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Making Meaning of Gender and Sexual Identities in Early Childhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Canadian Early Childhood Curricula

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Abstract

This study is a critical discourse analysis of kindergarten programmatic curricula as instantiated in program documents created by Ministries of Education (or equivalent) across Canada. The prime goal of the study was to produce knowledge of programmatic curricula's treatment of diverse gender and sexual identities within a country that has been a leader in promoting social equity through, for example the early legalization of marriage for same-sex couples. The research questions investigated what gender and sexual identities are included in the curricula, how these identities are configured, the meaning making opportunities children are thereby offered, and the implications for students' gender and sexual identity options and their understandings of gender and sexual minority youth and same-sex parented families.

The data collection tool drew upon Fairclough's (1995) textual analysis (including linguistic and intertextual components), Dillon's (2009) questions of curriculum (modified to explore the nature, elements, and practice of *gender and sexual identities*), and the six dimensions of language arts (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing).

Findings indicate that most of the examined curricula lacked explicit language to specify what gender and sexual identities should be included in classroom curricula. Null and hidden curricula were identified that reinforce gender norms and could limit identity options for children. Developmentally Appropriate Practice figured prominently in the curricula and placed constraints on classroom curricula relative to diverse gender and sexual identities. Overall, sections in the curricula relative to inclusive education and citizenship were found as most likely to offer children semiotic opportunities to make sense of diverse identities. Recommendations for practice stemming from the findings include changes to programmatic curricula to be more specific regarding identities to include in teaching (e.g., same sex relationships), supports for teachers to discern how to disrupt gender stereotypes including what resources to use and how to resolve conflict over differences. The study also suggest that programmatic curricula move beyond narrow perspectives of Developmentally Appropriate Practice to include, for example, reconceptualist perspectives of childhood such

that there be a rethinking of what is appropriate curricular content for children. Educator professional learning is required to support all recommendations.

Keywords

Gender identities; sexual identities; kindergarten curriculum; hidden curriculum; null curriculum; early childhood education; developmentally appropriate practice; meaning-making

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Chapter 1: Background

As an educator and resident of Ontario, my teaching experience, primarily at the elementary level, generated several questions. Firstly, what gender and sexual identities were discussed in elementary school, and secondly, what gender and sexual identities were included in curricula? These questions were of enough significance to me that I left teaching to begin research in a Master of Education program focused on curriculum and social justice. My research involved interviews and observations with five Ontario elementary school educators regarding the extent to which they discussed diverse gender and sexual identities that reflected a modern curriculum, which did indeed refer to the inclusion of these identities. While I was not shocked, I was still disheartened that my data led me to conclude that teachers' pedagogy was primarily guided by fears of parental resistance to discussing non-normative gender and same-sex relationships as opposed to fears that children are harassed and doubting self-worth due to non-normative gender identities, desires beyond heterosexuality, or families headed by LGBTQ parents.

The more literature I read, the more I came to understand that many of the fears about discussing gender and sexual identities with young children were built upon beliefs about developmental inappropriateness. However, it was not whether gender and sexual identities were discussed with children, but rather, *what* gender and sexual identities? My interests expanded beyond *elementary* education in *Ontario* to *early childhood education* (ECE) across *Canada*. I wanted to know to what extent early childhood educators were discussing diverse gender and sexual identities, and what gender and sexual identities were included in Canadian kindergarten curricula? Given the results of the aforementioned study, I could discern that fears of parental resistance would influence ECE as well. I elected to find a teacher who was already having these conversations with students, so that I could observe the classroom network that made this environment possible. After a long and arduous process to gain ethics approval, I was denied access into a progressive school board. I was given reasons that argued this was a sensitive topic and may create tensions and concerns for parents and repercussions for teachers. It made me question further why this topic was so contentious. To help understand the problem, I turned to the documents that support ECE and wondered what meaning-making

opportunities young children are offered across Canada relative to diverse gender and sexual identities. Specifically, this study employed a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore provincial kindergarten curricula, and one purposefully selected early learning framework, for what kinds of gender and sexual identities were promoted and for the governmental mandates on how young children were or were not to be supported to make sense of gender and sexual identities.

I begin this chapter by identifying the population demographics and political climate in Canada. I then lead into a look at research in the literature regarding how children come to understand and make meaning of gender and sexual identities. Historical perceptions of childhood continue to influence how educators respond to ECE. After a review of Ryan's (2008) "Landscape of Modern Childhood," I conclude that current perspectives view childhood as a social construction, impacted by society and culture. The next section of the chapter reviews that while proponents of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) may suggest topics such as diverse gender identities and same-sex relationships are inappropriate for young children to discuss, there are misunderstandings behind notions of childhood innocence. I then provide an overview of the research study and research questions, followed by an in-depth description of curriculum, the historical background of curriculum theory and perspectives, and my personal curricular orientation. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the remaining chapters.

Before delving into the background of the study, I wish to provide my own values and beliefs that underpin the research. I view identity, childhood, and gender as social constructions. Social constructionism describes how the conditions in which an individual is raised will shape the way one views themselves, the world, and the people in it. For example, Nielsen and Davies (2008) suggested,

> children develop an emotional commitment to their gender as early as 2 years of age and when they arrive in preschool, many of them already act, speak and behave according to conventional images of gender—though the contents of these images vary considerably according to culture, historical period, social class, ethnicity, age, and individual circumstances. (p. 159)

Children are constantly being bombarded by messages about gender and sexual identities that they must read or otherwise make sense of. For example, the New London Group (1996) refer to "commodity culture" found in "TV, toys, fast-food packaging, video games, T-shirts, shoes, bed linen, pencil cases, and lunch boxes" (p. 70; see also Luke, 1995) all of which have implications for children's identities, particularly their gendered identities.

I approach my research as an advocate of children's rights and social agency, arguing that children are active in the construction of their own identities. I believe it is important that children are raised in a society where all identities are accepted and valued and that children are provided the language to make decisions for themselves about personal identities and self-expression. I am cognizant of the many same-sex parented families living in Canada as well as young children who express diverse gender identities. I understand from the literature that the way to combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia is through education, beginning as young as possible (Bailey, 1993; Blaise, 2005, 2009; Blaise & Ryan, 2012; Davies & Robinson, 2010; Gallas, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000; Meyer, 2007; Nielsen & Davies, 2008; Renold, 2000, 2006; Robinson, 2013; Thorne, 1993; Wohlwend, 2009). I argue that research, which illustrates how children play within gender binaries and heterosexual narratives, demonstrates how children could also play outside these identities if given the safe space and opportunities to make meaning of diverse identities. Children are already learning about gender and sexuality; the question is what gender and sexual identities are presented? Suggesting children are innocent of sexuality and not developmentally ready for these conversations implies that identities, which differ from the norm, are taboo, unacceptable, less desirable, or disrespected, despite their presence in Canadian societies, and the expectations raised by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (*Canadian Charter*, 1982, s 6(2)(b)) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). I remain reflexive of my positioning throughout my research, aware of how my own bias and personal values impact data collection and analysis.

1.1. **A Note about Terminology and Rights**

Given this study's attention to detail and its argument that language matters, I here clarify key vocabulary used in the study and provide a rationale for my choices. To guide my use of language and to signal to Canada as the location of the study, I drew upon resources provided by the *519*, a registered charity in Toronto, Ontario, Canada who serves the LGBTQ community and works to promote inclusion and understanding relative to gender and sexual identities. According to the *519*, gender, broadly defined, refers to "the expectations and stereotypes about behaviours, actions and roles linked to being a 'man' or 'woman' within a particular culture or society. The social norms related to gender can vary depending on the culture, and can change over time" (http://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary). Gender binary is "a social system whereby people are thought to have either one of two genders: 'man' or 'woman'" and "these genders are expected to correspond to birth sex," that "gender binary influences what society considers 'normal' or acceptable behavior, dress, appearance and roles for women and men," and that "gender norms can contribute to power imbalances and gender inequality in the home, at work, and in communities" (http://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary).

Gender identity is "a person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum" (http://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary). Sexual identity refers to one's sexual orientation or sexual interest that can also fall along a spectrum of identities from lesbian, gay, bisexual, or straight. Sex simply refers to a label that is "usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person's reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes and other physical characteristics" (http://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary). It should be noted that, "A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex" and "A person's gender identity is fundamentally different from and not related to their sexual orientation" (http://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary). Gender expression is "how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender…regardless of their gender identity" (http://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary).

Over the years, each province and territory has amended their human rights code to include the terms gender identity and/or gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination to protect trans rights, specifically. The federal government has recently also now amended the *Canadian* Human Rights Act to include this language. Table 1 shows the years in which each province or territory took this initiative and these data highlight the political context for each province and territory, respectively. Northwest Territories was the first jurisdiction to include gender identity as prohibited grounds for discrimination in 2004. It wasn't until 2012 that others began to follow suit, beginning with Ontario and Manitoba and then Nova Scotia. The following year saw Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island make these changes to their human rights codes, and then Saskatchewan and Alberta in each consecutive year. The remaining five jurisdictions, in bold in Table 1, amended their human rights codes from June 2016 onward (Quebec and British Columbia in 2016), several as recent as only a few months ago (Nunavut, Yukon and New Brunswick). Amendments at the federal level reached royal assent in June 2017. This speaks to how current and important it has become to support trans rights and provide protection from discrimination.

Table 1. Human Rights Codes Amended to Include Gender Identity/ Expression

	Gender Identity and/or Gender Expression	Source
Federal	**as of June 2017**	Parliament of Canada, 2017
BC	**as of July 2016**	Government of British Columbia, 2017b
AB	as of Dec. 2015	Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2015
SK	as of Dec. 2014*	Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2014
MB	as of June 2012*	The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2012
ON	as of June 2012	Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2012
QC	**as of June 2016**	Assemblée Nationale Québec, 2012
NL	as of Dec. 2013	Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission, 2014
NB	**as of May 2017**	New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 2017
NS	as of Dec. 2012	Office of the Legislature Counsel, Nova Scotia House of Assembly, 2012
PE	as of Dec. 2013	Salerno, 2013
NT	As of July 2004	Government of Northwest Territories, 2004
NU	**March 2017*, assent to follow**	Ostroff, 2017
YK	**as of April 2017**	Legislative Assembly of Yukon, 2017; Salerno, 2017

Note: *Indicates Gender Identity Only

1.2. **Diverse Gender and Sexual Identities in Canada**

The focus of this study is urgent given the current Canadian population demographics and political climate. In 2005, Canada became the fourth country to legalize same-sex marriage. Between 2006 and 2011, "the number of same-sex married couples nearly tripled" and, as of 2011, 9, 600 children were reported to live with same-sex parents (Statistics Canada, 2015). These children are now or will soon be attending schools across Canada. While a search for information about transgender individuals living in Canada produced limited results, the Trans PULSE project (Bauer & Scheim, 2015) collected data within Ontario, which provided an overview of the province's population. The project involved three focus groups of 85 trans community members in 2006, and a survey conducted between 2009 and 2010 included 433 trans individuals. Results indicated that trans people in Ontario represent a cross section of ages and races, and that 44% were in a committed relationship and 24% were parents (p. 2, Bauer & Scheim, 2015).

Increased rights and awareness for same-sex relationships or trans identities are not the only factors affecting Canadian attitudes towards diverse sexual and gender identities; conceptions of what makes up a family have been shifting for many years now, with the increase of divorced parents, single-parent households, and blended families. Along with the changes in family dynamics, there has also been ongoing work towards gender equity. More women are entering the workforce, and gender norms are continually being challenged. Diverse representations of family and more fluid understandings of gender identities and gender expression are expanding the possibilities for identity options for individuals.

Despite the changes in family and gender roles, however, research indicates that homophobia and gender-based harassment are still prevalent in Canadian schools. In 2011, EGALE Canada conducted a survey of 3, 700 students across the country and reported that, "20% of LGBTQ students and almost 10% of non-LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity" (p. 16) and "almost two thirds (64%) of LGBTQ students and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents reported that they feel unsafe at school" (p. 17). Of

significance are students who are harassed about their *perceived* sexual orientation or gender identity. Butler (1993) described gender as a performance and social construction: "gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (p.402). This performance is read by others through a meaning-making process in which peers make judgments based on the way someone looks, acts, or speaks. It becomes important among peer culture to express an acceptable gender performance to avoid harassment and exclusion, and research has shown that young children quickly learn how to participate in peer and self-surveillance through play to reinforce gender and sexual norms (Bailey, 1993; Blaise, 2005; Butler, 1997; Kumashiro, 2000, 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2001, 2003, 2005; Meyer, 2007; Renold, 2000, 2006; Thorne, 1993).

Gender norms are upheld because of heteronormative environments or the notion of compulsory heterosexuality. Butler (1993) described this relationship between gender and sexuality through the *heterosexual matrix*:

> A hegemonic discursive/epistemological model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (p.151)

Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) linked the construct hegemony to critical theorist Antonio Gramsci and said it was used to explain "how the mechanism for social control was exercised through the moral leaders of society…who participated and reinforced universal 'common-sense' assumptions of 'truth'" (p. 6). The term *hegemonic* is now used to describe social practices that have become the norm, maintained through power relations. For example, hegemonic masculinity in North America encourages boys to be aggressive, athletic, and tough. If these traits are not exhibited, then it is presumed that a boy is not very masculine, which can become conflated with assumptions about queer identities. As articulated by Kimmel and Mahler (2003), homophobia has become more

than discomfort around gay individuals, but also "the terror that others will see one as gay, as a failed man" (p.1446).

Thorne (1993) used the term "gender play" (p.5) to describe the ways children establish gender binaries and exhibit peer surveillance in maintaining gender roles in school through play. He suggested, "in preschools and kindergartens, girls more often gravitate to housekeeping corners and doll-play, and boys to the area with large blocks and toy cars and trucks" (p. 57). Thorne claimed that the label "sissy" denotes a boy who exhibits feminine qualities such as "timidity, passivity, and dependence" (p.116) and by fourth and fifth grades, "fag" has become a widespread and serious term of insult. Herr (1997) wrote, "'passing' as heterosexual is one way to survive a hostile culture. As long as gays and lesbians are effectively hidden, the heterosexist culture can proceed unchallenged" (p.58). Renold (2006), who conducted research with elementary students in Britain, concluded, "the pressures of compulsory heterosexuality to conform have particularly damaging consequences for those boys and girls who are positioned as Other to the normalising and regulatory (heterosexual) gendered scripts" (p. 324). She called attention to the need for research that investigates how discourses of early childhood, specifically, intersect with discourses of gender and sexuality.

The notion that gender is like a *script* to be read and deconstructed draws a connection between gendered identities and literacies. The term multiliteracies, proposed by the New London Group (1996), encompassed "the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity" (p. 63). The term has since been revisited and described by Kalantzis and Cope (2012) as a term that refers to at least two major aspects of meaning-making: social diversity and multimodality (pp. 1-2). Social diversity describes the social context that impacts the ways one encounters literacy, such as "life experience", "area of employment", or "gender identity" among other factors (p. 1). Multimodality describes the various ways meaning is made and conveyed, including "oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile and spatial patterns of meaning" (p. 2). Identity, itself, can be considered a text that is communicated and read by others through various semiotics and gender codes. Semiotics deals with how people make meaning by exploring signifiers (that carry meaning) and the signified–the messages

being communicated. Meyer (2007) expressed, “children learn at a very early age that it is not biological sex that communicates one’s gender to the rest of society; rather it is the signifiers we choose to wear that will identify us as male or female” (p. 19). These signifiers can be anything from the material clothes and accessories we wear to the interests and abilities we associate with our identities. In discussing gender codes, Meyer warned that “the strict expectations that accompany them severely limit girls’ opportunities to be assertive, physically strong, and competitive; boys’ opportunities to be creative, sensitive, and cooperative; and gender nonconforming youths’ opportunities to express their gender freely” (p. 19).

One might think that in order to challenge stereotypes and restrictive expectations for gender identities, educators can simply have conversations with young children to think critically about identity, gender roles, and diverse families; however, research indicates there are various barriers to educators feeling that they are able to have these conversations (Britzman, 2003; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2011, 2016; Meyer, 2009; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001). In particular, research indicates that many teachers are concerned that the topic of same-sex relationships (which, as stated above, is often conflated with diverse gender identities) is considered inappropriate to discuss in ECE (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Kintner-Duffy, 2012; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2011, 2016). Beliefs about what is appropriate for children or what children are capable of are directly related to various perspectives of childhood and the child, as outlined in the next section.

1.3. Perspectives of Childhood and Developmentally Appropriate Practice

In an historical investigation of childhood, Ryan (2008) described a “Landscape of Modern Childhood” encompassing four dominant paradigms: *Romantic Developmentalism, Positive-Scientific Developmental Theory, Socialization Theory, and Social Actor Theory*. Each paradigm is associated with a way of viewing the child: The Authentic Child, The Developing Child, The Conditioned Child, and The Political Child, respectively (See Figure 1).

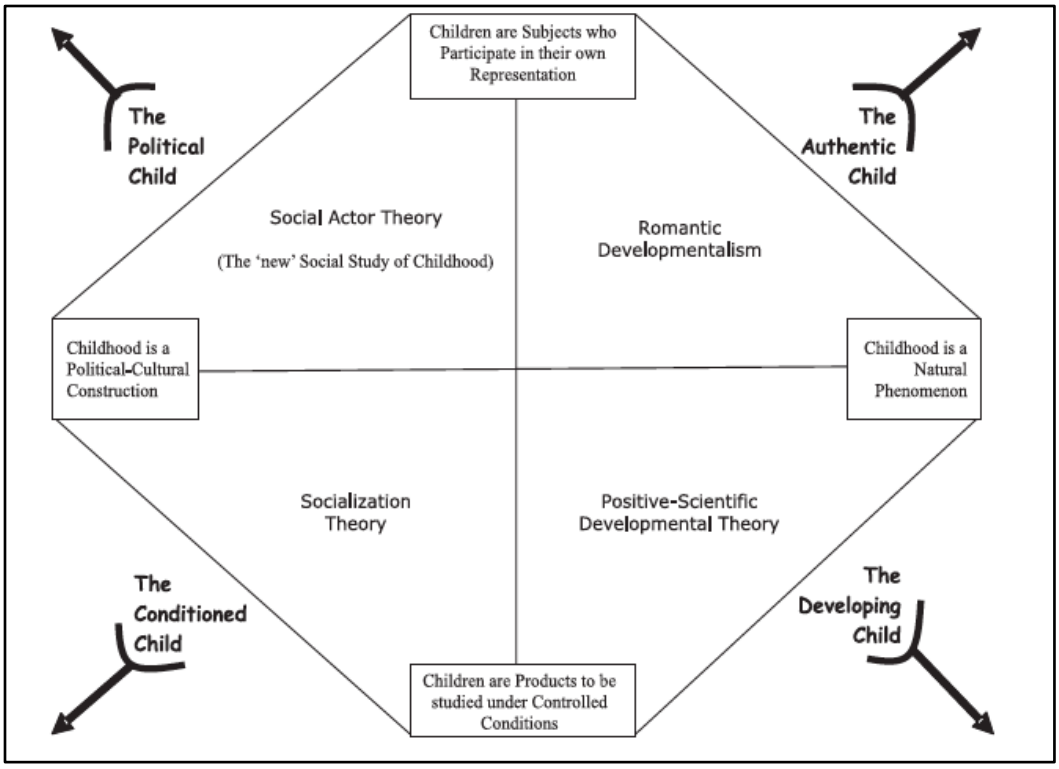


Figure 1. The Landscape of Modern Childhood (Ryan, 2008).

The Authentic and Developing Child both share a perspective that childhood is a natural phenomenon, and Romantic Developmentalism goes as far as to suggest children are innocent subjects. Directly opposite on Ryan's landscape is The Conditioned Child within Socialization Theory, which views the child as a political-cultural construction and product of their environment. While The Developing Child is also viewed as a product to be studied, The Political Child is positioned as its opposite on the landscape as part of what Ryan calls "the 'new' social study of childhood" where children are subjects who participate in their own representation. It is this paradigm that is receiving a great deal of attention recently. In particular, James and Prout (1997) have been recognized by many for their influential text, "Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood," which described an *emergent paradigm* for viewing childhood as a social construction as opposed to a natural, biological process that had been previously the dominant perspective regarding childhood. Within this new way of thinking about childhood, children are considered active in the construction of their own lives and their social relationships are thought to

be worthy of study with stress placed on using ethnographic methods to study *with* children. Building on this, Blaise and Ryan (2012) argued children are active agents in their gender identity work. They noted,

> as social actors, young children are no longer simply 'learning' or 'soaking up' the social meanings, values, and expectations of how to be a girl or a boy exclusively from their parents, teachers, peers, or the media. Rather, children themselves are producing and regulating gender by constantly 'doing' and 'redoing' femininities and masculinities that are available to them. (p. 83)

Overall, childhood as a discourse is being reconstructed and arguably variable across space and time as opposed to being universal and associated with developmental stages, which can have the tendency to construct "some children as socially acceptable and others as unacceptable" (Blaise & Ryan, 2012, p. 83). Many authors have continued to write on this new perspective of childhood as a social construction (Grieshaber, 2008; Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Kehily, 2009; MacNaughton, 2000; Ryan, 2008; Steinberg, 2011). Kehily (2009) stressed that it is best to promote childhood studies as interdisciplinary rather than replacing older perspectives. Instead, when researchers consider childhood, they should be critical of how childhood has been perceived through various historical eras and how childhood has evolved as a product of society and culture. Heydon and Wang (2006) articulated, "we believe that what constitutes childhood is situational, and we acknowledge that definitions of childhood and what adults ask of children (e.g., through curricula) directly affect their identity and life-course options, as well as quality of life" (p. 31).

Of particular significance in childhood studies today is the notion of children as social agents who have needs and rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) declares children's right to participate in decision making:

> States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (Article 12)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child also stresses the need for children to be protected from discrimination of any kind. Supporting children's voices and opinions and ensuring children are protected from discrimination includes discussions about respecting gender and sexual diversity and providing children opportunities to express their identities and their family's identities freely.

While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has a significant influence on ECE, so does the National Association of the Education of Young Children (2014) who are proponents of DAP, which suggests there to be appropriate and inappropriate practice for each age and stage of development. As a result, there is controversy over discussing diverse gender and sexual identities with young children, in fear that these topics are inappropriate or represent *difficult knowledge* (Kintner-Duffy, 2012; Robinson, 2013). However, according to Grieshaber (2008), while teachers may fear intervening inappropriately, "transformed societies need transformatory pedagogies" (p. 515). Differentials in ascription of value towards some identities over others produce hierarchies of identity and power relations that influence how children make meaning about diverse identities (Bainbridge & Heydon, 2013; Freebody & Luke, 1997, 2003; Janmohamed, 2010). Luke (1995) argued, "in an educational context in which all schools are being called upon to provide access and equity to increasingly heterogeneous student populations, the tensions between official discourses and minority discourses should be principal focuses for educational research" (p. 38). While child care and nursery school programs were originally rooted in developmental theories and perspectives of childhood, and child development will remain a factor in the production and facilitation of curricula, there are increasing concerns over the limitations of DAP. Grieshaber (2008) wrote, "developmental theories, particularly Piagetian stage theories, have become weapons of mass seduction in ECE across the globe, vaporizing Piagetian developmental perspectives" (p. 508). Iannacci and Whitty (2009) illustrated how developmentalism limits educators' pedagogical possibilities:

> Since developmental progression is viewed as inevitable, children are understood and constructed as an analogous group rather than individuals. Differences are

> ignored and what is deemed normal for an age group becomes the primary pedagogical focus of programming and instruction for that age group, with little room for variation. (p. 12)

Many modern researchers of ECE advocate moving beyond the developmental paradigm (Grieshaber, 2008; Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Kehily, 2009; Janmohamed, 2010; Lubeck, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000; Robinson, 2013; Taylor & Richardson, 2005). Goffin and Wilson (2001) noted that among various concerns expressed is the extent to which developmental theory "responds to the multiple purposes of early education and values of participating families" (p. 197; see also Delpit, 1988, 1995; Lubeck, 1996, 1998; Silin, 1995; Stott & Bowman, 1996). Furthermore, as Goffin and Wilson (2001) wrote, "reliance on developmental theory to determine educational outcomes obscures the political dimensions of what is taught by implying that curriculum choices can be determined by developmental appropriateness, rather than political and moral priorities" (p. 210; see also Kessler, 1991; Lubeck, 1998; Silin, 1995). Hatch (2012), in a book chapter that reviewed the contribution of DAP to early childhood curriculum, concluded, "Developmental theory has almost nothing to say about curriculum, when curriculum is understood to be the content that young children are exposed to in early childhood classrooms" (p. 51). The rhetoric about what is *developmentally appropriate*, however, continues to blend into conversations about early childhood curriculum and what should be taught. In particular, resistance and reservations remain over discussing diverse gender identities and same-sex relationships with young children (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Kintner-Duffy, 2012; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2011, 2016; Robinson, 2013).

1.4. Limitations of Ideas on Childhood Innocence

One of the main arguments behind why topics of diverse gender and sexual identities are considered difficult knowledge or inappropriate conversation hinges upon the notion that children are innocent of sexuality. It is important to understand the root of these assumptions because not discussing sexuality can have damaging effects on the way children perceive themselves, their families, or non-normative identities (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; EGALE, 2011; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2001, 2003, 2005; Meyer, 2007; Renold, 2006). Also, as discussed earlier, sexual identities and gender expressions

have become inextricably linked due to stereotypes and assumptions. Thorne (1993) wrote that the label "sissy" suggests that a boy has ventured too far into the contaminating "feminine" (p. 111). The correlation between *wimpy* boys and *homosexual* boys places both identities outside the accepted *masculine* identity. In other words, as Thorne articulated, "a 'sissy' is a failed male" (p. 116).

Girls get labeled as well. Walkerdine (1990) noted, "in our work with girls, throughout all age-groups, 'nice' and 'kind' and 'helpful' were the three commonest signifiers posited as the most desirable characteristics for girls to possess" (p. 76), and "girls are prepared for entry into heterosexual practices and, in particular, for romantic love" (p. 87). Blaise (2009) observed children in a kindergarten class and assertively reported the degree children express sexuality through their interactions with peers:

> Children are neither ignorant nor naïve about what girls want and what they need in current times. They believe in heterosexual desire, and this is evident through their talk and actions…These understandings restrict possibilities for both girls and boys, and they clearly show how heteronormativity is part of the early childhood classroom. (p. 458)

However, acknowledging name-calling, heterosexual practices, or desirable gender characteristics as linked to sexuality is considered inappropriate by some or intentionally disregarded by others. Robinson (2013) argues, "sexuality has come to signify danger in the lives of children through discourses of innocence and protection, which have largely dismissed children's sexual subjectivities" (p. 42; see also Davies & Robinson, 2010; Renold, 2005, 2006; Robinson, 2008, 2013).

Robinson (2013) reviewed some of the history of thought pertaining to children's sexuality and noted several theorists who viewed children's sexuality "as normal, natural and critical to children's intellectual development and healthy adulthood" (p. 89). Namely, Freud was known for supporting this perspective, which, as Robinson identified, was "popularized in the USA, Britain and Australia during the mid-1950s, largely through the works of Benjamin Spock" (p. 89). Specifically, Robinson wrote,

> Freud believed there were identifiable natural stages in psychosexual development during infancy, and considered these to be integral to a mature heterosexual adulthood. Unlike previous eras, where children's sexuality was perceived to be dangerous, parents were encouraged to accommodate children's erotic impulses and curiosities (e.g. masturbation) as much as possible, as they were perceived to be how children learnt about the world. It was considered important that children's minds were free to develop without inhibitions, fears and anxieties. Children's sex-play was seen as wholesome. Freud claimed that neurosis in adulthood, including sexual deviancy, was a result of repression of sexuality in childhood and childhood trauma. (pp. 89-90)

These views maintained traction through the 1960s and 1970s, which, Robinson noted, has since been labeled "the progressive era in terms of sexuality" (p. 89). He later identified that in the latter years of the nineteenth century, laws began to be established to "protect young children's innocence through intervening in their sexual exploitation" (p. 47). Furthermore, new scientific perspectives of childhood were emerging that advocated childhood as a separate stage from adulthood, and with this knowledge came opinions that childhood was a time to be protected from adult behaviours. Discourses surrounding childhood innocence compiled, and Robinson (2013) has identified, "debates about whose responsibility it is to educate children about sexuality, relationships and ethical behaviours—either parents or schools or both—has continued to be a politically hot topic in many countries" (p. 112).

In attempts to dispel concerns over same-sex relationships being inappropriate to discuss with young children, DePalma and Atkinson (2010) highlighted the narrow definitions of sexuality that are tied simply to sex acts, resulting in primary teachers feeling *sexuality* is not "a relevant or even permissible topic for young children" (p. 1675); instead, they draw on the words of a participant who suggested sexuality is about empathy, comfort, and is what makes life worth living (p. 1675). Also promoting conversations about gender and sexual identities with young children, Robinson (2013) argued that in silencing conversations about these identities children become vulnerable to gender-

based harassment and are left to navigate understanding diverse identities in isolation (see also Steinberg, 2011).

However, research indicates that many teachers continue to avoid challenging gender and sexual norms based on concerns that the topic of sexuality is "taboo" (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Kintner-Duffy, 2012). Kintner-Duffy (2012) explained that, "because sexuality is regarded as taboo, teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards LGBT families are often ignored or excluded from both teacher preparation programs and research in early childhood education" (p. 213). Similarly, DePalma and Atkinson (2010) report on studies in the UK: "Cultural assumptions and taboos about sexuality have prevented teachers from exploring non-heterosexuality and gender variance within educational contexts" (p. 1675). Research conducted in Australia and Canada by Martino and Cumming-Potvin (2011, 2016) indicated that pre-service teachers, who were presented the possibility of using picture books addressing same-sex parenting and non-normative sexuality, expressed concern regarding texts that were "in your face" (2011, p. 16), with fear of upsetting parents, of pushing a "gay agenda" (2011, p.486), or of questioning the age-appropriateness of the material. The authors emphasized a teacher who felt "she had to navigate how to deal with explicitly deploying texts that introduced topics such as same-sex families and relationships" (2014, p. 9).

Research indicates that concerns about the relevance or appropriateness of discussing diverse gender and sexual identities seem to increase with how young a child is. After interviewing pre-service teachers' beliefs about addressing diverse gender and sexual identities with young children, Robinson and Ferfolja (2008) concluded:

> Among the participants, perceptions of relevance diminished from the secondary context to early childhood education. That is, the younger the children pre-service teachers were working with, the lesser the importance placed on the issues, with some teacher educators questioning *any* relevance to those working with children in primary or early childhood. (p.849)

In the next section I review some of the research that has been done to demonstrate young children's participation in establishing and negotiating gender identities.

1.5. **Gender Identities and ECE**

While some say that, "boys will be boys," the research I share in this section demonstrates how gender is a social construction, beginning at an early age. MacNaughton (2000) noted,

> myths prevail about the aptness of addressing the gendering of identity through, and in, early childhood education. They range from the view that gender doesn't matter to young children, through a sense that good early childhood practice produces equity for all, to beliefs that pursuing gender equity compromises partnerships with parents and clashes with multicultural perspectives in early childhood. (p. 1)

Gendered play in ECE has been studied by many, however, who stress the imminent need to disrupt normalizing behaviours that limit gendered identities for young children (Bailey, 1993; Blaise, 2009; MacNaughton, 2000; Renold, 2006; Robinson, 2013; Skattebol, 2006; Steinberg, 2011; Taylor & Richardson, 2005; Thorne, 1993; Wohlwend, 2009). MacNaughton (2000) wrote, "the child is an active player in gender identity formation, but not a free agent" (p. 28). Children are constantly participating in meaning-making surrounding gender identities and what are considered acceptable or unacceptable performances. Renold (2004) reported on a study of ten and eleven year old boys:

> Over two thirds of boys openly expressed their feelings of powerlessness and anxiety as they struggled to negotiate the impossible fiction of hegemonic masculinity and over one third of boys were subject to routinized forms of gender-based bullying…if they did not desire and/or 'fit' the hegemonic ideal. Rarely then did boys sustain any comfortable security with their gendered identities. (p. 249)

Renold noted that, "a boy's rejection of popular modes of masculinity implicates him with 'girl', traditional femininities and gay masculinities" (p. 251). While Renold's work was with children slightly older than the early years, research shows how these habits begin early (Bailey, 1993; Blaise, 2009; Blaise & Ryan, 2010; Chen, 2009; Davies, 1989;

Davies & Robinson, 2010; Dyson, 2003; Gallas, 1998; Meyer, 2007, 2009; Thorne, 1993; Walkerdine, 1990; Wohlwend, 2009, 2012a, 2012b).

Bailey (1993) worked with kindergarten and grade one students to discuss their understandings of gender and gender norms through the use of four children's stories that featured non-normative expressions of gender. She reported how much children understand about what are "girl things" and "boy things" from a very early age and the extent to which children rely on visible markers of gender, which then impact how children play together. Wohlwend (2009) has also spent significant time observing young children's play time in regards to gender identity. Through a mediated discourse analysis, she studied children's non-verbal modes of communication and interaction and how they influence the social, material, and cultural environment. She labeled three distinct play groups: the Abbie Wannabes (who played teacher), the Just Guys, and the Disney Princess Players. Of interest, she observed the protection of masculine space in the Just Guys group, which made it difficult for girls to join, as well as boys who were interested in Disney Princess play (p. 238). Corroborating Wohlwend's (2009) work, Davies (1989) also observed children taking up gender in multiple ways, demonstrating the fluidity of gender and children's ability to challenge gender norms.

Davies' (1989) research also demonstrated, however, how many children actually resisted challenging gender norms. She read feminist stories to preschool children and facilitated conversations where she noted children were quick to find problems with non-normative stories. Commenting on Davies' work, Blaise and Ryan (2012) suggested that, "children's resistance to feminist storylines meant the field needed to rethink their beliefs about how children take up gender as well as the kind of curriculum that was considered to be the most effective for challenging gender bias and stereotypes" (p. 83). More often than not, research reports the heterosexual narratives that infiltrate children's play and interactions.

Davies and Robinson (2010) argued, "from the moment children are born, they are…automatically placed within a system of signifiers that assume and attempt to constitute heterosexuality and normative performances of gender" (p. 251). Gallas (1998)

reported, “by first grade they are capable of complex and subtle social maneuvering, tampering with the edges of social acceptability while simultaneously making the rules for what is acceptable” (p. 35). Blaise (2009) suggested that kindergarten educators often “fail to notice the delight and pleasure the children are experiencing while actively drawing upon gender and sexuality discourses to construct images of femininity and masculinity, as well as what it means to be a girl and boy” (p. 451). Chen (2009) observed a grade one and two classroom and wrote:

> I explored the gender division strictly monitored by the peer rules in this class and found that the major social integration between the boys and girls is through developing a sort of romantic relationship legitimated by the peer culture. Children adopted the adult theme of romance into their peer culture and many of them considered that hanging out with the opposite sex should be age-appropriate. Also, when one has a friend of the opposite sex, he or she must be ready for the public comment in this class. (p. 172)

The children in her study were well aware of the gendered and sexualized narratives in which they were participating.

The ways children perform gender is also connected to their understanding of power relationships. Walkerdine (1990) presented a script from her research of two four-year old boys and a female teacher, where the boys draw on their masculine power to oppress the teacher. She witnessed young boys teasing the teacher with derogatory sexual claims like “take all your clothes off, your bra off” and yet still showcased their childhood nature when another boy follows this up with “yeah, and take your bum off, take your wee-wee off, take your clothes, your mouth off” (p. 4). In another example, Walkerdine shared a conversation among young boys and girls playing house, in which the girls were able to exude feminine power through their role as domestic and controlling over the male role. However, she also noted that this scenario still placed the girls in a submissive role since they were dependent on the male for his economic power. Walkerdine suggested that in understanding the play of children we can observe how these practices “produce the children as re-creating the (often reactionary) discourses with which they are familiar, but

also serve to constitute them as a multiplicity of contradictory positions of power and resistance" (p. 10). Similarly, Gallas (1998) reported on early childhood classroom observations and noted,

> repeatedly over the years, I have observed six-, seven-, and eight-year-old boys, who are very interested in power, figure out how to push the boundaries of public discourse so that they can always be at the top of the social hierarchy. (p. 35)

She continued, "at a very early age, these boys have an astonishing sense of how power is constructed to subdue and intimidate others, to control social dynamics, and to obtain special favors" (p. 36). These accounts demonstrate children's awareness of how power and gender roles are intertwined.

There is no such thing as childhood innocence in terms of gender and sexuality; when we do not discuss what children experience, we produce childhood *ignorance* and condone discrimination and harassment towards misunderstood identities. There is a need to understand how discussions (or lack thereof) about diverse gender and sexual identities impact children's identities and identity options. In examining how kindergarten curricula include these identities, this research contributes towards this significant conversation by exploring the meaning-making opportunities offered to young children.

1.6. **Research Study and Research Questions**

There is a need for research that explores the opportunities offered to young children to make meaning of diverse gender and sexual identities and that acknowledges the implications for children's own identity options and their understanding of the diverse identities of others. I chose ECE as the research focus as it is the first point of contact for many young children as they make the transition from home to school and are exposed to diverse identities. As Blaise and Ryan (2012) noted, "Early childhood settings are saturated with power relations and knowledge production is continuously being (re)constructed" (p. 83).

Furthermore, as outlined by Friendly and Prentice (2012), the Canadian climate of ECE and care is evolving:

> Until very recently, early childhood education (ECE) programs for 3- and 4-year-olds such as nursery schools were typically the responsibility of provincial/ territorial social service departments, while education ministries took responsibility for kindergarten for children from 4 or 5 years of age. (p. 51)

Already, by 2010, six provinces/territories had integrated child care and ECE under the broad umbrella term of education, and many were offering full school-day kindergarten for 5-year olds (Friendly & Prentice, 2012, p. 52). Now, 11 kindergarten curriculum documents have been created to serve all 13 jurisdictions across Canada. With the exception of the territories, which share curriculum documents, each province has a separate curriculum document with different values and expectations. Many of these documents have only recently been published, as provinces and territories work to establish kindergarten programs.

Since early childhood is a time when young children are acquiring understandings about gender and sexual identities, the goal of this study is to explore the Canadian educational curricula that support early childhood and how the curricula construct and position children's identity options in relation to children's meaning-making. This is with the hope of identifying the affordances and limitations produced by these texts for supporting educators in discussing diverse identities. The research questions are as follows: (1) What gender and sexual identities are included in Canadian early childhood curricula? (2) How are these identities configured including what meaning-making opportunities are children offered relative to them? (3) What is the null curriculum relative to gender and sexual identities? (4) What is the hidden curriculum relative to gender and sexual identities? (5) What are the implications for students' gender and sexual identity options and their understandings of gender and sexual minority youth and same-sex parented families?

This study employed a CDA of kindergarten curriculum documents used in each province and territory in order to gain an understanding of the content and values expressed. Fairclough (1995) suggested, one of the goals of CDA "is to contribute to the development and spread of a critical awareness of language as a factor in domination" (p. 186). He argued that a close investigation of texts "sometimes suggests how they might

be elaborated or modified, and occasionally suggests that they are misguided" (p.188). Also, "textual analysis can often give excellent insights about what is 'in' a text, but what is absent from a text is often just as significant from the perspective of sociocultural analysis" (p.5). For the purpose of this study, text refers to the kindergarten programmatic curricula. The term curriculum, however, requires explanation and background. Below, I outline how I framed curriculum for this work and the context from which curriculum studies has evolved.

1.7. **Curriculum and Curriculum Theory and Perspectives**

Schubert (1986) stressed the importance of curriculum study in his opening chapter: "The future of the individual, society, and civilization is at stake when we ask: What is worthwhile to know?" (p. 5). He noted that, "during the past fifteen years, much scholarly attention has been given to the nature and function of curriculum inquiry" (p. 37). The term *curriculum* originated from Latin meaning "the course of a chariot race," yet, as Schubert (1986) identified, the racecourse could be seen as "a metaphor for a journey of learning and growth that is consciously developed" (p. 6).

Since there have been various definitions that have been applied to the term curriculum, it is important to describe the conceptualization of curriculum that I drew upon for this study. Doyle (1992) described Programmatic Curriculum, which are the texts or documents that outline the written expectations of schools. He noted that these curricula become political instruments integrating social expectations into the school environment. Comparable to Doyle's Programmatic Curriculum is what Schubert (1986) identified as the Overt Curriculum: "The intended or explicit curriculum" that schools "formally admit to teaching" (p. 104). He suggested that it usually appears in what he calls "curriculum guides" and consists of "skills, concepts, principles, appreciations, and values that school officials overtly provide for students" (p. 104). This type of curriculum is what I am referring to when I speak about the kindergarten curriculum documents.

Other concepts considered in curriculum studies include the Hidden Curriculum and the Null Curriculum. Schubert (1986) described the Hidden Curriculum as "that which is taught implicitly, rather than explicitly, by the school experience" (p. 105). He noted,

> since the late 1960s, school has been acknowledged as a subculture with rules, mores, folkways, and emergent values of its own. Thus, ways of life derived from school experience convey learnings. (p. 105)

Similarly, Apple (2004) described hidden curriculum as the degree to which culture and values enter into curriculum despite not always being explicitly stated. In my research, I consider the hidden curriculum within the programmatic curriculum.

The Null Curriculum also conveys values through what is omitted from programmatic or experienced curriculum. Eisner (1979) has been credited for the term Null Curriculum, and, in 1985, he wrote a compelling piece about aesthetic knowledge and how the absence of a subject also impacts students and teaches them about what we value or do not value. Schubert (1986) noted, "it may seem strange to think of the curriculum that is not taught, but we often teach by our silence on many matters" (p. 107). Therefore, I was also cognizant of various topics, words, or phrases that may not appear in programmatic curriculum.

Appreciating curriculum documents requires an understanding of how the field of curriculum studies has evolved to support curriculum development. In 1837, Friedrich Froebel of Germany, developed the first kindergarten with curriculum that was "truly child centered and provided for individual differences" (Schubert, 1986, p. 68), and this established the beginning of progressive education for the next century. Different perspectives surrounding curriculum theory and paradigms in curriculum all impact what Schubert (1986) identified as the three most basic curriculum questions: "What knowledge is most worthwhile? Why is it worthwhile? How is it acquired or created?" (p. 1).

It is suggested that the notion of curriculum *theory* emerged at a conference at the University of Chicago in 1947 (Schubert, 1986, p. 131). Following questions surrounding the nature of reality and how humans know what we know, curriculum theory was seen as a branch of philosophical thought to address decisions about what content is significant to know or what should be taught. One of the most notable curriculum theorists is John Dewey.

In 1900 and 1902, Dewey produced two books that, according to Schubert (1986), became "the foundation stones of the Progressive Education Movement" and in these books, Dewey argued, "the experience of the child must be the basis for education. The educator must realize that children are active learners who are already involved in meaningful social life" (Schubert, 1986, p. 71). Then, in 1916, Dewey published his major work on education, "Democracy and Education," where he stressed democratic living and problem solving to ensure personal growth (p. 72). Schubert (1986) summarized, "Dewey viewed education as life itself, not primarily preparation for future life" (p. 72). In the 1930s, Dewey pushed for curriculum "that was integrated by attention to learner interest and need" (Schubert, 1986, p. 80). While Dewey's work remains influential today, there have been a variety of curriculum theorists that span a spectrum of beliefs about education.

Table 2 provides a simplified summary of the field of curriculum outlined in this section to assist in making sense of the information presented, beginning with Schubert's (1986) four category schemes to encompass conceptions of curriculum theory (Descriptive, Prescriptive, Critical, and Personal), as well as Schubert's three curriculum orientations (Intellectual Traditionalist, Social Behaviorist, and Experientialist).

Table 2: Summary of the Field of Curriculum

Curriculum Theory	Descriptive	Prescriptive	Critical	Personal
Schubert's (1986) Curriculum Orientations	Intellectual Traditionalist	Social Behaviorist		Experientialist
Habermas' (1971) Paradigms of Inquiry	Empirical-analytical	Hermeneutic		Critical
Interests Served	Technical	Practical		Emancipatory
Curricular Priorities	Objectivity, efficiency, generalizability	Interactions, context, meaning through language use		Power, values, oppression/liberation
Heydon & Wang's (2006) Forms of Curricula	Prescriptive	Adaptable		Emergent

The four conceptions of curriculum theory are purposely placed offset from the three dominant columns of the table, as I perceive an overlap across the columns. For example, both descriptive and prescriptive schemes could fit within the Intellectual Traditionalist orientation of curriculum and the Social Behaviorist orientation could maintain both prescriptive and critical conceptions simultaneously.

In Schubert's (1986) first category of curriculum theory, descriptive curriculum theorists value the natural sciences and analyze *what is*, promoting the ability to define, describe, predict, and direct. This approach is considered free of ideological values and aims to explain and predict behavior, specifically. While descriptive theorists aim to identify behavior, prescriptive curriculum theorists view curriculum as a recommendation for how to behave. This approach focuses on what ought to be done and advocates and establishes norms for action. Both descriptive and prescriptive theories have been criticized for being restrictive in different ways; whereas descriptive theory ignores that theory is value-laden and thereby constricts individuals from seeing beyond the data, prescriptive theory relies heavily on values and existing value systems, which can restrict growth and change.

In attempts to explore the values that maintain societal structures and organization, Critical Theory aims to assess the ways curriculum perpetuates socioeconomic class structure and oppression and looks to emancipate individuals by exposing knowledge about money, consumption, distribution, and production. Schubert (1986) identified several noteworthy critical theorists, including Adorno, Marcuse, Horkheimer, Habermas, and Freire (p. 133). With a focus on society and culture, Critical Theory helps to illuminate possibilities for change. An extension of this theory is what Schubert called Personal Theorizing, which captures the work that has emerged since the mid-1970s that has attempted to reconceptualize the field of curriculum. In particular, William Pinar (1975) urged the use of the word *theorizing* rather than theory and turns the focus towards the nature of the educational experience itself.

Schubert's (1986) three curriculum orientations—Intellectual Traditionalists, Social Behaviorist and the Experientialist—provided yet another lens in which to view how individuals approach the ultimate question: What is worthwhile to know? According to

an Intellectual Traditionalist, curriculum should consist of the liberal arts, such as The Harvard Classics. The goal of education, to an Intellectual Traditionalist, is to understand the great minds of the past and consider big ideas in life such as truth, love, and death. In contrast, while the Social Behaviorist also believes in studying the "basics", they believe this knowledge lies in traditional subjects such as mathematics and the sciences. Unlike the former two orientations that prioritize the transmission of knowledge from expert to student, an Experientialist values dialogue, personal meaning, and a subjective journey of exploration and understanding.

Moving from considerations of what we should know and experience are questions surrounding how educators should approach teaching and curriculum development. Drawing on Dewey's work, the end of the 1940s brought Tyler's (1949) "Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction", which remains influential today (p. 82). Schubert (1986) summarized the four questions Tyler identified to frame curriculum study:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. How can learning experiences be selected which are likely to be useful in attaining these objectives?
3. How can learning experiences be organized for effective instruction?
4. How can the effectiveness of learning experiences be evaluated? (p. 171)

In other words, there was a focus on purpose, content, organization, and evaluation, which supported questions of *what*, such as "What considerations should be made when analyzing or developing curriculum?" (Schubert, 1986, p. 170). Schubert suggested that these topics are perennial and provided the foundation for a "technical rationality" for curriculum inquiry that attempted to produce "cookbook approaches" for curriculum development (p. 173). Schubert drew on the work of Habermas (1971) and his three paradigms of inquiry—empirical-analytical, hermeneutic, and critical—and connected each one to the interests served: technical, practical, and emancipatory, respectively (see Table 2). A technical mindset, as described above, is concerned with objectivity, efficiency, and generalizability. Mueller (2012) described this curriculum as "set apart

from politics, giving it the appearance of neutrality and separation from the competing values and interests of any historical time" (p. 55). Furthermore, this view of curriculum has been "one of the greatest influences on what we know as curriculum" (p. 55).

Joseph Schwab (1969) argued that a technical focus was inhibiting the growth of curriculum studies and advocated for practical considerations. In "The Practical 3: Translation into Curriculum" (1973) he identified four classroom commonplaces as the essence of curriculum: teachers, learners, subject matter, and milieu—where milieu refers to the environment. He was particularly interested in the interactions between and across the commonplaces. This relates to Habermas' (1971) Hermeneutic inquiry, which viewed humans as "active creators of knowledge" and reality as "shared within a historical, political, and social context"; there was specific focus on meaning through language use (Schubert, 1986, p. 181).

Lastly, derived from Critical Theory, the critical paradigm is considered to be emancipatory, with special attention given to "the impact of race, socioeconomic class, and gender on education, quality of life, outlook on life, and capacity to grow and become more fully liberated" (Schubert, 1986, p. 177). This mindset has been associated with theorists such as Michael Apple, William Pinar, Henry Giroux, and Madeleine Grumet, as well as educational philosophers like Paulo Freire. The focus of this paradigm is power and the underlying values of educational structures and programmatic curriculum.

More recently, Walkerdine (1990), an educational feminist, discussed how power operates in the classroom. She noted, "individuals are powerless or powerful depending upon which discursive practice they enter as subject" (p. 10), and that, "girls and women do not take up *any* position in *any* discourse….The positions available to them exist *only* within certain limits" (p. 14). She argued that, "forms of pedagogy necessary to the maintenance or order, the regulation of populations, demand a self-regulating individual and a notion of freedom as freedom from overt control. Yet such a notion of freedom is a sham" (p. 19). She suggested power was not static, but rather "produced as a constantly shifting relation" (p. 14). Similarly, Lather (1991) described that postpositivist

approaches to research that adopted a critical realism viewed research as “an enactment of power relations” (p. 14) and looked to “the productivity of language in the construction of the objects of investigation” (p. 13). She encouraged readers to be “deconstructive” and “to engage and disrupt the text, to analyse it in terms of its absences, to find a position outside its assumptions” (p. 5). Curricula are texts that use language that can either reinforce or challenge existing power relations.

Heydon and Wang (2006) identified three dominant forms of curricula that describe the design of programmatic curriculum more specifically: Prescriptive, Adaptable, and Emergent. Each form can be related to Habermas’ (1971) paradigms of inquiry respectively: Empirical-analytical, Hermeneutic, and Critical. The values associated with each form of curricula can have significant impact on the extent to which power relations are addressed.

For Heydon and Wang (2006), prescriptive curriculum “denies contributions that children and families can make to the curriculum” (p. 34) and is produced by curriculum designers who “work outside of the classroom” (p. 33) and “away from those with proximity to the children it will affect” (p. 34). Theory both precedes and directs practice and the environment is controlled. There is a focus on “what children cannot do or are missing” (p. 33) and any behavioral changes or individual differences are attributed to learning as opposed to personal development.

Adaptable curriculum, as Heydon and Wang (2006) explained, is still a document conceived outside of the classroom, but teachers are given more discretion to initiate activities according to children’s interests and backgrounds. This form of curriculum is considered to take an interactive and constructive view of curricula where children, teachers, parents, and the environment all play an active role. Expectations are based on Paiget’s age-related cognitive changes.

Lastly, Heydon and Wang (2006) described emergent curriculum, which embraces a dynamic and critical view of curriculum. In this form, practice and theory inform one another and there are harmonious collaborations within schools and communities. Children are seen as contributing and participating members of the community and a

source of curriculum. Teachers are trusted to exercise professional judgment in determining class projects. There is no formal document; the curriculum is co-constructed by the teachers, the children, and the parents. The environment is also considered a teacher.

I have outlined various forms, paradigms, and theories of curriculum to provide a framework to assist in categorizing the Canadian kindergarten curricula explored in this study (analysis provided in Chapter 5), as well as to articulate my own curricular orientation. Of the four main conceptions of curriculum theory presented by Schubert (1986), I align with Critical Theory, which explores curriculum with a focus on oppression and social inequities. CDA afforded me the opportunity to apply this lens as I investigated the language used in the texts and how gender and sexual identities are positioned and articulated. This perspective is associated with the far right column of Table 2 that was presented earlier, which consists of Schubert's experientialist curriculum orientation, and Habermas' (1971) critical paradigm of inquiry—both of which serve emancipatory interests that focus on values and power dynamics. These priorities are most evident in Heydon and Wang's (2006) emergent form of curricula, which viewed children as active, contributing members of the community.

1.8. Chapter Summary and Dissertation Overview

I began this chapter with Canadian population demographics and statistics, followed by a brief discussion of gender norms, hegemony, and multiliteracies. Then, I reviewed various perspectives of childhood and how this impacts questions about what and how children should learn and develop. Furthermore, I provided a discussion about the misunderstandings behind childhood innocence. I then explained my proposed research, which employed a CDA of Canadian kindergarten programmatic curricula to record the inclusion of gender and sexual identities and the meaning-making opportunities offered to children in relation to these identities. To support an understanding of the significance and impact of curricula, I then provided an overview of curriculum definitions, as well as curriculum theory and perspectives.

In chapter two I present a review of the literature, including research on ECE and curricula. In the chapter, I also summarize studies within education that draw on CDA to investigate curriculum and educational policies, as well as other relevant research connected to inclusive education and diverse identities. I identify a gap in the research in terms of exploring recent kindergarten curricula across Canada for the inclusion of diverse gender and sexual identities given federal priorities for inclusion, respect, and anti-bullying, as well as shifting population demographics and gender roles.

I delve deeper into CDA as the methodology for the research, in chapter three. CDA provides the opportunity to analyze text for how gender and sexual identities are configured and any power relations that exist among intended, hidden, or null curriculum. In the chapter, I justify the reliability and trustworthiness of the research, as well as some of the constraints and considerations.

In chapter four, I provide an overview of the curriculum documents reviewed in the study. I outline the format of each document, the program structure, and the age of eligibility for the programs. I also include a note about authorship.

In chapter five, I present the results, systematically, corresponding with the data collection tool. In the first section, I review data recorded based on Fairclough's (1995) methods of textual analysis, including grammar, vocabulary, semantics, textual organization, genre, discourse, and societal and historical influences on text. The second component of the data collection tool is where I document language pertaining to Dillon's questions of curriculum, which were modified to reflect the nature, elements, and practices of gender and sexual identities. I then summarize findings corresponding to the six dimensions of language arts and the meaning-making opportunities children are afforded.

Chapter six is where I provide a discussion of the findings most pertinent to the research questions, in relation to the literature. I emphasize the significance of the data and the contributions to the field.

In chapter seven, I review the implications of the findings and provide recommendations that follow from the research study. I conclude with a summary and final remarks.

Chapter 2 : Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide the approach to the literature review and give an overview of the pre-existing work related to early childhood curricula and the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within education, given that CDA is my chosen methodology. Several of the relevant resources I selected from the literature search provide background to early childhood education (ECE) in North America and a review of the evolution of early childhood curriculum. Research that draws on CDA in education explored various educational texts, curricula, and policies. I also reviewed other relevant research that pertained to curriculum, educational policies, and identity construction, despite not using CDA. While I found several studies that focused on early learning curriculum frameworks in Canada, I determined that no studies provided an analysis of the existing kindergarten curricula in Canada, especially as some documents have only become available in the last year or two. In conducting a CDA of the emerging kindergarten curricula across Canada I aim to add significantly to a dialogue about social justice education in public early childhood classrooms. In the last section of this chapter I highlight the contribution of this research.

Before reviewing the literature in detail, I share how I approached the search. I entered the search terms *early childhood education*, *curriculum*, *Canada*, and *Critical Discourse Analysis* in both the Western library catalogue as well as the library catalogue at the University of Toronto. The search produced a large number of results, so I browsed the first 100 as results were sorted by relevance. Upon reading titles and abstracts, I recorded any work that explored educational curriculum or policy or that used CDA related to education or identities. In several cases, resources appeared in both catalogues respectively, confirming that the work was relevant to my search terms. I then delved deeper into the Western database collection and searched the same four terms together within the JSTOR database. Again, some resources resurfaced, as well as some new titles that I made note to explore. Upon searching the four terms together in ProQuest, no results were found. I then eliminated Canada as a search term, and seven results emerged, two of which I found relevant. When I put Canada back into the search, but took out ECE (therefore searching curriculum, Canada, and CDA), 37 results appeared, in which I

recorded four noteworthy resources. ERIC also produced no results upon searching with all four terms, but provided 11 results when I searched ECE, curriculum, and CDA, four of which I recorded and one of which had already appeared in the ProQuest database. Upon reviewing all relevant resources retrieved, I have categorized the information under the following headings: History of Early Childhood in North America; Research in ECE, Canadian Curricula, and Early Learning Frameworks; CDA in Educational Research; and Peripheral Research of Particular Relevance.

2.1. History of Early Childhood Education in North America

I extracted resources from the literature search that provided the background to ECE in North America, with a focus on Canada. This was important to understand the current context of ECE and curriculum. The attention towards ECE was high in the 1960s, following World War II and the baby boom. Not surprisingly, then, Goffin and Wilson (2001) noted:

> Prior to the 1960s, children's development was believed to be predetermined by heredity. Adherence to this belief was aided by the fact that, to many, educating very young children outside the home was considered an infringement on the functions and rights of families. (p. 46)

While there were some nursery schools targeted towards middle-class families to provide "child-rearing advice and social-emotional enrichment to a child's home life" (Goffin & Wilson, 2001 p. 17), most early childhood care was in the form of *day nurseries*, which were full day programs, as opposed to the half day nursery school programs, and were geared for low-income mothers who were forced to work. It was not until the 1960s that the United States developed a national early childhood program called Head Start. The program still predominantly served lower-income families and was intended to assist "poor preschoolers to enter school as well prepared as their middle-class counterparts" (Goffin & Wilson, 2001, p. 12). Canadian nursery school teachers learned about the program in 1965 and initiated something similar, opening its first center in 1967 (Prochner & Robertson, 2012, p. 35). It was believed that "school readiness" for academic activities was a significant priority for "children deemed at-risk of school

failure due to poverty or 'cultural deprivation'" (Prochner & Robertson, 2012, p. 42). Also in 1967, Project Follow Through was established in the United States for children in kindergarten through grade three "in hopes of extending the benefits of Head Start" (Goffin & Wilson, 2001 p. 23). During the 1960s several movements were concerned with the well-being of children in the developing world; The United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of the Child was established in 1959 and dedicated the 1960s to development, and in 1963 the United Nations International Children's Fund developed a report, which encouraged educational programs that not only prepared children for the future but focused on children's health and nutrition as well (Prochner & Robertson, 2012).

Despite some Canadian resistance to a dependency on American ideas, several curriculum models emerged in the United States that influenced Canadian education systems (Davis, Sumara, & Laidlaw, 2011). According to Goffin and Wilson (2001), "The term *curriculum model* refers to a conceptual framework for decision making about educational priorities, administrative policies, instructional methods, and evaluation criteria" (p. 15; see also Evans, 1982). Furthermore,

> variations among curriculum models reflect differences in value commitments concerning what is more or less important for young children to learn as well as the process by which children learn and develop—though these value commitments frequently are not made explicit. Curriculum models in early childhood education also have varied in terms of the flexibility that they grant teachers to interpret a model's conceptual framework. (Goffin & Wilson, 2001, p. 16)

One of the earlier models of early childhood curriculum was the Montessori Method, which was actually advocated by Maria Montessori herself beginning in 1916 in Italy, but it was not until the 1960s that this program really became popular in the United States and Canada (Goffin & Wilson, 2001; Prochner & Robertson, 2012). The Montessori Method was built on the goals of self-education and self-control. The environment was a key component contributing to children's development, and the program aimed to

provide children “freedom *to* take care of one’s own needs, and freedom *from* dependency on others” (Goffin & Wilson, 2001 p. 52).

In 1972, The National Day-Care Information Centre within Health and Welfare Canada was established to focus on research regarding day care services and on the development of standards in the day care field (Prochner & Robertson, 2012). Also in the early 1970s was the emergence of the Developmental-Interaction approach (Antler, 1982; Biber, 1977). This model emphasized both the intellectual and social-emotional development of children, and individuals supporting this approach believed that, “More fully developed individuals would be more capable of being caring, productive citizens who could create a force for effecting change” (Goffin & Wilson, 2001 p. 73). Educational goals included competence, individuality, socialization, and integration, and developmental progress was emphasized; the approach relied on the teacher’s knowledge and ability to respond to children and, therefore, placed significance on the need for qualified practitioners (Goffin & Wilson, 2001).

Goffin and Wilson (2001) noted that while theories of education focus on individual growth and personal character, “psychology’s purpose is to describe behavior as it is, not in terms of what it ought to be” (p. 212). Therefore, “behavioral psychology viewed the child as a recipient of, rather than a participant in, learning” (p.100). Following this aim, the model of Direct Instruction attempted to teach children systematically in fields such as reading, writing, and math, and emphasized efficiency and social utility (Goffin & Wilson, 2001). Direct Instruction is an example of what Heydon and Wang (2006) perceived as Prescriptive Curriculum, which denies children’s contributions to curriculum development and focuses on the skills that children lack. In 1986, the National Association of the Education of Young Children released a document that challenged the validity of academic early childhood programs.

The 1980s saw the popularization of the High/Scope Curriculum Model, where children’s interests were the source of the learning and educational goals included initiative, reflection of actions, intrinsic motivation, and problem solving (Goffin & Wilson, 2001, p. 152). It was based on two key principles: “human beings develop intellectual

capacities in predictable sequences" or stages (p. 155), and "changes in logical reasoning occur as a result of changes in a child's underlying thought structures" (p. 155). In other words, children actively construct new understandings. This model of curriculum aligns with Heydon and Wang's (2006) description of Adaptable Curriculum, where teachers are encouraged to support children's interests and work cooperatively with families. As Goffin and Wilson (2001) noted, this requires respect for diversity and an awareness of personal values. The late 1980s also saw an increasing influence from DAP in North America and beyond, with the release of a book by the National Association of the Education of Young Children called "Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8" (Bredekamp, 1987). Largely based on theories from Jean Piaget, DAP also encouraged children to learn based on their interests and it perceived childhood as having natural stages of development and children, likewise, as having developmental levels (MacNaughton, 2000).

Another approach that was gaining attention throughout the decades was the Reggio Emilia Approach, which continues to maintain popularity. This curriculum model also strives to work along-side families and emphasizes children's interests and initiative. Goffin and Wilson (2001) summarized:

> Children in the programs of Reggio Emilia are viewed as citizens of a community with the right to be taken seriously, respected for their intelligence and feelings, and valued for their lives in the here and now—not merely to be prepared for success with later schooling. Central to this image is the belief that children are contributing participants in the social and cultural activity of the community. (p. 236)

Heydon and Wang (2006) described this kind of curriculum model as Emergent Curriculum.

Each of the models of curriculum that have surfaced from the 1960s onward has influenced public kindergarten programs across Canada, which are increasing in attendance as more women enter the workforce. Friendly and Prentice (2012) reported that, "by the late 1990s, virtually all 5-year-olds and some 4-year-olds in most of Canada

attended public kindergarten on a part-day basis" (p. 53). Now, several provinces offer full-day kindergarten and two-year kindergarten programs.

Heydon and Wang (2006) stated, "in 1998 The Ontario government published its first policy document for kindergarten in over fifty years" (p. 30). This document has since been revised in 2011 and again in 2016 with the aim of regulating programming for junior and senior kindergarten in Ontario. All other provinces and territories followed this trend of producing documents to regulate programming for the kindergarten program. With so many children in attendance of ECE, there are increasing concerns regarding what is considered quality education. However, Goffin and Wilson (2001) noted problems with program evaluation such as the "availability of valid and reliable measures of program impact" (p. 175) and the "inability to determine which program elements are connected with which program outcomes" (p. 179).

In the early 2000s, Canada was one of twenty developed countries that participated in an international study by the Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development that examined the quality of ECE programs. Unfortunately, Canada ranked low on the scale due to programs that were considered "unplanned, inadequate, and less than effective for children and families" (Friendly & Prentice, 2012, p. 51). Furthermore, Friendly and Prentice argued that, "regulated child care is expensive, availability is insufficient, and the quality is usually too mediocre to be considered consistently educational or developmental" (p. 54). Friendly and Prentice made note that among political arrangements for early childhood education are also issues surrounding diverse Canadian values and beliefs and their place in ECE. The authors suggested that, "ideas about families and children, preferences for gender equality, and tension between the idea that we should care for our neighbours but look out for ourselves" are part of current political culture and conflict (p. 76). Goffin and Wilson (2001) articulated:

> Until recently, the field of curriculum focused primarily on the development and management of curriculum. It is only within the last 30 years—basically the life span of systematic dissemination and implementation of early childhood curriculum models—that curriculum studies have moved beyond developing and

> managing curriculum to investigating educational experience in terms of its political, cultural, gender, and historical dimensions", known as *curricular reconceptualization* (p. 195; see also Pinar, 1988, 1999).

They highlight how cultural context has been almost completely neglected in discussions of curriculum models, and that modern curriculum theorists are exploring whose interests are being served or marginalized by curricular decisions (see also Ogbu, 1994; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Swadener & Kessler, 1991). Goffin and Wilson (2001) suggested, "the abilities to cooperate with others, solve problems, and set personal goals are becoming valued as skills and dispositions necessary for academic success, as well as essential life skills" (p. 206). These new priorities led to a surge of research in ECE and curricula.

2.2. Research in Early Childhood Education, Canadian Curricula, and Early Learning Frameworks

When I reviewed the research, which explored early childhood curricula and early learning frameworks I identified a gap in the research for investigating recent Canadian kindergarten programmatic curricula for potentially marginalized identities. In a book edited by File, Mueller, and Basler Wisneski (2012) entitled "Curriculum in Early Childhood Education: Re-examined, Rediscovered, Renewed," File (2012) examined questions surrounding what works in curriculum and what makes curriculum effective. She wrote:

> In summary, questions regarding *how* curriculum works have generally received less attention than questions of *if* a curriculum works. The gaps here between what we know and what we need to know are great. The quantitative observational research has typically involved complex coding schemes with answers that are elusive and recognizably partial. Qualitative research has only illuminated the tip of the iceberg that is curriculum enactment. (pp. 19-20)

File later noted, "the answers to *if* questions remain weakly established" (p. 22). Overall, File concluded, "there are gaps between what we know about early childhood curriculum, what we need to know, and how we choose to know" (p. 24).

These questions, and how educators approach them, coincide with evolving perspectives on curriculum theory and curriculum development, as I outlined in chapter one. In a recent analysis of curriculum theory on early childhood, Mueller (2012) argued that a shift has taken place from "a focus on curriculum development and curriculum as a transcendent product, to the idea of 'understanding' (Pinar, 2004) curriculum as a sociological, contextualized *process* laden with issues of power, authority, phenomenology, and interpretation" (p. 58). This is greatly due to the changes, which occurred across North America in the last few decades.

Pacini-Ketchabaw and Bernhard (2012) noted that by the 1980s a critical discourse around multiculturalism was infiltrating government affairs with its inclusion in the 1982 Constitution Act, followed by the Multiculturalism Act in 1985, and the 1995 Employment Equity Act. However, the authors communicated, "Although multiculturalism may well have been introduced to preserve the integrity of the diverse cultures in Canada, the actual effect of the policies and interventions leads in the direction of assimilation" (p. 164). In particular, in ECE, multiculturalism created universalist views of culture among children: As a result, anti-racist education emerged. Anti-racist approaches view identity as socially constructed and emergent from discourse and representation. Furthermore, it challenges ideas of identities as vulnerable or fixed and, instead, emphasizes identities as active and productive (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Bernhard, 2012). MacNaughton, Davis, and Smith (2009) argued that young children make active decisions regarding their "racing" and identity choices (p. 36). Pacini-Ketchabaw and Bernhard (2012) suggested that with an anti-racist perspective, "educators did not hide instances of racism in their classrooms anymore, but instead, realized that everyone was implicated in racism, and hiding it was not going to eliminate it" (p. 171). This example is significant, as a parallel can be drawn to considerations of gender and sexual identities. Ignorance or silence of same-sex relationships or diverse gender identities does not mean that young children are unaware of these identities.

As more considerations for ECE began to surface beyond developmental theories, provinces and territories across Canada responded with pedagogical guidelines for early childhood care, beginning with Quebec in 1997 (Langford, 2012). Langford (2012) made

a distinction between curriculum and curriculum frameworks, where curriculum, specifically, "is how programs are organized to support goals and philosophy" (p. 210; see also Friendly, Doherty, & Beach, 2006). Langford drew on the New South Wales Early Learning Framework document to define a framework: "It is a sieve through which the professional 'sifts' thinking as a means of reflecting critically on practice" (Office of Childcare, 2004, p. 20). Moreover, Langford identified that the Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development "recommends that a curriculum framework should be flexible so that well-trained early childhood educators can adapt it to the level of the individual program while still being consistent with the broad vision, beliefs, values and principles" (p. 210; see also Bennett, 2004). Kindergarten curriculum, such as the one developed in Ontario in 1998, is intended to be different than a curriculum framework. This is because it establishes expectations for public education goals as opposed to guidelines for early childhood learning, broadly. Langford (2012) noted, "the continuities and differences between curriculum frameworks and guides that focus on children from birth to age 4 years and those for kindergarten children require further investigation" (p. 226). Many early learning frameworks, which guided and continue to guide kindergarten programs as jurisdictions are in the process of developing kindergarten curricula. While only one kindergarten curriculum document serves a province or territory, several early learning frameworks exist to support early childhood care.

Langford (2012) provided an analysis of the development, purposes, and content of provincial curriculum frameworks, with special attention given to how the frameworks address the issue of diversity. Langford concluded that all frameworks that were investigated focused on relationships with families, reaffirmed the importance of play, and highlighted the importance of the educator's role in building respectful relationships with children as well. The author found that the Quebec, British Columbia, Ontario, and New Brunswick frameworks, in particular, referred to provincial diversity and the importance of respect for others and inclusion. The latter three documents contained a specific focus on Aboriginal children and considerations for how worldview impacts early learning contexts. Langford also concluded that the frameworks indicated "there is

much to inspire and motivate ECEs to think about their philosophies of early learning and to provide rich learning environments for young children" (p. 225).

With increased attention on the learning environments of young children came greater interest in examining factors that influenced ECE conditions. Drawing on the work of Lamb and Ahnert (2006), Jacobs and Adrien (2012) provided an overview of "structural variables" and "process variables":

> Structural variables can be quantified and measured with ease, and typically include group size, educator: child ratios, and educator training. Process variables are more difficult to quantify and include factors such as the type and tone of educator-child interactions and, thus, determine children's daily classroom experiences. (p. 109)

Using these variables, the authors reviewed "regulations drafted by Canadian provincial and territorial governments to address structural and process variables in child care," where regulations are considered "government or ministerial orders that carry the force of law" (p. 110). The authors selected several recent early learning frameworks developed across Canada, to represent all thirteen jurisdictions (consisting of ten provinces and three territories). The authors noted that some jurisdictions were more open than others regarding program activities and expectations. Jacobs and Adrien (2012) identified and noted the frequency and occurrence of ten factors: developmental appropriateness; behavioural guidance; schedule of program activities; holistic nature of the curriculum; cultural sensitivity; inclusivity and acknowledgement of differences; community as a resource; indoor/outdoor activities; creativity; and large/small group and group/individual collaborations.

Of particular interest to this research, Jacobs and Adrien (2012) determined that seven of the thirteen jurisdictional regulations referred to the individual differences of children and the need for inclusivity, although it should be noted that inclusive education at this time referred specifically to children with special learning needs. Reference to cultural sensitivity was found in only four of the thirteen jurisdictions. Interestingly, developmental appropriateness was referred to in twelve of the thirteen jurisdictions.

Lastly, Kerry McCuaig (2014) of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at University of Toronto, also produced a review of early learning frameworks in Canada. She selected early learning frameworks that were government sponsored. At that time, she noted seven provinces had developed early learning frameworks (British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island), and Alberta and Newfoundland were expected to release theirs in the Fall of 2014. Similar to the findings by Langford (2012), McCuaig concluded that the frameworks had many similarities which included priorities for family and community relations, a respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and a program driven by play (p. 1). It was not intended as a comparison project but rather aimed to "showcase the rich body of work that has emerged from Canada's early childhood sector" (p. 1), including the consultation process, background research, application of the framework, and the purpose and structure of the document. Furthermore, attention was given to the theoretical model that supported the framework as well as specific developmental or curricular areas, such as culture and diversity. There was also comment on factors such as the learning environment, the role of early childhood educators, and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators.

Cahill and Gibson (2012) stressed the importance of using critical theories in curriculum studies that asked questions such as the following:

> Who benefits from having a written plan? How might a written plan limit the possibilities for teachers, children, and families? What are the many meanings to a written plan? What is the role of the teacher as connected to this written plan? (p. 95)

One such critical lens is one afforded through the use of CDA. Luke (1995) suggested CDA can "provide tools for the denaturalization of text, for revealing that the representations of the texts are indeed linguistic and discursive artifacts, artifacts that often hide or disguise their own status and authority through linguistic techniques" (p. 19). Studies on CDA in the field of education are outlined in the next section.

2.3. **Critical Discourse Analysis in Educational Research**

Rogers and Schaenen (2013) noted that in 2005, "research in literacy education represented 39% of the total number of CDA studies in education (18 of 46). Within educational settings overall since that time, research in literacy education from 2004 to 2012 produced nearly 5 times as many studies (N = 76). This scholarship represents 30% of all studies in education calling on CDA (76 of 257)" (p. 121). The increased attention towards CDA in literacy education, in particular, is due to the focus on texts and how texts both shape individuals and are shaped *by* individuals. Rogers and Schaenen highlighted how researchers such as Heath (1983), Street (1985), Luke (1988), and Gee (1990) wrote about the "ideologically charged nature of texts in contexts" (p. 122). Luke (1995) argued:

> Human subjects use texts to make sense of their world and to construct social actions and relations required in the labor of everyday life. At the same time, texts position and construct individuals, making available various meanings, ideas, and versions of the world. (p. 13)

He advocated that CDA illustrates how texts position students and teachers and generates "relations of institutional power at work in classrooms, staff rooms and policy" (p. 12-13). An increasing number of studies have begun to explore the texts that impact educational policy, curriculum, and classrooms.

Pini and Gorostiaga (2008) explored teacher education policies in Latin America and North America using a comparative perspective of CDA as a means to focus on aspects of the policies in the context of late capitalism. The authors identified similarities and differences between political statements in attempts to characterize the general elements of teacher education policies to meet the needs of their respective societies. It is noted that the study was a continuation of other work, which also applied CDA to policy (see Pini 2004, 2005; Pini and Vales, 2005). Pini and Gorostiaga (2008) shared concern that, "despite the fact that the political climate and the economic model have changed since the 1990s, democracies in Latin America continue being constrained by inequity and the lack of legitimacy of politicians" (p. 429), and they look to teacher education policies as a

reflection of the situation. In a similar vein, my research is turning a critical eye towards kindergarten curriculum documents to question the extent to which they reflect changes in Canadian societies and human rights legislation. Pini and Gorostiaga articulated that the aims of teacher education policies are to "generate and transfer knowledge and values that are needed for the integral formation of each person, for national development and for building a more equal society" (p. 435). The authors concluded that, "counter-hegemonic initiatives are needed to defend and improve public institutions," and that "these initiatives should seek a redefinition of the social goals of those institutions" (p. 440).

CDA was also useful in the investigation of educational policy documents in Kilderry's research (2014, 2015). In analyzing early childhood policy documents in Australia, during a time when there were no regulated curriculum documents, Kilderry (2014) explored "how forms of control, teacher authority, obligation and constraint within policies potentially influenced teachers' curriculum decisions" (p. 242), where curriculum in this sense was the experienced or enacted curriculum (Doyle, 1992). Kilderry (2014) noted the affordances of CDA in examining policies "to 'increase consciousness' about the role discourse and power play within a particular social context at a particular point in time" (p. 244; see also Fairclough, 2001). One question posed in the study was: "What discourses are marginalized, silenced and excluded from the text?" (p. 246). Kilderry found that teachers, themselves, were mostly invisible in policy and, as a result, the professionalism of educators, as individuals with curricular knowledge, was lost. If the identities of educators as professionals can be diminished in policy discourse, this points to the extent that policy, and curriculum, may also slight the abilities and identities of young children.

Continuing to explore Australian policies, Kilderry (2015) also investigated how performative measures have increasingly affected teaching and curriculum in ECE. Looking at both curricular related policies as well as interview transcripts of teachers she noted, "due to its capacity to reveal effects of power relations at the situational, institutional, and societal levels, CDA (Fairclough, 2001, 2003) is drawn on to uncover types of teacher accountability and performativity" (p. 640). Three types of performative

accountability were reported: anxiety, confidence, and disregard. The author noted how "the effects of performativity on teaching and curriculum can be complex, contradictory and at times, unintended" (p. 633). Kilderry's (2014, 2015) research speaks to the degree to which values enter into curriculum, particularly the impacts of hidden and null curriculum.

Also concerned with how policies impact ECE, Pacini-Ketchabaw, White, and Armstrong de Almeida (2006) conducted a CDA of policies in British Columbia and explored the discourses of racialized minorities, specifically Aboriginal and foreign-born youth. The authors asked questions such as: "What views of children and families does this text reveal?" or "How are the voices of racialized minorities positioned in relation to other voices on child development and well-being?" (p. 101). The authors concluded that, "policies need to be critically examined as they are embedded with normalizing discourses that are often taken for granted" (p. 108). Similar to racialized discourses, it is imperative that policy documents, such as kindergarten curricula, are explored for the normative language that is used in terms of gender and sexual identities to identify potential hierarchies and power imbalances present in the texts.

With interests in how policies impact conversations beyond the classroom, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Armstrong de Almeida (2006) interviewed immigrant parents and early childhood educators, in a mid-sized Western Canadian city, regarding their views of young children's bilingual development. CDA was used to "expose the ideology enmeshed in the ways in which participants spoke about children's first and second language acquisition" (p. 314). The data revealed "the social relations of power embedded in how parents and early childhood educators understand issues of bilingualism and language maintenance among young children" (p. 328) and dominant discourses centered on monolingualism. The authors noted these perceptions were influenced by language used in government policies and publications, popular media, and professional texts. The degree to which texts shape individuals and ideologies is significant. Bartley and Hidalgo-Tenorio (2015) wrote about the Hallidayan notion of Transitivity: "how language users construe versions of reality in discourse" (p. 18). In other words, what people choose to say and how they choose to express it, conveys

meaning related to how people perceive particular events. Their research employed a CDA of Transitivity in the Irish Press, exploring the discourse construction of the term homosexuality. The authors noted, "misrepresentation, under-representation and over-representation, though often unintentional, provide clues as to the collective set of beliefs and practices reinforced in writing and speaking" (p. 30).

CDA has also been used in several thesis publications of interest, which relates to curriculum and policy and constructions of identities: Petherick (2008) looked at Ontario policy texts and the power/knowledge relations within curriculum development in regards to the production of health knowledge in secondary physical education programs; Partridge (2014) analyzed Ontario policy and curriculum documents for how white supremacy and colonization were legitimized and reproduced; and Itani (2015) explored Japanese mainstream newspapers and magazines published between 2001 and 2012 for constructions of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and nation, in relation to Japanese female and 'trans' athletes.

Each study in this section that utilized or drew upon CDA perceived text in different ways: some were policies, some were transcripts, and some were mainstream media. The commonality among these studies, however, was their exploration of the relationships of power between text and discourse. In focusing on how texts shaped individuals and norms, the authors were able to uncover social inequities and evidence for change. My research reviewed texts for the ways gender and sexual identities are positioned and discussed in Canadian kindergarten programmatic curricula and identified both the affordances created by the documents for meaning-making, as well as the gaps.

2.4. **Peripheral Research of Particular Relevance**

Other research that surfaced during the literature review, which warrants mention despite methodologies that did not employ CDA, are outlined below as they provide interesting findings pertaining to curriculum, policy, and identity construction.

Recent research has explored Canadian Health and Physical Education elementary curriculum policies for each province and territory to determine the consistency and

coherence of the concept of body image and the messages being conveyed (Robertson & Scheidler-Benns, 2016; Robertson & Thomas, 2012). Drawing on the tools of policy analysis, Robertson and Thomas presented a framework for data collection that spanned from simplistic to complex to categorize the language used within the documents that addressed body image issues, personal responsibility, critical stance, and a focus on weight. Looking at body image, specifically, they concluded that body image messages across provinces generally lacked complexity, and there was little coherence across Canada in terms of addressing body image and recognizing diversity of body shapes and sizes. Similarly, Robertson and Scheidler-Benns expressed concerns that healthy eating was also positioned simplistically and recommended more critical health literacy approaches.

Sefa Dei (1996) collected stories and experiences of Black/African-Canadian high school students who declared a need for a more inclusive curriculum that incorporates more Afrocentric knowledge. Sefa Dei described inclusivity in the context of education as dealing with equity and ensuring representation. Also concerned with issues of inclusivity are Macartney and Morton (2013) who presented the stories of two parents regarding the exclusion of their disabled children within early childhood and primary settings. The authors turned to New Zealand curriculum documents to gain an understanding of how the texts articulate the aims of inclusive education in contrast to the lived experiences of young children, and the authors argued for more professional development that helps educators mobilize the expectations within the documents and develop more inclusive pedagogy.

The need for better professional preparation for early childhood educators was also a concern expressed by Janmohamed (2014), specifically in helping educators grasp a greater understanding of queer identities and families. Her research drew upon early childhood texts within Ontario, focus groups with early childhood educators, and interviews with queer parents of children in early childhood programs. Janmohamed stressed concern for how “developmentally appropriate practice silences queer in early childhood training and is embedded in foundational approaches including standards of practice, curriculum frameworks and textbooks commonly used in the training of early

childhood educators" (p. iii). My research extends her exploration of early childhood texts in a more detailed analysis of the inclusion and configuration of gender and sexual identities in Canadian early childhood curricula.

2.5. Chapter Summary and Contribution of the Proposed Research

In this chapter, I reviewed the history of ECE in North America and the research that has followed as questions arise surrounding the quality and effectiveness of ECE programs. With the development of more written curriculum frameworks, there has emerged more criteria to evaluate whether these documents reflect the needs and priorities of society. As Cahill and Gibson (2012) argued, exploring frameworks and curriculum requires a critical lens. In the last few decades, there has been increased attention towards diversity and culture and the ability to cooperate with others and respect differences. File (2012) noted that gaps remain regarding what we know about ECE and what we need to know. Curriculum has become a sociological process concerned with issues of power and an increasing number of studies explore the impacts of educational texts such as curriculum and policies.

Pini and Gorostiaga (2008) investigated policies that impacted Latin America and North America and evaluated them for equitable discourse and their ability to meet the needs of society. Exploring Australian policy, Kilderry (2014, 2015) questioned what discourses were marginalized, silenced, or excluded, as well as the impact of accountability discourse. Pacini-Ketchabaw, White, and Armstrong de Almeida (2006) looked at how voices of racialized minorities were positioned, and Pacini-Ketchabaw and Armstrong de Almeida (2006) explored discourses surrounding bilingual children. Turning to media, Bartley and Hidalgo-Tenorio (2015) looked for evidence of constructions of homosexuality in Irish Press, and Itani (2015) investigated the language of Japanese newspapers and magazines for constructions of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and nation. In Ontario, Petherick (2008) analyzed the production of health knowledge in secondary curriculum, and Patridge (2014) explored curriculum and policy for discourses of white supremacy and colonization. Also focusing on health curriculum was Robertson and Scheidler-Benns (2016) and Robertson and Thomas (2012) who shared concerns over the

simplicity of the curriculum. Lastly, several authors identified gaps, whether it was in the curriculum or its implementation, in terms of Afrocentric knowledge (Sefa Dei, 1996), inclusive practices (Macartney & Morton, 2013), and queer identities and families (Janmohamed, 2010, 2014).

As the research in ECE has identified, there has definitely been an impact on curriculum from the multicultural discourse that gained ground in the 1980s through the creation of the Constitution Act in 1982 and the Multiculturalism Act in 1985. Many studies listed in this review share concern for racialized identities. With an increased focus on health and well-being over the last decade, more studies have begun to focus on the language of health curricula. While these topics continue to be significant areas of research, the most recent area of interest is inclusive education—in terms of children with special needs as well as the more broadly conceived notion of inclusion to encompass students and families with diverse backgrounds. This new focus can be seen in the recent Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No.119 "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools" (2009) replacing the former policy "Development and Implementation of School Board Policies on Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity" (1993).

Inclusive education goals span beyond Ontario. The Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development recently released a new proposal for the Programme for International Student Assessment 2018 regarding the focus of future education and skills. The current document, entitled "Global Competency for an Inclusive World" stressed:

> Schools need to prepare students for a world in which people need to work with others of diverse cultural origins, and appreciate different ideas, perspectives and values; a world in which people need to develop trust to collaborate across such differences; and a world in which people's lives will be affected by issues that transcend national boundaries. (2016, p. ii)

Therefore, it is imperative that research, which explores curriculum and policy, begin to focus more on inclusive practices and discourses. My research contributes to this conversation by investigating the inclusion of diverse gender and sexual identities within

ECE curriculum, specifically. By understanding more about how these identities are configured in the kindergarten programmatic curriculum, educators can reflect critically about the meaning-making opportunities that children are provided to make sense of these identities in order for these children to respect differences and become inclusive citizens. When these identities are not part of the normative discourse, children learn through hidden and null curriculum, that a power differential exists for some gender and sexual identities over others.

While several studies have explored early childhood curriculum frameworks, this study is unique in its aim, which is to explore newly developed Canadian kindergarten curricula and the language used in these texts to postulate implications for students' gender and sexual identity options, as well as their understandings of diverse families and identities as international priorities for diversity, equity, and inclusion are of utmost significance.

Chapter 3 : Methodology

In this chapter, I outline the methodology and methods that supported this study. I begin by discussing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the ways a critical approach to research combines an analysis of written text with an analysis of power relations and identities. Specifically, this study explores the inclusion of gender and sexual identities in Canadian early childhood curricula. In the section that follows, I provide justification of the text selection for the study. I then detail the methods employed in the study. Three tools were created to assist in data collection, which I explain individually as well as I explain how they work together to provide reliability and trustworthiness. The culmination of each tool provided a focus for data analysis where I was able to search for patterns in programmatic curriculum, hidden curriculum, or null curriculum. Lastly, this chapter reviews some of the constraints and considerations in conducting this research.

3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA expands on the relationship between language and power. The theories and methods of CDA were discussed and formalized at a symposium in Amsterdam in January 1991 by a group of scholars, including Fairclough, Kress, van Dijk, van Leeuwen, and Wodak (Rogers & Schaenen, 2013). It was determined that CDA was sufficiently coherent for application in a variety of disciplines (Rogers & Schaenen, 2013, p. 122). In 1995, Fairclough expanded the conversation about CDA in his book "Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language." In one of his articles, he explained:

> By 'critical' discourse analysis I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (p. 132-133)

Key to the study of *critical* discourse analysis is an exploration of the power relations established through the use of language. Language can either be used to establish hierarchies of identity in discourses of racism or sexism, for example, or to embrace diverse identities in discourses of inclusion and equity. Examining texts not only provides insight into how they have been developed and shaped by the ideologies influencing society, but it also casts light on how they might shape future power relations and ideologies about identities and social practices. Moje and Luke (2009) asserted that, "people's identities mediate and are mediated by the texts they read, write, and talk about" (p. 416; see also Lewis & del Valle, 2009; McCarthey, 2001; McCarthey & Moje, 2002).

However, before further discussion, it is important to define ideology to understand the differences in how it can be conceived and how this impacts perceptions of individual development and approaches to social justice. Lather (1991) suggested that, "from a poststructuralist perspective, ideology remains a much disputed term" (p. 14). Lather identified one view of ideology as neoGramscian, where "there is no meaning making outside ideology" (p.14); Ideology is "a constitutive component of reality: the production of meaning, the positioning of the subject" (p. 14). In other words, ideology has the power to enact meaning and reality for individuals. It is this perspective of ideology in which I align my beliefs and ground my work. In terms of curriculum, Schubert (1986) described ideology as "a general term that encompasses the political, economic, psychological, and cultural character of curriculum" (p. 12). In recognizing how ideology shapes an individual, it then becomes significant for curricularists of the critical praxis to analyze and evaluate the kind of knowledge that is perpetuated in curriculum and the impact of ideology on social justice.

Lather (1991) described other perceptions of ideology through Marxist and Foucauldian lenses, respectively. She suggested, "orthodox Marxists define it as false consciousness and oppose it to the 'true' knowledge of scientific Marxism" (p. 14). This perspective is reliant on the belief that reality is built on universal truths, not subjective experiences. She suggested that Foucault, on the other hand, "argues for the concept of power/knowledge to replace the reductionist Marxian usage of ideology, which he

believes is too embedded in assumptions of 'false consciousness' and a human essence awaiting freedom from constraints" (p. 14; see also Sholle, 1988). While considerations of power are significant, I assert that power relations are *embedded* within ideology as individuals co-construct their realities, and there is no such thing as false consciousness as each individual is aware of his or her own sense of self and the world and this is all relative. The notion of ideology is important to maintain, as it is this worldview that filters the perception of identities and identity hierarchies.

By 1997, CDA had received a great deal of attention, which Bloome and Talwalkar (1997) theorized as two-fold:

> (a) it has merged text oriented discourse analysis with an in-depth understanding of recent sociological discussions of society, culture, and power and (b) it has provided a theory-method linkage that is absent in many sociological discussions of everyday life and language use and in many linguistic discussions of social dynamics. (p. 104)

Bloome and Talwalkar expressed that CDA offered "a theoretical framing that hovers close enough to the realities of people's lives to be of use in addressing theory-practice links (especially with regard to unequal power relations)" (p. 105). Beyond theory-practice links, CDA also serves as a methodology in the way that researchers use it to approach textual analysis and results. According to Luke (1995), CDA "sets out to generate agency among students, teachers and others by giving them the tools to see how texts position them and generate the very relations of institutional power at work in classrooms, staff rooms and policy" (pp. 12–13). In particular, CDA enables researchers to explore the identities and potential identity hierarchies that are constructed or interpreted from the texts that educators employ. In Lather's (1991) discussion of methodologies, she wrote:

> Within the context of a critical social science, methodology is viewed as inherently political, as inescapably tied to issues of power and legitimacy. It is assumed that methods are permeated with assumptions about what the social world is, who the social scientist is, and what the nature of the relation between

> them is. Methods, then, are politically charged as they define, control, evaluate, manipulate and report. (p. 12)

She continued suggesting, "the central issue is how to bring together scholarship and advocacy in order to generate new ways of knowing that interrupt power imbalances" (p. 12). This study set out to bring a critical eye to the foundational texts being used for Canadian early childhood education (ECE). Specifically, it explores the inclusion of gender and sexual identities and how these identities are configured. How are children expected to make meaning of gender and sexual identities, and what are the implications to students' gender and sexual identity options and their understandings of gender and sexual minority youth and same-sex parented families?

3.2. **Text Selection**

Table 3 indicates the texts used for the CDA in this study. These documents are the kindergarten curriculum used in each province or territory to support classroom instruction. In Canada, programmatic curricula are provincially established and produced by the Ministry of Education (or the equivalent) in each province, respectively. Each province or territory is responsible to establish their own laws regulating education. Early childhood care, however, is a federal responsibility. Kindergarten is an opportunity to bridge child care and education together. Educators must follow these documents to guide their educational programming and assessment. It is in the selected early years programmatic curricula that I explore what values are explicitly stated, what values are projected, known as the *hidden* curriculum (Apple, 2004), and what values are expressed through the absence of material, known as *null* curriculum (Eisner, 1979).

One document was explored in addition to the provincial programmatic kindergarten curricula. An early learning framework was recently released, in 2016, for New Brunswick, which was written by academics in collaboration with the government and "reaches across modernist-postfoundational paradigms" (Whitty, 2009, p. 39) making it an asset to the study. The creation of the document involved "close to 1300 child care educators and approximately twenty-five curriculum team members at the UNB-ECC" (p. 36) and draws upon "curriculum theorizing that emphasizes a social-cultural approach

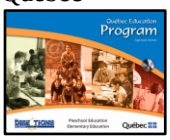
to children's learning and care" (p. 36). In this way, the document is a text that serves to renegotiate conversations about children and ECE.

All texts were retrieved from online sources. In order to identify the curricula used to support ECE, I used two search phrases: "<province> kindergarten curriculum" and "<province> early childhood curriculum." Some documents could be accessed through one link, while others were organized under multiple links. More information about the format of each document will be explored in chapter four.

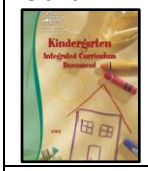
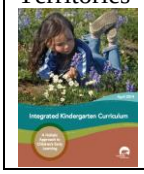
It should be noted that during the study, Ontario released "The Kindergarten Program" for 2016, which was a revised version of the draft released in 2011. This demonstrates how recent some of these documents are and the relevancy for studying this new documentation to understand how identities are being positioned and what content is being currently prioritized.

Table 3. List of Canadian Kindergarten Curricula

Province/ Territory	**Document Citation and Availability**
British Columbia & Yukon[i] 	British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2015a). *BC's New Curriculum*. Retrieved from https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2015b). *Introduction to British Columbia's Redesigned Curriculum*. Retrieved from https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/curriculum_intro.pdf
Alberta 	Alberta Education. (2008). *Kindergarten program statement.* Retrieved from https://archive.education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/ecs/programs/
Saskatchewan 	Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. (2010). *Saskatchewan curriculum: Kindergarten*. Retrieved from https://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/webapps/moe-curriculum-BBLEARN/index.jsp?kindergarten=true&view=kindergarten_home&lang=en&subj=kindergarten&level=k#
Manitoba 	Manitoba Education. (2003). *Kindergarten to grade 8 social studies: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/framework/k-8framework.pdf Manitoba Education. (2007). *Kindergarten to grade 12 Aboriginal languages and cultures: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/framework/k-12_ab_lang.pdf Manitoba Education. (2011a). *Kindergarten to grade 8 dance: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/docs/dance_k8.pdf

	Manitoba Education. (2011b). *Kindergarten to grade 8 drama: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/docs/drama_k8.pdf Manitoba Education. (2011c). *Kindergarten to grade 8 music: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/docs/music_k8.pdf Manitoba Education. (2011d). *Kindergarten to grade 8 visual arts: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/docs/visual_k8.pdf Manitoba Education. (2011e). *Kindergarten to grade 12 curriculum framework for EAL/LAL programming: Section 4a early years EAL acquisition continuum*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/eal/framework/section4a.pdf Manitoba Education. (2013). *Kindergarten to grade 8 mathematics: Manitoba curriculum framework revised*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/math/framework_k-8_rev2013/document.pdf Manitoba Education. (2015a). *Belonging, learning, growing: Diversity education*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/diversity/educators/index.html Manitoba Education. (2015b). *English language arts: A foundation for implementation–kindergarten*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/docs/outcomes/index.html
Ontario 	Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016). *The kindergarten program*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/kindergarten_program_en.pdf
Quebec 	Ministère de l'Éducation. (2001). *Québec education program–preschool education/elementary education*. Retrieved from http://www1.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/programmeFormation/primaire/pdf/educprg2001/educprg2001.pdf
Newfoundland 	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (2015). *Completely kindergarten: The kindergarten curriculum guide–interim edition.* Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/guides/earlybeginnings/index.html
New Brunswick 	Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation. (1998a). *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: K-3.* Retrieved from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/curric/English/EnglishLanguageArts-GradeK-3.pdf Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation. (1998b). *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Science Curriculum*. Retrieved from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/curric/Science/ScienceFoundation-K-12.pdf Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation. (1998c). *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum.* Retrieved from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/curric/SocialStudies/SocialStudiesFoundation.pdf Government of New Brunswick. (2000). *Elementary Physical Education Curriculum: Kindergarten – Grade 5*. Retrieved from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/curric/Health-PhysicalEducation/ElementaryPhysicalEducationCurriculumK-5.pdf

* 	Government of New Brunswick. (2004). *Music Education Curriculum K-5.* Retrieved from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/curric/Music/MusicEducation-K-5.pdf Government of New Brunswick. (2008). *Mathematics Kindergarten Curriculum.* Retrieved from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/curric/Math/Math-Kindergarten.pdf Government of New Brunswick. (2014). *Visual Arts Education Grades K-2 Curriculum.* Retrieved from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/curric/Arts/VisualArts-GradeK-2.pdf *Government of New Brunswick. (2016). *New Brunswick curriculum framework for early learning and child care*. Retrieved from http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/elcc/content/curriculum/curriculum_framework.html
Nova Scotia 	Government of Nova Scotia. (2015a). *English language arts—essential learning outcomes (Primary–3)*. https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/ELAP-3ProgressionChart-RevJuly30-2015.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015b). *Health education—essential learning outcomes (Primary–3)*. Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/HealthP-3ProgressionChart-RevJuly30-2015.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015c). *Information and communication technology—essential learning outcomes (Primary–3)*. Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/ITC-P-3ProgressionChart-RevAug26-2015.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015d). *Mathematics—specific curriculum outcomes (Primary–3)*. Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/MathP-3ProgressionChart-RevOct5-2015.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015e). *Music—essential learning outcomes (Primary–3)*. Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/MusicP-3Progression%20Chart-RevAug17-2015.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015f). *Physical education—essential learning outcomes (Primary–3)*. Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/PhysEdP-3ProgressionChart-RevJuly30-2015.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015g). *Primary to grade 3—competencies*. Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/EssentialGraduationCompetencies%282015%29.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015h). *Science—essential learning outcomes (Primary–3)*. Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/ScienceP-3ProgressionChart-RevJuly30-2015.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015i). *Social studies—essential learning outcomes (Primary–3*). Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/SSP-3ProgressionChart-RevJuly30-2015.pdf Government of Nova Scotia. (2015j). *Visual arts—essential learning outcomes (Primary-3)*. Retrieved from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/VisArtsP-3ProgressionChart-RevJuly30-2015.pdf

Prince Edward Island 	Prince Edward Island. (2008). *Kindergarten integrated curriculum document*. Retrieved from http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/k_doc.pdf
Northwest Territories 	Northwest Territories. (2014). *Integrated kindergarten curriculum: A holistic approach to children's early learning*. Retrieved from https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/resources/kindergarten_curriculum_2014.pdf

Note. As indicated by the Yukon Government (2015), Yukon schools follow the British Columbia program of studies. Nunavut curriculum has not been included as the resources that "form the foundation of educational programs in Nunavut" are listed in Table 3: Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (Nunavut Department of Education, 2015, p. 3).

3.3. **Methodology**

In this section I outline the details of the textual analysis conducted, as well as the tools utilized to execute the analysis. Bloome and Talwalkar (1997) suggested that Fairclough "critiques some contemporary social theories for their absence of attention to the specifics of everyday practice and interaction and for their failure to get down to the level of text analysis" (p. 105). Of the three overall dimensions of discourse analysis that Bloome and Talwalkar highlighted from Fairclough's work—description, interpretation, and explanation—it is the level of description that I focused my attention:

> Description is a linguistic analysis of a text; interpretation is an analysis of the relationship between the discourse processes (the processes of production and interpretation) and the text; explanation is an analysis of the discursive processes and the social processes. (Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997, p. 106)

While each dimension offers a unique level of analysis, focusing on the texts themselves can be powerful work.

Fairclough (1995) provided four main arguments to justify textual analysis in social

scientific research, each reason grounded theoretically, methodologically, historically, and politically, respectively (pp. 208-209). Fairclough wrote, "the theoretical reason is that the social structures…are in a dialectical relationship with social action" and "texts constitute one important form of social action" (p. 208). Furthermore, he noted:

> Language is widely misperceived as transparent, so that the social and ideological 'work' that language does in producing, reproducing or transforming social structures, relations and identities is routinely 'overlooked'. (pp. 208-209)

The methodological reason he outlined is that, "Texts constitute a major source of evidence for grounding claims about social structures, relations and processes" (p. 209). Particularly connected to my research is the historical reason: "Texts are sensitive barometers of social process, movement and diversity, and textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change" (p. 209). Lastly, he suggested,

> the political reason relates specifically to social science with critical objectives. It is increasingly through texts (notably but by no means only those of the media) that social control and social domination are exercised (and indeed negotiated and resisted). (p. 209)

Rogers and Schaenen (2013) drew on Widdowson (1998) and suggested, "CDA has been critiqued for decontextualizing discourse analyses, erring by either attending lopsidedly to broad social forces more emphatically than to fine-grained linguistic analysis, or to fine-grained analyses more than to the wider social context in which the discourse emerged" (p. 124). The tool I used for data collection combined various theories in order to provide a well-rounded representation of each text. Below is an explanation of the theories that influenced each individual component, followed by the full tool that integrates each component.

Firstly, Fairclough (1995) distinguished among two complementary methods within textual analysis: linguistic analysis and intertextual analysis:

> Whereas linguistic analysis shows how texts selectively draw upon linguistic systems…intertextual analysis shows how texts selectively draw upon *orders of*

> *discourse* – the particular configurations of conventionalized practices (genres, discourses, narratives, etc.) which are available to text producers and interpreters in particular social circumstances. (p.188)

Various aspects of linguistic and intertextual analysis have been represented in the first component of the data collection tool (See Table 4).

Table 4. Textual Analysis: Component One

		Text 1	Text 2		Text 'x'
Linguistic	Grammar (Interrogatives; imperatives)				
	Vocabulary (Frequency and choice of words)				
	Semantics (Relationship between signifier and signified)				
	Textual organization (Placement and length of text)				
Intertextual	Genre (Purpose/kind of written text)				
	Discourse (Heterosexual/ heteronormativity; hegemonic masculinity/ femininity; marginal masculinities/femininities)				
	Dependence on society (Influential stakeholders, cultural values, religious beliefs)				
	Dependence on history (Previous texts and theories)				

Linguistically, the ways sentences are structured as statements or questions might allude to the extent that students are expected to accept information or reflect critically. Commenting on grammar also allowed room for reflection about how strongly Ministries of education express certain values or beliefs. The choice of words and how often certain words appeared, such as "diversity" or "gender identities," may signal provincial priorities to recognize various identities. The names of potential headings within the documents may also give indication of the values expressed. The semantics of the text may illuminate messages being communicated, whether implicit or explicit. For example: What are the ways in which gender and sexual identities are represented in the texts and how are children expected to make meaning of these identities? What references, if any, are made about symbolism? Finally, the quantity of text dedicated to a subject or specific expectation or heading, or which subjects include discussion of identities and diversity,

was of interest.

The intertextual analysis focused more on the themes present throughout the texts. While the genre of each text was programmatic curricula written for the purpose of specifying educational expectations for children, each text was formatted differently, conveying a variety of beliefs or worldviews. Discourses such as heterosexual or marginal masculinities may be detectable based on the language selection and examples supporting curricular expectations. Furthermore, social factors such as community stakeholders, cultural values, or religious beliefs may be evident in the texts, as well as references to early childhood educational theories or previous texts in which the current text is established.

The second component of the data collection tool reflects Dillon's (2009) "questions of curriculum" and an adaptation of these questions, developed by Bocazar (2011) for a CDA of creativity in early childhood curricula. Drawing on Schwab's (1983) curricular commonplaces, Dillon's questions have been modified to replace the word curriculum with gender and sexual identities, respectively (see Table 5), and questions have been tailored accordingly that correspond with what is represented in Table 5 (see Figure 2).

Table 5. Textual Analysis: Component Two

		Text 1	Text 2		Text 'x'
Nature of gender and sexual identities (what is it)	Essence (substance)				
	Properties (character)				
Elements of gender and sexual identities (composition)	Teacher (expressive communication)				
	Student (receptive communication)				
	Subject (what should be taught)				
	Milieu (environment)				
	Aim (purpose)				
	Activity (action and interaction)				
	Result (behavioural/cognitive)				
Practice of gender and sexual identities	Action (what to do)				
	Thought (how to think)				

1. Nature of Gender and Sexual Identities (GSI)—What is it?
    a) Essence of substance—What, at bottom, is it?
    b) Properties or character—What is it like?

2. Elements of GSI—What are the things that compose GSI?
    a) Teacher—How should teachers convey meaning of GSI?
    b) Student—How should students make meaning of GSI?
    c) Subject—What should be taught about GSI?
    d) Milieu—What should the classroom, school, and community look like to include GSI?
    e) Aim—Why? To what end? What's the purpose of teaching GSI?
    f) Activity—How should the student and teacher act, respectively, and interact with one another?
    g) Result—What are the potential behavioural, affective, cognitive, or lifestyle changes?

3. Practice of GSI—How to think and act it?
    a) Action—What to do?
    b) Thought—How to think?

Figure 2. Adaptation of Dillon's (2009) questions of curriculum.

In filling out this section, I explored language that reflected the various elements. For example, when the text identified actions that teachers should take or considerations for teachers, this data was collected for how the teacher should convey meaning of gender and sexual identities. Similarly, actions specific to students that indicated what students should be able to do or think was categorized under how students should make meaning of gender and sexual identities. Expectations that were objective or descriptive were considered content for what should be taught. Any mention of how the classroom should be set up or the nature of the learning environment was data supporting the milieu element of the chart. In identifying aims or purpose I looked for statements that outlined a belief or goal supporting the learning objectives. The element of activity reflected interactions within the classroom. Finally, results were identified in statements that suggested an end product or desired outcome from the learning.

The last component of the textual analysis, seen in Table 6, looks to the meaning-making opportunities found in the six dimensions of language arts as described by Bainbridge and Heydon (2013): reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing. Recall, Kalantzis and Cope (2012) identified two major aspects of meaning-making, one of which was social diversity describing the social context that impacts the ways one encounters literacy including gender identity. Gender can be considered a text that is communicated through the six dimensions of language arts. For example, what are

children expected to be reading or writing in regards to gender and sexual identities? Are children encouraged to destabilize gender binaries or heterosexual norms in play stations? How are gender and sexual identities to be represented in the classroom milieu? What speaking opportunities, if any, are outlined to allow children to explore diverse identities? Identifying the opportunities children are offered in programmatic curricula to make meaning of diverse gender and sexual identities may indicate what values are being promoted.

Table 6. Textual Analysis: Component Three

Meaning-making Opportunities	Reading gender & sexual identities				
	Writing gender & sexual identities				
	Listening to gender & sexual identities				
	Speaking gender & sexual identities				
	Viewing gender & sexual identities				
	Representing gender & sexual identities				

Patton (2002) noted that researchers triangulate to "capture and report multiple perspectives rather than seek a singular truth" (p. 546). Collecting data using a variety of approaches to textual analysis serves to strengthen reliability and trustworthiness of the information gathered. The entire chart, integrating all three components, can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Textual Analysis Data Collection Tool

		Text 1	Text 2		Text 'x'
Linguistic	Grammar (Interrogatives; imperatives)				
	Vocabulary (Frequency and choice of words)				
	Semantics (Relationship between signifier and signified)				
	Textual organization (Placement and length of text)				
Intertextual	Genre (Purpose/kind of written text)				
	Discourse (Heterosexual/heteronormativity; hegemonic masculinity/femininity; marginal masculinities/femininities)				
	Dependence on society (Influential stakeholders, cultural values, religious beliefs)				
	Dependence on history (Previous texts and theories)				
Nature of gender and sexual identities	Essence (substance)				
	Properties (character)				

(what is it)					
Elements of gender and sexual identities (composition)	Teacher (expressive communication)				
	Student (receptive communication)				
	Subject (what should be taught)				
	Milieu (environment)				
	Aim (purpose)				
	Activity (action and interaction)				
	Result (behavioural/cognitive)				
Practice of gender and sexual identities	Action (what to do)				
	Thought (how to think)				
Meaning-making Opportunities	Reading gender & sexual identities				
	Writing gender & sexual identities				
	Listening to gender & sexual identities				
	Speaking gender & sexual identities				
	Viewing gender & sexual identities				
	Representing gender & sexual identities				

The analysis of data involved journaling observations throughout the process, as well as a final reader response-type activity in which I made comments and reflected on each cell of the data collection tool. As the chart was created in excel, once data collection was complete, I created an empty column beside each data set for each text to make these notes. All notes were then viewed together to identify any patterns or points of particular interest. In outlining my results, I responded to each section and component of the chart to guide my focus.

Fairclough (1995) noted, "analysis of implicit content can provide valuable insights into what is taken as given, as common sense" (p.6). As CDA is interested in power relations, I was also looking for any hierarchies of identities that might be present in the texts, such as heteronormativity demonstrated in descriptions of gender identities or family dynamics and how this might impact diverse students and families. Lather (1991) suggested,

> language is seen as both carrier and creator of a culture's epistemological codes. The ways we speak and write are held to influence our conceptual boundaries and to create areas of silence as language organises meaning in terms of pre-established categories. (p. 13)

The ways gender and sexual minority identities are addressed, included, or omitted, speak to the ways meaning is made surrounding cultural values and diverse identities. Language and power are directly tied, and the constructs and semiotic codes conveyed to young

children have implications for their meaning-making and perceptions surrounding identity options and acceptable family structures.

Critical discourse analysis relies on subjectivity and relativism; therefore, calling attention to reflexivity is essential. Fairclough (1995) cautioned that,

> while it is true that the forms and content of texts do bear the imprint of ideological processes and structures, it is not possible to 'read off' ideologies from texts. This is because meanings are produced through interpretations of texts and texts are open to diverse interpretations. (p.71)

Patton (2002) identified, "what something means depends on the cultural context in which it was originally created as well as the cultural context within which it is subsequently interpreted" (p. 113). The lens through which I view these curricula is one where same-sex marriage is legal and subordinate gender and sexual identities are becoming liberated. Furthermore, the way I interpreted the texts themselves and who I am as a researcher bears weight on the data analysis and results. Fairclough (1995) suggested, "The interpretation of texts is a dialectical process resulting from the interface of the variable interpretive resources people bring to bear on the text, and properties of the text itself" (p.9). I am mindful to acknowledge my own values as a social constructionist who views identities as constructs and products of society and culture, and who believes gender and sexual identities are non-binary and fluid. I perceive diversity as a term that defines all of our differences, including gender and sexual orientation.

Through reflexive practice, I draw attention to my belief that curricula should serve all identities, and should not create a hierarchical positioning of some identities over others. Luke (1995) noted,

> it is extremely risky to engage in the construction of texts of curriculum, educational policy, and research without some explicit reflexivity on how and whom we construct and position in our own talk and writing. For these reasons, a critical sociological approach to discourse is not a designer option for

> researchers but an absolute necessity for the study of education in postmodern conditions. (p. 41)

Based on goals to eliminate gender-based harassment and homophobia in schools, I look to the ways language can challenge hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity and I problematize language that continues to reinforce gender and sexual norms. I believe language that creates opportunities to make meaning about diverse identities will provide expanded identity options for youth and create a greater understanding of same-sex families and diverse gender identities.

3.4. **Constraints**

Fairclough (1995) cautioned that the value of textual analysis, in general, can be questioned due to the "the paucity of usable analytical frameworks" but he claims "discourse analysis can help fill this gap" (p. 209). Similarly, he highlighted that another possible critique of textual analysis is the perception of "scant attention to context" and acknowledged that, "discourse analysis needs a developed sense of and systematic approach to *both* context *and* text" and intertextual analysis plays an important mediating role. (p. 211). The tool developed for data collection thoroughly takes into account various aspects of textual analysis to provide a robust analytical framework.

Furthermore, Fairclough (1995) argued, "a critical discourse analysis must aim for constant vigilance about who is using its results for what, and about whether its critique of certain practices is not helping to naturalize other equally but differently ideological practices" (p.83). This current research seeks to serve marginalized gender and sexual identities that may not be equitably represented or promoted in early childhood curricula. The goal is to become aware of language that may be discriminatory or contributing towards establishing hierarchies of identity and power. While these beliefs support an ideological position, they are aligned with those of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states every individual is equal and should not experience discrimination (*Canadian Charter,* 1982, s 6(2)(b)).

Chapter 4 : Document Overview

In this chapter I provide an overview of all of the programmatic curriculum documents used in the study, including the format and length of each document, as well as the structure of the kindergarten programs themselves and the ages of the children they serve. I also discuss the authorship of each text.

While I have referred to each province or territory's programmatic curriculum as a document, respectively, some were single documents while others consisted of several documents or online links. I describe the way each province or territory organized the layout of their curriculum in Table 8 under Format of Document, along with information about the structure of how the kindergarten program is offered, the age of eligibility for kindergarten, and the age at which school becomes compulsory. Kindergarten is an optional program across Canada, except in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, where it is identified as compulsory (identified in bold in Table 8). The age in which children are eligible to attend school varies from province or territory; most provinces/territories indicate children must be five within the academic year in which they are attending kindergarten, and as of age six most provinces/territories require children to be registered in grade one, except for Manitoba, for which school is not required until age seven. In New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, where kindergarten is compulsory, children must attend school by five years of age, however, in each of these provinces, it is possible to delay the start of kindergarten by a year if the guardian decides the child is not yet ready.

Table 8. Curriculum and Program Information

	Format of Document	**Number of Pages**	**Structure of K Program**	**Eligibility for K**	**Compulsory School Age**
BC	Online; Each subject and grade is different link	Single website page per subject & grade	K is optional, but recommended; Full day, every day	September of the year they turn 5	Start grade 1 the calendar year they turn 6
AB	One document, available online or in	33 pages	K is optional; Mostly half-days	4 by March 1 of calendar year. *As of Sept.	Start grade 1 if 6 or older as of Sept .1

	pdf			2018, children must be 5 by Dec. 31	
SK	One document; available online or in pdf	78 pages	K is optional; Half-days every day or full-day every other day	5, although school divisions are responsible for establishing age of entry	School divisions responsible for establishing age of entry
MB	Online; Each subject is a different link; most available as pdfs	Soc. Stud.: 149 Ab. Lang.: 140 Visual Arts: 83 Dance: 85 Music: 81 Drama: 67 Math: 41 EAL/LAL: 22 Lang. Arts: 8 Belonging: webpage	K is optional; half-days or full-days every other day (some full-day every day)	Eligible to start when 5 by Dec. 31	Right to attend at 6 by Dec. 31; Required at 7 as of Dec. 31
ON	One document; available online or in pdf	328 pages	K is optional Two-year, full-day, every day	4 by Dec.31 for first of 2-year program	6 by Dec. 31
QC	One document; available online or in pdf	Introduction: 10 Cross-Curric. Competencies: 30 Broad Areas of Learning: 10 Preschool: 17	K is optional; Full-day, every day (part-time available)	5 (4 if certain conditions are met)	Age of admission for grade 1 is 6
NL	Online; one document, but pdf links for each section and subject	76 pages	K is optional; morning and/or afternoon available	5 by Dec. 31 in a school year for K; 4 by Dec. 31 for "KinderStart"	6 by Dec. 31 for grade 1
NB	Online; pdf links for each subject	Language Arts: 311 K-5 Music: 202 K-5 Phys. Ed.: 105 Science: 58 Math: 57 Visual Arts: 46 Social Studies: 42	**K is compulsory; Full day**	5 by Dec. 31 (but can be delayed a year)	Must complete K before Grade 1
NS	Online; brief pdf for each subject	Math: 27 Language Arts: 9 Info./Tech.: 7 Phys.Ed.: 7 Music: 4 Competencies: 4 Health: 2 Science: 2 Social Studies: 2 Visual Arts: 2	**K is compulsory; Full-day**	5 on or before Dec. 31 (but can be delayed a year)	Must complete K before Grade 1

PE	One document; available online or in pdf	198 pages	**K is compulsory; Full-day**	5 by Dec. 31 (but can be delayed a year)	Must complete K before Grade 1
NT	One document; available online or in pdf	56 pages	K is available, not compulsory; Full-day program (some half-day available)	5 by Dec. 31; As of Sept. 2014, K also offered to 4 year-olds	6 by Dec. 31

Each province or territory has a different way of organizing and articulating the values and expectations of the curriculum. While all can be found online, some are in one pdf document, while others have links or pdf pages for each subject. British Columbia's curriculum is accessed through individual links that corresponded with both subject and grade level. For example, social studies has a separate page for kindergarten through grade eight, respectively. Core competencies overarch the entire elementary curriculum, consisting of Communication, Thinking, and Personal and Social Competency. Upon entering a specific link, such as kindergarten social studies, there are three learning areas: Core Competencies, Big Ideas, and Learning Standards. Learning standards are then broken down into Curricular Competencies and Content. As for the kindergarten program itself, as stated on the Government of British Columbia (2017a) website regarding kindergarten, children "can start kindergarten in September of the year they turn five years old" and "parents are required to have their children registered for school or homeschooling by the calendar year in which they turn six" (Government of British Columbia, 2017a). The British Columbia kindergarten program is a full day, play-based program.

Alberta and Saskatchewan both have one single document for the kindergarten programmatic curriculum, 33 and 78 pages respectively, that are found online and available as a pdf. Both documents begin by outlining values associated with children's learning. Alberta outlines ten principles, which provide a framework for kindergarten programming; Saskatchewan sets the tone of the curriculum document with three broad areas of learning: Lifelong Learners; Sense of Self, Community, and Place; and Engaged Citizens. Both documents also include expectations based on what the students should be

able to do, know, or understand. Alberta offers mostly half-day kindergarten programs to children who are at least four years old on or before March 1 of the calendar year they begin school (Calgary Board of Education, 2017). However, new regulation states, "starting in the 2018-2019 school year, children must be at least five years old by Dec. 31, 2018 to start kindergarten in September 2018" and "children must start Grade 1 if they are six years of age or older on Sept. 1" (Calgary Board of Education, 2017). According to the "Early Childhood Education Report: Saskatchewan 2014," "kindergarten is not a mandated program, but most school divisions offer at least a half time program (half-days every day or full days every other day). School divisions are responsible for establishing the age of entry," and this report indicates there are 28 school divisions (Atkinson Centre, 2017d). Prekindergarten is identified as "an early education program available for children 3-4 years of age in many schools" (Atkinson Centre, 2017d) and Table 3.3 of this source suggests children are usually five years old for enrolment into kindergarten.

Manitoba's programmatic curriculum is all online and organized according to subject as opposed to grade level. Within each subject document, expectations often span numerous grade levels. For example, some learning outcomes, like those in the "Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures" document (Manitoba Education, 2007), which is 140 pages long, are clustered from kindergarten to grade two, while in other subjects, like "Kindergarten to Grade 8 Dance" (Manitoba Education, 2011a), which is 85 pages long, expectations are ongoing from kindergarten through grade four. The "Early Childhood Education Report: Manitoba 2014" articulates, "kindergarten is generally a half-time program (half-days every day or full-days every other day). Some school divisions offer full-day kindergarten every day" (Atkinson Centre, 2017c). This source also notes that, "children are eligible to start kindergarten if they are 5 years old by December 31." According to the Province of Manitoba (2016), "children who are six years of age or older on December 31 in a given year have the right to attend school from the beginning of the fall term of that calendar year" and "children are required to attend school from the time they reach compulsory school age (7 years of age or will be reaching 7 years of age by December 31 in a given calendar year)."

Ontario and Quebec's programmatic kindergarten curriculum documents are available online as single pdf documents and are values-based. In Ontario, the programmatic curriculum is 328 pages and is built upon four frames: Belonging and Contributing, Self-Regulation and Well-Being, Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours, and Problem Solving and Innovating. The "Early Childhood Education Report: Ontario 2014" indicates, "kindergarten is a two-year full-day, non-mandatory program offered by district school boards to all children in Ontario who turn 4 years old by December 31" (Atkinson Centre, 2017c). This indicates some flexibility for the start of grade one since the Ontario Education Amendment Act (2006) suggests compulsory attendance begins at "the age of six years on or before the first school day in September" yet many children will be six by December 31. In Quebec, the Gouvernement du Québec (2017) notes that, "the age of admission for first grade is six….However, most children start school a year earlier for an optional year of full-time kindergarten." It also suggests, "some special-needs children or children from low-income families can attend part-time or full-time kindergarten at the age of four, if they meet certain conditions." The curriculum is focused on competencies and culture and includes nine cross-curricular competencies that are grouped into four categories: Intellectual, Methodological, Personal and Social, and Communication-related. Each of these categories are explained in a section that is 30 pages long, followed by a ten-page section detailing the five Broad Areas of Learning: Health and Well-Being, Personal and Career Planning, Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, Media Literacy, and Citizenship and Community Life. The section of the curriculum dedicated to Preschool specifically is 17 pages long.

Newfoundland's programmatic kindergarten curriculum, despite being a single document that is 76 pages, is organized under separate numbered links for each section and subject in the document, in order from one through thirty-nine. For example, a separate link can be accessed for "Table of Contents," "Section 1: Program Design and Components," or "K Health: Unit One," and each link is available in a pdf. According to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2016a), "a child who is five years of age on December 31 in a school year may be enrolled in Kindergarten" and "schedules for morning and/or afternoon attendance vary among schools." The site also stipulates that, "a child must start a school year when he/she is six years of age on December 31." There is also a

program called KinderStart in Newfoundland, which is "a school transition program offered in the year prior to Kindergarten entry" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016b). In other words, "registration takes place in the calendar year a child becomes four years of age" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016b). The program consists of five to ten one-hour sessions organized and promoted at the school level for children and their parents/caregivers" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016b).

New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island all identify kindergarten as compulsory (as indicated in bold in Table 8). New Brunswick has a variety of subject specific curricula available online that all vary in page length and some documents like Music (202 pages) and Physical Education (105 pages) serve Kindergarten through to grade five. The Language Arts document is the longest at 311 pages and serves Kindergarten to grade three. In New Brunswick, kindergarten is offered as a full day program, and children are eligible for kindergarten once they are "five years old by December 31" (Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2014a). If the child is still four on September 1, parents may choose to wait a year (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2001). Similarly, Prince Edward Island (2012) stipulates, "Children must turn five years old by December 31st" and "must complete the kindergarten year before entering Grade 1," but, "Parents…may choose to wait a year if you are not sure your child is ready" (http://www.gov.pe.ca/eecd/index.php3?number=1025924&lang=E). Prince Edward Island's programmatic kindergarten curriculum is one document available online or in pdf format and is 198 pages long. Nova Scotia's curriculum is available online, but, like New Brunswick's curriculum, is also presented as separate pdfs for each subject, some of which serve Kindergarten to grade three. These pdfs are very brief however, with some as small as two pages. Nova Scotia also requires children to be "five years old on or before December 31" for kindergarten (also called Primary), and "parents of children turning five on or before Dec.31 can delay their child's participation" (Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2014b).

The Northwest Territories' programmatic kindergarten curriculum is available online as a single pdf that is 56 pages long and follows four major learning areas: Living in the World, Ways of Working, Ways of Thinking, and Tools for Working. While expectations are outlined for each subject, these aforementioned values permeate the document. Children's family experiences and cultural backgrounds are deemed very important to consider when thinking about the learning environment. Kindergarten is an optional program in the Northwest Territories, and it is offered as "a full-day program available to all children who turn 5 years of age by December 31" (Atkinson Centre, 2017b). Also, according to the "Early Childhood Education Report: Northwest Territories 2014," as of 2016, kindergarten is available to 4-year-olds throughout the Northwest Territories (Atkinson Centre, 2017b). The Northwest Territories' Education Act stipulates, "every student, who on or before December 31 of the academic year, has attained the age of six years…shall attend a school program regularly" (Government of the Northwest Territories, 1996).

In terms of authorship, the documents vary in terms of who has contributed and how these individuals are acknowledged. Some documents have an acknowledgement section, but not all. Alberta and Nova Scotia provide no mention of authorship and do not include any reference section. Ontario provides no authorship besides the Ontario Ministry of Education, but does include 10 pages of references, many of which are academic references. British Columbia broadly states,

> To guide the transformation, the province conducted reviews of trends in national and international jurisdictions and invited authorities on curriculum and assessment design to advise on proposed changes. In addition, as part of the work on core competencies, several commissioned researchers summarized the literature in critical thinking, creative thinking, and social and personal responsibility. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 1)

This seems to acknowledge the process that occurred, but again, no specific authorship is cited, nor are there references. Saskatchewan also broadly states,

> The Ministry of Education wishes to acknowledge the professional contributions and advice given by: teachers, university professors, the professional learning community, other educators and community members from various cultural groups (including First Nations and Métis) in the development of the Kindergarten Curriculum. (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. v)

Once again, there are no specific names listed, but there is a small reference section that is just over one page, many of which cite academic sources. Quebec's curriculum includes a letter from the Minister of State for Education and Youth and is copyright by Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Èducation, and includes 21 pages of references for all subjects and grades that serve the entire document for preschool and elementary education.

The remaining five documents have acknowledgement sections that identify contributors specifically. For example, Manitoba's curricula for Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Arts list names under the heading "writers" who are from University of Manitoba, Louis Riel School Division, Pembina Trails School Division, and Faculty of Education University of Manitoba. There is also a seven-page reference section in each of these documents. The curriculum for Aboriginal Languages and Cultures says it "was developed through the collaborative efforts of individuals and groups dedicated to the preservation, revitalization, and maintenance of Aboriginal languages and cultures" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. v) and Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth proceeds to thank names under the headings Elders/Community Advisors, Youth Advisors, Project Advisory Team, and Aboriginal Languages and Cultures Curriculum Project Team, Writers, and Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth Staff. The Social Studies and Math curricula similarly list names and associations; the EAL/LAL and Language Arts curricula, however, include no authorship and neither does the website about belonging.

New Brunswick also has a variety of subject documents, and in each text the individuals who served the subject committee are thanked. In the Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies documents produced by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation,

acknowledgement is given to a variety of names that are thanked and listed under each of the four provinces: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island. The Science and Social Studies documents list schools or affiliations, but the Language Arts document only lists the names of individuals. The Language Arts document has a 2-page bibliography and the Science and Social Studies documents each have one-page bibliographies. In the Math, Music, Arts, and Physical Education curricula, names and school districts are listed, and in some cases, consultants are identified. There is no bibliography in either the Arts or Physical Education documents, while the Math curriculum includes one page of references and Music has a half page of references.

Newfoundland's curriculum has an acknowledgements section that lists "members of the provincial Kindergarten Working Group" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. v), consisting of people from various schools. Prince Edward Island lists names under the headings of "English Kindergarten Writing Committee" and "English Pilot Educators", where many are from either the Child Development Centre or the Campus Kids Child Care Centre (p. i), and there is one page of references cited. Lastly, Northwest Territories curriculum includes a letter from the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. In the letter he notes, "The curriculum is the result of three years of development and an extensive two year pilot phase" and acknowledges "the numerous contributions of a wide range of educators and culture and language experts in the Northwest Territories" as well as "early childhood consultants, program support teachers, coordinators, principals and superintendents" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. iii). There is also an acknowledgements section on page vi that mentions these groups of individuals and lists educational authorities and the learning program documents "that provided valued models to learn from and adapt to our Northern context." Also included are a list of names under the headings "Kindergarten Subject Advisory Committee (K-SAC) and Kindergarten Pilot Team (KPT)", "Cultural Advisors" who are individuals from various schools and agencies, and "Specialist Advisors/Contributors", many of whom are consultants or coordinators.

The New Brunswick early learning framework, that was purposefully selected for inclusion in the study in addition to the programmatic curricula, is 221 pages long and is available in five pdf sections. The document is described as values-based and is organized according to four main goals: Well-Being, Play and Playfulness, Communication and Literacies, and Diversity and Social Responsibility. The authors are mentioned under a variety of headings including University of New Brunswick Early Childhood Centre Research and Development Team, Curriculum Advisory Committee, Joint Curriculum Committee, Curriculum Development Team, and Reviewers, as well as Pilot Sites and Participants.

Chapter 5 : Results

In this chapter I present the findings of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of my study. I read through and reviewed all eleven jurisdiction's programmatic curricula several times and I recorded data in the data collection tool outlined in chapter three. As I came across sentences and paragraphs that resonated with different aspects of the chart, I inserted them accordingly. While some data could represent multiple sections and categories, having various perspectives enabled for a more thorough analysis of information. In the second round of review, I followed the same procedure. It was often the case that in inserting a sentence or paragraph in the second round, I had already placed that sentence or paragraph in the respective category during the first round of analysis. This confirmed the validity and trustworthiness of the data collection.

I organize the chapter according to the three sections of the data collection tool. The first is based on Fairclough's (1995) methods of textual analysis, the second reflects Dillon's (2009) questions of curriculum, and the third are the six dimensions of language arts, to represent the various meaning-making opportunities. Within each of the three sections, I use subheadings to organize further findings, to reflect on the data collection tool.

5.1. Textual Analysis

The textual analysis draws on Fairclough (1995) who suggested, "textual analysis is seen as comprising two different, and complementary, forms of analysis: linguistic analysis and intertextual analysis" (p. 185). I have expanded each of these two forms of analysis, below.

5.1.1. **Linguistic.** Linguistic analysis explored grammar, vocabulary, semantics, and textual organization. I have outlined the findings from each category, respectively.

5.1.1.1. ***Grammar.*** In exploring grammar, I paid attention to syntactic constructions. The way a sentence was phrased provided indication of the intentions behind each statement. I found differences between language that conveyed choice or

recommendation versus statements that were imperative. Table 9 provides a simplified assessment of the style of grammar used in each jurisdiction.

Table 9. Expressive Grammar

	Recommended	Imperative
BC		✓
AB		✓
SK		✓
MB	✓	
ON	✓	
QC	✓	
NL		✓
NB	✓	
NS		✓
PE	✓	
NT	✓	

Documents where grammar suggests recommendation, such as Manitoba's curriculum, use language such as students "develop understanding," "connect," or "reflect on" (Manitoba Education, 2011a, p. 14), which has a much softer tone and degree of flexibility in children's acquisition of the skill. In contrast, language that is imperative indicates specific expectations of students, such as British Columbia's Social Studies curriculum, where students "should ensure" sensitivity to diversity, and are "expected" to know "ways in which individuals and families differ and are the same" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a). Similarly, Saskatchewan's curriculum includes a number of outcomes, which students "are expected to know, understand, and be able to do by the end of a grade" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 21). The major difference is the significance placed on *results*, as articulated in expectations, versus language where students are *developing* certain skills and the focus shifts to more of a *process*.

I also identified differences in grammar for curricula that includes overarching competencies or principles that are threaded throughout the document. Despite Saskatchewan's explicit curriculum expectations, the grammar is somewhat different when describing the cross-curricular competencies suggesting they are "intended to be addressed" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 3), and that, "It is important that teachers consider the principles of competency" (p. 4) where *intentions* and *considerations* imply that it is encouraged but not necessary. In contrast, the Northwest

Territories' curriculum articulates that, "All educators are required to base children's learning on the principles set out in the curriculum" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 8). This difference in expression could have impacts on interpretation.

5.1.1.2. ***Vocabulary.*** This category involved two aspects: First I looked at the choice of vocabulary and the impact on interpretation, and second I looked at vocabulary frequency and what I determined was prioritized in the documents.

5.1.1.2.1. *Vocabulary choice.* I gathered meaning through the language that was selected to describe expectations and values in the programmatic curricula, that was sometimes more explicit than others. While something could be said about every word, I narrowed the focus by looking for words that were connected to family or diversity as these words carry weight for how educators may or may not discuss gender and sexual identities. Blaise (2009) noted,

> poststructuralism asserts that all meaning and knowledge are constituted through language, and that language is the key to how we create meaning as socially constructed individuals…language becomes the site where social meanings and identities about femininity, masculinity, and sexuality are formed and reformed. (p. 455)

I found that variation of language choice across documents is substantial. There are some instances where Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, and New Brunswick (both curricula and the early learning framework) express support for discussing and experiencing difference and resolving potential conflict, while, at other times, I found language that is vague or broad, making it possible to avoid conversations about diverse identities. The variation in detail can be seen in a few examples provided below. For example, in Manitoba's "Kindergarten to grade 12 Curriculum Framework for EAL/LAL Programming," students are expected to, "observe and participate in classroom and school activities, as compatible with family beliefs" (Manitoba Education, 2011e, p. 19). The words "as compatible with family beliefs" (p. 19) imply that if a classroom activity, such as reading a book about a same-sex relationship, is deemed unacceptable by a family or a child, then

the child would not have to participate, or the activity could be omitted. In contrast to this, however, Manitoba's Social Studies curriculum advocates,

> a fundamental aspect of social studies learning and teaching is the consideration of controversial issues that involve ethical principles, beliefs, and values. Teachers should not avoid controversial issues. Diversity of perspectives, beliefs and values, disagreement, and dissension are part of living in a democratic society. (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 6)

This statement suggests that even when something seems incompatible with beliefs, it should still be discussed and worked through in a way that builds perspective and understanding. Similar to Manitoba's expectation, New Brunswick's Language Arts document also stresses that students "can come to understand each other's perspectives, to realize that their ways of seeing and knowing are not the only ones possible, and to probe the complexity of the ideas and issues they are examining" (The Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 5).

I found contradictory wording in Saskatchewan's curriculum, which provides a note to educators where the word inclusiveness could both support a classroom activity/conversation or support the absence of a classroom activity/conversation: "Teachers are also reminded that diversity within classrooms must be addressed with sensitivity and inclusiveness, recognizing that not all cultural traditions are practised by all members of a particular cultural group" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 64). On the one hand, sensitivity should be honoured, which might imply that avoidance is acceptable; on the other hand inclusiveness is important, which suggests no identity should be ignored. Also, it is unclear what constitutes a cultural tradition. Does Canadian culture exist, and if so, then same-sex relationships are a part of this culture, upheld by the law.

The term cultural can mean different things to different people and is expressed differently in different documents. Alberta's curriculum defines culture, broadly, as, "the beliefs, values, socially transmitted behaviours and traditions, language, arts and other human endeavours considered together as being characteristics of a particular

community, period or people" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 23) and stresses that "the cultural diversity of families is recognized" (p. 3). The definition in the Northwest Territories' curriculum is, "culture encompasses the understandings, patterns of behaviour, practices, values and 'world view' shared by a group of people" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 5). These descriptions of culture are evidence of how ambiguous the term is perceived. In the new early learning framework for New Brunswick, culture is one *aspect* of many that describes diversity. The text specifies,

> throughout this document we have used the term children to refer to all children, regardless of race, religion, culture, language, social and economic status, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. The use of this inclusive term, without qualifiers, is deliberate. It resists the implication that particular ways of being in the world are 'normal' while other ways are not. (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 5)

Here, the inclusion of gender and sexual orientation is explicit and intentional and the concept of a normal identity is challenged, suggesting there is no one single way to be among diverse identities. The assertiveness with which this value is expressed suggests that it is something that should also be conveyed in the classroom.

I determined that Quebec's curriculum also uses strong language to suggest that children should not avoid incompatible ways of thinking, but rather, they need to learn to live amongst difference and to resolve conflicts:

> Children compare their understanding of the world, their interests and their tastes with those of others. They gradually accommodate their interests and needs to those of others, and learn to resolve conflicts in a spirit of mutual respect and justice. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 58).

Likewise, under a competency called "To Interact Harmoniously with Others," it is expected of students, "to show interest in others. To become acquainted with different people. To recognize their physical, social and cultural characteristics. To recognize his/her differences from and similarities to others" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 59).

The strong wording that I found in Ontario's curriculum also indicates a necessity for exposure to difference. Of six main principles that guide the document, number three states, "respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion is vital" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 4). The impact of the word vital suggests that respect for diversity is not an option. To support this is the claim that, "it is essential that learning opportunities and materials used to support the Kindergarten program reflect the diversity of Ontario society" (p. 102). Therefore, it would follow that it is acceptable to read a book about a same-sex relationship, given Canadian demographics. It is also stated within the document that, "a learning environment that is safe and welcoming supports children's well-being and ability to learn by promoting the development of individual identity and by ensuring equity and a sense of belonging for all" (p. 13). This is followed by a footnote that indicates ensuring equity is one of four goals of the Ministry of Education's "Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario" (2014), and the vision is quoted in the kindergarten curriculum:

> The fundamental principle driving this [vision] is that every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other factors. (p. 13)

The explicit reference to *all* identities, including gender, gender identity, sex, and sexual orientation, helps educators to understand the intended essence of diversity. This is in contrast to Manitoba's curriculum, which notes in the Social Studies document, "the concept of diversity is integrated throughout the Framework. Learning outcomes are inclusive of diverse perspectives and encourage critical consideration of differing points of view as students engage in purposeful dialogue with others" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 18), however, the term diversity is not defined. It is unclear what is included in considering diversity or differing points of view, but it is evident that exposure to difference, generally, is expected.

The range of vocabulary choice, or specificity, can have large impacts on how an educator might interpret what is expected in the classroom curriculum or what is okay to omit.

5.1.1.2.2. *Vocabulary frequency*. The other aspect of vocabulary besides *what* words were used, is *how often* words are used. I determined that each document provided a different sense of priorities through the vocabulary that was used and the frequency with which certain words appeared. I found two concepts, in particular, to appear regularly throughout most curricula: citizenship and developmental appropriateness. Table 10 provides an overview of which documents referred to these topics.

Table 10. Prioritized Concepts

	Citizenship	Developmental Appropriateness
BC	✓	✓
AB	✓	✓
SK	✓	✓
MB	✓	
ON	✓	✓
QC	✓	
NL	✓	✓
NB.c	✓	
NB.f	✓	✓
NS		
PE	✓	✓
NT	✓	✓

Note. The letter c identifies the New Brunswick curriculum, whereas the letter f identifies the New Brunswick early learning framework.

I found that citizenship is *mentioned* in every single document, except Nova Scotia, which did not include any value statements. I noted citizenship as a *priority* for Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Northwest Territories, as these documents include a section dedicated to citizenship. In Alberta's curriculum, there is a section entitled Citizenship and Identity where the focus is "on the development of a strong sense of identity, self-esteem and belonging by Kindergarten children" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 19). For Saskatchewan, being an engaged citizen is one of three broad areas of learning. For both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, citizenship

is identified as “Essential Graduation Learning” and for Northwest Territories it is one of eleven key competencies.

While the curriculum of Manitoba and Quebec does not have a section dedicated to citizenship, I found these documents to include strong statements about values related to citizenship. Manitoba’s Social Studies curriculum articulates the importance of being a good citizen, with the aim that “students acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to become active democratic citizens and contributing members of their communities, locally, nationally, and globally” (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 3). Similarly, Quebec’s curriculum states schools have a responsibility “to help students take their place in society, by familiarizing them with basic social knowledge and values and giving them the tools they need to play a constructive role as citizens” (Ministère de l’Éducation, 2001, p. 2) and articulates the following belief:

> In a pluralistic society such as ours, schools must act as agents of social cohesion by fostering a feeling of belonging to the community and teaching students how to live together. This means that they must transmit the heritage of shared knowledge, promote the fundamental values of democracy and prepare young people to become responsible citizens. They must likewise prevent exclusion, which jeopardizes the future of too many young people. (p. 3)

The use of the word “must” emphasizes the significance of citizenship, as well as the priority for social cohesion. Manitoba’s curriculum also includes a noteworthy disclaimer:

> Diverse notions of citizenship have been used in the past and are being used in the present, for both good and ill. Throughout much of history, citizenship has been exclusionary, class-based, racist, and sexist. In Canada, for instance, First Nations parents were forced to send their children to residential schools in the interests of citizenship. The context of citizenship must be considered within the context of democracy, human rights, and public debate. (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 9)

Manitoba, Quebec, and New Brunswick's curricula are interesting documents as they are the only ones to not refer to a program that is *appropriate* (Nova Scotia does not refer to this either, but, as mentioned, had no articulated values). Instead, these documents actually encourage that "teachers should not avoid controversial issues" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p.6), that intellectual competencies draw on "intellectual rigour" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 14), and that, "*Issues-based* social studies considers the ethical dimensions of issues and addresses controversial topics" (Government of New Brunswick, 1998c, p. 29). All other texts used the word appropriate to suggest boundaries around learning objectives or experiences. Table 11 shows the instances where the word appropriate (underlined) is used. Prince Edward Island is the only province that dedicated an entire section to Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). To contrast the language around appropriateness, I have also included statements from Manitoba's, Quebec's, and New Brunswick's curricula (in bold) that seem to counter concerns for DAP.

Note that Ontario's curriculum shows the inclusion of both a statement about the program being age appropriate, as well as a statement about examining issues such as bias and point of view with children, despite that *adults* may find these to be "difficult issues." In Ontario's curriculum, I also found, but did not include it in Table 11, a statement that seemed to bridge both sentiments of addressing controversy as well as adhering to what is considered appropriate. The statement read, "educators are responsible for implementing a program that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, integrated, developmentally appropriate, and culturally and linguistically responsive, and that promotes positive outcomes for all children" (p. 117). A program that is developmentally appropriate could imply not discussing things that some might consider above children's cognitive abilities, such as diverse gender and sexual identities; however, this statement also suggests that educators are responsible to promote "positive outcomes for all children," which includes children of same-sex parents and diverse gender expression. It is evident from the difference in language use, how the interpretation of text can have significant impacts on what may or may not be discussed in the classroom.

Table 11. Developmental Appropriateness

British Columbia Ministry of Education (2015a)	Students "Engage actively as listeners, viewers, and readers, as appropriate, to develop understanding of self, identity, and community" (Language Arts)
Alberta Education (2008)	"The Kindergarten learner expectations describe learnings that are appropriate for young children and are part of a learning pathway" (p.1) "Children experience a range of appropriate experiences and interactions that enable them to add to their knowledge, learn new skills and practise familiar ones through self-initiated and structured activities" (p. 5) "activities that are developmentally appropriate for young children" (p. 9)
Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2010)	"Children will be given opportunities to develop their understandings of the diversity and uniqueness of individuals...Teachers are invited to include examples beyond the immediate student environment when appropriate. Teachers are also reminded that diversity within classrooms must be addressed with sensitivity and inclusiveness, recognizing that not all cultural traditions are practised by all members of a particular cultural group." (p. 64)
Manitoba Education (2003)	**"A fundamental aspect of social studies learning and teaching is the consideration of controversial issues that involve ethical principles, beliefs, and values. Teachers should not avoid controversial issues. Diversity of perspectives, beliefs and values, disagreement, and dissension are part of living in a democratic society." (p. 6)**
Ontario Ministry of Education (2016)	"The kindergarten program is designed to help every child reach his or her full potential through a program of learning that is coherent, relevant, and age appropriate" (p. 4). **"It is sometimes the adults who feel challenged when approaching 'difficult' issues with young children, perhaps because they feel uncertain about how to talk about such topics with young children. In a Kindergarten classroom, use of a broad range of 'languages' can engage children in exploring and examining issues such as bias, point of view, fairness versus unfairness, and the related equity and social justice concepts that naturally arise, while acknowledging that some issues may be more sensitive for some children than for others." (p. 70)**
Ministère de l'Éducation (2001)	**"The development of a world-view, which is related to the sense of judgment and conscience, is fostered by reflection on the great existential issues (life and death, love and hate, success and failure, peace and violence, etc.). It also depends on the extent to which students are willing to compare their world-view with those of others and to look critically at themselves and their actions, reactions, opinions, beliefs, values and attitudes" (p. 6); "The intellectual**

	competencies call on even the youngest students to go beyond superficial memorization of content and mindless conformity, and to aim for a higher level of skills. They define an active relationship to knowledge, and enable students to relate to reality—to grasp, interpret and understand it. Intellectual competencies draw on attitudes such as open-mindedness, intellectual curiosity, willingness to make an effort and intellectual rigor." (p. 14)
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2015)	"...it is critical that teachers of kindergarten children...plan for developmentally appropriate learning activities" (p. 58).
Government of New Brunswick (1998) *curricula	**"In reading, viewing, and discussing a variety of texts, students from different social and cultural backgrounds can come to understand each other's perspectives, to realize that their ways of seeing and knowing are not the only ones possible, and to probe the complexity of the ideas and issues they are examining" (1998a, p. 5)** **"*Issues-based* social studies considers the ethical dimensions of issues and addresses controversial topics. It encourages consideration of opposing points of view, respect for well-supported positions, sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences, and a commitment to social responsibility and action" (1998c, p. 29)**
Government of New Brunswick (2016) *framework	Environments should be "developmentally and culturally appropriate."
Government of Nova Scotia (2015)	no articulated values or descriptions for the educator or the environment —only expectations
Prince Edward Island (2008)	"Developmentally appropriate practice means doing what is best for children based on what is known about them" (p. 33); "Developmentally appropriate teaching includes creating environments that facilitate learning through meaningful play" (p. 25); "The educator provides a play-based, developmentally appropriate learning experience and materials that enhance the development and learning of all children" (p. 29); "Children will be provided with a variety of opportunities through age-appropriate, play-based learning activities to explore and experience social studies through the lens of personal experiences in their daily lives." (p. 111)
Northwest Territories (2014)	"This curriculum is…developmentally appropriate" (p. v).

5.1.1.3. ***Semantics.*** In this section I focused on the relationship between the signifier and the signified. I also paid attention to words that seemed ambiguous and that could have impact based on how they were interpreted. Many words could be analyzed in this section and I found no overall trend. One word stood out to me for the frequency in which it appeared in Saskatchewan's curriculum. I included it as an example of how nuanced words can be in terms of what they convey.

Particularly early in the document, Saskatchewan's curriculum frequently uses the word *meaningful*. Under the heading "Broad Areas of Learning," it states, "as children engage in meaningful play and inquiry, they become more knowledgeable, confident, and creative lifelong learners" (p. 2). Then, under the heading "An Effective Kindergarten Program," it is articulated that, "through meaningful conversations, respect and relationships are affirmed" (p. 5), and furthermore, "it is important that both educators and children learn with meaningful contexts that relate to their lives, communities, and the world" (p. 6). In a discussion about inquiry through play, it is suggested that, "building on children's inherent sense of curiosity and wonder while drawing on their diverse backgrounds, interests, and experiences provides children with meaningful learning opportunities" (p. 8). Each educator will implement this curriculum according to personal understandings of what is considered meaningful, but what is signified by the use of this word? It seems to imply importance, but what is important and to whom? How will experiences be meaningful? How is meaningful practice assessed? In terms of gender and sexual identities, what constitutes a meaningful conversation? All of these questions are determined by the teacher and result in hidden curriculum.

5.1.1.4. ***Textual Organization.*** In this category, I took note of section headings, as well as the length of various sections to indicate what was prioritized. I also looked at the page numbers to provide an indication of how soon values were stated. Five jurisdictions include a section dedicated to citizenship (Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick (both the curricula and the early learning framework), Prince Edward Island, and the Northwest Territories) and five jurisdictions dedicate a section to inclusive education (British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Newfoundland, New Brunswick (both the curricula and framework). Prince Edward Island's curriculum dedicates a section to

DAP, and Alberta and Ontario both claim their program to be developmentally appropriate in the program rationale and the vision of the program, respectively.

Eight documents—British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick (both the curricula and framework), and the Northwest Territories—center around guiding principles or broad areas of learning, in general, to frame the values of the document. For example, the first eight pages of Alberta's curriculum is dedicated to ten principles or values that guide the overall curriculum document, such as principle seven: "Children are citizens and active participants in school and society" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 6). Saskatchewan's curriculum is based on three broad areas of learning: lifelong learners; sense of self, community, and place; and engaged citizens (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2-3). Quebec's curriculum focuses on competencies and culture, and features nine cross-curricular competencies grouped under four categories: intellectual, methodological, personal and social, and communication-related. New Brunswick's curricula and the early learning framework include "essential graduation learning" such as citizenship. Citizenship, specifically, is a prioritized section for Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Northwest Territories.

I recognized priorities for inclusive education in the following ways. British Columbia's curriculum includes a section called "Program Considerations" within the curriculum introduction, and on page 8, there is a section called "Valuing Diversity" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b). New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum has a section called "A Gender-Inclusive Curriculum" and instructs teachers to "promote gender equity in their classrooms when they…review curriculum materials for gender bias in roles, personality traits, illustrations, and language" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 4). New Brunswick's early learning framework includes a section called "Including all Children" on page 5, and on page 6 there is reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), followed by a section on "Inclusiveness and Equity" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 6). Newfoundland's curriculum also includes a section on inclusive education, found on page 19 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015). Manitoba dedicates an entire website link for diversity and equity education, and notes on the site:

> This website is dedicated to providing educators and youth with a multiplicity of resources related to diversity and equity education. It encourages educators and youth to get involved in social justice issues and to be the change that makes the difference in our community and schools.

Ontario's curriculum uses the term inclusive to describe the kindergarten environment on page 5, 9, and 29 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). On page 101, there is a section entitled "Equity and Inclusive Education in Kindergarten," which states how the strategy "focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating the discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of children to learn, grow, contribute to society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). The section continues for a full page and a half, encouraging the use of diverse resources, fostering a respectful environment, and ensuring all identities—including gender identity and sexual orientation—are reflected in the classroom curriculum.

Apparent in Prince Edward Island's curriculum is the text dedicated to DAP. The term "developmentally appropriate" appears on page 3, 5 (3 times), 8, 13 (twice), 25 (twice), 27, 29, and culminates in an entire section dedicated to DAP in kindergarten on page 33 (Prince Edward Island, 2008).

5.1.2. **Intertextual.** The intertextual analysis included genre (where I assessed the model of curriculum that was most aligned to each document), discourses identified in relation to gender and sexual identities, and societal and historical influences found in the texts, such as cultural values and theoretical frameworks, respectively.

5.1.2.1. ***Genre.*** In genre, I analyzed the documents for the degree to which they reflected Heydon and Wang's (2006) curriculum models: prescriptive, adaptable, or emergent which are defined in in chapter one. Heydon and Wang place these models on a continuum ranging from prescriptive on one extreme and emergent on the other. Recall that adaptable curriculum is conceived outside of the classroom, but teachers have input regarding how to approach the expectations or values outlined in the document, and

parents, children, and the environment are also all considered to have an active role in the construction of curricula.

As evidenced from their programmatic curricula, I judge Manitoba's, Ontario's, Prince Edward Island's, the Northwest Territories', and New Brunswick's curricula to be operating from curricular models that are situated towards the middle of Heydon and Wang's (2006) continuum. Manitoba's curriculum, for example, resembles adaptable curriculum in that expectations often span numerous grade levels and are themselves described along a continuum, thus progression through the expectations can be recursive and pedagogies also ostensibly so. This flexibility of attaining the expectations over a longer period of time takes into consideration children's various stages of development and interests. Prince Edward Island's curriculum has a section entitled "Suggestions for Learning and Teaching" that, similarly, helps teachers to adapt expectations to children's needs and interests. Ontario and The Northwest Territories' curriculum are permeated with values that appear more important than the learning objectives themselves, but still have expectations for students to attain. Also, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories both demonstrate strong recognition for Indigenous cultures and how children's family experiences shape their understandings, enabling input from families to enter classroom curriculum.

Recognizing the literature about the various curriculum models, I determined that the many documents were, like those just discussed, also adaptable but leaning more towards the prescriptive side of the continuum. Each of these documents use imperative language, as described under the heading Grammar, which outlined specific expectations that focused on action or inaction without much consideration for children's or families' interests, as characteristic of prescriptive curricula. In British Columbia's curriculum, for instance, under Curricular Competencies and Content, it assertively states that, "students will be able to…" and "students are expected to know the following…" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a, Social Studies). Similarly, the curriculum of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia also include expectations based on what the students are expected to be able to do, know, or understand. Nova Scotia is

the only province that does not include any values or preamble to accompany the expectations in the document, making it more prescriptive in nature.

I found that Quebec's curriculum and New Brunswick's early learning framework draw upon the emergent curriculum model as they attempt to focus more on values and character building than expectations, and language in the document suggests that input from families and children is honoured.

5.1.2.2. ***Discourses.*** I read each programmatic curriculum looking for discourses about gender and sexual identities. I found such discourses primarily in two types of section or discussion. Discourses of gender and sexual identities were commonly present in content related to family and gender roles as well as inclusive education.

5.1.2.2.1. *Family and gender roles.* Every province/territory includes an expectation to learn about family, but how family is described varies drastically, from simply asking children to identify that we are all a part of a family to learning more specific ideas of what constitutes a family. The only documents that include specific reference to families headed by same-sex parents are Ontario's, Newfoundland's, Nova Scotia's, and New Brunswick's early learning framework. For example, Nova Scotia's Health curriculum includes an expectation that students should "describe their own family structure and those different from their own (including blended, those with same sex parents, institutional, families led by extended family members, and families that do not live together all of the time)" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015b, p. 1). By placing examples in brackets, it is clear as to what kind of families should be discussed. Similarly, in Newfoundland's Religion curriculum, there is a note to teachers that indicates, "teachers and students need to be sensitive regarding the diversity of family structures, e.g., blended families, single-parent families, multi-racial families, same-sex parent families, etc." (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. RE11). Furthermore, there is an expectation in the Health curriculum that students "understand that we are all members of a family" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. H46) and a recommended resource to help teach this expectation is The Family Book,

which depicts a same-sex couple. As a *recommended* reading, however, it is not required that educators use this resource.

Prince Edward Island's and the Northwest Territories' curricula include comparatively broader learning expectations in relation to families. In Prince Edward Island's Social Studies curriculum, students should "identify and describe their family (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 118) and under suggestions, it provides a reminder: "Family make-up may be different than what is considered to be the traditional family. Be sensitive to the needs of all children" (p. 118). Similarly, the Northwest Territories' curriculum suggests, "among cultures, child-rearing and family lifestyles differ and value may be placed on different types of knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 5). While both documents acknowledge various family dynamics, the lack of specificity could lead to ambiguity as to what kinds of families are *appropriate* to discuss.

In the Manitoba, Ontario, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick curricula, as well as the New Brunswick early learning framework, I found references to gender roles. For example, Newfoundland's Social Studies curriculum has an expectation to, "demonstrate an understanding of how the roles of family members have changed over time" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. SS25) and links gender to family in a suggested prompt: "In some homes, dad takes out the trash, but never changes the baby. In other homes dad does both, while in others it is mom who changes the baby and the child who takes out the trash" (p. SS34). Manitoba's "Kindergarten to grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures" curriculum includes an expectation to, "identify characteristics (e.g., name, nation, gender, gifts, qualities, abilities) that describe self as special and unique" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 54), where gender is one aspect of identity to be discussed.

Along with expectations, there are also prompts within curriculum documents that are intended to guide conversations. Newfoundland's English Language Arts curriculum provides a prompt to discuss gender:

> Using flyers from various book clubs that are distributed within a school, ask students guiding questions that will encourage them to discuss topics that may be

> present in the advertisements such as gender equity and stereotypes. Observe and note responses to questions about: the colours used throughout the flyer to sell specific items to a specific group of people. For example, pink is commonly used when girls are targeted as the consumers. (Why is this colour used to advertise this item?); the types of activities that boys and girls are engaged in on the advertisements (Who is most likely to be photographed on a skateboard? Why?); photographs of moms and dads and the roles portrayed. (Does your mom barbecue or mow the lawn?) (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA61)

Similarly, New Brunswick's early learning framework includes prompts for potential classroom conversation: "Explore media representation by asking questions that challenge representations, such as, 'What toys do you think both boys and girls would like to play with?' or 'How come you think that only boys can be Ninjas?'" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 153) and later, educators are instructed to "challenge children's stereotypes. For example, introduce them to children's books that portray males and females in non-traditional roles" (p. 163). New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum suggests, "Through critical examination of the language of a range of texts, students can discover what they reveal about attitudes towards gender roles and how these attitudes are constructed and reinforced" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 4). Ontario's curriculum includes scenarios that also aim to challenge gender stereotypes: "'I am not a writer. I am a boy.' Another child says, 'That's not true. I am a boy, and look at my writing,'" or "How come all the people in our construction sets are boys?" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 143).

5.1.2.2.2. *Inclusive education.* As indicated in Textual Organization, I determined that inclusive education is prioritized in five documents—British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick (both the curricula and the early learning framework)—where priority was assessed based on whether there was a section dedicated to the topic. It is also clear in Saskatchewan's and Quebec's curriculum that respecting diversity is important as this is indicated in various aspects of both curricula. Ontario's curriculum defines inclusive education as:

> Inclusive education starts from the premise that everyone in the school community - students, educators, administrators, support staff and parents - feels that he/she belongs, realizes his/her potential, and contributes to the life of the school. In an inclusive education, diversity is embraced, learning supports are available and properly utilized, and flexible learning experiences focus on each individual student. Inclusive education aims to substantially alter general education classrooms to make them more responsive to heterogeneous groups of learners. Differences amongst students exist in a myriad of ways including race, ethnicity, gender, family background, language, sexual orientation, and religion—as well as differences in ability/performance, readiness and interests" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 19).

> In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all children in Kindergarten, their parents, other family members, and other members of the school community—regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or other similar factors -- are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. (p. 101)

Similarly, New Brunswick's early learning framework has a list of identities to be included:

> All children, regardless of race, religion, age, linguistic heritage, social and economic status, gender, or ability are entitled to inclusion in everyday activities and routines. When inclusiveness and equity are practised, children come to appreciate their physical characteristics and their gendered, racialized, linguistic and cultural identities. (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 52)

Manitoba has a website link dedicated to diversity and equity education, British Columbia has a "Valuing Diversity" section in the curriculum introduction document (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b), New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum has a "Valuing Social and Cultural Diversity" section (Atlantic Provinces

Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 5), and Newfoundland has an Inclusive Education section included under “Program Design and Components” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015).

Despite not having a section dedicated to inclusive education, Saskatchewan and Quebec also articulate the importance of inclusion. Saskatchewan’s curriculum includes a competency for developing identity and interdependence where, “achieving this competency requires understanding, valuing, and caring for oneself; understanding, valuing, and respecting human diversity and human rights and responsibilities; and understanding and valuing social and environmental interdependence and sustainability" (p. 3).

Quebec’s curriculum embraces inclusive education by rejecting “all forms of exclusion” in the value statement below,

> as learning communities and microcosms of society, schools bring together students of diverse social and cultural origins. This makes the school an ideal place to learn to respect others and to accept their differences, to be receptive to pluralism, to maintain egalitarian relationships with others and to reject all forms of exclusion. (p. 50)

Documents that explicitly state values for inclusion provide educators with the support necessary to discuss and represent diverse gender and sexual identities in classroom conversations and resources, so that all children see themselves reflected in the learning environment.

5.1.2.3. ***Dependence on society and history.*** In my data collection tool, dependence on society and dependence on history were two separate categories in which I documented information. Dependence on society included references to stakeholders within the community, cultural values, or religious beliefs that influenced curriculum. Dependence on history included any references to previous texts, theories, or historical values that supported the curriculum. In analyzing the data, there was an alignment between cultural values expressed (categorized under dependence on society) and

psychological perspectives about childhood (categorized under dependence on history), so I have merged the two to present three dominant themes from the data: Knowledge is socially constructed and interaction with others enables meaning-making of ourselves and our world; as children are active participants in the construction of knowledge, they also have specific responsibilities as citizens in their community; the early years are a significant time of growth and development. Table 12 indicates that every province/territory expresses these same values, except for Nova Scotia, which does not express any values as it focuses only on learning expectations. While I did not find anything in British Columbia's curriculum that discusses the significance of the early years, this could be attributed to the format of the curriculum, which centers on subjects and big ideas. Value statements are found in the introduction to the curriculum document (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b), which serves all grade levels as opposed to just the early years.

Table 12. Social and Historical Influences

	Knowledge is Socially Constructed	Children as Active and Responsible Citizens	Early Years as Significant time of Development
BC	Yes	Yes	---
AB	Yes	Yes	Yes
SK	Yes	Yes	Yes
MB	Yes	Yes	Yes
ON	Yes	Yes	Yes
QC	Yes	Yes	Yes
NL	Yes	Yes	Yes
NB.c	Yes	Yes	Yes
NB.f	Yes	Yes	Yes
NS	No values expressed; only learning expectations		
PE	Yes	Yes	Yes
NT	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note. The letter c identifies the New Brunswick curricula, whereas the letter f identifies the New Brunswick early learning framework.

5.1.2.3.1. *Knowledge is socially constructed*. Every document (except Nova Scotia) expresses the belief that knowledge is socially constructed—a perspective that aligns with the emergent paradigm of childhood (James & Prout, 1997; Ryan, 2008). In a section about critical literacy in the New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum, this perspective is described:

> When meaning is said to be social constructed, it means that most of what is known/understood about the world and one another is determined by cultural and social expectations and by ways in which individuals are positioned. It cannot be assumed that the laws, values, customs, traditions, and manners learned from one setting are universally interpreted and accepted in the ways in which they have been learned. (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 230)

Principle four of Alberta's curriculum articulates, "children make sense of the world through interaction with teachers, family members, other children and community members. Through this interaction, children construct knowledge and make meaning of the world" (p. 4). This principle is elaborated upon, suggesting,

> children construct knowledge when their minds are actively engaged in meaningful, shared interactions with adults and peers in a range of social, cultural and linguistic contexts. This knowledge is collective, socially constructed and both enabled and constrained by language, history and traditions. (p. 5)

These expectations expressed in Alberta's curriculum point to the importance of children interacting with a variety of individuals in a variety of settings, as each person and context contributes towards the meaning made by an individual.

Manitoba's Drama curriculum also expresses similar sentiments saying, "learning is an active, embodied, and social process of constructing meaning" (Manitoba Education, 2011b, p. 6) and the Social Studies curriculum expresses:

> Learning is more meaningful when individual backgrounds are acknowledged and valued, when learners are provided with opportunities to reflect critically on their

> own views, and when students are encouraged to broaden their perspectives through informed and focused interaction with others. (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 5)

In this way, not only is it important that children interact with others to construct their understandings, but they also should have a thorough and critical understanding of themselves in relation to others. Ontario's curriculum highlights this reciprocal relationship stating, "knowledge is socially constructed—created by people learning, working, and investigating together—and can be shared" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 126). This language suggests cooperation as children make meaning of themselves and others. Newfoundland's curriculum expects students to "recognize that cooperating and respecting others contributes to the overall health of self and others" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. H58). This notion of learning about ourselves and others to cultivate healthy relationships is also echoed in British Columbia's Physical Education curriculum as, "learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy relationships" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a).

Through these interactions, knowledge is also constructed about gender identity. New Brunswick's early learning framework directly refers to how children's gendered identities are shaped by the interactions with others: "Children's personal, social, and literate identities are co-constructed in their interactions with others, and by the expectations held by others for example, gendered expectations" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 40). Prince Edward Island's curriculum also recognizes gender as a factor affecting children's development: "Children's development is shaped by many factors, including gender, social and cultural backgrounds, and the extent to which individual needs are met" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 27). Recognizing the cultural backgrounds of children is also expressed in Quebec's and the Northwest Territories' curriculum. Quebec advocates to "create an environment in which students become familiar with their culture, pursue understanding of the world and the meaning of life and develop new ways of adapting to society" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p.2). The Northwest Territories' curriculum states,

> in Kindergarten, their development and learning will be influenced by the connections they already have with the people, places, values and beliefs they have experienced within their families and community. They will learn best when their early school experiences make a strong and positive connection with their lives and past experiences. (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 2)

In each of the quotes presented, there is a sense of children's active participation in the interactions with others and the construction of knowledge. This theme was even more apparent as curriculum connected this active role to children's rights and responsibilities as citizens in their community.

5.1.2.3.2. *Children are active participants and responsible citizens in their communities*. Along with the emergent paradigm of childhood supporting the notion that knowledge is socially constructed, and that children are active in this process, children are also believed to be active as citizens harboring rights and responsibilities. This belief is expressed across all curriculum documents (except Nova Scotia). British Columbia's curriculum articulates this value clearly: "Rights, roles, and responsibilities shape our identity and help us build healthy relationships with others" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a). Alberta's curriculum acknowledges the shift from developmental perspectives of childhood to ones that now support how child development is socially constructed, and therefore, how important it is to ensure children are actively participating in identity formation and citizenship:

> The developmental milestones of childhood are no longer thought to be universal and consistent across cultures. It is now recognized that explanations of child development, as well as expectations of developmental accomplishments, are socially constructed. (Alberta Education, 2008, p.2)

This is followed by the statement that,

> children should be active participants in shaping their identities as members of various cultural and social communities and as citizens of a pluralistic and democratic society. When children are in learning environments that recognize

> individual and collective rights, and foster personal and collective responsibility, they develop shared values and a sense of self and community. (p. 6)

Essentially, this suggests that when children are made aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, they develop a greater sense of self and shared values with their community. This is significant given the diverse communities of which students are a part. Manitoba's Social Studies curriculum expresses:

> Through a study of the ways in which people live together and express themselves in communities, societies, and nations, students enhance their understanding of diverse perspectives and develop their competencies as social beings. This process enables them to reflect upon their roles as individuals and citizens so as to become contributing members of their groups and communities. (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 11)

Once again, this shows the extent to which students are expected to participate in their community through expressing themselves while developing an understanding of different ways of life.

Part of being a responsible citizen is recognizing that children are *capable* of having such responsibility and an active role. Saskatchewan's curriculum claims, "children are viewed as capable, competent thinkers who have multiple ways of knowing, doing, and understanding" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 4). Ontario's curriculum similarly states, "the Kindergarten program reflects the belief that four- and five-year-olds are capable and competent learners, full of potential and ready to take ownership of their learning" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 8), and

> an awareness of being valued and respected—of being seen as competent and capable—by the educator builds children's sense of self and belonging and contributes to their well-being, enabling them to be more engaged in learning and to feel more comfortable in expressing their thoughts and ideas. (p. 11)

The idea that children are seen as competent and capable to express personal thoughts and ideas has also sprouted from the emergent paradigm of childhood that believes each

child has a voice as opposed to children merely absorbing the information of those around them (James & Prout, 1997; Ryan, 2008).

The documents from Newfoundland, Quebec and New Brunswick stress critical thinking as part of children's rights and responsibilities. Newfoundland's curriculum states:

> When students think and respond critically, they use thought processes to actively evaluate and analyze information that is received building a classroom environment of mutual respect and reassurance is essential to students learning how to respond critically to information and ideas from differing points of view. Teachers need to model critical responses. (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA26)

Similarly, Quebec's curriculum encourages reexamining what you know, suggesting that a constructivist approach to learning,

> sees learning as a process, and the student as the principal agent in that process. The situations that are seen as most conducive to learning are those that present a real challenge to students by obligating them to reexamine their learnings and personal representations. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 5)

In recognizing the potential challenges involved with critical thinking and differing points of view, New Brunswick's early learning framework includes a statement that is sensitive to this negotiation:

> Determining what is in children's best interests requires ongoing conversation, communication, and negotiation. Diverse families and communities may differ in what they believe to be best for their children, and the children themselves are entitled to a voice. As well, the interests of individual children always exist in fragile balance with the interests of the various groups to which they belong. Consequently, children's best interests must be understood in the context of their dynamic relationships with families, communities, languages, and cultures. (p. 5)

New Brunswick's Social Studies curriculum similarly expresses, "Social studies requires students to listen critically to others; to evaluate and respond to their arguments…and to identify perceptions and bias" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 7). Particularly significant here is despite that families and communities may have different perspectives and beliefs, children also have a voice. This is a key component of the emergent paradigm of childhood.

5.1.2.3.3. *The early years are a significant time of development*. Every document, except British Columbia and Nova Scotia, stress the importance of the early years for child development and growth. In fact, Saskatchewan's curriculum and New Brunswick's early learning framework both articulate how learning begins at birth, and how the early years are simply an extension of this critical time in children's lives:

> Children begin exploring and creating from the moment they are born. As children explore, they better understand what they are exploring and seek opportunities to share this way of knowing and understanding. During this sharing, children build a sense of belonging and contributing. (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 6)

New Brunswick's early learning framework expresses:

> Children begin learning at birth, and their experiences during the early years have critical consequences both in the present and for their own futures....They are entitled to engaging and inclusive environments in which well-being is secured...and respect for diversity promoted and practiced. (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 8)

Alberta's curriculum articulates several values related to early learning experiences and brain development. In the Program Overview, it states:

> Independence, initiative, decision-making, creativity, the ability to learn, the ability to relate to others and feelings of self-worth all have their beginnings in early childhood. What young children learn at this stage will have a major impact

> on successful learning experiences in school, on personal development and on future participation in society. (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 1)

Furthermore, "what young children learn at this stage will have a major impact on successful learning experiences in school, on personal development and on future participation in society" (p. 1) and, "early childhood development is the most active period of brain development....Experience plays an important role in this development, with the nature of a child's early experience having a long-term impact on learning outcomes" (p. 2). Concerns about brain development also appear in the Northwest Territories' curriculum, which discusses the development of neural pathways in the brain:

> During early childhood, relationships and experiences interact with genes to create neural pathways within the brain thus influencing all domains of development. This is a critical time as attitudes and expectations developed in the early years influence an individual's learning throughout life. (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 6)

Recognizing the malleability of the brain in the early years, it also states in the Northwest Territories' curriculum that, "it is the early years that provide the most critical opportunity for taking action and building upon children's strengths" and "we know they will have the greatest chance for success if they are firmly grounded in family, community, identity and culture" (p. iii). Manitoba's curriculum on "Belonging, Learning, and Growing: Diversity Education" similarly suggests, "the school years encompass some of the most important stages of human person and social development. School to a large degree helps to shape our future lives and characteristics" (Manitoba Education, 2015a). Also alluding to the influence the early years can have on future health and development, Ontario's curriculum states, "experiences during the early years strongly influence their future physical, mental, and emotional health, and their ability to learn" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 9). Similarly, Prince Edward Island's curriculum expresses, "early childhood is a significant period in human development. Independence, decision making, creativity, the ability to learn, the ability to relate to others, and feelings of self-worth all have their beginnings in early childhood" (Prince

Edward Island, 2008, p. 7) and Newfoundland's curriculum suggests, "from a young age, children set out on a lifelong quest for complex answers relating to the profound questions of life" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 8).

Quebec's curriculum not only articulates the notion that the early years set the stage for developing the foundation of a strong sense of self, but also the time when children learn to "accept differences and be open to diversity" by stating that,

> constructing an identity is a process that begins very early. Small children gradually become aware of the position they hold within their family and integrate the values of their milieu....They also learn—to a variable extent, depending on the context—to affirm their choices and opinions, recognize their own values, accept differences and be open to diversity. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 32)

Similarly, New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum suggests,

> only by beginning to work with children as early as the primary grades to help them recognize how text constructs our understanding/world view of race, gender, social class, age, region, ethnicity, and ability, can teachers begin to give them the means to bring about the kind of social justice that true democracy seeks to create. (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, pp. 230-231)

Recognizing that nearly every curriculum document expresses the significance of the early years for development of self and respect for others reinforces the significance of ensuring young children are exposed to difference and are given a variety of meaning-making opportunities to make sense of their own identities and the diverse identities around them as early as possible.

5.2. **Questions of Curriculum**

Built upon Schwab's (1983) conception of curriculum found in the *commonplaces* such as the teacher, student, subject, and milieu, Dillon (2009) introduced questions pertaining to the nature, elements, and practice of curriculum. In considering the nature of

curriculum, Dillon highlights the essence or substance of curriculum and the properties or character of curriculum, respectively. In my analysis, I have explored the nature of *gender and sexual identities* within the curriculum, and looked for language that represented the essence and properties of gender and sexual identities. Similarly, the elements of curriculum have become the elements of gender and sexual identities, with subcategories for the seven elements proposed by Dillon: teacher, student, subject, milieu, aim, activity, and result. Lastly, the practice of curriculum translates to the practices of gender and sexual identities, and what to do and how to think about gender and sexual identities.

5.2.1. **Nature of gender and sexual identities.** This section contained language that described the essence of gender and sexual identities as well as the properties of gender and sexual identities. In the former category, I looked for indications of what gender and sexual identities *are*. The latter elaborated on this by exploring what gender and sexual identities *are like*.

5.2.1.1. ***Essence.*** As essence could be described in a myriad of ways, I found something in every document that supported kindergarten children *are* diverse. Five out of eleven documents (Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) use the word "unique" to describe students. Other provinces describe this essence in other words: British Columbia's curriculum says young people are of "varied backgrounds, interests, and abilities" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 8); Alberta's curriculum indicates, "children have diverse perspectives" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 3); Saskatchewan's Health curriculum expects students to, "explore that who I am includes more than my physical self" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 42); Ontario's curriculum stresses children are, "competent, capable…" and "grow up in families with diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 10); and the Northwest Territories' curriculum stresses that students' identities are a product of culture (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 10).

Beyond words, Newfoundland's curriculum and New Brunswick's early learning framework include pictures within the documents that configure gender and sexual identities. Newfoundland's curriculum has pictures of children enacting roles that reinforce gender norms. Figure 3 shows images of girls presenting a baked cake (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 37) and playing hop scotch (p. 7), while boys were featured at the block centre (p. 38) and playing doctor (p. 4). These pictures suggest that girls are bakers and boys are doctors, for example.

Figure 3. Pictures from Newfoundland's curriculum.

In contrast, New Brunswick's curriculum has pictures of boys baking in the kitchen (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 23) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Pictures from New Brunswick's early learning framework.

The message from these pictures is that boys are bakers, which could be read as a subtle example of challenging gender stereotypes.

5.2.1.2. ***Properties.*** The properties of gender and sexual identities looked at the language that described what these identities *are like*. While essence explored the substance or statements made of what gender identities are, such as girls are bakers or boys are bakers, properties elaborated upon the character of gender and sexual identities. While the former helped to answer what gender and sexual identities are included, the latter looked at how these identities are configured. This was described in the roles children enact through play. Newfoundland's curriculum articulates that, "students may engage in conversations through dramatic play and assume roles such as: doctor, chef, father, mother, teacher, pilot, builder, etc." (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA20). This prompt does not give any indication of how gender might be assigned to each role. Similarly, in a prompt in New Brunswick's early learning framework, gender is not explicitly discussed: "Noticing that the children are still engaging in dress-up play after Halloween, the educators purchase a variety of costumes on sale. The children play at being princesses, knights, princes, dragons, pirates, and Transformers for extended periods of time" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 152). A sample narrative found in New Brunswick's early learning framework illustrates children at play: "Bonnie (4 years) enters the block corner and Paul (4 years) says, 'You can't come in here we are playing Ninjas.' Bonnie replies, 'Girls can be Ninjas too,' and begins to play" (p. 162). This scenario provides an example of how gender might be configured in non-normative ways and how children themselves might challenge stereotypes. New Brunswick's framework also provides a scenario featuring a relationship among girls playing: "Jan (3 years) and Louise (3 years) are playing house. They both want to be mommy. Jan says, 'We'll both be the mommy,' and then, 'We'll have two mommies'" (p. 112). This example of the depiction of a same-sex relationship was the only one I found across all the documents.

5.2.2. **Elements of gender and sexual identities.** The elements of gender and sexual identities referred to how the documents intended curriculum to be executed among seven categories, representing an extension of the initial commonplaces established by Schwab (1983): teacher, student, subject, milieu, aim, activity, and result. Each of these categories helped to answer what meaning-making opportunities children

were offered in terms of gender and sexual identities, and what null and hidden curricula were present. Due to the vast amount of data collected for each category, a comprehensive table for each heading has been provided in the appendices. Below, are key findings for each category.

5.2.2.1. ***Teacher: Expressive communication.*** In this category, language denoted how the documents suggested a teacher should convey meaning of gender and sexual identities. Quebec's and Nova Scotia's curriculum were the only two that did not provide explicit instruction for educators on how to communicate about identities. Other curricula provided several prompts for educators to consider. The common theme, found in the remaining nine documents, was ensuring the use of resources that reflected diversity, encouraged inclusiveness, and, in some cases, challenged assumptions. Appendix 1 includes all data that were collected for this category, and I will share a few pertinent excerpts below to illustrate the common theme. British Columbia's curriculum is very explicit in outlining considerations for diversity when selecting resources:

> When selecting specific topics, activities, and resources to support the implementation of the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to ensure that these choices support inclusion, equity, and accessibility for all students. In particular, teachers should ensure that classroom instruction, assessment, and resources reflect sensitivity to diversity and incorporate positive role portrayals, relevant issues, and themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance. This includes diversity in family compositions and gender orientation. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 8)

Similarly, Ontario's curriculum stresses, "it is essential that learning opportunities and materials used to support the Kindergarten program reflect the diversity of Ontario society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 102).

Ontario's and New Brunswick's curricula, as well as New Brunswick's early learning framework, encourage educators to foster critical thinking and conversations that center on gendered identities, specifically. Ontario's curriculum says, "educators can provide multiple opportunities for children to develop critical literacy skills by: noticing and

naming behaviours in the classroom that can provoke discussion (e.g., 'We've noticed that more boys than girls play with the blocks. Why is that? What can we do about it?')" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 70). Similarly, New Brunswick's framework says educators should, "model and invite children to raise and explore cultural questions. For example, what do boys play with? What do girls play with?" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 153). New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum provides a sample of a potential classroom conversation:

> Mr. MacGregor asked the students whether it was fair/ true to say that all girls…, or that all boys…, and to explain why or why not. He then explained the meaning of stereotyping – believing/ saying that all members of a particular group have the same characteristics. In order to give students practice in using fair language, he modeled a structure that discourages false generalizations: 'Some boys like baseball; other boys like music; some boys like baseball and music.' (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 101)

Prompts and questions like these help to expand identity options as students are encouraged to like and play with anything, regardless of their gender identity.

Manitoba, New Brunswick (both the curricula and the early learning framework), and Newfoundland prompt educators to be aware of personal bias and keep an open mind. Manitoba's Social Studies curriculum suggests, "teachers need to be aware of the implications of presenting their own beliefs and perspectives as fact rather than opinion. Social studies is rich in opportunities to detect and analyze bias through the critical exploration of diverse points of view" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 6). New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum encourages teachers to "confront their own gender stereotyping and biases" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 4), the Social Studies curriculum says teachers should "help students explore and understand why different people have different perspectives" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 32), and the early learning framework acknowledges:

> Challenges in relationships are often linked to differences in beliefs and values about early learning, child care, and family structure. Successful communication

> between families and educators can open the door for families....Become aware of one's own biases and beliefs—how they might differ from others and possibly interfere with communication. (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 13)

Lastly, Newfoundland's curriculum suggests:

> Children learn from general to specific, therefore, they do think in terms of stereotypes. It is a way for them to order general information that is a basis for more specific knowledge. Keep this in mind when helping them to think of family structures and the roles of family members. Rather than further entrenching stereotypes, work toward opening their minds. (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. SS32)

The examples shared above, show the ways in which the documents prioritized resources and discussions that reflect diverse identities to promote inclusion, think critically, and recognize personal bias.

5.2.2.2. ***Student: Receptive communication.*** In this category, data were collected on the language used in the documents to express how students should make meaning of gender and sexual identities. I found that all documents stressed the need for children to be respectful and understanding of difference. All the data related to this theme are included in Appendix 2, and I will share a few excerpts: British Columbia's curriculum clearly articulates that students "are co-operative, principled, and respectful of others regardless of differences" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 2). Manitoba's "Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures" curriculum asks students to, "demonstrate understanding that people may differ in their opinions" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 80), and the Social Studies curriculum says to "respect the world's peoples and cultures through a commitment to human rights, equity, and the dignity of all persons" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 3). Ontario's curriculum expresses that, "children's sense of belonging and contributing grows as they: develop an appreciation of diversity and an understanding of the concepts of equity, equality, fairness, tolerance, respect, and justice" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 50), and it is expected that students, "recognize bias in ideas and develop the self-confidence to

stand up for themselves and others against prejudice and discrimination" (p. 124). Lastly, Quebec's curriculum articulates, "recognition of the principle of equal rights for all and of the right of individuals and groups to express their differences; recognition of the negative consequences of stereotypes, discrimination and exclusion" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 50).

5.2.2.3. ***Subject.*** Language in this category pertained to how the documents configured what should be taught about gender and sexual identities. It was in this category that hidden and null curriculum became more apparent. There was no theme across what should be taught, as each curriculum document values different topics. The only commonality I found was in the expectations, which related to the body and the importance of knowing one's self.

Five curriculum documents—British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and the Northwest Territories—expect students to know body parts. British Columbia's Physical Education curriculum is the most explicit, asking students to know "names for parts of the body, including male and female private parts" as well as "appropriate and inappropriate ways of being touched" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a). Similarly, an outcome for Nova Scotia's Health curriculum is that, "students will apply safe practices and effective strategies for personal safety and injury and disease prevention—identify the proper names for parts of their body that are private versus parts of their body that are not" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015b, p. 2). British Columbia's and Nova Scotia's curriculum are the only two to refer to *private parts*. Quebec's curriculum identifies parts of the body and characteristics, suggesting students should know "the parts of the body (e.g. eyebrows, throat) and their characteristics (e.g. brown eyes, short hair)" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 67). While the Northwest Territories and Alberta's curriculum also refer to knowing the body, but the language used in each of these documents is much less specific. The Northwest Territories' curriculum expectation is for students to "identify basic body parts and their functions" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 24), and Alberta's curriculum says, "the child: identifies external body parts and describes the function of each" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 30).

The other commonality I found in terms of what students should know was simply to know themselves. While knowing the body was related to this, this theme contained language that was more broad, referring to a variety of aspects that contribute to identity. Nine documents express this theme—Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, New Brunswick (both the curricula and the early learning framework), Prince Edward Island, and the Northwest Territories—and each one expresses it differently. New Brunswick's framework advocates that students are "becoming knowledgeable and confident in their various identities, including cultural, racial, physical, spiritual, linguistic, gender, and socioeconomic" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 52). Also specific is Quebec's curriculum outlining that students will develop "awareness of the consequences for health and well-being of his/her personal choices: diet, physical activity, sexuality, hygiene and safety, stress management and management of emotions" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 44), where sexuality is listed as a component of well-being. Quebec also specifically refers to considering media when developing the ability to articulate identity and multiple perspectives, asking students to develop an "understanding of the way the media portray reality: elements of media language (sound, image, movement, message); comparison between facts and opinions; recognition of sexist, stereotypical and violent messages; the difference between reality and its virtual or fictional representations" (p. 49). This expectation demonstrates the weight placed on critical thinking in order to understand self and others. Also expressing the various ways students can understand themselves and others is New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum:

> Students can learn much from the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of their classmates in a community of learners where participants discuss and explore their own and others' customs, histories, traditions, beliefs, and ways of seeing and making sense of the world. (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 5)

In contrast, the other documents are vague about what aspects of identity to include. In Newfoundland's Health curriculum, there is a unit entitled "All About Me" where "students will be expected to assess personal traits and talents that make one special"

(Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. H29). The null curriculum is what kinds of traits or talents are to be discussed? Similarly, Saskatchewan's curriculum vaguely expects students to "Ask and explore 'big' questions about 'Who am I?'" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 42). Alberta's curriculum states students "will be given opportunities to become aware of who they are as unique individuals and to express themselves by sharing their personal stories" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 19), but does not indicate what these opportunities might look like. If a student was from a same-sex family, it seems logical that this is an aspect that makes them unique, which they could share. Manitoba's curriculum says to "identify characteristics (e.g., name, nation, gender, gifts, qualities, abilities) that describe self as special and unique" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 54), but there are no prompts to follow up on what discussions about gender might entail. Lastly, both the Prince Edward Island's and Northwest Territories' curriculum ask students to broadly think about what makes them unique: "recognize and discuss personal interests, characteristics, and preferences that make them unique and special" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 112); and "expresses sense of identity as a unique individual and as a member of groups" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 15).

Other data in this category reflected a variety of things children were expected to learn, relating to identity, specifically gender and sexual identities. All data is included in Appendix 3. Newfoundland's and New Brunswick's curricula, as well as New Brunswick's early learning framework, provides suggestions for discussing gender identities in more detail, such as exploring "the types of activities that boys and girls are engaged in on the advertisements" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA61) or the "various identities and characters embedded in popular culture" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 152). New Brunswick's early learning framework says to, "Ask children to look at how their images of self and others are constructed by the clothing they wear. This is another way of sorting out the ways in which individuals unconsciously categorize/ label one another and deal with one another as a result of their conclusions" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 231). This expectation allows children to think critically about how clothing and gender identities are related.

5.2.2.4. ***Milieu.*** The milieu consisted of how the documents configured what the classroom, school, community, or society should look like, therefore I recorded any reference to the environment in this category. All data collected for this category can be found in Appendix 4. The common theme I discerned from the data was that students should experience diversity and/or various points of view, as each document expressed this sentiment, except for Alberta and Nova Scotia, which does not include any language that refers to the milieu. Manitoba and Ontario also specifically indicate students should experience a sense of belonging in their environment. In other words, students should feel a part of the classroom and not ignored for any aspect of their identities.

As each document iterated the same kind of language to describe inclusive environments, I have selected a few specific examples to illustrate how this might be created, according to the curriculum. Saskatchewan's curriculum stresses that, "a positive environment encourages children to interact with each other, explore who they might become, and learn to appreciate diverse perspectives" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2). Similarly, Ontario's curriculum states "a learning environment that is safe and welcoming supports children's well-being and ability to learn by promoting the development of individual identity and by ensuring equity and a sense of belonging for all" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 13). New Brunswick's early learning framework boasts, "learning requires inclusive and equitable environments where children work and play within diverse groups, and engage in meaningful, respectful interactions with people, materials, and content that embody diversity" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 52); and Manitoba's and Newfoundland's curriculum reinforces the role of the teacher to create and foster these environments. Manitoba's curriculum instructs educators to "create environments, structures, and programs where every educator, learner, and their families feel they ***belong*** and are welcomed" (Manitoba Education, 2015a), while Newfoundland's curriculum articulates that, "building a classroom environment of mutual respect and reassurance is essential to students learning how to respond critically to information and ideas from differing points of view. Teachers need to model critical responses" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p.

ELA26). All of these examples demonstrate that exposure to, and respect for, difference is important in the children's classroom environment.

5.2.2.5. ***Aim.*** The aim focused on how the documents use language that expresses the purpose or goal of teaching. As there are no examples within the documents that state a purpose for teaching gender and sexual identities, specifically, I recorded data that explained the purpose or aim of teaching broadly about inclusion. Three provinces (Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) did not refer at all to an educational aim regarding inclusion. The remaining nine documents shared two aims, respectively: British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories' curriculum suggest the aim of inclusive education is to develop a sense of self; Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick's curricula, and New Brunswick's early learning framework, say inclusive education develops respect for diversity; while Newfoundland's curriculum expresses a strong aim towards both goals.

While the first identified aim—to develop a sense of self—may relate to diversity in that understanding yourself means understanding others and different perspectives better, the priority is placed on knowing the self. Saskatchewan's curriculum articulates their aim in the Social Studies curriculum by stating: "The ultimate aim is for students to have a sense of themselves as active participants and citizens in an inclusive, culturally diverse, interdependent world" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 63). While Manitoba's curriculum suggests:

> The goal of public schools in an inclusive society is to create environments, structures, and programs where every educator, learner, and their families feel they belong and are welcomed. This sense of belonging is an essential step in ensuring our schools respond appropriately to the rich diversity that is present in our schools and in our community. (Manitoba Education, 2015a)

If each student feels that they belong, respectively, then the goal of inclusive education has been met.

With only a slight difference in how it is presented in the curriculum, the second aim emphasized respect for diversity and turned the focus outward at understanding difference. New Brunswick's early learning framework articulates that their vision includes children who are "respectful of diversity" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 1) and that the curriculum itself "values and promotes children's experience of...socially inclusive and culturally sensitive environments in which consideration for others, inclusive, equitable, democratic and sustainable practices are enacted, and social responsibility is nurtured" (p. 1). Similarly, Quebec's curriculum expresses an educational aim "to ensure that students take part in the democratic life of the classroom or the school and develop a spirit of openness to the world and respect for diversity" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 50). New Brunswick's Social Studies curriculum states,

> In Atlantic Canada, social studies promotes the development of attitudes that value citizenship, the democratic process, fundamental human rights and freedoms, diversity, and the learning process. Students clarify these attitudes as they examine issues, communicate, and participate with each other within their schools and their local, national, and global communities. (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 10)

For other examples of these aims, see Appendix 5.

5.2.2.6. ***Activity.*** This category represented how the documents used language to express how the student and teacher should act, as well as how they should interact together—both the student with other students and the student with the teacher. I framed the data in terms of considering gender and sexual identities, and have included relevant selections below. All data collected under this category can be found in Appendix 6, but the common theme, referred to in all documents (except for Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories, which do not have anything pertaining to activity) is how children learn through play and/or peer interactions.

As it states in the curriculum, it is through play that children act and interact with one another. Prince Edward Island's curriculum argues, "through the process of play, children

learn to represent their real and imagined worlds using listening, speaking, reading, writing, role playing, painting, drawing, building, measuring, estimating, and exploring" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 25). Ontario's curriculum provides explicit play scenarios that demonstrate considerations of gender identities. One example is that, "children notice that only the boys are playing in the blocks area. They begin a discussion asking why only boys can play in the blocks area. One of the boys invites girls to play and says it is okay for girls to build in the blocks area because, 'My mom fixes things all the time'" (pp. 141-142). Similarly, another example suggests, "a few of the children are role-playing at the 'Fix-It-Shop' in the dramatic play area. Another child attempts to enter the play and is assigned a role by one of the children: '*You can be the customer because you are a girl.'* The other children in the group protest: '*That isn't fair. Girls can fix cars, too!*'" (pp. 162-163). These potential interactions among children are provided as models of exemplary dialogue between a student and other students that show inclusion and critical thinking.

Other examples of activity among children demonstrate the importance of interactions on identity formation. Manitoba's curriculum articulates, "learners will build upon their *sense of* identity, *belonging,* and *place* through the development and exploration of interpersonal relationships with peers, family members, *Elders,* and people with whom they have contact both within and outside the community" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 43). New Brunswick's early learning framework echoes this sentiment by suggesting, "children actively co-construct their identities in relation to the people, places, and things within the various communities to which they belong" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 20).

5.2.2.7. ***Result.*** The category of result was language I found in the documents that suggested the potential behavioral, affective, cognitive, or lifestyle changes that may occur due to considerations for diverse identities (I kept diverse gender and sexual identities in mind, specifically, as I looked for corresponding data). All data for this category can be found in Appendix 7. I found the common theme to be that considerations for diverse identities not only enable more respectful school environments, but these considerations also contribute to children's sense of identity. This is reflected in

all documents that referred to a type of result—British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick (both the curricula and the early learning framework), and the Northwest Territories; there was no direct reference to a result in all other documents.

Related to how inclusive education develops a sense of self and respect for diversity, the result of considering diverse identities fosters inclusive environments. British Columbia's curriculum expresses that, "honouring diversity within the school system is based on the principle that if our differences are acknowledged and utilized in a positive way, it is of benefit to the quality of our learning and working environments" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 8). Another result that is expressed in considering diverse identities is students gaining a stronger sense of self. Ontario's curriculum notes, "children's sense of belonging and contributing grows as they: develop an appreciation of diversity and an understanding of the concepts of equity, equality, fairness, tolerance, respect, and justice" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 50). New Brunswick's early learning framework suggests, "when inclusiveness and equity are practised, children come to appreciate their physical characteristics and their gendered, racialized, linguistic and cultural identities" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 52). The Northwest Territories' curriculum claims, "by learning more about oneself, family, culture and history, children can grow in their sense of identity and autonomy" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 20).

5.2.3. **Practice of gender and sexual identities.**

This last section of Dillon's (2009) questions pertains to how the documents configured how students should act and think in relation to identity.

5.2.3.1. ***Action.***

Actions are language that provide indications of what to *do* in terms of making meaning of gender and sexual identities. The dominant theme I identified in all documents in this category involved social engagement. I looked for expectations that either included the word action or demonstrated engagement.

I have provided some examples of children *in action*. British Columbia's Language Arts curriculum notes how children develop a greater sense of self when actively making

meaning: “Engage actively as listeners, viewers, and readers, as appropriate, to develop understanding of self, identity, and community” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a). Likewise, Newfoundland’s curriculum notes, “throughout the year, self-image, self-concept, self-control, self-regulation and self-confidence are developed through social engagement. Ensuring that kindergarten children are affirmed as unique individuals helps them become more socially-oriented members of a diverse community of learners” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 3). Manitoba’s Social Studies curriculum expects students to, “demonstrate a commitment to democratic ideals and principles, including respect for human rights, principles of social justice, equity, freedom, dissent, and differences, and willingness to take action for the public good” (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 4). Alberta’s curriculum states:

> Children should be active participants in shaping their identities as members of various cultural and social communities and as citizens of a pluralistic and democratic society. When children are in learning environments that recognize individual and collective rights, and foster personal and collective responsibility, they develop shared values and a sense of self and community. (p. 6)

In each of these examples, children are expected to be active in their participation as citizens through social engagement and respectful behavior.

5.2.3.2. ***Thought.*** Just as it sounds, this category was how the documents configured how children should *think* about diverse identities, broadly (I kept gender and sexual identities in mind when reading for this category). Seven of twelve documents recommend critically reflecting on or reexamining personal world-views: Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland, New Brunswick (both curricula and the early learning framework), and Nova Scotia.

Critical reflection is shown as an opportunity to make sense of diverse identities. For example, Saskatchewan’s curriculum advocates, “children who are engaged in inquiry: encounter differing perspectives and ideas” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 8). Manitoba’s Social Studies curriculum says that not only does critical thinking enable exposure to difference but also makes meaning personal: “Discussion and debate

concerning ethical or existential questions serve to motivate students and make learning more personally meaningful" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 6), and that students should ponder "a sense of shared identity as Canadians, combined with a realization that Canadian identity is multifaceted, open to debate, and not exclusive of other identities" (p. 10). Quebec's curriculum identifies that, "the situations that are seen as most conducive to learning are those that present a real challenge to students by obligating them to reexamine their learnings and personal representations" (p. 5). In this way, when students question their pre-existing knowledge, this is when they learn the most about themselves and others. New Brunswick's curriculum suggests, "children raise questions and act to change inequitable practices that exclude or discriminate" (p. 157). This shows children not only thinking, but also taking action. Ontario's curriculum also expresses this sentiment through an example that includes gender: "Think critically about fair/unfair and biased behaviour towards themselves and others, and act with compassion and kindness" (p. 143). This expectation shows the connection between thoughts and action. When children are given opportunities to make meaning of diverse identities, they can act accordingly to be respectful and understanding of difference.

5.3. Dimensions of Language Arts

The six dimensions of language arts, as described by Bainbridge and Heydon (2013), are reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing. I found this section often produced overlap with other categories in the data collection tool, yet, it provided another lens to think about how the curriculum documents are including opportunities for children to make meaning of diverse identities.

5.3.1. **Meaning-making opportunities.**

Each of the aforementioned dimensions of language arts were teased apart, below, to present the various ways children might develop personal understanding or opinions about diverse identities, specifically gender and sexual identities.

5.3.1.1. ***Reading.***

This literacy practice referred to the books, or texts more broadly, children should be exposed to as well as the importance of story. Ontario, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum all

advocate that it is important children are exposed to literature that is representative of diversity. British Columbia and Alberta support this sentiment indirectly by stressing the importance of story is how it help us to understand ourselves and others. Newfoundland's and New Brunswick's curricula, as well as New Brunswick's early learning framework, argue for the importance of challenging assumptions and stereotypes when reading. I did not record anything explicitly stated from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, or the Northwest Territories regarding how reading might provide children opportunities to make meaning of diverse identities.

I found language that stresses the need for exposure to diverse literature in Ontario's curriculum, which articulates, "books should include fairy tales, stories from mythology, and tales about children and adults from diverse social, cultural, spiritual, and family contexts" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 102). Prince Edward Island's curriculum similarly states, "children need to be exposed to a variety of literature that represents ethnic, gender, social, and cultural diversity and abilities" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 76). Books help to offer exposure to difference as well as provide opportunities for children to see themselves reflected in the stories. British Columbia's Language Arts curriculum specifically states, "stories help us learn about ourselves and our families" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a), and Alberta's curriculum identifies that a child "constructs meaning from texts: relates aspects of oral, print and other media texts to personal feelings and experiences" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 12). With this in mind, whether or not children see themselves or their families reflected in the literature they read contributes to the meaning that children are making about identities and what is acceptable or normal.

A diverse exposure of texts also includes the texts that surround children on a daily basis. New Brunswick's early learning framework promotes a range of texts in the form of "signs, labels, and images that are posted in children's environments—on clothes, footwear, toys, in picture books, directions, poems, songs, signs, maps, information, and story books" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 141). Meaning is made in applying a critical lens on these texts and challenging stereotypes, suggesting children should be introduced to "children's books that portray males and females in non-

traditional roles" (p. 163). New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum also suggests teachers should "use bulletin board displays that reflect diversity and non-traditional roles" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 72) and includes the expectation to "identify instances of prejudice, bias, and stereotyping" (p. 100). Similarly, Newfoundland's curriculum notes, "when assumptions are questioned, it helps learners see that they construct and are constructed by texts," and it encourages asking questions when reading texts such as: "What has been included and what has been omitted?" and to pay attention to "messages intended for boys versus messages intended for girls" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA60). These prompts to encourage children to challenge gender stereotypes were rare among the curriculum documents; aside from Newfoundland and New Brunswick, Ontario was the only other curriculum to include such detailed prompts for discussion like this.

5.3.1.2. ***Writing.*** I found that the data collected in this section expressed the sentiment that writing is a means to exploring self and others, as indicated in five of twelve documents: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec. The other documents either do not refer to how writing might be a way to make meaning of identities or include a more broad purpose for writing such as Newfoundland's curriculum, which suggests children "express feelings and imaginative ideas through writing and representing" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA64).

Of the five documents that share the sentiment that writing is a means to explore the self and others, many provinces mention family and/or community. British Columbia's Language Arts curriculum states that students are expected to "create stories and other age-appropriate texts to deepen awareness of self, family, and community" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a). This is in keeping with Saskatchewan and Manitoba's curriculum, which also ask students to "create a story about self and family" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 36) and "tell and draw stories about self and family" (Manitoba Education, 2015b, section 5.1.1). Saskatchewan's Language Arts curriculum also indicates that students should "compose and create a variety of texts that address identity...community...and social responsibility" (Saskatchewan Ministry of

Education, 2010, p. 35). Similarly, Quebec's curriculum suggests, "placed in a rich, stimulating environment, children develop oral and written communication skills that allow them to affirm their personality, relate to others, construct their understanding of the world and complete activities and projects" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 60). This curriculum suggests that if a child's family is headed by same-sex parents, then writing is an opportunity for them to make sense of these identities and share through stories.

5.3.1.3. ***Listening.*** The common theme I identified within the practice of listening was that children would gain an understanding of diverse perspectives when hearing the opinions and world-views of their peers. This is expressed in all six documents where I collected data about listening in relation to identities (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Newfoundland, New Brunswick's early learning framework, and the Northwest Territories); nothing was recorded for the other five documents. British Columbia's Language Arts curriculum asks students to "exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding" and that, "through listening and speaking, we connect with others and share our world" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a). Similarly, Alberta's curriculum notes, "as children share ideas and listen to diverse views and opinions, respect for and collaboration with others is fostered" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 32). Ontario's curriculum expresses, "it is important for all of us to listen and consider the diverse viewpoints expressed in the groups to which we belong" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 139), and "we learn about the world, others, and ourselves through listening" (p. 182). Newfoundland's and the Northwest Territories' curriculum expect students to "listen respectfully to experiences and feelings shared by others" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA8), and "listen to opinions, ideas and thoughts of others" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 32). New Brunswick's early learning framework encourages educators to listen to promote conversation in their classrooms: "Listen seriously to children's observations and comments about differences in skin, colour, gender, and family structure, and engage in ongoing conversations about similarities and differences" (Government of New

Brunswick, 2016, p. 159). In all of these selections, listening is perceived as key to respect and inclusion.

5.3.1.4. ***Speaking.*** In this category, every curriculum document, except Nova Scotia, expresses that speaking is a means for children to share ideas, emotions, and/or perspectives. Naturally, this may include opinions about diverse gender and sexual identities and differences of opinion may arise about different ways of life. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and the Northwest Territories all stress that children need to be mindful of what is considered respectful vocabulary choices. Ontario's curriculum expresses that, "communication has the power to influence and encourage change" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 182). New Brunswick's early learning framework specifically asks educators to "encourage children to bring their personal experiences of social injustice to discussions and help them plan for local action" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 171). New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum notes that through critical literacy, "children can be engaged in conversations that deepen understandings that lead to action for a more just world" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 231). Quebec's curriculum articulates how sometimes, in expressing opinions, children may be influenced by others or may realize the influence they have on others:

> Children are capable of expressing their preferences and distinguishing between what is allowed and what is forbidden. They realize that their actions have consequences for others....They can express an opinion...and can communicate what they think and feel...but they tend to model their viewpoints on those of others or even simply repeat what they hear. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 21)

The last part of this expectation above suggests how significant it is for educators to be aware of the impact they have on children's identity options as children "model their viewpoints" or "repeat what they hear" from those around them. The beginning of this quote suggests that children are also capable of identifying boundaries. Ontario also alludes to boundaries in conveying the importance of children learning to articulate when

they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. The curriculum indicates that children should "discuss what action to take when they feel unsafe or uncomfortable, and when and how to seek assistance in unsafe situations" and includes the following example: "My Mom's friend wanted to give me a hug when she met me. I didn't want to hug her, so I said, 'Nice to meet you. I'd rather not hug'" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 270). In this way, children are given tools to respectfully navigate conversations and actions that make them uncomfortable.

Teaching students how to use respectful language is an expectation in Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Northwest Territories' curriculum. This is a way of providing children the tools needed to make sense of diverse identities and have conversations where opinions may differ. Nova Scotia's Language Arts curriculum suggests students should "begin to develop an awareness of respectful and non-hurtful vocabulary choices" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015a, p. 2). Saskatchewan's curriculum articulates, "through meaningful conversations, respect and relationships are affirmed" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 5). Alberta's curriculum claims that the student "responds appropriately to comments and questions, using language respectful of human diversity" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 22). Lastly, Northwest Territories' curriculum brings together speaking as an expression of voice and the need for respect when speaking with the following expectation: "Begins to use a voice that is individual, expressive, engaging, with an awareness of respect for intended audience and intended purpose" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 32). This belief stems from the emergent paradigm of childhood where children are capable and active in the construction of knowledge (James & Prout, 1997; Ryan, 2008).

5.3.1.5. ***Viewing.*** Data from this category focused on children being critical and reflective of messages received from viewing texts, particularly from the media. Every document, except British Columbia, Alberta, and Prince Edward Island, stresses being critical while making meaning of what we are exposed to, and Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick's early learning framework extend this criticality to media texts. Ontario's curriculum simply states, "demonstrate an understanding and critical awareness of media texts" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 181) and Manitoba's

curriculum expects students to, “give examples of how the media may influence own needs, wants, and choices” (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 80). New Brunswick’s framework uses an example that involves gender identities, suggesting to “explore media representation by asking questions that challenge representations, such as, “What toys do you think both boys and girls would like to play with?’” (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 47). Speaking more broadly is Quebec’s curriculum, which articulates values of how important media is in children’s lives and how necessary it is for children to have critical skills:

> The media are omnipresent in children's daily lives and play an important role in the cultural lives of students and give them access to a world of knowledge and impressions that need to be channeled. They also influence the development of students' personalities and their choice of values....Schools must teach them to maintain a critical distance with regard to the media, to perceive the influence of the media on them. (Ministère de l’Éducation, 2001, p. 48)

While potentially, although not necessarily, referring to media, Saskatchewan’s Language Arts curriculum asks students to “understand and apply language cues and conventions to construct and confirm meaning when viewing...recognize how gestures and body language communicate part of the message (other cues and conventions)” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 33). When thinking about this in terms of gender and sexual identities, gestures and body language are part of reading the body and children should be aware of stereotypes when we read gender identities, in particular.

5.3.1.6. ***Representing.*** Every document refers to play as a means for children to represent their world and explore identities—whether it be their own or others. For example, Manitoba’s Drama curriculum suggests, “drama invites people to participate as viewers and players in telling their stories. Through dramatic experiences, people learn about themselves individually and as a collective” (Manitoba Education, 2011b, p. 5). The document identifies that children “select and use real and imaginary costumes, props, and objects to support and enhance dramatic play” (p. 24). What teachers provide children with for play will, therefore, impact the possibilities for identity exploration.

Newfoundland's curriculum articulates, "play enables children to: learn to consider other people's perspectives; negotiate play roles and plans" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 10) and that,

> through play, children learn to represent their real and imagined worlds using language. Students may engage in conversations through dramatic play and assume roles such as: doctor, chef, father, mother, teacher, pilot, builder, etc. Props and costumes may be used. (p. ELA20, Suggestions for Teaching and Learning)

This prompt does not specify which roles would be assumed by which gender identities. Several curriculum documents refer to how children reproduce what is "familiar," such as Alberta's curriculum, which articulates that children will "role-play familiar situations; e.g., store, home, school" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 25). This could be read as encouraging heterosexual identities and gender norms, unless children are exposed to diverse identities. Alberta's curriculum also suggests, however, that children will use play to *experiment* and clarify understanding: "Through organized activities and purposeful play, children explore and experiment with their environment. They clarify and integrate information and concepts encountered in their previous experiences" (p. 5). Similarly, Ontario's curriculum talks about how children build upon what is familiar to them in order to explore new possibilities:

> In socio-dramatic play, language becomes a self-regulatory tool...Children begin to assimilate adult prompts, descriptions, explanations, and strategies by incorporating them into their self-talk...Participants in socio-dramatic play communicate with each other using language and symbolic gestures to describe and extrapolate from familiar experiences, and to imagine and create new stories. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 20)

In this way, children might ostensibly be able to push boundaries of gender and sexual norms and explore diverse identity options. As New Brunswick's early learning framework articulates, "children invent symbols and develop systems of representation: negotiating the meaning of symbols with others; taking up and reshaping cultural

experiences" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 32) and that, "play allows children to take the initiative, to test their physical and mental limits, and to explore positions of power and questions about good and evil" (p. 30).

5.4. **Summary**

In this chapter I have shared the data collected in the CDA of 11 kindergarten curricula, and one early learning framework, from across Canada. Based on the data collection tool, I presented results under three main categories: textual analysis, questions of curriculum, and dimensions of language arts. Within each category were subcategories that helped to sort and classify the data. While there was an abundance of data, only the most pertinent expectations and values were selected. Throughout, I was mindful of the inclusion of gender and sexual identities or any reference that could be read through this lens.

I divided textual analysis into two subcategories: linguistic and intertextual. Linguistic analysis involved an exploration of grammar, vocabulary, semantics, and textual organization. Findings reported differences in the use of grammar, as well as vocabulary choice and vocabulary frequency—such as citizenship and developmental appropriateness. Also, I reviewed the ambiguous interpretation of various words, such as what is considered meaningful. I also discussed how much space was dedicated to various sections or topics in the documents, and in some cases, how early a topic was considered. Intertextual analysis investigated the genre of the texts, considering prescriptive, adaptable, or emergent models, as well as discourses present such as family and gender roles and inclusive education. Lastly, I provided a discussion of the dependence on society and history and how these values impacted the tone of the documents, respectively. Every document (except Nova Scotia, which did not articulate any values) expressed that knowledge is socially constructed, that children are active and responsible citizens, and that the early years is a significant time of development (except British Columbia).

Questions of curriculum focused on Dillon's (2009) work regarding the nature, elements, and practice of curriculum, which were substituted with the nature, elements, and practice

of gender and sexual identities. I elaborated upon the nature of these identities in the essence and properties described in the documents. The elements consisted of seven subcategories: teacher, student, subject, milieu, aim, activity, and result. Due to the vast amount of data collected for each of these categories, I created appendices for each category, and I shared pertinent quotes within the chapter. I discussed the practice of gender and sexual identities through how the documents configured how to act and think about these identities.

The dimensions of language arts were six opportunities for meaning-making found in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing. Overall, I found evidence across these categories that there was a priority for understanding and experiencing multiple perspectives through self-expression and discussion, as well as being respectful and inclusive.

Chapter 6 : Discussion

In this chapter I respond to the research questions and the literature to provide a discussion of the major findings I generated from the data, highlighting the significance of the findings and the contributions to the field. The goal of this study was to explore Canadian early childhood curricula for how gender and sexual identities are configured and the meaning-making opportunities that children are offered to make sense of diverse identities. Programmatic curriculum outlines the intended learning outcomes for children (Doyle, 1992). Recall Schubert's (1986) words about curriculum study: "The future of the individual, society, and civilization is at stake when we ask: What is worthwhile to know?" (p. 5). This study employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to identify how curriculum texts might shape ideologies about identities and social practices, specifically diverse gender and sexual identities. Fairclough (1995) noted, "texts are sensitive barometers of social process, movement and diversity, and textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change" (p. 209). A review of the literature indicated that no study has investigated the early childhood programmatic curricula across Canada. With the exception of Quebec, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, most of New Brunswick's curricula, and a few subjects from Manitoba, all kindergarten documents have been released since 2010. Many of the curriculum documents were published within the last two years, and Ontario's most recent curriculum and New Brunswick's early learning framework were released in 2016.

The research questions guiding this study were as follows: (1) What gender and sexual identities are included in Canadian early childhood curricula? (2) How are these identities configured including what meaning making opportunities are children offered relative to them? (3) What is the null curriculum relative to gender and sexual identities? (4) What is the hidden curriculum relative to gender and sexual identities? (5) What are the implications for students' gender and sexual identity options and their understandings of gender and sexual minority youth and same-sex parented families? I identified three major findings most pertinent to the research questions: What identities are included, implied, and neglected in the programmatic curricula; how are gender and sexual identities configured in the programmatic curricula to convey children's identity options;

and what are children's semiotic opportunities in programmatic curricula to make sense of diverse identities? I consider each major finding, in relation to literature.

6.1 What Identities are Included, Implied, and Neglected in the Programmatic Curricula?

I found that language about what identities to include in classroom curriculum was most prevalent in sections about inclusive education in the programmatic curricula. I determined a section as a segment of text that includes a heading pertaining to inclusive education, and I identified this in six documents: British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick's early learning framework and Language Arts curriculum. Ontario, for example, describes the various identities that should be included:

> In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all children in Kindergarten, their parents, other family members, and other members of the school community -- regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or other similar factors -- are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 101)

This paragraph explicitly articulates what identities should be included and that children with any of the aforementioned identities should feel safe. Since the word *diversity* follows this list of identities, this placement implies that any reference to diversity in the document should be understood as encompassing this list of identities.

While New Brunswick's early learning framework also contains a section dedicated to inclusive education, the language in this document is less explicit than that of Ontario's. New Brunswick's framework states, "when inclusiveness and equity are practiced, children come to appreciate their physical characteristics and their gendered, racialized, linguistic and cultural identities" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 52). The language used suggests that inclusion should be practiced and children should appreciate

their gendered identities, but it does not articulate what inclusion looks like or that diverse gender identities should be included in classroom curriculum. This missing language, or null curriculum, can have an impact on what a teacher feels they are able to teach as it does not provide explicit direction to include all individuals, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Two curriculum documents, Saskatchewan and Quebec, did not have sections dedicated to inclusive education, but used the word diversity frequently throughout the documents, respectively. This is problematic when the reader does not know how diversity is defined and what identities should be included. An example from the Quebec curriculum illustrates how null curriculum is operating by not explicitly naming identities, but rather, simply expecting respect for difference:

> As learning communities and microcosms of society, schools bring together students of diverse social and cultural origins. This makes the school an ideal place to learn to respect others and to accept their differences, to be receptive to pluralism, to maintain egalitarian relationships with others and to reject all forms of exclusion. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 50)

When explicit mention of identities is neglected in programmatic curricula by using all-encompassing language like "respect others" under the umbrella term of diversity, the specifics of what identities should be respected is lost. Janmohamed (2010) has articulated concern over the way diversity is often discussed; she argued:

> The limited definition of diversity represented by difference in culture and immigrant status, but absence of gender identity, sexuality, and family composition, is reflective of the desire to ensure that children's learning and the knowledge that informs this practice are sanitized and dominated by a heterosexual matrix of relations. (p. 307)

As a result, she claimed there are superficial attempts to embed notions of diversity and equity. Identifying gender and sexual identities, among a list of identities, is important in order for educators to have support and justification for what inclusive education

includes. Simply stating that inclusiveness should be practiced, without identifying *who* to include, leaves language open for interpretation and makes it difficult for teachers to discern what identities are to be represented and discussed in classroom conversations.

The language used in specific expectations about family in the programmatic curricula, also need to be specific in articulating what identities are to be included. I found reference to same-sex relationships in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Ontario, and New Brunswick's early learning framework. For example, Nova Scotia's Health curriculum included an expectation that students should "describe their own family structure and those different from their own (including blended, those with same sex parents, institutional, families led by extended family members, and families that do not live together all of the time)" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015b, p. 1). The language is clear to educators that families, including those with same-sex parents, should be described. Newfoundland's curriculum also includes same-sex families in a list describing family structures in a note to teachers: "Teachers and students need to be sensitive regarding the diversity of family structures, e.g., blended families, single-parent families, multi-racial families, same-sex parent families, etc." (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. RE11). The use of "e.g.," however, as opposed to Nova Scotia's curriculum that uses the word "including," is less explicit as e.g. implies it is a *suggestion* to include same-sex families.

The language that articulates the inclusion of same-sex families, which I found in Ontario's curriculum, is not in an expectation for students but rather for educators. It is actually language that has been taken directly from curriculum called "Every Child, Every Opportunity," that is intended to support early learning programs in Ontario (Pascal, 2010). The Ontario programmatic curriculum states, "same-sex parents, grandparents, new Canadian parents, fathers and very young parents are easily discouraged from participation—raising their comfort level is a prerequisite to involving them in the program" (p. 9; see also Pascal, 2010, p. 14). In other words, it is a requirement to include same-sex parents in the program. Including same-sex parents in programming, however, versus including conversations in the classroom about same-sex families, are two different expectations. The teacher must read the section on inclusive

education in Ontario's programmatic curriculum, as outlined above, to find language about including diverse sexual identities in the classroom. There is no language in Ontario's programmatic curriculum that articulates, specifically, that children should learn about same-sex families.

New Brunswick's early learning framework, similarly, does not include explicit language to express that children should be given opportunities to learn about same-sex families. I found the inclusion of a same-sex relationship in New Brunswick's curriculum in a sample scenario of two girls playing: "Jan (3 years) and Louise (3 years) are playing house. They both want to be mommy. Jan says, 'We'll both be the mommy,' and then, 'We'll have two mommies'" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 112). The inclusion of this language is indication to educators that this scenario is normal and it disrupts heteronormativity. Similar to the "e.g." used in Newfoundland's programmatic curriculum, however, this example is a sample scenario, not an explicit expectation for children to discuss same-sex relationships. The lack of any additional language to articulate that this scenario should be read to children as an example of play is null curriculum, which can leave this example to be easily ignored by educators.

Noteworthy is the difference between language that conveys reactive versus proactive responses. For example, Ontario's programmatic curriculum states, "all children…are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 101), which implies that if it arises in classroom conversation that a child has same-sex parents, then they should be made to feel welcomed and included; however, the language in Nova Scotia's curriculum that asks students to "describe their own family structure and those different from their own (including…those with same sex parents...)" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015b, p. 1) proactively requires that children are provided opportunities to make meaning of families different than their own such as same-sex families.

Other Canadian early childhood education (ECE) curricula, besides Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and New Brunswick, have no explicit language that refers to same-sex relationships. For example, Prince Edward Island's Social Studies curriculum asks students to "identify and describe their family" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 118), and

the Northwest Territories' curriculum articulates, "among cultures, child-rearing and family lifestyles differ and value may be placed on different types of knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 5). The lack of specificity regarding *what* different kinds of families should be included acts as null curriculum. This leaves educators unsupported for potentially difficult conversations to include same-sex families, which can cause an educator to avoid the topic and can leave children to make meaning on their own. Where does this leave children who are from same-sex parents, or who know same-sex couples, or who question their own sexual identities? Furthermore, I have discussed the inclusion, or omission, of same-sex relationships in programmatic curricula, but I have not even begun to discuss the inclusion of families that consist of trans identities or that participate in polyamorous relationships. Sexual orientation refers to whom someone is attracted, so when Ontario's programmatic curriculum states that all of the children's family members should be included, regardless of sexual orientation, this should include all diverse families and identities. The language articulates the classroom is a space where children should feel safe and welcome to share who they are and the families they come from.

Furthermore, the programmatic curriculum in Ontario states the inclusion of gender identity, but what does this mean? Chen (2009) noted, "research shows, gender is rooted deeply in children's daily social practices and they learn how to 'do' gender well by the age of three (Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Thorne, 1993)" (p. 152). The literature shows that children are actively participating in their gendered identities, (Bailey, 1993; Blaise, 2005, 2009; Chen, 2009; Davies, 1989; Herr, 1997; Janmohamed, 2010; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, 2005; Meyer, 2009; Renold, 2000, 2006; Thorne, 1993), yet there is no explicit programmatic curricula to address children who are beginning to question gender binaries, identify as trans, or exhibit diverse expressions of gender. Instead, there are a few prompts in the Ontario curriculum for educators to problematize gender stereotypes: a child says, "'I am not a writer. I am a boy.' Another child says, 'That's not true. I am a boy, and look at my writing.'" or "How come all the people in our constructions sets are boys?" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 143). Prompts are problematic, however, as they serve as suggestions, and there is no actual emphasis in the

programmatic curriculum that diverse gender identities *should* be included or that critical conversations should be had about how gender is a social construct, for example.

New Brunswick's early learning framework includes a similar scenario disrupting gender stereotypes, where children are "negotiating equitable solutions to problems that arise from differences, including...gender," and the sample narrative provided is, "Bonnie (4 years) enters the block corner and Paul (4 years) says, 'You can't come in here we are playing Ninjas.' Bonnie replies, 'Girls can be Ninjas too,' and begins to play" (p. 162). While the inclusive education section in New Brunswick's early learning framework suggests that children should appreciate their gendered identities, again, there is no explicit language instructing educators to include diverse gender identities proactively in classroom curriculum. The most explicit direction regarding gender identities is in New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum under the section "A Gender Inclusive Curriculum" where teachers are instructed to "review curriculum materials for gender bias in roles, personality traits, illustrations, and language" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 4).

Curriculum needs to be explicit about including diverse gender identities and diverse families such as same-sex parented families, to ensure educators are clear about what identities should be discussed and represented in classroom curriculum. My research questions included what gender and sexual identities are included in Canadian ECE curricula, and what are the null and hidden curricula relative to gender and sexual identities. While there are many things not taught or said in school, null curriculum specifically refers to those topics that have an effect on what is learned. As cited in chapter one, Schubert (1986) commented on null curriculum, suggesting, "it may seem strange to think of the curriculum that is not taught, but we often teach by our silence on many matters" (p. 107). Not talking about diverse families impacts children's meaning-making about identity options and norms. In thinking about the examples in this section, does the absence of explicit curriculum dictate that a topic should be avoided? How do educators know what is intentional in programmatic curriculum versus what might be an oversight? How do educators determine what is appropriate versus inappropriate content? In navigating these questions, teachers participate in delivering hidden curriculum, which

Schubert described as “that which is taught implicitly, rather than explicitly, by the school experience” (p. 105). Students who have questions surrounding their own gender or sexual identity, or are members of diverse families, should not have to navigate these identities in isolation (Robinson, 2013).

6.2 How are Gender and Sexual Identities Configured in the Programmatic Curricula to Convey Children’s Identity Options?

This section explores how children’s gender and sexual identities are *described* to provide educators a sense of what children’s identity options are. Five documents (Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) use the word *unique* to describe children, and several documents express how children are *diverse*, yet the majority of the documents reinforce gender and sexual norms, countering the notion that children are unique.

To illustrate the contrast between how identities are configured, I draw upon Newfoundland’s curriculum and New Brunswick’s early learning framework. In Newfoundland’s “English Language Arts” curriculum, there is a list of potential roles children may enact through dramatic play: “doctor, chef, father, mother, teacher, pilot, builder, etc.” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA20). There are also pictures included in the document that feature girls baking a cake, playing hopscotch, and playing hand clap games, while boys are busy at the block centre and playing doctor (see Figure 3). The ways gender has been included in these pictures serves as hidden curriculum, as they reinforce gender norms and impact the interpretation of the aforementioned list of roles, implying that the boys will be the doctors and builders, and the girls will be the chefs and teachers, thereby limiting children’s identity options.

A similar reinforcement of gender norms can be found in New Brunswick’s early learning framework, which states, “noticing that the children are still engaging in dress-up play after Halloween, the educators purchase a variety of costumes on sale. The children play at being princesses, knights, princes, dragons, pirates, and Transformers for extended periods of time” (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 152). As there is no

explicit language that articulates that boys could be princesses and girls could be Transformers, the default interpretation for educators is that which corresponds to normative culture, which depicts girls as princesses and boys as Transformers, as children have seen in fairytales and television shows.

New Brunswick's early learning framework, however, was one of few documents that explicitly encouraged teachers to disrupt gender stereotypes. It included the expectation to "challenge children's stereotypes. For example, introduce them to children's books that portray males and females in non-traditional roles" (p. 163). The teacher could use this as an opportunity for a critical reading, by using the children's story "My Princess Boy" by Kilodavis (2009) to discuss how boys can indeed be princesses, and how gender is a social construct. Furthermore, the pictures that I found in New Brunswick's early learning framework feature boys at the baking centre (See Figure 4), which provides another example that conveys to educators how gender binaries can be disrupted. While this may seem like a minor example, it is the cumulative number of examples like this that challenge gender stereotypes, which can have large impacts on perceptions of gender and sexual identities. Explicit language and pictures in ECE documents that disrupt gender binaries and ask educators to engage in critical conversations with young children about gender identities are rare, yet they are needed to support educators in providing children semiotic opportunities to make meaning of diverse identities and consider expansive identity options.

The reinforcement of gender norms in programmatic curricula is problematic as it leaves children who do experiment with or exhibit diverse gender identities to experience harassment from peers, and teachers are not provided explicit instruction to intervene. Research indicates that some children do express non-normative gender identities and face gender-based harassment and homophobic bullying (Bailey, 1993; Davies, 1989; Meyer, 2007, 2009; Wohlwend, 2009, 2012a, 2012b). Wohlwend (2012a, 2012b) wrote about boys' Disney Princess play and described, from her classroom observations, that, "the children used layers of media to accomplish social work in the classroom in complicated ways: to restrict peers but also to create spaces for accessing, improvising, and animating otherwise unreachable identity texts" (2012b, p.607). Furthermore, "young

children strategically play in and out of these gender identity texts in ways that affect their status as students in school culture but also their affiliations in peer culture (p. 597; see also Dyson, 2003; Marsh, 2002; Wohlwend, 2011). Wohlwend (2012a) discussed how discourse offers ways of thinking about femininity and masculinity, and that "children learn to 'do girl' through membership in multiple 'communities of femininity practice'" (p. 5; see also Paetcher, 2003), and "similar relationships and practices develop among children and masculinities through communities of masculinity practice" (p. 5). Blaise's (2009) research corroborates Wohlwend's findings and she asserted:

> In early childhood classrooms, where play and talk is valued and encouraged, this means that children *themselves* are constantly creating and re-creating meanings about gender and sexuality with each other. It is through their talk and interactions with each other that they are constituting what it means to be 'girl' or 'boy' in that particular space. (p. 455)

Blaise also wrote, "by acting out our genders, we make sense of what it means to have a sexual identity and practice our sexuality" (p. 453).

The aforementioned research demonstrated how children actively participate in gender identity constructions in early childhood classrooms, but research also indicated the struggles children encounter while enacting gender. Chen (2009) illustrated how difficult it can be for children to navigate the peer culture in her research, which aimed to understand children's identity claims and the issues they faced in school. She noted,

> there is an underlying problem in that they are thrown into the complex school culture where normative power is already in place and many of them must learn or struggle through the harsh lesson that their own version of success or being good is not necessarily valued or recognized by the normative standards. (p. 53)

Thorne (1993) identified the labels children use, such as sissy and fag, to police one another to ensure gender play is maintained within gender binaries of male and female. Chen (2009) described,

> as most of them told me, boys and girls just did not (or perhaps should not) hang out together. Some boys even considered it as an absolute rule between boys and girls. Once this gender boundary is set up, any action such as a boy hanging out mostly with girls that crossed it would be either defined by the peer norms as something of a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship or the boy will be sanctioned by the peer group. (p. 158)

Many other education scholars have articulated the self-surveillance that occurs among young children in order to avoid gender-harassment (Bailey, 1993; Blaise, 2005, 2009; Davies, 1989; Herr, 1997; Janmohamed, 2010; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, 2005; Meyer, 2009; Renold, 2000, 2006). Recognizing that the research has shown how children participate in the construction and maintenance of their gendered and sexualized identities, it is important that programmatic curriculum critically challenges gender stereotypes and includes diverse identities to help children make meaning of the power struggles they experience and to celebrate expansive identity options. If children are unique, which they are indeed, then programmatic curricula needs to discuss how children's gender and sexual identities are also unique, as these aspects are a large part of identity, including children's identities, as the aforementioned research has indicated.

6.3 What are Children's Semiotic Opportunities in Programmatic Curricula to Make Sense of Diverse Identities?

In this section, I consider the findings related to the semiotic opportunities that children are provided, or not provided, in programmatic curricula to make meaning of gender and sexual identities. I discuss the implications of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) as limiting children's semiotic opportunities.

As I discussed in the previous section, the New Brunswick early learning framework and Language Arts curriculum were two of the few documents that explicitly prompted educators to challenge gender stereotypes, along with Ontario and Newfoundland. Despite that I determined Newfoundland's curriculum reinforces gender norms through

language and images, I found the following prompt in the "English Language Arts" curriculum:

> Using flyers from various book clubs that are distributed within a school, ask students guiding questions that will encourage them to discuss topics that may be present in the advertisements such as gender equity and stereotypes. Observe and note responses to questions about: the colours used throughout the flyer to sell specific items to a specific group of people. For example, pink is commonly used when girls are targeted as the consumers. (Why is this colour used to advertise this item?); the types of activities that boys and girls are engaged in on the advertisements (Who is most likely to be photographed on a skateboard? Why?); photographs of moms and dads and the roles portrayed. (Does your mom barbecue or mow the lawn?). (Government of Newfoundland, 2015, p. ELA61)

This prompt provides many opportunities for critical conversations about gender identities, although it is not an explicit expectation for teachers to engage in these conversations. It is also problematic that language, like that found in this example, which encourages educators to disrupt gender or sexual stereotypes, is infrequent across the Canadian ECE curriculum, and instead, rhetoric about DAP is more prevalent.

While Prince Edward Island's curriculum is the only document to dedicate a section towards DAP, I found that most other curricula refer to DAP. This is significant, because if a teacher *does* decide to provide semiotic opportunities for children to make sense of diverse gender and sexual identities, despite null curricula, teachers must consider the extent to which content is *appropriate* as the programmatic curricula does not support them with explicit language about what *is* appropriate. In particular, I determined that the majority of Canadian ECE curricula express contradictions in aims for inclusion and citizenship while accommodating DAP, which is significant in considering what opportunities children are offered relative to diverse gender and sexual identities. In this section, I provide discussion surrounding DAP versus inclusion, DAP versus citizenship, and what curriculum can look like when language pertaining to DAP is absent.

6.3.1. ***DAP versus inclusion.*** The values of DAP conflict with Canadian ECE programmatic curricula's aims of being fully inclusive, yet both often appear together, as is the case in Ontario's curriculum. Early in the document, in both the program rationale and the vision of the program, the curriculum boasts that it is developmentally appropriate; for example, it states, "the kindergarten program is designed to help every child reach his or her full potential through a program of learning that is coherent, relevant, and age appropriate" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 4). However, Ontario also articulates strong values in the section "Equity and Inclusive Education in Kindergarten," where all children "regardless of…gender identity, sexual orientation…are welcomed, included…" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 101). As I outlined in chapter five, Ontario also claims, "educators are responsible for implementing a program that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, integrated, developmentally appropriate, and culturally and linguistically responsive, and that promotes positive outcomes for all children" (p. 117). This seems a difficult aim, as the program, which promotes positive outcomes for all children, implies that it will be an inclusive program where all children see themselves reflected in the classroom resources and discussions; however, when a program also aims to be developmentally appropriate, it can leave educators unsure of what is deemed appropriate, such as conversations about diverse gender and sexual identities. The same contradiction between censorship and inclusivity can be seen in Saskatchewan's curriculum: "Teachers are also reminded that diversity within classrooms must be addressed with sensitivity and inclusiveness, recognizing that not all cultural traditions are practiced by all members of a particular cultural group" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 64).

The issue is that DAP has been associated with a notion of childhood innocence. Taylor and Richardson (2005) articulated, "the Romantic metaphor of natural childhood innocence has been subsumed within the educational science of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and reconfigured as a foundational premise of age-appropriate—and hence protective, nurturing and enabling—sequence and order" (p. 164). Ryan's (2008) description of the Authentic and Developing Child each share the idea that childhood is a natural phenomenon, with the former also supporting the belief

that children are innocent subjects. MacNaughton (2000) identified, "DAP results from a long and intimate relationship between developmental psychology and early childhood curriculum theory and practice…To be considered good, early childhood curriculum needs to be developmentally appropriate" (p. 45). In other words, teachers are immersed within a discourse that appropriate practice is good practice and so they may fear facilitating conversations that could be perceived as inappropriate.

Adults often ignore the sexual subjectivities of children in attempts to preserve innocence and to separate children from the complexities of the adult world (Robinson, 2013). However, as I illustrated in chapter one, researchers have argued that children are neither innocent nor devoid of sexual identities; heterosexual identities are perpetuated through play while other sexual identities are considered abnormal or taboo (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Kintner-Duffy, 2012; Robinson, 2013). Many researchers advocate for disrupting heterosexual discourses and gender binaries as these narratives actually restrict children's identity options and force children to navigate acceptable gender boundaries alone (Bailey, 1993; Blaise, 2009; MacNaughton, 2000; Renold, 2006; Robinson, 2013; Skattebol, 2006; Steinberg, 2011; Taylor & Richardson, 2005; Thorne, 1993).

Rhetoric for inclusion is frequently present in literacy expectations, which promote opportunities for identity exploration and understanding. Of the provinces that refer to *reading* practices, I found the documents stress that literature, which exposes children to diversity or enables children to see themselves reflected in story, is important for both understanding themselves and others. Newfoundland and New Brunswick (both the curricula and the early learning framework) also express the importance of literature in helping children to challenge assumptions. Similarly, *writing* is a means to think about the self and others. Quebec's curriculum articulates, "placed in a rich, stimulating environment, children develop oral and written communication skills that allow them to affirm their personality, relate to others, construct their understanding of the world and complete activities and projects" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 60). Rowsell and Pahl (2007) argued that, "texts can be seen as traces of social practice, and their materiality is important in revealing those traces" (p. 388). Furthermore, they suggested, "children's identities can be instantiated within texts," which they refer to as "sedimented

identities" (p. 388). It follows that in order for children to see themselves and others reflected in their reading and writing, this should include LGBTQ identities.

The practice of *listening* is expressed in most curricula as an opportunity to hear about different ways of life and various opinions and world-views. This is directly related to *speaking* skills as it is identified in every curriculum document (except Nova Scotia which did not have any expectations about speaking) that children should learn to express personal opinions and beliefs while being respectful of others. Drawing on the work of Gilligan (1988), MacNaughton (2000) described identity formation as a dialogue:

> Dialogue…is an active process of talking with others, listening to them and being listened to by them. It also refers to how we respond to others without losing who we are as we do. In dialogue with others we learn about who will attend to us, who will care for us and under what conditions they will do this. We learn who we can and should be as others show us who they are willing to attend to and care for. (p. 26; see also Gilligan, 1988)

She argued that, "from this perspective, learning is seen as a highly interactive process between child and adult. The teachers' role in gender equity programs is to help the child 'gain voice' and perspectives and to engage the child in conversations about different voices in and perspectives on the world" (p. 26). The belief that children have a personal voice to establish and share is, once again, part of the emergent paradigm of childhood (James & Prout, 1997; Ryan, 2008) and supports the beliefs of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Furthermore, this notion of children actively making meaning and developing a point of view relates to children *viewing* texts as well, particularly in the media, as expressed in several documents.

The last dimension of language arts, *representing*, is a category that identifies children's ability for identity exploration through play. Some documents focus on how children recreate familiar narratives, while other documents express how children might experiment with role-play, and "imagine and create new stories" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 20). In discussing identity formation, McNaughton (2000) also drew on the work of Gherardi (1996) to describe identity formation as a narrative: "In

Gherardi's view we learn identity through several interrelated theatrical processes: telling stories, playing roles, critiquing our performances and being critiqued by others. We reshape our stories and our roles as we interact with others and ourselves" (p. 27). Furthermore, she argued, "identity is not merely absorbed but has to be worked at with others who are actively engaged with us" (p. 28). Almost as if continuing this conversation a few years later, Davies (2003) wrote:

> In order to achieve these narratives of oneself and others, children must learn the ways of seeing made possible by the various discourses of the social groups of which they are members. This is not simply a cognitive process of language learning, but also an ability to read and interpret the landscape of the social world, and to embody, to live, to experience, to know, to desire *as one's own*, to take pleasure in the world, as it is made knowable though the available discourses, social structures and practices. (p. 19)

Davies also articulated,

> 'getting it right' does not mean behaving exactly as everyone else behaves, but rather it means practicing the culture in an identifiably individual way. This means knowing the ways in which cultural practices can be varied. Radical or even disruptive variations are generally only accepted by others if one's capacity to know what ought to be is not likely to be called into question. (p. 10)

As the literature indicated, children learn from a young age how to negotiate acceptable gender performances to avoid peer harassment (Bailey, 1993; Blaise, 2005; Butler, 1997; Kumashiro, 2000, 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2001, 2003, 2005; Meyer, 2007; Renold, 2000, 2006; Thorne, 1993). The values articulated across the language arts curricula suggest that opportunities for children to make meaning of diverse identities *should* be provided to students; however, protecting considerations of DAP can often stand in the way of teachers feeling assured that all resources and discussions are *acceptable*.

6.3.2. ***DAP versus citizenship.*** I also found contradictions within the programmatic curricula where language expressed aims of being a good citizen as well as attempts to support DAP. This is particularly apparent in Alberta's curriculum; the rhetoric promoting DAP frequently appears early in the document stating, "the Kindergarten learner expectations describe learnings that are appropriate for young children and are part of a learning pathway" (p.1), and, "children experience a range of appropriate experiences and interactions that enable them to add to their knowledge, learn new skills and practise familiar ones through self-initiated and structured activities" (p. 5), and boasting that, "activities that are developmentally appropriate for young children" (p. 9). These statements make it difficult to interpret the intended meaning of appropriate, but there is no section in the curriculum dedicated to DAP to elaborate. There *is* a section, however, called Citizenship and Identity, which focuses on "the development of a strong sense of identity, self-esteem and belonging by Kindergarten children" (p. 19). Having a strong sense of self, and exhibiting respect for self and others, is part of recognizing the rights and responsibilities associated with being a citizen, and requires thinking about diverse gender and sexual identities. Paechter (2015) felt that accessing these rights came from claiming a heterosexual identity:

> This pleasure that children gain by inserting themselves into the heterosexual matrix should not be underestimated. It is the pleasure associated with feeling powerful by acting out powerful positions; It is the pleasure that comes from claiming and recognizing one's future as full actors within a heterosexually focused civil society. (p. 12)

Paechter argued that children are not only aware of sexual identities, but they also know the power that is associated with heterosexual identities in society and how it provides them access to various rights as citizens.

Research has argued that children deserve opportunities to understand diverse identities, power relations, and hierarchies of identities. Davies and Robinson (2010) argued, "children have a right to understand that sexuality is a powerful signifying system that

represents far more than sexual contact, so that they may have increased agency in this critical area of their lives" (p. 250). They suggested:

> Children's access to knowledge about sexuality and ethical relationships has crucial implications for their health and well-being, not just in the early years but also throughout their lives. This knowledge can build children's competencies and resilience, contributing to new cultural norms of non-violence in gendered and sexual relationships. It also develops children's capacity to understanding their own sexual subjectivity, which is critical for fostering their literacy with regards to sexual knowledge and is essential to their rights as sexual citizens. (p. 249)

This inclusive perspective impacts how the next generation of people will view gender and sexuality in society and governs what norms are established, and it does not shy away from what could be perceived as inappropriate or difficult knowledge. Taylor and Richardson (2005) suggested, "through our emphasis on the fluidity of children's gender identity performances and their strategic negotiation of multiple and shifting identity positions, we challenge both the heteronormative assumptions of stable, discrete and coherent gender categories, and the straight and narrow temporality of DAP discourse" (p. 171). When the constraints of DAP are removed from programmatic curricula, children can be offered more opportunities to assume their role as citizens who challenge hierarchies and inequality, as the next section illustrates.

6.3.3. ***The absence of DAP.*** The only programmatic curriculum documents that did not refer to DAP were Manitoba, Quebec, and New Brunswick's curricula, and instead of considerations about appropriateness, these documents actually encouraged controversy. (Nova Scotia's curriculum also did not refer to DAP, but it did not refer to any program values at all as it was only expectations). Quebec's curriculum uses strong language to suggest that children should not avoid incompatible ways of thinking, but rather they need to learn to live amongst difference and to resolve conflicts:

> Children compare their understanding of the world, their interests and their tastes with those of others. They gradually accommodate their interests and needs to

> those of others, and learn to resolve conflicts in a spirit of mutual respect and justice. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 58)

Furthermore, children are instructed to "look critically at themselves and their actions, reactions, opinions, beliefs, values and attitudes" (p. 6). Intellectual competencies are a goal of the curriculum and they "draw on attitudes such as open-mindedness, intellectual curiosity, willingness to make an effort and intellectual rigor" (p. 14). Each of these expectations promote the idea that children are both capable and expected to face differences directly and learn to maintain an open mind, while participating in demanding or difficult conversations that force them to reflect upon their reactions and opinions.

Quebec's curriculum shares similarities with the values expressed in the Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development's (2016) proposal "Global Competency for an Inclusive World." While Quebec's curriculum articulates that part of intellectual competencies are drawing on attitudes such as open-mindedness, the Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development similarly uses the word open to describe the interactions children should practice. The proposal celebrates children's abilities to "engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with others from different backgrounds on the basis of a shared respect for human dignity" (Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016, p. 4). Quebec's curriculum also recognizes that in a pluralistic society, social cohesion is important and learning the values of democracy is part of the responsibility of a citizen:

> In a pluralistic society such as ours, schools must act as agents of social cohesion by fostering a feeling of belonging to the community and teaching students how to live together. This means that they must transmit the heritage of shared knowledge, promote the fundamental values of democracy and prepare young people to become responsible citizens. They must likewise prevent exclusion, which jeopardizes the future of too many young people. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 3)

In this statement, students are meant to prevent exclusion, and thereby *include* everyone, and learn "how to live together" as opposed to avoid uncomfortable situations.

Manitoba, similarly, does not shy away from students thinking critically about difference and disagreement. Rather than concern about appropriateness, Manitoba's Social Studies curriculum argues,

> a fundamental aspect of social studies learning and teaching is the consideration of controversial issues that involve ethical principles, beliefs, and values. Teachers should not avoid controversial issues. Diversity of perspectives, beliefs and values, disagreement, and dissension are part of living in a democratic society. (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 6)

The Social Studies curriculum also expresses goals about citizenship, advocating that, "students acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to become active democratic citizens and contributing members of their communities, locally, nationally, and globally" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 3). The curriculum later states, "the context of citizenship must be considered within the context of democracy, human rights, and public debate" (p. 9). In other words, recognizing and respecting diverse gender and sexual identities is a responsibility of citizens in a democratic country.

In New Brunswick's Language Arts curriculum, students are encouraged to "probe the complexity of the ideas and issues they are examining" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 5) and in the Social Studies curriculum it suggests, "Many of the ethical issues that confront today's students must be examined from the critical perspective provided through the social studies" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 8) and that, "students construct a global perspective as they seek equitable, sustainable, and peaceful solutions to issues that confront our culturally diverse world" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 2). The words "probe" and "confront" indicate that students are not meant to avoid controversy, but rather address the issues directly. The New Brunswick Language Arts and Social Studies curricula are both from 1998, the Quebec curriculum is from 2001, and the Manitoba Social Studies curriculum is from 2003. These are some of the oldest documents that I analyzed and they appear to contrast the newer documents that seem to shy away from controversy and appease DAP.

Research confirms that DAP limits children's semiotic opportunities to make meaning of diverse identities or to engage in respectful debate to understand and appreciate difference (Blaise, 2009; Blaise & Ryan, 2012; Janmohamed, 2010; MacNaughton, 2000; Robinson, 2013; Taylor & Richardson). MacNaughton (2000) argued how discourses like DAP "preclude debate" and "silence alternatives":

> Discourses (e.g., DAP) institutionalise particular systems of 'morality' (sense of rightness). The power derived from this institutionalisation is hidden because the moral nature of the preferred definition of normal, right and desirable ways of being precludes debate, therefore marginalising and/or silencing alternatives: everyone 'just knows' that they are right and normal. (p. 52)

In other words, DAP limits the ability to critically disrupt ideas of what is considered *normal* identities, such as heterosexuality. Blaise (2009) argued, "rather than remaining stuck in developmental frameworks, which lead us blind and helpless in responding to children's gender and sexuality, we need a new paradigm" (p. 459). Taylor and Richardson (2005) suggested, "discourses of childhood innocence and hegemonic heterosexuality are "limiting and regulating…on children's emerging gender identities" (p. 163). Furthermore, the authors find DAP problematic for how "the universal applicability of its appropriate childhood 'norms' are widely accepted as self-evident and rarely debated" (p. 165). Blaise and Ryan (2012) advocated:

> Teaching young children in the 21st century requires that we do things differently. In assuming that our developmentally based curricula are inclusive of all learners, we have been unjust to some students and families. Early childhood educators need critical theory because it enables them to examine the political nature of the curriculum, and in so doing challenges normative views of young children and outdated views of childhood. (p. 90)

Programmatic curricula should offer students semiotic opportunities to make sense of diverse identities and mediate conflict respectfully, so they can develop the global competence that is necessary for today's world (Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016).

6.4. **Summary**

In this chapter I provided an in-depth discussion of the research in relation to the research questions and the literature, highlighting the significance of the findings. Data indicate that the gender and sexual identities that *were* in fact included were rarely descriptive enough to facilitate critical conversations about non-normative identities. Null and hidden curricula show the effects on interpretation and how omitted language can result in ignorance or avoidance towards topics such as diverse gender and sexual identities. I found that gender norms were often reinforced in the programmatic curricula, limiting children's identity options. While the literature demonstrated that notions of childhood innocence are becoming outdated as the emergent paradigm of childhood gains momentum, this study confirms that DAP still maintains a presence in ECE, which can constrain the opportunities children are offered to make meaning of diverse identities. The contradictions shared through the data confirm arguments for moving away from DAP. The priorities for inclusion and citizenship encourage semiotic meaning-making opportunities surrounding power relations and hierarchies of identities that enable more equitable environments.

Chapter 7 : Conclusion

This research study contributes towards an understanding of how Canadian kindergarten curricula might shape children's identities and identity options, and the implications for meaning-making surrounding diverse identities and families. In this section, I review specific implications that follow from the discussion. I also provide my recommendations moving forward and offer concluding remarks.

7.1. Implications

Whether curriculum reinforces or disrupts gender and sexual norms, or has opportunities to discuss diverse identities, can have impacts on the classroom curriculum and children's perceptions of acceptable identities or identity options. Furthermore, null and hidden curriculum can affect how a teacher interprets curriculum as well as how curriculum is actualized in classroom discussion and resources. As cited in chapter one, Fairclough (1995) indicated that one of the goals of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) "is to contribute to the development and spread of a critical awareness of language as a factor in domination" (p. 186). This study has illustrated that most Canadian programmatic curricula seem to be a contradiction between stated aims for inclusive education and language that is absent or not explicit enough to support these aims. As Fairclough also mentioned, what is in a text and what is also absent from a text has an effect in the world and is significant for sociocultural analysis. When texts do not refer to same-sex relationships or diverse expressions of gender identity, these documents become open to interpretation, to hidden curriculum, and to potential omission of discussing diverse gender and sexual identities. Hegemonic ideas of masculinity, femininity, and heteronormativity prevail conveying messages to children about what identities are acceptable, normal, or available.

Not addressing diverse gender and sexual identities in school is problematic, as *all* children may grow up with misguided assumptions and the inability to accept difference. Furthermore, children who themselves struggle with personal identities—whether questioning how they fit in, or how their family fits in—are forced to experience gender-based harassment, violence, and self-doubt (Check, 2002; EGALE Canada, 2011;

Ferfolja & Robinson, 2004; Herr, 1997; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Thorne, 1993).

Educators who acknowledge the research that indicates young children's active participation in gender and sexual identity constructions and the power relations that children must negotiate (Blaise, 2009; Chen, 2009; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Meyer, 2007; Renold, 2006; Robinson, 2013; Steinberg, 2011; Walkerdine, 1990) could have a desire to engage in critical conversations, which invoke these issues; but research has also shown the struggles teachers themselves experience without the support from programmatic curricula (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Meyer, 2009; Janmohamed, 2010). Meyer reports:

> In spite of this personal commitment, they felt limited in their actions by a perceived lack of support from the administration and/or their colleagues. They also reported feeling isolated in addressing the problem of homophobic name-calling in particular, stating that it was too prevalent an issue in their school for them to tackle alone. The lack of intervention by colleagues and the lack of demonstrated support from the administration resulted in many of these teachers giving up and limiting their interventions to only the most severe offenses. (p. 43)

Teachers are at the mercy of the schools and communities they serve without the explicit backing from programmatic curricula. Furthermore, while Prince Edward Island was the only province to dedicate a section towards developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), DAP still has a presence in many of the documents reviewed in this study, and it can leave teachers feeling unsure about what is okay to discuss in early childhood education (ECE). When teachers feel unsupported to address diverse identities in the classroom curriculum, children suffer from a lack of semiotic opportunities to make meaning of gender and sexuality and mature in a society that is ignorant and narrow-minded.

The impacts of DAP limiting children's identity options cannot be ignored. Blaise and Ryan (2012) suggested that many scholars have "turned to critical theories drawn from philosophy, sociology, and cultural studies to examine the politics of the curriculum, particularly the assumed benign impacts of developmentally appropriate practice" (p. 80).

While DAP has undergirded much of the rise of ECE, it is now a deterrent for educators to being able to recognize children as active agents and responsible citizens as supported by the emergent paradigm of childhood (James & Prout, 1997; Ryan, 2008). Research has also highlighted the limitations of protecting notions of childhood innocence. Davies and Robinson (2010) found "anxieties were linked to the fear of breaching childhood 'innocence', which has become a deeply entrenched value in hegemonic discourses of childhood—a value considered by many adults to be in need of protection. Within this context, children's access to sexual knowledge is viewed to be developmentally inappropriate and is considered to detrimentally impact on children, as well as compromise dominant constructions of childhood, and 'childhood innocence' more broadly" (p. 250). However, as Robinson (2013) illustrated, in efforts to *protect* children by not discussing diverse gender and sexual identities, children are actually left to navigate these issues in isolation, leading to personal trauma and harassment from peers. Research has advocated moving beyond DAP as it limits new priorities in ECE (Davies & Robinson, 2010; Grieshaber, 2008; Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Kehily, 2009; Janmohamed, 2010; Lubeck, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000; Robinson, 2013; Taylor & Richardson, 2005). This study corroborates this argument by showing how DAP often contradicted other ECE curricular goals of inclusivity and citizenship.

7.2. **Recommendations**

Based on the findings from this research, I have made three recommendations that I detail below. The first is that programmatic curricula needs language that explicitly outlines *what* identities should be included and *how* they should be included, so that educators have support for classroom curriculum and children are provided the meaning-making opportunities to which they have a right (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). Secondly, programmatic curricula should also include language that emphasizes skills to mediate conflicting world-views and resolve tensions respectfully. Thirdly, to assist these first two aims, programmatic curricula needs to move past language that promotes DAP, which leaves educators unsure about how to navigate critical literacies and diverse identities. Lastly, professional development is required both currently and as curricula are revised. I expand upon each recommendation below.

7.2.1. **What does inclusive education include?** Programmatic curricula need to be explicit about how to facilitate conversations that disrupt gender stereotypes and include diverse families. For example, in expectations where children must learn about family, it is important that there is a list that specifically identifies the inclusion of same-sex parents, or parents who identity as trans. Moreover, teachers should be familiar with terminology such as gender identities, gender expression, trans identities, bisexuality, or same-sex relationships, and to be able to discuss these various identities comfortably and respectfully. If programmatic curricula provided a glossary of terms this would help teachers become more educated and prepared.

In order for educators to critically challenge gender binaries and stereotypes to ensure children are provided expansive identity options, ECE programmatic curricula needs to be explicit about how to have these conversations. For example, an expectation might ask children to consider gender as a social construct, note its fluidity, and question whether there are even gender characteristics at all. In other words, if girls can have masculine traits and boys can have feminine traits, why does society denote the difference? MacNaughton (2000) highlighted the role that teachers have to free children of the gender constraints they may experience in the classroom. She suggested, "teachers need to find alternative ways of integrating alternative gender storylines into children's play," and "teachers can also help children recreate their storylines by creating classroom communities in which children are in constant dialogue and in which multiple and conflicting voices are heard, are allowed and encouraged" (p. 123). She provided ways for teachers to reflect upon gender in the classroom:

- How gender is lived and experienced by children and how this shifts over time and in different spaces;
- How gendered power is lived and experienced by children and how this shifts over time and in different spaces;
- How all of the above shift and move over time for children and for us but always impact on their educational lives.

  (pp. 84-85)

Blaise and Ryan (2012) similarly support the need for educators to reflect critically about their classroom curriculum:

> Engage in a critical questioning of their practice by asking themselves what discourses are at work here, whose knowledge is shaping the curriculum, who benefits and who loses if I use this knowledge, and what other knowledges and practices might I bring into play to create a more equitable curriculum for students? (p. 82)

Questions, such as those raised by Blaise and Ryan (2012) or MacNaughton (2000), need to be included in ECE programmatic curricula to support semiotic meaning-making opportunities for children regarding diverse gender and sexual identities. Furthermore, as revised curricula emerge that incorporate these suggestions, teachers require professional development to foster divergent thinking and to provide support for a careful and critical reading of the programmatic text.

Programmatic curricula should also highlight resources that teachers can use to provide opportunities for children to make meaning of diverse identities. While most curriculum documents investigated in this study encourage the use of resources that celebrate diversity, British Columbia's curriculum is the only one to specifically note that resources should reflect diversity in family composition and gender orientation (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b). There needs to be more explicit instruction about what these resources might look like and how they can be used. For example, books such as "The Sissy Duckling" (Fierstein, 2002), "Oliver Button is a Sissy" (De Paloa, 1979), "10, 000 Dresses" (Ewert & Ray, 2008), or "My Princess Boy" (Kilodavis, 2009) are resources that could prompt discussion about diverse male identities and the gender-based harassment that often accompanies these identities. When discussing family, books such as "And Tango Makes Three" (Richardon & Parnell, 2005), "Mom and Mum are getting Married!" (Setterington, 2004), and "A Tale of Two Daddies" (Oelschlager, 2010) are good opportunities to incorporate diverse families in classroom curriculum. As MacNaughton (2000) highlighted,

> the child can construct many and varied meanings but they are limited to the alternatives made available to them. Children do not enter a 'free marketplace' of ideas but form identities in a highly controlled marketplace. Some meanings are more powerful than others because they are more available, more desirable, more pleasurable and more able to be recognised by others. (p. 24-25; see also Hughes & MacNaughton, 1998)

She advocated questioning: "How do teachers in part produce who it is possible for the children to be in our classrooms?" (p. 79) and "Who benefits from our decisions to intervene or not in children's play?" (p. 57). MacNaughton (2000) provided some recommended strategies for educators:

- Checking to see whose voices about gender are silenced, marginalized and trivialized in the group;
- Exploring multiple ways of creating dialogue about who children are and how they see themselves and their genders;
- Reflecting on how race, class, gender, disability and sexuality feature in children's narrations, who features them, how do they and how do others react. (p. 33)

Suggestions like these mentioned by MacNaughton, and specific resources to accompany them, need to be in programmatic curricula as expectations for educators in program planning. In this way, educators can begin to challenge norms, recognize null and hidden curriculum, and move closer towards an inclusive education that truly includes all identities. Again, professional development is needed to reinforce educator's critical thinking skills about gender and sexuality.

While teachers should have autonomy to make decisions in their classroom based on the needs of their students and communities, there are tensions between what is considered professional discernment and covering mandated expectations. If programmatic curricula are explicit about including diverse gender and sexual identities, this could help teachers' professionalism by providing them with the foundation required to both uphold the law and teach within the complexities of a pluralistic society.

There is also a need for future studies to explore how ECE educators are actualizing goals of inclusive education from programmatic curricula that support diverse gender and sexual identities. This is so other educators may benefit from some of the strategies and resources that are being implemented in the classroom. This research could be beneficial for other educators who wish to provide children with more semiotic opportunities to make meaning of diverse identities, as well as significant for curriculum designers so that future curricula is more robust and explicit.

7.2.2. **How to mediate conflict respectfully.** Knowing that difference can cause conflict among individuals, programmatic curricula needs to include explicit language that ensures both educators and students develop skills and confidence to approach controversy as opposed to avoid it. Language in the curricula should refer to the values outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (*Canadian Charter,* 1982, s 6(2)(b)) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), so that educators and students feel supported to have conversations about gender and sexual identities.

Furthermore, revised programmatic curricula need to pay attention to the new Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development (2016) proposal for global competency. According to this proposal, "the need for an evidence-based approach to teaching and assessing global competence is urgent" (p. 3), and some of these skills include negotiating difference and disagreement respectfully. The proposal states,

> global competence is the capacity to analyse global and intercultural issues critically and from multiple perspectives, to understand how differences affect perceptions, judgments, and ideas of self and others, and to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with others from different backgrounds on the basis of a shared respect for human dignity. (p. 4)

In other words, students are not to avoid exposure or conversations related to different ways of life, but rather should actively engage in interactions that provide opportunities for them to make meaning from multiple perspectives. This belief should also be articulated in ECE programmatic curricula.

It is inevitable that learning about someone's way of life that is incompatible with your own can be uncomfortable. Freire (1970) and Kumashiro (2002) have stressed, however, that education should not be about reinforcing your own beliefs, but rather exposing yourself to difference and sometimes unlearning what you might believe to be true. Freire (1970) wrote, "it is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, not (*sic*) to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours" (p.129). Similarly, Kumashiro (2002) called information that can unsettle us as "disruptive knowledge," which can result in a "pedagogy of crisis" (p. 63):

> Education is not something that involves comfortably repeating what we already learned or affirming what we already know. Rather, education involves learning something that disrupts our commonsense view of the world. The crisis that results from unlearning, then, is a necessary and desirable part of anti-oppressive education. Desiring to learn involves desiring difference and overcoming our resistance to discomfort. (p.63)

Programmatic curricula need to explicitly acknowledge that conflict and disagreement is part of human interaction and need to include strategies for individuals to handle this potential crisis and negotiate difference of opinions amongst their peers.

7.2.3. **Moving beyond DAP.** Programmatic curricula in ECE need to respond to the broader research and move away from a narrow reliance on DAP and embrace the perspectives of the emergent paradigm of childhood (Blaise, 2009; Blaise & Ryan, 2012; Grieshaber, 2008; Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Kehily, 2009; Janmohamed, 2010; Lubeck, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000; Robinson, 2013; Taylor & Richardson, 2005). ECE scholars argue that childhood is a social construction, where children are active participants in identity development and understanding (Grieshaber, 2008; Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Kehily, 2009; MacNaughton, 2000; Ryan, 2008; Steinberg, 2011). Programmatic curricula need to highlight this research for educators so they are familiar with the direction of ECE and comprehend the implications of DAP and why researchers are advocating a move away from the thinking that underpins DAP. In order for teachers

to help children establish a strong sense of self, show respect for others, and to be active in their role as a citizen, teachers need the language and support to engage in these conversations, to think critically about difference, and to not be afraid that they are engaging in conversations that might be considered inappropriate.

To be clear, there are still topics that are inappropriate to discuss with young children, but what needs to be clarified for educators in programmatic curricula is how this line has shifted due to changing ideologies, demographics, and goals for inclusive education. Research has indicated that children very much participate in gender construction and play in narratives that draw upon sexual identities, so it is no longer believed that children are innocent of expressing and discussing gender and sexual identities. The question has become *what* gender and sexual identities are children exposed to?

Curricula that continue to provide statements related to DAP may be connected to a neoliberal agenda where curriculum developers appeal to an older generation of thought to gain political popularity. For example, the Ontario Health curriculum went through a great deal of scrutiny before the newly revised edition was finally published in 2015. The version that was released in 2010 to replace the version from 1998 was identified as the *interim* edition (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b). Opposition was expressed from various conservative groups resulting in several expectations being removed from the original intended curriculum to appease the opposition and settle political disputes. For example, the following expectation from the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010a) was not included in the interim edition:

> Assess the effects of stereotypes, including homophobia and assumptions regarding gender roles and expectations, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or culture, mental health, and abilities, on an individual's self-concept, social inclusion, and relationships with others, and propose appropriate ways of responding to and changing assumptions and stereotypes. (p.164)

The heading "Human Development and Sexual Health" was also omitted and, instead, the section entitled "Growth and Development" from the 1998 document was left intact. It took several more years before these expectations could be included as originally

intended, and even upon release of the new document in 2015, there was still significant protest and backlash. Curriculum developers should not be influenced by political agendas, but rather should focus on children's identities and identity options and the consequences for children and families when explicit language about diverse gender and sexual identities are omitted.

7.2.4. **Professional development.** Educators will need professional development as curricula are revised to incorporate more explicit and inclusive language, but educators also require professional development now, to work with the current curricula. Firstly, teachers need to know their rights and responsibilities in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (*Canadian Charter,* 1982, s 6(2)(b)). If teachers are questioned by members of the community about their pedagogical decisions to include same-sex families, trans identities, or diverse gender identities in classroom curriculum, they should know that they are supported through Canada's values for diversity and democracy. Secondly, until programmatic curricula provides the background information about diverse gender and sexual identities, teachers need to be informed about the various identities of the children and families that compose current Canadian demographics, as I outlined in chapter one. Thirdly, teachers need opportunities to reconcile personal beliefs with those that are discussed in the classroom, so they, themselves, develop the skills necessary to negotiate controversy and difference of opinion. Educators need to serve as role models for their students, demonstrating respectful behavior and inclusive practices. Teachers also need guidance to begin to let go of the ingrained teachings of DAP. MacNaughton (2000) provided the following narrative about a teacher in her study:

> Anne had never before formally used gender as a basis of her observations and had rarely examined patterns of play between children. The individual, not the group, had been the focus of her curriculum decision-making. The second way in which she had to change her normal observation practices was by using power-related concepts to interpret her observations. This required her to move beyond her own normal ways of understanding children's behavior (which were DAP-

> derived) and to begin to theorise her observational categories differently. (pp. 72-73)

This example demonstrates how difficult it can be for teachers to let go of what their practice has been based upon and accept new ways of approaching children and learning. Lastly, this professional development for educators should be a requirement, not an elective.

7.3. **Summary and Final Remarks**

In this dissertation, beginning in chapter one, I outlined the context in Canada in terms of LGBTQ demographics, rights, and challenges children continue to face in school. I showcased literature that argues children are not innocent of constructing gender and sexual identities, and I shared studies that researched gender and sexuality in ECE. In a review of the literature in chapter two, I identified that while there were studies that have used CDA to explore curriculum and policy, no study had investigated the kindergarten programmatic curricula across Canada, some curricula published as recent as 2016. In chapter three I detailed CDA and the data collection tools that were used in the study. I reviewed the Canadian ECE programmatic curricula in chapter four and outlined the program structure and eligibility for each province and/or territory. I then systematically reported on the data collected, in chapter five, following the structure of the data collection tool used in the study. In chapter six, I entered into a discussion of three major findings I found most pertinent to the research questions, namely that language in programmatic curricula is not explicit enough about what identities should be included when discussing inclusive education or families, how gender and sexual identities are often configured as reinforcing norms and how this limits children's identity options, and how DAP limits curricular aims for inclusivity and citizenship. In chapter seven, I responded to these findings with corresponding recommendations that argue for more detailed and specific content in ECE programmatic curricula to expand children's semiotic opportunities for meaning-making surrounding diverse identities, for language that supports educators and students in negotiating conflict that can arise from opposing world-views, for moving away from DAP, and for providing professional development that supports these recommendations.

This research has identified the gaps in Canadian ECE curricula in terms of discussing diverse gender and sexual identities explicitly and critically. As I cited in chapter two Luke (1995) noted,

> human subjects use texts to make sense of their world and to construct social actions and relations required in the labor of everyday life. At the same time, texts position and construct individuals, making available various meanings, ideas, and versions of the world. (p. 13)

Programmatic curricula serve as important "barometers of social practices" (Fairclough, 1995) and classroom expectations. Heterosexism and misogyny remain pervasive in North American society, and education has the potential to provide young children opportunities to make meaning differently and cultivate a more respectful and open-minded society, beginning with the intended curriculum. Research no longer supports the justification of avoiding diverse gender and sexual identities under notions of childhood innocence or DAP (Davies & Robinson, 2010; Grieshaber, 2008; Kehily, 2009; Janmohamed, 2010; MacNaughton, 2000; Robinson, 2013; Taylor & Richardson, 2005). Children are active in the construction of their gender and sexual identities, and are a part of, or are surrounded by, diverse families or are questioning personal identities. In a multicultural and multimodal society, diverse identities cannot be ignored or avoided. Young children deserve, and have a right to, an education that includes and embraces *all* identity options and all families.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Teacher: Expressive Communication

BC	"When selecting specific topics, activities, and resources to support the implementation of the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to ensure that these choices support inclusion, equity, and accessibility for all students. In particular, teachers should ensure that classroom instruction, assessment, and resources reflect sensitivity to diversity and incorporate positive role portrayals, relevant issues, and themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance. This includes diversity in family compositions and gender orientation." (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 8)
AB	"Make informed instructional decisions and create learning environments that are responsive to children's…cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 1)
SK	"Effective educators develop relationships that respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each child. Relationships are opportunities for young children to create a sense of self, identity, and belonging while learning about the world around them. Environments are carefully designed to be aesthetically pleasing and inspire children to wonder, ask questions, and be curious. By reflecting on and responding to their environments, children construct their own understanding of the world" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 5) "Teachers are also reminded that diversity within classrooms must be addressed with sensitivity and inclusiveness, recognizing that not all cultural traditions are practised by all members of a particular cultural group" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 64)
MB	"make learning meaningful by encouraging critical reflection, questioning, and the consideration of diverse points of view" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 5) "Teachers need to be aware of the implications of presenting their own beliefs and perspectives as fact rather than opinion. Social studies is rich in opportunities to detect and analyze bias through the critical exploration of diverse points of view" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 6)
ON	"By creating, fostering, and sustaining learning environments that are caring, safe, inclusive, and accepting, educators can promote the resilience and overall well-being of children" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 9) "Educators ask questions about the impact of their interventions, for example, 'What will be the impact on the learning of these children if I intervene in their conversation in this way at this time?'" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 21) "Children's social development is supported when school boards, schools, and educators create and sustain a warm and supportive environment in which: bullying, harassment, violence, and physical punishment are discouraged, and when instances do occur, they are addressed" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 61) "Educators can provide multiple opportunities for children to develop critical

	literacy skills by: noticing and naming behaviours in the classroom that can provoke discussion (e.g., 'We've noticed that more boys than girls play with the blocks. Why is that? What can we do about it?')" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 70) "Educators can give children a variety of opportunities to learn about diversity and diverse perspectives. They can enable children from a wide range of backgrounds to see themselves reflected in the program....It is essential that learning opportunities and materials used to support the Kindergarten program reflect the diversity of Ontario society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 102)
QC	No language directed towards educators
NL	"Teachers of kindergarten children will support children's spiritual and moral development by providing opportunities to explore and discuss questions through the examination of various living belief systems" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 8) "The kindergarten teacher must be cognizant of the diverse backgrounds and learning experiences that each child brings to the kindergarten classroom" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 12) "Make certain that the storybooks you use represent a variety of families and cultures from a local, national, and global perspective" and "Listen for language that suggests that they have an understanding that they must respect how others define their family. For example, when Jack says he has two dads, two moms, a cat, a dog, and two brothers and that makes nine" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. SS14) "Children learn from general to specific, therefore, they do think in terms of stereotypes. It is a way for them to order general information that is a basis for more specific knowledge. Keep this in mind when helping them to think of family structures and the roles of family members. Rather than further entrenching stereotypes, work toward opening their minds" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. SS32) "Use a children's literature selection to prompt a discussion of how people are alike/different....The story discussion should get students to think beyond physical traits to such things as religious beliefs, race, family systems, language" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. H56) "Give examples of themselves as consumers satisfying needs and wants" - suggestions: "Teachers can discuss with the class how name brand items are not necessary to fulfill needs...Where do our ideas of preference come from? How do companies get us to want their brand? Look at commercials, look for ads in magazines, logos" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. SS10)
NB.c	"Teachers promote gender equity in their classrooms when they….review curriculum materials for gender bias in roles, personality traits, illustrations, and language; confront their own gender stereotyping and biases" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 4) "Include texts that represent ethnic, gender, social, and cultural diversity" and "Use bulletin board displays that reflect diversity and non-traditional roles" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 72)

	"Demonstrate that diversity in valued in the classroom by having students tell stories about themselves that reflect who they are" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 84) "Express and explain opinions about texts and types of texts, and the work of authors and illustrators, demonstrating an increasing awareness of the reasons for their opinions" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 96) Mr. MacGregor asked the students whether it was fair/ true to say that all girls…, or that all boys…, and to explain why or why not. He then explained the meaning of stereotyping – believing/ saying that all members of a particular group have the same characteristics. In order to give students practice in using fair language, he modeled a structure that discourages false generalizations: 'Some boys like baseball; other boys like music; some boys like baseball and music.' (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 101) "Help students explore and understand why different people have different perspectives" and "Promote opportunities in nontraditional careers and occupations for students of both genders" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 32)
NB.f	"Challenges in Relationships: Challenges in relationships are often linked to differences in beliefs and values about early learning, child care, and family structure. Successful communication between families and educators can open the door for families....Become aware of one's own biases and beliefs - how they might differ from others and possibly interfere with communication" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 13) "While creating and using texts with children, educators raise questions to explore multiple interpretations, assumptions, and biases" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 46) For reflection: "Explore media representation by asking questions that challenge representations, such as, 'What toys do you think both boys and girls would like to play with?'" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 47) For reflection: "Think about the reasons children give for excluding peers (language, skin colour, gender, or possessions)....How do you challenge negative stereotypical language and exclusive practices among children? Think about how children talk with each other in describing differences. How do they invite or prevent access to different play areas? Think about how adults notice, record, and involve children in discussions about access. Think about how you respond when particular children monopolize particular areas, or if particular children are regularly excluded" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 53) For reflection: "Does the setting ensure equitable access to materials and social worlds for children? Think about race, class, gender, age, and family background. Do educators challenge behaviours that exclude or discriminate?" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 55) "Educators are aware of their own social and cultural biases, and take steps to ensure that these do not result in marginalizing any children or their families" and "Educators encourage children to present and discuss different identities" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p.61) "Model and invite children to raise and explore cultural questions. For example,

	what do boys play with? What do girls play with?" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 153)
NS	No language directed towards educators
PE	Suggestions for Learning and Teaching: "Children need to be exposed to a variety of literature that represents ethnic, gender, social, and cultural diversity and abilities" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 76) "Be certain to read a cross-section that can open the discussion about what they consider family" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 118)
NT	"Educators design a learning environment that fosters inclusiveness, democratic values and optimal development" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 9)

Appendix 2. Student: Receptive Communication

BC	"citizens who accept the tolerant and multifaceted nature of Canadian society" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 1) "able to think critically and creatively and adapt to change" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 2) "are co-operative, principled, and respectful of others regardless of differences" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 2)
AB	"responds appropriately to comments and questions, using language respectful of human diversity" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 22) "As children share ideas and listen to diverse views and opinions, respect for and collaboration with others is fostered" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 32)
SK	"Share what is known about healthy relationships (e.g., be kind to each other, laugh together, accept differences, feel like one belongs and contributes" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 41) "Developing Identity and Interdependence] requires the learner to be aware of the natural environment, of social and cultural expectations, and of the possibilities for individual and group accomplishments. Achieving this competency requires understanding, valuing, and caring for oneself; understanding, valuing, and respecting human diversity and human rights and responsibilities....Kindergarten children enjoy being able to make choices as part of their growing identity" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 3)
MB	"demonstrate understanding of differences between own and others' needs and wants" and "demonstrate understanding that people may differ in their opinions" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 80) "students are encouraged to participate actively as citizens and members of communities and to make informed and ethical choices when faced with the challenges of living in a pluralistic democratic society" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 3) "respect the world's peoples and cultures through a commitment to human rights, equity, and the dignity of all persons" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 3) "Participate in activities and experiences that involve people of diverse backgrounds and reflect elements of different cultures" (Manitoba Education,

	2011c, p. 4-17)
ON	"Children's sense of belonging and contributing grows as they: develop an appreciation of diversity and an understanding of the concepts of equity, equality, fairness, tolerance, respect, and justice" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 50) "demonstrate respect and consideration for individual differences and alternative points of view" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 132) "recognize bias in ideas and develop the self-confidence to stand up for themselves and others against prejudice and discrimination" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 124)
QC	"To recognize his/her biases" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 21) "To realize that other people's opinion influence his/her reactions" and "To become aware of his/her place among others: To recognize his/her values and goals. To have confidence in himself/herself. To define his/her opinions and choices. To recognize that he/she is part of a community. To be open to cultural and ethnic diversity" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 33) "To interact with an open mind in various contexts: To accept others as they are. To be responsive to others and recognize their interests and needs. To exchange points of view with others, to listen and be open to differences. To adapt his/her behavior" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 35) "Recognition of the principle of equal rights for all and of the right of individuals and groups to express their differences; recognition of the negative consequences of stereotypes, discrimination and exclusion" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 50)
NL	"Students will be expected to: 2.3 respond personally to information, ideas and opinions" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA24) "Students will be expected to: 2.4 respond critically to information, ideas and opinions" – Suggestions: "Did the author portray the boys as being stronger than the girls?" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA26)
NB.c	"Students can learn much from the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of their classmates in a community of learners where participants discuss and explore their own and others' customs, histories, traditions, beliefs, and ways of seeing and making sense of the world. In reading, viewing, and discussing a variety of texts, students from different social and cultural backgrounds can come to understand each other's perspective, to realize that their ways of seeing and knowing are not the only ones possible, and to probe the complexity of the ideas and issues they are examining" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 5) "Students construct a global perspective as they seek equitable, sustainable, and peaceful solutions to issues that confront our culturally diverse world" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 2)
NB.f	"Children practice democratic decision-making, making choices in matters that affect them: voicing their preferences and opinions, and developing an awareness of other points of view" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 54)
NS	"begin to develop an awareness of respectful and nonhurtful vocabulary choices" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015a, p. 2)

	"begin to develop an understanding and respect for diversity" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015a, p. 5)
PE	"In kindergarten, children need to feel safe to take risks, recognize that their contributions are valued and worthwhile, and feel free to express their ideas, opinions and feelings" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 47) "Through movement, drama, music, art, and play, we share with one another our creativity and individuality. As young children explore and experience the world around them, they learn to respond thoughtfully and sensitively to their environment. They develop personal creativity through which they enrich, deepen, and extend their thinking, language, learning, and communication" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 155)
NT	"Communicate opinions and ideas" and "Begins to use a voice that is individual, expressive, engaging, with an awareness of respect for intended audience and intended purpose" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 32)

Appendix 3. Subject

BC	"names for parts of the body, including male and female private parts" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, Physical Education) "appropriate and inappropriate ways of being touched" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, Physical Education) students are expected to know "ways in which individuals and families differ and are the same" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, Social Studies) "Identify and appreciate the roles and responsibilities of people in their schools, families, and communities" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, Career)
AB	"children will explore who they are in relation to others in their world. They will be given opportunities to become aware of who they are as unique individuals and to express themselves by sharing their personal stories" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 19) "How can we show respect and acceptance of people as they are?" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 19) "the child: identifies external body parts and describes the function of each" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 30)
SK	"Ask and explore 'big' questions about 'Who am I?'" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 42) "Identify similarities and differences in observable characteristics among...different people" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 60) "Demonstrate an understanding of similarities and differences among individuals in the classroom" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 65) "Give examples of different types of work in the family and school, including paid and unpaid work" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 68) "Create a story about self and family" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 36)

MB	"provide examples of and information on various types and sizes of families (e.g., single-parent families, stepfamilies)" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 44) "The contexts are organized in relation to the learning environments that are familiar to students" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 43) "Begin to explore diversity and similarities in the classroom, school, and local community" (Manitoba Education, 2011e, p. 17) "fulfill their responsibilities and understand their rights as Canadian citizens" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 3) "the ability to work through conflicts and contradictions that can arise among citizens" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 9); "identify characteristics (e.g., name, nation, gender, gifts, qualities, abilities) that describe self as special and unique" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 54)
ON	Self-Regulation and Well-Being: "recognition of and respect for differences in the thinking and feelings of others" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 15) Self-Regulation and Well-Being Frame: "What children learn in connection with this frame allows them to focus, to learn, to respect themselves and others, and to promote well-being in themselves and others" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 53) "demonstrate an understanding of the diversity among individuals and families and within schools and the wider community" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 122)
QC	"Constructing an identity is a process that begins very early. Small children gradually become aware of the position they hold within their family and integrate the values of their milieu....They also learn--to a variable extent, depending on the context--to affirm their choices and opinions, recognize their own values, accept differences and be open to diversity" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 32) "Awareness of the consequences for health and well-being of his/her personal choices: diet, physical activity, sexuality, hygiene and safety, stress management and management of emotions" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 44) "Understanding of the way the media portray reality: elements of media language (sound, image, movement, message); comparison between facts and opinions; recognition of sexist, stereotypical and violent messages; the difference between reality and its virtual or fictional representations" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 49) "Awareness of the importance of rules of social conduct and democratic institutions:...respect the role of each individual; rights and responsibilities associated with democratic institutions" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 50); "The parts of the body (e.g. eyebrows, throat) and their characteristics (e.g. brown eyes, short hair)" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 67) "To ensure that students adopt a self-monitoring procedure concerning the development of good living habits related to health, well-being, sexuality and safety" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 44) "To help students become autonomous, responsible citizens, schools must teach them to maintain a critical distance with regard to the media, to perceive the influence of the media on them, and to distinguish clearly between virtual and real situations" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 48)

NL	"Students will be expected to assess personal traits and talents that make one special" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. H29) "understand that we are all members of a family" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. H46) "examine personal acceptance of differences in people" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. H56) "recognize that cooperating and respecting others contributes to the overall health of self and others" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. H58) "demonstrate an awareness of social conventions" - Suggestions for Teaching and Learning: "respecting and considering differing points of view" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA32) "Using flyers from various book clubs that are distributed within a school, ask students guiding questions that will encourage them to discuss topics that may be present in the advertisements such as gender equity and stereotypes. Observe and note responses to questions about: the colours used throughout the flyer to sell specific items to a specific group of people. For example, pink is commonly used when girls are targeted as the consumers. (Why is this colour used to advertise this item?); the types of activities that boys and girls are engaged in on the advertisements (Who is most likely to be photographed on a skateboard? Why?); photographs of moms and dads and the roles portrayed. (Does your mom barbecue or mow the lawn?)" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA61)
NB.c	"Identify instances of prejudice, bias, and stereotyping" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 100) "Ask children to look at how their images of self and others are constructed by the clothing they wear. This is another way of sorting out the ways in which individuals unconsciously categorize/ label one another and deal with one another as a result of their conclusions" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 231). "Examine human rights issues and recognize forms of discrimination" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 6) "Identify, describe, and interpret different points of view and distinguish fact from opinion" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 8) "Acknowledge and value the ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, and culture shape particular ways of viewing and knowing the world" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 30)
NB.f	"Becoming knowledgeable and confident in their various identities, including cultural, racial, physical, spiritual, linguistic, gender, and socioeconomic" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 52) "Learning about differences, including cultural, racial, physical, spiritual, linguistic, gender, social, and economic" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016p. 52) "Exploring various identities and characters embedded in popular culture" - Sample Narrative: "The children play at being princesses, knights, princes, dragons, pirates, and Transformers for extended periods of time. Soon children dictate stories and illustrate their own books with their favourite characters. Fairy

	tales from the library extend the children's explorations of these characters" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 152) "Growing in their capacity to ask critical questions about stereotypes represented in popular culture" - Sample Narratives: "Educators talk with a group of three and four-year-olds about what mommies and/or daddies do. The educators make a list and the children compare their list with the images in the picture books in the room, discovering that their list is broader than the images in the picture books" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 152);
NS	"begin to develop an awareness of respectful and nonhurtful vocabulary choices" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015a, p. 2) "Students will respond personally and critically to a range of diverse texts" - Indicators: "Begin to develop an understanding and respect for diversity" and "begin to recognize different points of view" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015a, p. 5) "Students will apply safe practices and effective strategies for personal safety and injury and disease prevention - identify the proper names for parts of their body that are private versus parts of their body that are not" (Government of Nova Scotia, 2015b, p. 2)
PE	Students should "identify and describe their family" and under suggestions, it provides a reminder: "Family make-up may be different than what is considered to be the traditional family. Be sensitive to the needs of all children" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 118) "recognize and discuss personal interests, characteristics, and preferences that make them unique and special" - suggestions include broad characteristics such as height, hair and eye colour (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 112)
NT	"Expresses sense of identity as a unique individual and as a member of groups" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 15) "Tell and draw stories about self and family" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 21) "identify basic body parts and their functions" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 24)

Appendix 4. Milieu

BC	"The school system strives to create and maintain conditions that foster success for all students. These conditions include:…school cultures that value diversity…school cultures that promote understanding of others and respect for all…processes that give a voice to all members of the school community" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 8)
AB	No direct reference to the milieu
SK	"In Kindergarten, purposefully designed environments enable children to develop a positive sense of self, while learning to respect their own and others' ways of seeing the world" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2) "A positive environment encourages children to interact with each other, explore who they might become, and learn to appreciate diverse perspectives"

	(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2) "Environments are carefully designed to be aesthetically pleasing and inspire children to wonder, ask questions, and be curious" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 5)
MB	"The learning environment: respects and values the diversity of students and ways of coming to know within the learning community" (Manitoba Education, 2011b, p. 8) "create environments, structures, and programs where every educator, learner, and their families feel they ***belong*** and are welcomed" and "Schools are places students are encouraged to 'spread their wings' and grow individually and collectively" (Manitoba Education, 2015a)
ON	"A learning environment that is safe and welcoming supports children's well-being and ability to learn by promoting the development of individual identity and by ensuring equity and a sense of belonging for all" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 13) "In an inclusive education system, all children see themselves reflected in the program, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, so that they can feel engaged in and empowered by their learning experiences" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 101)
QC	"School is an ideal setting for learning to live together on the basis of a set of values, and an appropriate place for students to become familiar with teamwork. The construction of knowledge and the development of competencies grow out of the confrontation of various points of view and ways of doing things, and certain objectives would be far more difficult to attain without the collaboration of all concerned" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 34) "As learning communities and microcosms of society, schools bring together students of diverse social and cultural origins. This makes the school an ideal place to learn to respect others and accept their differences, to be receptive to pluralism, to maintain egalitarian relationships with others and to reject all forms of exclusions....It gives them an opportunity to experience the democratic principles and values that form the basis for equal rights in our society" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 50)
NL	"Kindergarten teachers who create caring, respectful and nurturing environments where children and their families are valued play an integral role in supporting children to reach their full potential" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 12) "Building a classroom environment of mutual respect and reassurance is essential to students learning how to respond critically to information and ideas from differing points of view. Teachers need to model critical responses" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. ELA26)
NB.c	"Learning is facilitated when students have a rich, stimulating environment that encourages interaction, exploration, and investigation. It flourishes when the classroom climate is one that provides support, structure, encouragement, and challenge, and where students are treated with warmth, sensitivity and respect" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 11) "An effective social studies learning environment must be…inviting and

	inclusive; respectful of diversity" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 30)
NB.f	Framework promotes "socially inclusive and culturally sensitive environments in which consideration for others, inclusive, equitable, democratic and sustainable practices are enacted, and social responsibility is nurtured" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 1) "[Children] are entitled to engaging and inclusive environments in which well-being is secured...and respect for diversity promoted and practiced" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 8) "Learning requires inclusive and equitable environments where children work and play within diverse groups, and engage in meaningful, respectful interactions with people, materials, and content that embody diversity" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 52) For reflection: "Does the setting ensure equitable access to materials and social worlds for children? Think about race, class, gender, age, and family background. Do educators challenge behaviours that exclude or discriminate?" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 55)
NS	No language directly referred to the milieu
PE	"Social and cultural diversity is a resource for expanding and enriching the learning experiences of all children. All children need to see their lives and experiences reflected in the kindergarten environment. Learning activities, resources, and materials used in the kindergarten program should include books, music, art, and props from diverse social and cultural contexts. They should allow children to make meaningful connections between what they are learning and their own backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 28)
NT	"Children grow and thrive in environments that validate the individual identities they bring with them to school, as they make the transition to Kindergarten" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 20)

Appendix 5. Aim

BC	"Learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy relationships" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a, Physical Education)
AB	No reference to aim
SK	"[Social studies'] purpose is to make students aware that, just as contemporary events have been shaped by actions taken by people in the past, they have the opportunity to shape the future. The ultimate **aim** is for students to have a sense of themselves as active participants and citizens in an inclusive, culturally diverse, interdependent world" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 63)
MB	"The goal of public schools in an inclusive society is to create environments, structures, and programs where every educator, learner, and their families feel they belong and are welcomed. This sense of belonging is an essential step in

	ensuring our schools respond appropriately to the rich diversity that is present in our schools and in our community" (Manitoba Education, 2015a)
ON	"The Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating the discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of children to learn, grow, and contribute to society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 101)
QC	Educational Aim for Citizenship and Community Life: "To ensure that students take part in the democratic life of the classroom or the school and develop a spirit of openness to the world and respect for diversity" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 50)
NL	"A major goal of education is to develop independent, creative and critical thinkers" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 2) "Inclusive education starts from the premise that everyone in the school community - students, educators, administrators, support staff and parents - feels that he/she belongs, realizes his/her potential, and contributes to the life of the school. In an inclusive education, diversity is embraced, learning supports are available and properly utilized, and flexible learning experiences focus on each individual student. Inclusive education aims to substantially alter general education classrooms to make them more responsive to heterogeneous groups of learners" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015, p. 19)
NB.c	"vision of enabling and encouraging students to become reflective, articulate, literate individuals who use language successfully for learning and communication in personal and public contexts" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 1); "vision that all students, regardless of gender or cultural background, will have an opportunity to develop scientific literacy" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998b, p. v) "In Atlantic Canada, social studies promotes the development of attitudes that value citizenship, the democratic process, fundamental human rights and freedoms, diversity, and the learning process. Students clarify these attitudes as they examine issues, communicate, and participate with each other within their schools and their local, national, and global communities." (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. 10) "vision: the Atlantic Canada social studies curriculum will enable and encourage students to examine issues, respond critically and creatively, and make informed decisions as individuals and as citizens of Canada and of an increasingly interdependent world" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998c, p. v)
NB.f	Vision includes children who are "respectful of diversity" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 1) "values and promotes children's experience of:...socially inclusive and culturally sensitive environments in which consideration for others, inclusive, equitable, democratic and sustainable practices are enacted, and social responsibility is nurtured" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 1) "Children experience socially inclusive and culturally sensitive environments in which consideration for others, inclusive, equitable, democratic and sustainable

	practices are enacted, and social responsibility is nurtured" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 17)
NS	No reference to aim
PE	No reference to aim
NT	"This curriculum, which was developed in the NWT and enriched by perspectives from our eleven official language groups, strives to support and validate the young identities of all 4 and 5 year old children as they grow and develop in an ever changing world" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 1)

Appendix 6. Activity

BC	"Demonstrate curiosity and a sense of wonder about the world" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a, Science)
AB	"Through organized activities and purposeful play, children explore and experiment with their environment. They clarify and integrate information and concepts encountered in their previous experiences" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 5)
SK	"create play situations, interpret peer's response to ideas, explain idea for play, play co-operatively with other children, express suggestions given by playmate" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 36)
MB	"Learners will build upon their *sense of* identity, *belonging,* and *place* through the development and exploration of interpersonal relationships with peers, family members, *Elders,* and people with whom they have contact both within and outside the community" (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 43)
ON	"School-community interactions should reflect the diversity of both the local community and the broader society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 102) "Children notice that only the boys are playing in the blocks area. They begin a discussion asking why only boys can play in the blocks area. One of the boys invites girls to play and says it is okay for girls to build in the blocks area because, 'My mom fixes things all the time'" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, pp. 141-142) "A few of the children are role-playing at the 'Fix-It-Shop' in the dramatic play area. Another child attempts to enter the play and is assigned a role by one of the children: '*You can be the customer because you are a girl.*' The other children in the group protest: '*That isn't fair. Girls can fix cars, too!*'" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, pp. 162-163)
QC	"School is an ideal setting for learning to live together on the basis of a set of values, and an appropriate place for students to become familiar with teamwork. The construction of knowledge and the development of competencies grow out of the confrontation of various points of view and ways of doing things, and certain objectives would be far more difficult to attain without the collaboration of all concerned" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 34)
NL	"Purposeful play is an important mode of learning for children and an integral part of the kindergarten program" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador,

	2015, p. 6)
NB.c	"Students can learn much from the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of their classmates in a community of learners where participants discuss and explore their own and others' customs, histories, traditions, beliefs, and ways of seeing and making sense of the world" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 5) "When students are role-playing, highlight how they use body language. Have the students watch for and comment on how other students use these devices effectively to communicate" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 48). "Critical literacy teaches children to begin to make intelligent, considered, humane decisions about how they choose to accept, resist, or adapt understandings they have unravelled. It encourages children to look with open eyes, to explore many sides of the same issue. Through it, children can be engaged in conversations that deepen understandings that lead to action for a more just world" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 231)
NB.f	"Children actively co-construct their identities in relation to the people, places, and things within the various communities to which they belong" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 20)
NS	No direct reference to activity
PE	"Through the process of play, children learn to represent their real and imagined worlds using listening, speaking, reading, writing, role playing, painting, drawing, building, measuring, estimating, and exploring" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 25) "Through movement, drama, music, art, and play, we share with one another our creativity and individuality. As young children explore and experience the world around them, they learn to respond thoughtfully and sensitively to their environment. They develop personal creativity through which they enrich, deepen, and extend their thinking, language, learning, and communication" (Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 155)
NT	No direct reference to activity

Appendix 7. Result

BC	"Honouring diversity within the school system is based on the principle that if our differences are acknowledged and utilized in a positive way, it is of benefit to the quality of our learning and working environments" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 8)
AB	No direct reference to result
SK	No direct reference to result
MB	"Through the study of the ways in which people live together and express themselves in communities, societies, and nations, students enhance their understanding of diverse perspectives and develop their competencies as social

	beings" (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 11)
ON	"Children's sense of belonging and contributing grows as they: develop an appreciation of diversity and an understanding of the concepts of equity, equality, fairness, tolerance, respect, and justice" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 50)
QC	Schools "have a responsibility to help students take their place in society, by familiarizing them with basic social knowledge and values and giving them the tools they need to play a constructive role as citizens" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001, p. 2)
NL	No direct reference to result
NB.c	"Critical literacy is all about…helping learners come to see that they construct and are constructed by texts; that they learn how they are supposed to think, act, and be from the many texts that surround and bombard them" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1998a, p. 230)
NB.f	"When inclusiveness and equity are practised, children come to appreciate their physical characteristics and their gendered, racialized, linguistic and cultural identities" (Government of New Brunswick, 2016, p. 52)
NS	No direct reference to result
PE	No direct reference to result
NT	"By learning more about oneself, family, culture and history, children can grow in their sense of identity and autonomy" (Northwest Territories, 2014, p. 20)

Curriculum Vitae

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2001-2005 Hons. B.A.

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