiring students to “out” themselves in a course assignment. While there is a general assumption, and policies in place, that seek to ensure that the content of assignments are kept confidential between the student and the instructor, it is important to find a balance between challenging students to investigate and describe their social location, while also maintaining safety for individuals who may be at risk of harm from such a task. For example, the 338 Self-Reflection Paper, “Social Location and Positionality” makes up six out of 10 marks, with the assignment description requiring students to identify their gender and sexuality as identity markers (School of Child and Youth Care, 2020d). Fortunately, the rubric does not explicitly include articulating sexuality or sexual orientation in its criteria, but focuses on understanding intersectionality and its personal and professional implications, and development of critical thinking skills. It is unknown if this incongruence was intentional or accidental, but it is vital to attend to the power dynamics between instructors and students when they are asking them to share intimate parts of their identity. Child and Youth Care students are often asked to engage with their personal identities and experiences to uncover the biases and beliefs that impact their practice. When instructors are tasked with evaluating students’ own social locations it would be unethical to evaluate them on content. Instead, instructors need to support students’ exploration of their identities in the safest way possible. Explicitly naming the tension in evaluating a student’s understanding of their own social location, and following the lead of the 338 assignment by grading students on other criteria, are possible ways to honour the complexity of

potentially sensitive dimensions of identity. Further, it may also open up possibilities for students to more freely explore and express their personal experience of their gender without fear of academic repercussions.

4.1.8 Sexual and Reproductive Health

The final UNESCO concept of Sexual and Reproductive Health attends to contraception, options to address unintended pregnancy, and supporting a healthy pregnancy. It also supports sexual decision-making, supporting the development of skills that promote communication for the purposes of negotiation, refusal skills, and safer sex practices and reduce vulnerability from outside influences (UNESCO, 2018). This concept also addresses access to sexual health services for HIV prevention and care, STIs, and gender-based violence in varying populations.

The single artifact identified in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health is a course reading in 166b.

Readings. Marshall (2011) challenges sexual stereotypes in aging populations in an effort to increase sexual agency and interrogate current assumptions about sexual health in older adults. This course reading offers students in 166b an opportunity to engage with sexual diversity in a way that is not otherwise considered in the curriculum.

Analysis. The category of Sexual and Reproductive Health includes three components: Pregnancy and Pregnancy Prevention; HIV and AIDS Stigma, Care, Treatment and Support; and Understanding, Recognizing and Reducing the Risk of STIs, including HIV (UNESCO, 2018). The single artifact attributed to this category offers unique insights into senior sexuality but does not address any of the key ideas set out by UNESCO. The following analysis will engage with

the gaps in curriculum and offer opportunities for including aspects of Sexual and Reproductive Health in the CYC written curriculum.

Gaps. While not comprehensively covered in the CYC curriculum, sexual health education programs in schools have generally offered considerable resources for learning about pregnancy and STI prevention (Narushima, 2020). It is important to note that, UNESCO tends to employ a deficit focus when it comes to practical knowledge of sexual health and decision-making. While it is important to include strategies and resources that support the prevention of unwanted pregnancy, STIs, and other blood-borne infections, comprehensive sexual health education requires educators and curriculum developers to move away from fear and danger and embrace sexual and reproductive health in a more balanced way. Vliet and Raby (2016) support this balance, suggesting that “rather than representing sexuality as a potentially dangerous, frightening, and complicated aspect of life, perhaps educators should reassure young people that it is potentially satisfactory, pleasurable, and rewarding, and provide them with the resources to ensure this is so” (p. 266). Including discourses of pleasure, disrupting heteronormativity, and looking towards the vast possibilities of sexual health and sexuality learning that support diverse bodies and identities is essential to educating competent and confident Child and Youth Care practitioners willing and able to support sexual and reproductive health with their clients (Russell et al., 2016).

Opportunities. Misinformation and stigma have long been associated with STIs, including HIV. Thomas et al. (2022) found that “the stigma of STIs is not only commonplace: it is often promoted via public health campaigns in attempts to educate and shield young people from exposure” (p. 1416). In Canada, gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV, representing 52% of all people

with new HIV infections in 2018 (Caffrey et al., 2022). Karver et al. (2022) found that “the groups at highest risk for acquiring HIV in the United States and globally are those whose identities encompass multiple socially stigmatized populations, such as marginalized groups at the intersections of racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual minority status” (p. S421).

Watts and O’Byrne (2019) describe stigma as “something that brings discredit or shame or reduces social status” (p. 1), and as a result, often results in a delay in seeking testing and treatment. Garcia et al. (2021) suggest that stigma can be addressed by supporting “routine implementation of four key practices: person-center approaches; sex positivity; trauma-informed care; and, community-engagement” (p. 1). These practices are in strong alignment with existing CYC values. Supporting destigmatization of STIs and HIV, as well as continuing to combat homophobia through a queering of sexual health education and CYC will support the key ideas in UNESCO’s Sexual and Reproductive Health category.

4.2 Feminist and Queer-Oriented Categories

The categories of Pleasure, Heteronormativity, and Pornography were identified in the review of the literature as aspects of sexuality and sexual health that need to be thoughtfully included in comprehensive sexual health education. Thus far in the analysis, only two artifacts were identified within the CYC curriculum that were associated with heteronormativity. There were no artifacts related to Pleasure or Pornography in the curriculum. The following sections will explore these categories and contextualize them within the field of Child and Youth Care.

4.2.1 Pleasure

Analysis. With the absence of pleasure discourses in the CYC syllabi, this analysis is offered as opportunities to gain insights into the importance of pleasure in sexual health education, as well as highlights some of the challenges in pedagogy and practice.

Opportunities. The primary reasons humans have sex with each other are feelings of attraction to another person and wanting to experience physical pleasure (Zaneva et al., 2022). In the Child and Youth Care curriculum conversations of sex and pleasure are entirely absent. Curiously, the only reference to consensual, desired sexual activity is in a single article focusing on examining long held assumptions of sexual health and sexuality among seniors (Marshall, 2011). The absence of pleasure and desire in the curriculum is not unexpected and is likely due to its absence from sexual health education as a whole (Kantor & Lindberg, 2020), centralization of other priorities in the CYC curriculum, and challenges with sex research (Keen, 2022).

The School of Child and Youth Care espouses commitments to anti-racist, decolonizing, queer and feminist pedagogy, and yet many course assignments and readings typically focus on the violence, discrimination, and marginalization among minoritized populations. The course syllabi focus on the risk factors and anti-oppressive practice, and attention is paid to the challenges faced by racialized, queer, and Indigenous people, but in their efforts to address these challenges (e.g., disproportionate sexualized violence) course materials can neglect to address the inherent and fiercely fought for joy, pleasure, love, and success of these marginalized groups (Brock et al., 2019). It would of course be irresponsible to neglect the systemic and relational challenges faced by these individuals and communities, but it is essential to recognize that any positive aspect is consistently positioned as resilience in the face of adversity (Brock et al.,

2019). If the curriculum is to address pleasure and desire more adequately, it must also contend with and decentralize fear and danger, while also balancing the realities of white supremacy, compulsory heterosexuality, and colonial violence as it persists today (Simard, 2020).

Pleasure for pleasures sake is also an important idea to consider. Stewart et al. (2022) supports a sex-positive perspective that “gives due attention to managing sexual health risks, yet centers the positive aspects of sexuality, such as sexual pleasure, satisfaction, self-efficacy, agency, and self-esteem, which each contribute to sexual well-being” (p. 252). Wood et al. (2019) warns against the risks of enforcing a “pleasure imperative”: “social and cultural norms that position pleasure as something that young people feel they must or should achieve in their sexual lives” (p. 1), which helps contextualize desire across a spectrum that is inclusive of asexual identities. Despite this, researchers emphasise that “pleasure remains a valuable tool in sexualities education concludes that pleasure, as a ‘possibility’ rather than an imperative, is ‘worth fighting for’ in education” (Wood et al., 2019, p. 3).

Finally, sexuality research and pedagogy is fraught with challenges that impact the inclusion of pleasure and desire in the curriculum. Barriers to sexuality research are rooted in institutionalized stigma, with research highlighting challenges graduate students encounter finding mentorship when engaging in sexuality studies, often considered an area of study best left in the margins (Keene, 2022). Gratefully, this has not been a factor in the research for this thesis but contending with these challenges requires graduate students and researchers to be willing to accept these risks in order to invite more pleasure into scholarly pursuits.

4.2.2 Heteronormativity

Assignment. The 338 Self-Reflection Paper makes a final appearance here in the category Heteronormativity, which shows up as a single word, and an optional topic for exploration. Students seeking to choose a topic will find heteronormativity in the list of 36 options for the assignment. They are then tasked with describing how their understanding of intersectionality impacts how they view the topic, and how this knowledge influences their practice with children, youth, and families (School of child and Youth Care, 2020d).

Analysis. The findings previously identified in this chapter include an acknowledgement that diversity was a topic that was well addressed in the curriculum. There are many references to queerness as an aspect of identity throughout the learning outcomes, course descriptions, assignments, and course readings. What surfaced through the analysis was a lack of specific engagement with heteronormativity as the potentially problematic opposite to diversity and queerness. The analysis for the category of Heteronormativity is framed as an opportunity to contextualize this within the field of CYC, and offer some continued possibilities for queering the curriculum.

Opportunities. CYC offers many opportunities to engage in social justice work, citing a dedication to a “community and strength-based social justice approach that embraces diverse perspectives and life experiences” (University of Victoria, 2020c, para. 1). Pollitt et al. (2021) define heteronormativity as “the presumption and privileging of gender conformity, heterosexuality, and nuclear families over all other “deviant” forms of gender expression, sexuality, and families” (p. 522). Longoria (2021) supports a queering of CYC as way to embrace diversity and to deepen our understanding of child and youth care. This inspires the

question: how can we attend to queerness without also recognizing the pervasiveness of heteronormativity? It is not enough to talk about decolonization without also attending to white supremacy. It is essential to talk about inclusion, but must also continue to draw attention to racism, ableism, and other -isms that continue to push people into the margins. If we are to truly endeavour to “queer” CYC, we must also ensure that heteronormativity is acknowledged in the curriculum, remembering that “anti-oppressive education as well as queer and trans-informed scholarship are salient for critical changes” (Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2018, p. 45).

It is not the intention of this analysis to question the integrity and intention of the CYC community, we are drawn to this discipline because we care deeply about people. This research does not offer any insights into the curricular changes that have been made over time, or how far we have already come, but endeavors to offer a glimpse of what is currently in the written curriculum and look towards the future. Seal (2019), seeking to entangle higher education with these ideas suggests that “the question then becomes what features of our pedagogy interrupt and reconstruct heteronormativity and whether those features build towards a wider critical pedagogy” (p. 241). This reminds us that there must always be a desire to be thoughtful in our pedagogy as we continue to move forward towards equity, inclusion, and social justice for children, youth, and families.

4.2.3 Porn

Analysis. The absence of pornography discourses in the curriculum did not come as a surprise during analysis. The following therefore provides opportunities to understand the challenges in including conversations about porn in the classroom and in practice, and the role pornography may play in sexual health and sexuality education.

Opportunities. Pornography is consumed by people across lifespan as a source for sexual arousal, entertainment, inspiration, and education (Bóthe et al., 2021). Conversations about sex in the post-secondary classroom in general seem to be avoided, either due to lack of comfort with the material, personal biases, or the risks of engaging with such material in the academic realm (Rose et al., 2019). Fahs et al. (2018) highlight the challenges of teaching about sex in the higher education classroom, stating that “there is constant negotiation between the ‘too real’ and the ‘not real’, the ‘too dangerous/radical’ and the ‘not dangerous enough’” (p. 507). Within this schematic, pornography is both too dangerous and radical. Paasonen (2016) suggests that most higher education instructors face potential career consequences when teaching about pornography, putting into question their pedagogical practice and risking censorship. Pornography in the classroom may also be perceived as antifeminist, with “the legacy of the so-called sex wars dividing antipornography scholars from anti-antipornography and prosex academics continues to orient contemporary argumentation and possibilities for dialogue, as well as the possibilities for addressing pornography in the university classroom” (Paasonen, 2016, p. 428). Ziv (2018) proposes that to address the lack of opportunities in the classroom for open, critical engagement with personal beliefs, experiences and responses to sexually explicit material, instructors need to create a “safe space.” In academic contexts this is “a metaphor for a classroom climate that allows students to feel secure enough to take risks, honestly express their views, and share and explore their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors while feeling protected from psychological or emotional harm” (p. 3).

As identified in the literature, young people, especially queer youth, use pornography as an educational resource to supplement and fill in the gaps in their formal sexual health education

(Bradford et al., 2019). In order to address this gap, “safe spaces” must also be queered. Ziv (2019) offers insights on the tension within academic contexts:

In particular sites in academia, such as queer studies courses, or gender and sexuality programs in general, these two partly overlapping constructions of ‘safe space’—the educational one and the queer one— meet creating an inevitable tension: on the one hand queer, LGBT, and feminist students see these sites as theirs—spaces where they can (finally) express their views, perform their identities, and narrate their experiences without fear of censure and ridicule, and receive validation; on the other hand, these are not community or activist spaces the entry to which can be regulated, and in which particular codes of conduct can be instituted on the basis of shared needs and values, but rather open educational spaces, where all students who enroll in the class should be made to feel equally secure and comfortable, free to participate and express themselves honestly (p. 3).

To answer the call of supporting youth sexual development and learning, Child and Youth Care does not need to offer comprehensive engagement with porn studies as a discipline. However, including an opportunity to demystify, complexify, and become comfortable with talking about pornography would be an asset in the development of student practitioners with a capacity to meet youth where they are in the exploration of their sexual identities.

Conclusion

The findings and analysis in this chapter have revealed strengths within the existing written curriculum in the CYC syllabi, identified gaps in relation to the UNESCO (2018) International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, and highlighted opportunities to

enrich the curriculum towards a more comprehensive offering of sexual health and sexuality education for the support of developing CYC practitioners. This analysis, which is grounded in a queer, feminist, intersectional lens, supports a continued “queering” of CYC, and informs specific recommendations offered in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Recommendations

Identifying the strengths within the CYC undergraduate curriculum also illuminates the gaps and challenges that require thoughtful attention. Exploring these absences in the curriculum by measuring it against the UNESCO and queer/feminist frameworks will inform the recommendations presented in this chapter. Additionally, applying a critical, queer, feminist lens to areas where content is being adequately offered allows an opportunity to extend and deepen how these concepts are being taught. Finally, homing in on sex as an embodied experience creates space to destabilize and disrupt the danger/risk avoidance model that continues to permeate conversations about sex, sexual health, and sexuality in sex education.

The recommendations in this chapter are three-fold. First, it is necessary to consider conceptual reorientations that create opportunities for including aspects of sexual health and sexuality education into the CYC curriculum. Second, dimensions of potential sexual health and sexuality education are explored as physical, personal, and relational aspects of learning. Finally, content specific recommendations will provide opportunities to weave together content drawn from the UNESCO framework and the intersectional queer and feminist content identified as priorities in the literature and the analysis. These recommendations are offered as aspirations with the hope that these concepts will be considered when developing a curriculum that supports a holistic approach to working with the ever-changing identities, experiences, and desires of children, youth, and families as sexual beings.

5.1 Curriculum Approach and Design

In order to introduce comprehensive sexual health education and sexuality topics into the Child and Youth Care undergraduate curriculum it may be useful to consider the pedagogical

approach to integrating the concepts across the curriculum. The spiral approach suggested by UNESCO's framework is a thoughtful way to consider how we might weave these ideas throughout the program. First conceptualized in the 1950s by Jerome Bruner, the spiral curriculum approach supports student learning by teaching and then offering opportunities to "revisit a topic, theme, or subject several times throughout their schooling, where the complexity of the topic is increased with each visit so the new learning is connected to the old learning" (Gibbs, 2014). This method is an effective tool for building capacity and competency in the area of sexual health and sexuality not only through repeated exposure to key concepts, but it also allows for opportunities to fill in educational gaps that will vary from student-to-student dependant on their own individual experience with sexual health education. It also lets students apply their learning to themselves as they grow and change throughout the duration of their program. This approach is an alignment with current curriculum development strategies utilized by The Undergraduate and Practicum Operations Committee (TUPOC) in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. Staff and faculty who have recently been tasked with streamlining the program have made significant changes in the core courses being offered. Some of the courses that have historically been stand alone courses are now being integrated across the curriculum. This makes the timing of this research favourable, as the approach offered here is well suited to piggyback on the current shift in curriculum design.

With the integration and streamlining of certain key concepts across the curriculum underway, it is also essential to ensure that there is alignment between learning outcomes and course assignments. While there is always an opportunity to develop in-class activities that support a variety of learning outcomes, the reality of increased asynchronous course delivery may leave some students with less consistency in meeting all aspects of the course goals.

Additionally, it may be useful to include in the course syllabi a specific articulation of the purpose of each of the course learning outcomes. Developing a sense of purpose in learning helps facilitate self-reflection, supports student engagement, and also allows students the opportunity to take ownership of their learning (Howell, 2018).

5.2 Integrating Sexual Health and Sexuality Education into the CYC Curriculum

This section offers some possible suggestions for infusing the CYC curriculum with aspects of sexual health and sexuality education. While the previous section described strategies for designing the overall curriculum, this section focuses more on course content. Students in the undergraduate program come from a broad range of personal and academic experiences, values, and identities. Some students enter directly from high school, while others transfer in from general college programs or with diplomas in related fields. Some students enter the program still young themselves, others are mature students with years or even decades of experience working in the CYC field. These students have rich, complex identities and have a diverse range of goals they are reaching towards after completion of their CYC degree. Regardless of their entry point into the CYC program, CYC110, 250, 300, and 410/410A/411 are required for all students. Additional core courses, or their equivalencies, make up the foundation of the CYC program (See Appendix B). For the purpose of these recommendations, there will be a focus on integrating sexual health and sexuality education into the core program courses through three high-level topic areas: anatomy and physiology; knowledge of self; and relational learning.

5.2.1 Anatomy and Physiology. Understanding the development of our physical bodies, their functions, and how to maintain sexual and reproductive health across the lifespan is foundational to student learning. Having a comprehensive understanding of the structure and

function of sexual and reproductive systems supports students in knowing about themselves as well as the people they support in practice.

To supplement and build on existing knowledge most students are likely to have on topics such as puberty, it is important to also offer an understanding of diverse bodies, as well as facilitated and natural processes of change. A queering of CYC requires us to look outside what is often referred to as “normative” development, and support learning that is inclusive of all bodies. Compulsory heteronormativity can have a big impact on how we talk about physical development. Including a basic understanding of the impact of body dysmorphia and gender-affirming processes for people of all genders would help push back against what continues to be seen as “normal”.

5.2.2 Knowledge of Self. Personal growth and development of student practitioners has been a strong emergent theme in this research. Child and Youth Care is, at its best, a beautiful collective of humans-helping-humans, with diverse individual values, beliefs, experiences, and identities informing a deep commitment to health and wellbeing across the lifespan. Some research suggests that individuals come into the CYC profession due to adverse life experiences in their youth (Yakhnich et al., 2021). While this can not be generalized across all students, it does reinforce the importance of self work in CYC. Despite the clear commitments to diversity in the curriculum and ethos of the CYC program, Hillman et al. (2020) found that “assumed Whiteness continues to pervade our CYC literature, often unexamined, centred, and invisibilized” (p. 49). Taking inventory of our own biases and experiences through an intersectional, queer, feminist lens supports the development of practitioners that, in knowing themselves, can support diversity in their practice. Continuing to attend to gender, heteronormativity, sexual identity, and an individual’s skills and strategies that support health

and wellbeing, and how they show up in their own histories and multiple potential futurisms, is essential in ethical CYC scholarship and practice.

5.2.3 Relational Learning. Relational aspects of sexual health education are identified as a priority by both UNESCO, and by young people themselves (Thiessen et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2018). Integrating learning that supports navigating healthy sexual relationships through development of sexual communication skills, consent and refusal skills, and the ability to assess the health of our interpersonal relationships is essential. Through our engagement in relationships with others we have an opportunity to heal, grow, learn and set boundaries, and find nourishing, quality relationships of all sorts. It is through our foundational relationships that we form our first set of beliefs and values. Our experiences across the lifespan offer opportunities to adapt these values and beliefs to best suit our cultural, familial, and relational needs. All of these interactions, whether brief or lifelong, intense or superficial, exquisite or excruciating, impact our interactions with curriculum and learning if we create space for thoughtful reflection.

5.3 Content Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Include foundational content on sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology, including changes across lifespan, and medical supports available for trans people

Purpose: To address gaps in basic sexual health knowledge, expand on naturally occurring changes across the lifespan, and to disrupt heteronormative assumptions of development

Learning outcomes:

- Articulate an understanding of the structures and processes of the sexual and reproductive systems of cis, trans, and nonbinary bodies
- Demonstrate an awareness of the complexity, challenges, and joys of gender transition, and the choices and processes involved

Potential course(s) for integration: CYC120 - Lifespan Development

Resources:

- Is This Normal? Puberty in Intersex and Non-Binary People, Explained | Planned Parenthood Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpyOnR_O6Tk

A short video that offers a very brief overview of the challenges young people may face when going through puberty as a trans or non-binary youth, and potential resources for support.

- The Beautiful Cervix Project <https://www.beautifulcervix.com/>

The Beautiful Cervix Project offers a comprehensive guide to understanding the anatomy and physiology of the cervix, uterus, and other related reproductive parts. It includes detailed information on fertility, menstruation, and the role of hormones. Includes extensive photos and illustrations.

- Roen, K. (2019). Intersex or diverse sex development: critical review of psychosocial health care research and indications for practice. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 56(4-5), 511-528.

Offers a psychosocial perspective on the well-being of people with a diagnosis diverse sex development (dxd). Critiques the norms and assumptions of sexual development, and offers recommendations for health care providers to better support children and families.

Recommendation 2

Include discourses of pleasure that support healthy, diverse, understandings of the spectrum of desire between people and across lifespan

Purpose: To support an understanding of the variability of desire, the impact of identity, life experiences, and changes on sexual pleasure

Learning Outcomes:

- Describe the spectrum of sexual pleasure and desire as it is experienced by diverse sexual identities
- Articulate the variability of sexual pleasure and desire across lifespan

Potential course(s) for integration: CYC120 - Lifespan Development, CYC320 - Critical Identity Development

Resources:

- How to Talk to Your Kids About Masturbation in a Healthy Way: Expert-backed guidelines for parents who want to raise kids with a healthy understanding of sex.
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/masturbation-how-to-talk-to-kids_n_5c3020e1e4b073352832e3c6

Practical strategies and additional resources for discussing masturbation with children and youth.

- Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVENA). Perspectives: Opening the door to self-discovery <https://www.asexuality.org/?q=node/41>

Personal narrative describing how one person navigates cultural expectations of sexual desire and comes to an understanding of their own sexual identity.

- Philpott, A., Singh, A., & Gamlin, J. (2017). Blurring the boundaries of public health: It's time to make safer sex porn and erotic sex education. *IDS Bulletin* (Brighton. 1984), 48(1)<https://doi.org/10.19088/1968-2017.108>

Acknowledges the global mortality risk of unsafe sex, and the concurrent reality that pornography is a key resource for self education around the world. Argues that the development of safer sex porn can have a positive impact on global sexual health outcomes.

Recommendation 3

Provide opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of their own gender and sexuality as aspects of their social location

Purpose: to support students' thoughtful reflection and investigation of their relationship with their own identity, experiences, and values and how it impacts helping relationships.

Learning Outcomes:

- Articulate your process for examining the development of your gender identity and sexuality

- Demonstrate an awareness of the impact diverse gender and sexual identities have in relationships

Potential course(s) for integration: CYC110 - Introduction to Child and Youth Care, CYC320 - Critical Identity Development

Resources:

- Goldberg, & Kuvalanka, K. A. (2018). Navigating Identity Development and Community Belonging When “There Are Only Two Boxes to Check”: An Exploratory Study of Nonbinary Trans College Students. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 15(2), 106–131.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2018.1429979>

A small research study offers insights into the complexity of navigating non-binary identities within the higher education system.

- Bansal, S. (2018, December 17). *Story of my life: How various events shaped my sexuality and gender expression*. *Galaxy*. <http://www.gaylaxymag.com/articles/queer-voices/the-story-of-my-life-how-various-events-shaped-my-sexuality-and-gender-expression/>

An individual exploration of identity development as it intersects with culture, sexuality, gender, history, and family.

- Surette, T. (2019). Too scared to teach: Secondary students’ insights into educators silencing and stigmatization of gender and sexual diversity in public schools in Alberta, Canada. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*, 14(2), 33-49.
<https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29367>

Discussions of gender and sexual diversity continue to be challenging topics to address in schools. This research views the absence of these conversations through the eyes of high school students, who see fear of personal and professional consequences, a lack of sexual health education, and apathy as reasons for the silence.

Recommendation 4

Include conversations of healthy relationships and navigating sexual relationships in places where risk and danger are assumed to be present

Purpose: to provide more balance by disrupting the danger/fear paradigm and infusing discourses of sexual autonomy and pleasure with children and youth, specifically populations that are often lacking skills that help them facilitate desired sexual activity

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate an understanding of discourses of pleasure and desire in diverse populations (e.g., children and youth, individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities, seniors, queer people)
- Articulate key strategies to support diverse populations in accessing sexual health resources

Potential course(s) for integration: CYC320 - Critical Identity Development, CYC356 - Developing CYC Praxis with Diverse Families, CYC464 - CYC Praxis with Neurodiverse and Differently-abled Children

Resources:

- Sex Ed for People with I/DD. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuEvYNNQ-dHeVhbyeJHx9s8oqsvBk621v>

10-part series (totalling less than 10 minutes) created by the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and Rooted in Rights.

- Finigan-Carr, N., Steward, R., & Watson, C. (2018). Foster youth need sex ed, too! Addressing the sexual risk behaviors of system-involved youth. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 13(3), 310-323.

System-involved youth in foster homes, group homes, therapeutic treatment centers, and detention centers need access to sexual health resources.

- <https://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/>

Organization by and for Indigenous youth focused on sexual and reproductive health as a human rights and social justice issue.

- Burns, M. M. L. (2020). Reclaiming Indigenous Sexual Being: Sovereignty and Decolonization Through Sexuality. *The Arbutus Review*, 11(1), 28-38.

Seeking to move beyond the singular lens of violence when viewing Indigenous sexuality, author explores a resurgence of sexuality through erotics as an act of sovereignty and active decolonization.

Recommendation 5

Include resources on sexual health, sexuality, and pleasure as a human right.

Purpose: to contextualize sexual health, sexuality, and sexual rights on a local and global scale

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate an awareness of the variability of access to sexual health and sexuality education across different local and global settings

Potential course(s) for integration: CYC250 - Law, Indigenous People and the TRC Calls to Action, CYC300 - Advancing Social Justice Praxis in CYC

Resources:

- World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) Declaration of Sexual Rights
https://worldsexualhealth.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/declaration_of_sexual_rights_sep03_2014_b.pdf
- World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) Declaration on Sexual Pleasure
<https://worldsexualhealth.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/WAS-DECLARATION-ON-SEXUAL-PLEASURE-2021-.pdf>
- Kismödi, E., Corona, E., Maticka-Tyndale, E., Rubio-Aurioles, E., & Coleman, E. (2017). Sexual rights as human rights: A guide for the WAS declaration of sexual rights. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 29(sup1), 1-92.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19317611.2017.1353865>

Expands upon the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) Declaration of Sexual Rights.

- Simard, F. (2020). Federal Child Welfare and Indigenous Childhood Sexual Violence. Yellowhead Institute. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/svacy-brief-f-simard.pdf>

Brief calls out Indigenous and Canadian governments on their failure to protect Indigenous children and youth from sexualized violence. Demands an Indigenous-led and human rights-based approach to child welfare practices.

Recommendation 6

Include discourses of sexuality, sexual relationships and health issues and their potential impact on family relationships

Purpose: to develop awareness and skills to assess how relationships may be impacted when an individual discloses sensitive sexual information (e.g., STI or HIV-positive status; pregnancy; sexual abuse; or sexually active youth). Support initiation and developing capacity to discuss sex in practice with sexually diverse children, youth, and families.

Learning Outcomes:

- Describe the impacts of sensitive sexual information disclosure on relationships
- Articulate skills necessary for engaging children, youth and families in conversations about sexual health and sexuality

Potential course(s) for integration: CYC356 - Developing CYC Praxis with Diverse Families, CYC410/411 - Advanced Supervised Practicum, CYC475 - Advanced Child and Youth Care Practice with Families and Groups

Resources:

- Sexual Intimacy After Sexual Assault or Sexual Abuse.

<https://www.healthyplace.com/sex/abuse/sexual-intimacy-after-sexual-assault-or-sexual-abuse>

Understanding common sexual symptoms after sexualized violence, and possible strategies for developing/relearning healthy sexual attitudes and responses to sexual touch

- Should Teens Be More Sexually Active? The real threat to kids' mental health is loneliness, not sexual activity. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/nurturing-resilience/202002/should-teens-be-more-sexually-active>

Normative sexual activity in teens, loneliness, and contending with the loss of face-to-face interactions.

- Living With HIV. Amaze.org. <https://amaze.org/video/living-with-hiv/>

This video defines Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), explains the various ways HIV is transmitted, and normalizes the feelings and responses people can experience when they are diagnosed. The video also describes prevention and treatment options that support ongoing sexual relationships.

Conclusion

This research began with an undertaking of a comprehensive review of the literature to situate the current trends, knowledge, and inquiry currently occupying the scholarly landscape of sexual health and sexuality. The literature uncovered a multitude of challenges in sexual health education for youth, including a significant lack of content that supports healthy sexual development for queer youth, a desire for more in depth learning on how to grow healthy, pleasurable sexual relationships, and where to find relevant, reliable, comprehensive information. CYC graduates work in relationship with children, youth, and families in a multitude of capacities. Sex as an act of pleasure, love, procreation, and connection is a fundamental part of the overall health and wellbeing of all people, and yet our undergraduate program lacks any substantive content that will prepare its graduates to engage with their clients on aspects of sexuality outside prevention of risk and harm. It is with this in mind that this research asks the question, how is sexual health and sexuality education being taken up in the Child and Youth Care undergraduate curriculum?

Through an intersectional, queer, feminist lens the CYC undergraduate curriculum was examined for any aspects of sexual health and sexuality that occurred within its content. Learning outcomes, course objectives, assignments and course resources were analyzed through a multilayered approach that required a close look at what content was being included, what was absent, and what surprises came along the way. The findings from this analysis suggested that there were certain aspects of sexuality and sexual health that were being addressed, but they often lacked a depth that is required for students to truly consider how these topics impact their practice, as well as how their own experiences, values, and beliefs inform their praxis. Recommendations were offered as an opportunity for this research to directly, swiftly, and easily

be implemented into the curriculum throughout the core courses of CYC to reach as many students as possible with this content. This was an explicit goal of this research: to create a real possibility that these recommendations would be taken up into the curriculum in a meaningful way to address the gaps in knowledge and support the capacity of our students to have informed, meaningful, supportive engagements with the diverse families and communities in which they work.

Child and Youth Care is not just for children and youth. It is the foundation on which we seek to understand our individual and collective histories, build healthy, strong communities, and work towards a more just world for people who seek to thrive inside and outside the margins. Sex has been a dirty word for long enough. If we include comprehensive sexual health and sexuality education in our curriculum, we will be addressing fundamental aspects of the human experience in a more holistic way that highlights pleasure, joy, and connection while we continue to support safety and healing for those who need it.

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Appendix A

Table 4. Artifacts Organized by Course

Curricular artifacts found in syllabi	Course description	Learning outcomes	Assigned readings	Assignments	Optional topics given for assignments	Readings not required of whole class	External resources
110		Describe the intersecting influences of gender, class, ethnicity, race, nationality, age, ability, and sexual orientation in shaping identities, opportunities and experiences	Anderson-Nathe, B. (2019). Queering gender and sexuality in child and youth care. In K.Gharabaghi & G. Charles (Eds.), Child and youth care across sectors, Volume 1: Canadian perspectives (pp. 157-171). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars	<p>Prepare a 1-page social location map that reflects your multiple and fluid identities across different identity dimensions and axes of privilege, including for example: age, gender, race/ethnicity, ability, class, sexual orientation, education, citizenship, cis/transgender, language, etc.</p> <p>Assignment # 5. Reducing Racism and Colonial Violence/Promoting Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice for Children, Youth and Families (30%) Due: Week 11 Part 1 - For this assignment you will select a topic of special interest related to the practice of Child and Youth Care. Specifically, you are asked to research, describe, and analyze a program or service in your home community, that is designed to reduce racism and colonial violence and/or promote equity, inclusion, social justice for children, youth, families, and/or</p>	Sexual Exploitation	Teen Line. (2015, May 14). LGBTQ : Understanding sexual orientation and gender identities. [YouTube].	

				<p>communities. You are expected to refer to your own social location, professional identity, and vision of social justice and decolonization. Choose a program that focuses on promoting diversity, inclusion, empowerment, decolonization, and/or social justice for children, youth, families, and communities with at least one of the following dimensions of diversity being an explicit focus: Gender Violence, Gender Expression/Fluidity/variance, Queer Identities, Gender Affirming Care, Sexual, Exploitation, queer youth, gender non-conforming children</p>			
166b			<p>Dame, L. (2004). Live through this: The experiences of queer youth in care in Manitoba. <i>The Canadian Online Journal of Queer Studies in Education</i>, 1(1), 1-28.</p> <p>Veale, J., Saewyc, E., Frohard-Dourlent, H., Dobson, S., Clark, B., & the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey Research Group. (2015). <i>Being safe, being me: Results of the Canadian trans youth health survey</i>. Vancouver, BC: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia. http://www.saravyc.ubc.ca/2018/05/06/trans-youth-health-survey/</p> <p>Navasky, M., & O'Connor, K. (2015). <i>Growing up trans</i> [Video file].</p>				

			Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/online/film/growing-up-trans/ .				
			Marshall, B. L. (2011). The graying of “sexual health”: A critical research agenda. <i>Canadian Review of Sociology</i> , 48(4), 390-413				
171	Introduces frameworks and theories for conceptualizing child and youth care practice with families who are experiencing a variety of challenges and difficulties. Taking an international perspective, family issues are explored in terms of diversity (sexual orientation, race or ethnic affiliation/identity, gender, and socio-economic status). The ultimate goal is to help students to understand the diversity and complexity of family issues, patterns and processes in local and international contexts in order to engage intentionally in practice.	Demonstrate an awareness of the role of diversity—for example ethnic and racial, gender, sexual orientation—in family life;	Powell, N. (2018, January 29). 4 ways queer and trans parents are raising revolutionary children during the Trump era. <i>Everyday Feminism</i> [Blog Post]. https://everydayfeminism.com/2018/01/queer-and-trans-parenting/				
205			Clark, N. (2016). Red intersectionality and violence-informed witnessing praxis with Indigenous girls. <i>Girlhood Studies</i> , 9(2), 46–64 Barry, B., & Drak, D. (2019).				

			<p>Intersectional interventions into queer and trans liberation: Youth resistance against right-wing populism through fashion hacking. <i>Fashion Theory</i>, 23(6), 679–709.</p> <p>Boatwright, T. (2019). Flux Zine: Black Queer Storytelling. <i>Equity & Excellence in Education</i>, 52(4), 383–395.</p>				
338		<p>Week 18 Focus on Sexual Development Upon completion of this week's readings and activities you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate normative sexual development and sexual behaviour problems associated with age grouping. • Articulate formation of gender identity and sexual orientation by understanding LGBTQ* (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, Queer/Questioning) issues on individual development and community responses. 	<p>Little, J.N. (2001). Embracing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youth in school-based settings. <i>Child & Youth Care Forum</i>, 30(2), 99-110.</p>	<p>Apply two developmental theories that helps to understand the child/youth... Build your theory around a specific challenge (where appropriate) e.g., learning disabilities, mental health, bereavement, sexual abuse, identity, relationship issues, etc. You are required to provide research citations wherever necessary.</p> <p>Social Location and Positionality • Social Location: Describe succinctly how your identity has been developed in the context of the identity markers such as gender, socialization, sexuality, ethnic/white/immigrant/refugee/mixed heritage/Indigenous ethnic identity, spirituality</p> <p>Become Oriented. It is suggested that you use the concepts of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, Garcia Coll's Integrative Model, or the Goetz & Canon's Ecosystemic Biopsychosocial Grid (EBG) and the ideas related to development and</p>	<p>Self-Reflection Paper: Integrating Development in Intersectional Praxis Potential Topics: Gender variance/sexuality, Sexual health, Hot contemporary issues (e.g., queer families, gender roles/identities and policy/practice, etc.), Conceptualizations and outcomes of gender construction, Diversity (neuro, [dis]ability, queer/trans*, etc.)</p> <p>Part B: Topic • Identify a relevant topic (see list below for ideas) that has been covered in Module 1, 2 or 3 and describe how your knowledge from Module 3 (intersectional framework) has</p>		

				<p>cultural context to guide your work. Module 3 of the course will be especially relevant for this part of the assignment. In other words, you should not be focusing on intrapsychic dynamics or biological conditions or other intra-individual (internal) variables except insofar as these relate to the interactions of the child or youth with the environment or how the environment responds to this individual. You are encouraged to explore the macro and chrono systems that have set and maintained certain structures, practices, policies, and standards that may affect the child, youth, and family in less than optimal ways. For example, if a toy kitchen is set up in one corner and a car track in another and the children are referred to as “boys and girls,” how might that affect a genderqueer child’s optimal development?</p>	<p>affected your perception of that topic and how your professional practice may be influenced. Potential Topics Think of topics covered in Module 1, 2 and 3: heteronormativity, Diversity (neuro, [dis]ability, queer/trans*, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualizations and outcomes of gender construction • Hot contemporary issues (e.g., queer families, gender roles/identities and policy/practice, etc.) • Power/privilege (white, straight, class, cis-gender, ability, size, etc.) • Sexual health 		
350			<p>Alaggia, R., & Kirshenbaum, S. (2005). Speaking the unspeakable: Examining the impact of family dynamics on child sexual abuse disclosures. <i>Families in Society</i>, 86(2), 227-234.</p> <p>Yuille, J. C., Cooper, B. S., & Hervé H. F. (2009). The step-wise guidelines for child interviews: The new generation. In M. Casonato & F. Pfafflin (Eds.), <i>Handbook of pedosexuality and forensic science</i>.</p>				

			<p>Olafson, E. (2012). A call for field-relevant research about child forensic interviewing for child protection. <i>Journal of Child Sexual Abuse</i>, 21(1), 109-129, DOI: 10.1080/10538712.2012.642469</p> <p>Shelton, J., Poirer, J.M., Wheeler, C., & Abramovich, A. (2018). Reversing Erasure of Youth and Young Adults Who are LGBTQ and Access Homelessness Services: Asking about Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Pronouns. <i>Child Welfare</i>, 96(2), pp. 1-29</p> <p>Mountz, S. (2011). Revolving doors: LGBTQ youth at the interface of the child welfare and juvenile justice system. <i>LGBTQ Policy Journal at the Harvard Kennedy School: 2011 Edition</i></p>				
356		Demonstrate a critical understanding of how gender and sexuality affect families within the context of CYC practice and within feminist frameworks.	<p>Sheff, E. (2016). Resilience in polyamorous families. In P. Krevian (Ed.) <i>Critical & Experiential: Dimensions in Gender and Sexual Diversity</i> (pp. 257-280)</p> <p>Shimoni, R., & Baxter, J. (2019). Gender Diverse Families (Chapter 18). In R. Shimoni & J. Baxter, <i>Working with families</i> (7th ed., pp. 302-311). Toronto, ON: Pearson Canada</p> <p>Edwards, L., Goodwin, A., & Neumann, M. (September 01, 2019). An Ecological Framework for Transgender Inclusive Family Therapy. <i>Contemporary Family Therapy</i>, 41, 3, 258-274.</p> <p>Lev A.I., Sennott S.L. (2020) Clinical Work with LGBTQ Parents and Prospective Parents. In: Goldberg A., Allen K. (eds) <i>LGBTQ-Parent Families</i>. (pp. 383-403). Springer, Cham</p>				<p>Victoria Sexual Assault Centre. https://vsac.ca/</p> <p>PFLAG Canada: https://pflagcanada.ca/</p> <p>Gender Spectacular: https://genderspectacular.com/</p>
382		Learn how to support children and families inclusive of a variety of sexual and gender	<p>Janmohamed, Z., & Campbell, R. (2009). <i>Building bridges: Queer families in early childhood education</i>. Toronto, ON: Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development.</p>				

		identities/expressions.	<p>Secrett, S. (2017). Creating inclusive early learning environments for LGBTQ2+ families</p> <p>National Centre on Parent Family and Community Engagement. (2020). Healthy gender development and young children: A guide for early childhood programs and professionals.</p>				
410		<p>Family: What type of family did you grow up in (nuclear, extended, blended, same-sex, interracial, adopted, etc.)? What were the values and the beliefs modeled by your family while growing up in relation to your development as a CYC practitioner? Have you held onto these or have</p> <p>Gender identity and sexual orientation: How does your gender identity and sexual orientation influence your work? Give clear examples of how this has influenced your Practice experience.</p>					
475	Students are provided with opportunities to experiment with working with a broad population.						

<p>For example, students may focus their work on families who are experiencing a range of challenges (e.g., loss, depression, substance use), and these families can reflect diverse configurations (e.g., single parent, same-sex parents, foster parents, etc.) as well as cultural backgrounds /identities</p>						
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Appendix B
Current CYC Core Courses (2022)

CYC110 - Introduction to Child and Youth Care

CYC120 - Lifespan Development

CYC152 - Introduction to Helping Skills in Child and Youth Care Practice

CYC206 - Applying Change Theory in CYC Practice

CYC210/210A/211 - Supervised Practicum I

CYC250 - Law, Indigenous People and the TRC Calls to Action

CYC265 - Introduction to Group Work in Child and Youth Care Practice

CYC300 - Advancing Social Justice Praxis in CYC

CYC310/310A/311 - Supervised Practicum II

CYC320 - Critical Identity Development

CYC356 - Developing CYC Praxis with Diverse Families

CYC370 - Applying Assessment and Case Planning in CYC Practice

CYC410/411 - Advanced Supervised Practicum

CYC423 - Research Literacy in CYC

CYC464 - CYC Praxis with Neurodiverse and Differently-abled Children

CYC470 - Mental Health and Addictions

CYC475 - Advanced Child and Youth Care Practice with Families and Groups