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Taking Back Curriculum: Feminist Innovations Towards Nonviolent Futures

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Abstract: This paper maps key factors that activate adult stakeholders in Ontario to support curriculum pertaining to consent and non-violence in K-12 education. The paper draws from a study that used three qualitative approaches: (1) the design of an original media literacy curriculum module for Ontario youth ages 13-15; (2) curriculum assessment of the module by diverse stakeholders in Ontario K-12 education (n=20); and (3) analysis of archival documents pertaining to consent education and media literacy in Ontario, including official curriculum and media reports. Four key factors united stakeholders in supporting K-12 curriculum pertaining to consent and non-violence in Ontario. Firstly, stakeholders are intrigued by media-based pedagogies that can facilitate consent education that is "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings 1994; 1995) for diverse learners in Ontario. Stakeholders are also more likely to support consent and violence prevention initiatives if accompanied by professional development and teaching tools. Educator collectives and political organizing also allow for more feminist and social-justice pedagogies in the classroom, including consent education. Finally, parent councils and community groups are essential places for activism and knowledge sharing that can meet the needs of community members, while addressing stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours that gatekeep violence prevention initiatives in education.

Keywords: consent education; critical curriculum studies; critical media literacy; sexual violence prevention; social justice education; transnational feminism

Résumé : Cet article présente les principaux facteurs qui incitent les intervenants adultes de l'Ontario à soutenir le programme éducatif portant sur le consentement et la non-violence dans l'éducation primaire et secondaire. Il s'appuie sur une étude qui a utilisé trois approches qualitatives : (1) la conception d'un module original d'éducation aux médias pour les jeunes ontariens âgés de 13 à 15 ans; (2) l'évaluation du module par divers intervenants du système d'éducation primaire et secondaire de l'Ontario (n= 20); et (3) l'analyse de documents d'archives relatifs à l'éducation au consentement et aux médias en Ontario, dont des programmes officiels et des reportages médiatiques. Quatre grands facteurs ont amené les intervenants à soutenir le programme éducatif pour le primaire et le secondaire sur le consentement et la non-violence en Ontario. Tout d'abord, les méthodes pédagogiques axées sur les médias qui peuvent faciliter l'éducation au consentement qui est « adaptée à la culture » (Ladson-Billings 1994; 1995) pour divers apprenants de l'Ontario intriguent les intervenants. Les intervenants sont aussi plus disposés à appuyer les initiatives liées au consentement et à la prévention de la violence si elles s'accompagnent d'un perfectionnement professionnel et d'outils pédagogiques. Les groupes d'éducateurs et l'organisation politique permettent également des méthodes pédagogiques plus féministes et plus axées sur la justice sociale dans les salles de classe, notamment l'éducation au consentement. Enfin, les conseils de parents et les groupes communautaires sont des lieux dans lesquels le militantisme et l'échange de connaissances sont essentiels pour répondre aux besoins des membres de la collectivité, tout en enrayant les attitudes et les comportements des intervenants qui empêchent les initiatives de prévention de la violence dans le domaine de l'éducation.

Mots clés : éducation au consentement; théorie critique des programmes éducatifs; éducation essentielle aux médias; prévention de la violence sexuelle; éducation à la justice sociale; féminisme transnational.

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Introduction

bell hooks (2000) reflects on Fromm's definitions of love as "the will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth" (11). This reflection reminds us how significant love is to feminist praxis. Everyday life contains violence erasure and competition, and countering this requires a shift towards interventions rooted in the opposites—love, creativity, and mutuality. This paper expands on hooks (2000) reflections by discussing how curriculum centered in love, creativity, and mutuality can make important feminist interventions. More specifically, this paper shares findings from a larger study that explores how media-based curriculum modules can help sustain sexual violence prevention and non-violent relationships. The study found that four key factors united stakeholders in supporting curriculum pertaining to consent, healthy relationships, and non-violence in Ontario K-12 education: (1) media-based and culturally relevant pedagogies; (2) professional development; (3) educator collectives; and (4) parent/community councils. These factors help to address racist and sexist attitudes and behaviours exhibited by stakeholders in Ontario education. Learning from these unifying factors helps move scholars, practitioners, and educators from critique to solutions.

Ontario's health and sex education curriculum was indeed the subject of much critique, making top news headlines for over a decade. Former Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne described the curriculum as "the most widely consulted upon curriculum in the history of the province" (Jones 2015). Sex education drew attention again in 2019 when Ontario Premier Doug Ford promised to repeal the 2015 curriculum. Conservative media outlets fueled debates about race and belonging by focusing heavily on non-white religious groups and especially on South Asian and Muslim parents who opposed the Ontario sex-education curriculum changes (Bialystok and Wright 2017; Rayside 2017). The curriculum became an outlet for ongoing debates about race and national belonging that worsened post 9/11, privileging a desirable kind of Canadian that adapts to Western standards (Thobani 2007; Razack 2008).

The media's biased reporting that scapegoats racialized immigrant communities is evidenced by international research. For example, a study of 715 students' attitudes towards school-based sex and relationship education in two districts in Tanzania reported that over 80% of students supported sex and relationship education and wanted it to be delivered between the ages of 10-14 (Mkumbo 2014). Studies of teachers and parents from different regions in India have also found that the majority had a positive attitude towards sex education (Goel 2014; Lalremruata 2019; Toor 2012). This literature highlights the unethical reporting of "immigrant communities." Skewed media reports also ignored public opinion polls claiming that the majority support teaching sex education in schools (Shipley 2014). More specifically, surveys of Ontario parents found that over 87% of parents agreed that sexual health information should be delivered in schools (McKay et al. 2014). However, updates to the Health and Physical Education curriculum continued to be the subject of great political debate with the 2015 updates and the 2019 repeal.

Literature Review

The political climate and intense debate surrounding Ontario sex education demonstrated the need for interdisciplinary approaches and dialogue within and across fields. The literature reviewed in this study was thus intentionally interdisciplinary, drawing inspiration from transnational feminists who have encouraged communities to build bridges and cross disciplines (Alexander 2005; Anzaldúa and Moraga 2015). Systems of oppression uphold and maintain one another and, thus, working in silos or taking "single issue approaches" (Lorde, 2007) is ineffective. The study bridged consent education, sexual violence prevention, critical curriculum studies, critical media literacy, theories of critical youth empowerment, and transnational feminist theories.

"Consent" dominates the field of sexual violence prevention in Ontario K-12 education and has been the subject of great political debate over the last decade (see Bialystok 2018; Bialystok 2019; Bialystok et al. 2020). Scholars argue that consent education has potential to prevent and reduce rates of violence (Mallet and Herbé 2011; Bialystok 2018) because education can be delivered to cohorts of students before violence occurs (Schneider and Hirsch 2020). Feminist scholars have noted, however, that the historical and geopolitical context of learners is essential for violence prevention to be effective (Todorova 2018). While some scholars have explored how dominant consent frameworks do not always resonate with international students in Ontario higher education (Todorova et al. 2022), the Eurocentricity of "consent" frameworks has hardly been explored in Ontario K-12 education until the Moorhouse (2023) study.

This paper also draws from critical curriculum studies scholars who argue that "official knowledge" is not neutral but always tied to power and structures of inequality (Au 2012; Apple 2000; 2018), including racism and colonialism, capitalism, neoliberalism, heteropatriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism. Critical curriculum studies use interdisciplinary frameworks to map how official curriculum documents are generated and what knowledges are devalued by their continual exclusion. Scholars have also mapped "hidden curriculum": implicit and explicit values that are reinforced through everyday interactions in educational spaces (Au and Apple 2009). For example, the lack of comprehensive sex education in Ontario curriculum reinforces a "hidden" curriculum that sex is taboo or that interpersonal relationships are not worthy of study. Critical scholars also understand education as a paradoxical space. Education often reaffirms existing power structures and inhibits feminist thought by prioritizing capitalist ideologies and gatekeeping social justice initiatives. Simultaneously, education provides fertile ground for scholars and practitioners to engage in creative and "liberatory practices" (hooks 1991). This paper suggests that bridging critical media literacy education with transnational feminist frameworks allows for liberatory practices in education centered in non-violence.

Critical media literacy (CML) teaches analysis of how media reflects sociopolitical issues related to race, class, religion, gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability (Hobbs 1998; Kellner and Share 2007). CML scholars and educators have also discussed creative counter-production of media as a key pedagogy so that learners recognize their active role in sustaining or shifting media representations (Pangrazio 2016; Todorova 2015). Youth in North American cite media and pop culture as key places where they learn about sex and relationships (Pinkleton et al. 2008; McGrath 2016), making CML that includes media production particularly potent. Creative counter-production also requires active involvement which has been more effective than pedagogies that only include passive listening (Jeong, Cho, and Hwang 2012). Few studies have used CML frameworks to inform sex education, but existing studies show promise (see Pinkleton et al., 2008; Scull, Kupersmidt, Malik, and Keefe, 2018; Scull, Kupersmidt, Malik, and Morgan-Lopez 2018).

CML pedagogies also promote Critical Youth Empowerment (CYE), which has six key dimensions: (1) a welcoming and safe environment (Cargo et al. 2003; Messias et al. 2005); (2) meaningful participation and engagement with real-world challenges; (3) equitable power sharing between youth and adults (Checkoway 1998); (4) critical reflection of social and political structures (Jennings et al. 2006); (5) participation in sociopolitical processes such as shifting norms and values (Jennings et al. 2006; Zimmerman 1995); and (6) empowerment at individual and community levels so youth are aware that they can create change. Engagement with media production and discussion on "real world" challenges with relationships and conflict resolution provides students opportunities to put hooks' notion of love (2000) and transnational feminism into practice.

Transnational feminism attends to how intertwined structures of capitalism, globalization, patriarchy, and colonialism continuously impact understandings of race, gender, class, and sexuality (Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Mohanty 2003; Swarr and Nagar 2010). These same forces have caused intergenerational trauma that often make vulnerability, emotional expression, and love feel unsafe (Naryan, Lieberman and Masten 2021). Vulnerability is an essential requirement to experience joy, belonging, and love (Burke and Brown, 2021, xviii), which are natural human needs. Transnational feminist scholar Alexander (2005) reminds us that healing the fragmentation that colonization caused requires us to make room for the deep yearning for wholeness in material and existential forms. Media-based pedagogies that depict a spectrum of relationships may increase an understanding of shared humanity that can lead to "reciprocal investments" and interdependence (Alexander 2005) that is a core aspect of transnational feminism and key to non-violent relationships.

Methods

This paper draws from a larger study that examined which factors compelled adult stakeholders to support curriculum pertaining to consent and non-violence in Ontario. The study utilized three data collection approaches: (1) the design of an original media literacy curriculum module for Ontario youth ages 13-15 to teach consent and health relationships; (2) curriculum assessment of the module by diverse stakeholders in Ontario (n=20), and (3) analysis of archival documents pertaining to consent education and media literacy in Ontario, including official curricula and media reports.

Curriculum Design

The curriculum module that was assessed by adult stakeholders is an adaptation of the critical media literacy pedagogies outlined in Moorhouse and Brooks (2020). A detailed description of the module is beyond the scope of the paper but can be reviewed in Moorhouse and Brooks (2020) and Moorhouse (2023). The module is also informed by best practices in violence prevention (Nation et al. 2003; De Gue et al. 2014). The module also draws from theories of CYE (Jennings et al., 2006) that bridge personal empowerment with active civic engagement. Transnational feminist frameworks (Alexander 2005; Anzaldúa and Moraga 2015) also allowed a more holistic approach to the module's pedagogy. The curriculum module sought to apply this transnational feminist teaching by using a "desire-based framework" (Fine 1988; Fine and McClelland 2006) that allows youth participants a sense of agency in designing consent-based relationships that fit with their unique experiences, subjectivities, and value systems. The curriculum module used an "inquiry-based approach" to pedagogy (Abd-El-Khalick et al. 2004) that begins with open-ended questions students analyze together, emphasizing the student's role in the learning process. For example, the curriculum module asked youth to rewrite problematic media scripts to reflect the kind of relationships they would like to have instead of prescribing definitions and solutions.

Curriculum Assessment

The second step of data collection involved curricular assessment of the module by 20 adult stakeholders in Ontario education. Stakeholders for this study included: (1) K-12 educators working in public and private education, including librarians who are sometimes tasked with delivering "media literacy"; (2) educational administrators such as principals and vice principals; (3) policy and curriculum writers such as employees of Ontario school boards or the Ontario Ministry of Education; (4) parents, guardians or adult siblings of youth ages 13-15; (5) graduate students or researchers in higher education with specializations in media literacy and/or sexual violence prevention in education. Participants were provided with the curriculum module prior to the semi-structured interviews. Participants then gave feedback on perceived merits and limitations of the curriculum module, how it aligned or diverged from existing Ontario curriculum, and whether professional development or supports might be valuable. Follow-up questions probed the origins of stakeholder perceptions by asking them to recall experiences in the classroom as educators and/or learners, interactions with other groups of stakeholders, and media-based examples about gender, sexuality, and relationships. Interviews allow researchers to capture the richness of participants' multidimensional experiences (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). While a small qualitative sample can never represent the entire Ontario population, the study sample captures what the literature identifies as key stakeholders in K-12 Ontario schools. The sample is diverse in terms of cultural background, sexual orientation, spiritual views, and life experience in addition to a spectrum of adult viewpoints. Diversity within the sample allows for researchers to map the variance of ideas, needs and concerns of parents, educators, and policy makers who live and work with Ontario youth. These diverse perspectives allow for analysis of what inhibits curriculum revisions and innovations so that community needs can be better understood and reflected through curriculum modules and culturally responsive feminist pedagogies.

Analysis of Archival Documents

The third component of data collection involved the identification and retrieval of archival documents pertaining to sex education in Ontario, including the Ministry of Education curriculum on Health and Physical Education (2015; 2019) that includes discussions on relationships, consent, and sex education. Additional curriculum documents that were important to the study were: Grade 6 Social Studies, Grades 7 and 8 History and Geography (2018); Grade 9 and 10 Canadian and World Studies (2018) which includes Geography, History and Civics (Politics); Language Curriculum Grades 1-8 (2006); and Grades 9-10 (2007) which each contain Media Literacy strands. Curriculum documents are important to the study because they illuminate how researchers and policy writers determine "age-appropriate" topics, relevant pedagogies, and the prior knowledges that Ontario youth are expected to have when entering classrooms.

Data Coding and Analysis

This study utilized four types of coding: initial, in vivo, frequency, and cultural coding. Initial codes are described as "first impressions" that allow for researcher reflexivity—examining how personal experiences, professional training, and knowledge of pre-established theories shape analytical interpretations (Saldana 2008). In vivo codes take words or phrases directly from a transcript, policy, or curriculum document. In vivo coding highlights the voices of participants, allowing them to give meaning to data (Manning 2017). "Frequency coding" (Saldana 2008) was applied to the transcripts using QSR International's NVivo 12 Software (2018) to identify key terms that were significant to stakeholders. Frequency coding was also applied to the archival documents to notice patterns and omissions within the Ontario curriculum. For example, themes related to violence prevention and the guiding questions of the study such as "power," "race," "agency," or "freedom" do not appear in the Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum

documents. Lastly, the study coded for "cultural resources," defined as external narratives that help negotiate the meaning of self, others, cultures, and events (Wetherell 2003). Cultural coding highlights how different processes of meaning-making intersect relationally based on geographical and temporal context. Contextualizing cultural resources illuminates how racial power, inequality, and subjectivities are (re)produced in discourse. Cultural coding in this study illuminated the prior knowledges and cultural resources stakeholders used to assess the existing Ontario curriculum and the curriculum module designed for this study.

Findings and Discussion

Study participants highlighted four key factors that united stakeholders in supporting curriculum pertaining to consent, healthy relationships, and non-violence in Ontario K-12 education: media-based and culturally relevant pedagogies, professional development, educator collectives, and parent/community councils.

Media-based and culturally relevant pedagogies

Adult stakeholders in education are intrigued by media-based pedagogies because they can facilitate "culturally relevant pedagogy" for diverse learners in Ontario. Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP) was developed to meet the unique pedagogical needs of students of colour in the United States (Ladson-Billings 1992; 1995a; 1995b; Gay 2000). Core components of CRRP include: (1) using "culture as a vehicle for learning" (Ladson-Billings 1995a, 161) such as references to poetry, hip-hop, and the development of critical consciousness; (2) believing in the potential for student success by having high expectations (Ladson-Billings 1995b); and (3) having educators understand themselves as part of a community to facilitate collaborative and equitable social relations within their classroom.

Media literacy and CRRP align because both frameworks allow youth to bring media-based examples into the classroom (Mears 2012). Study participants echoed these sentiments, expressing that it allowed for better understanding of the media-based scripts that impacted students' identities and were difficult to keep up with due to the rapid pace at which media changes. As one teacher lamented, "Last years' hashtags are already old." Student-generated examples ensure that educators are not stuck using outdated examples. Instead, youth can engage in cultural knowledge exchange, teaching educators about cultural and generational scripts. Media literacy approaches that involve creative counter-production also serve as culturally relevant pedagogies, especially if they embed "Asia literacy" (Hamston 2012) or Afro-centric curriculum that discusses the interconnectedness of all beings including land, plants, and animals (Mswazie and Mudyahoto 2013). Media literacy scholars, including Todorova and Brooks (2019), suggest these pedagogies can foster deeper understanding of interconnected struggles across borders and social identities, thus inspiring solidarity across social differences.

Culturally relevant pedagogies that address social differences are also key for consent and relationship education, as the Ontario K-12 student population is increasingly diverse. In Canada, 23% of the population identified as immigrants or permanent residents with 62% of the immigrant population coming from Asia and the Middle East and the largest proportion of immigrants originating from India, followed by the Philippines and China (Statistics Canada 2022). Related, 69.4% of new immigrants reported languages other than English or French as their first language. Employees from the Ministry of Education and Ontario school boards discussed how racialized and/or immigrant communities constitute the majority of the student population in many regions. These stakeholders affirmed findings in the literature about the importance of culturally relevant examples to ensuring student engagement.

Research shows that Ontario youth felt that sexual health education focused too much on biology, was rarely sex-positive, and was not culturally relevant (Causarano et al. 2010; Larkin et al. 2017). Related, the Toronto Teen Survey gathered data from 1,216 youth respondents ages 13-17 and reported that the top four topics youth wanted to learn more about were: healthy relationships, sexual pleasures, communication, and sexual violence/abuse. Most recently, the Youth Engagement Project (YEP) examined Ontario youth perspectives on sexual health education and found that youth wanted more inclusive and relevant sexual health education starting from an early age (Narushima et al. 2020). Inclusive sex education was defined as sex education for 2SLGBTQ2+ youth as well as racially and religiously diverse groups.

The study discussed here found similar gaps, where participants who were parents expressed concerns with Ontario consent education missing culturally relevant examples. Other stakeholders who were adult siblings of Ontario teens expressed concern about "the idea of experimentation being forced onto youth" in Ontario K-12 schools. Racialized parents and siblings of Ontario teens also discussed how some youth felt "left out" of consent conversations with Hollywood references due to different media choices in their country of origin. This is due in part to the dominance of the field of "consent" by white scholars from the global North who have yet to use transnational feminist approaches to consent-based discussions or curriculum developments. This gap in the field has contributed to the lack of culturally relevant approaches to discussing non-violent relationships with youth in K-12 Ontario public education. Imposing monolithic definitions that do not fit with the everyday experiences of young learners and their families has contributed to heated debates and a resistance to Ontario curricular innovations pertaining to consent.

Study findings suggest that educators and feminist scholars must adequately discuss the role of race, culture, and diverse religious values as it pertains to consent and healthy relationships rather than talking in what one participant described as "awkward metaphors describing consent as tea" instead of allowing for "more nuanced discussions on race and even how boundaries are culturally specific." The participant discussed the concept of "personal space" in-depth, which she reflected upon while travelling in urban, densely populated areas in East Asia that were in stark contrast to her experiences in her hometown in Ontario.

Rather than discussing consent in metaphors, researchers and educators could present a range of options and openly discuss pressures to sexually experiment or abstain from sex that allow youth to reflect on *their own* values and behaviours. Stakeholders in the study also discussed how conversations on race were likely to naturally emerge in discussions on love, consent, and relationships given Ontario's multicultural population, Ontario curriculum expectations, and the political climate of the past few years that has pushed race to the forefront of mainstream media conversations (e.g., white supremacist groups in the news, the global Black Lives Matter movement). Youth also regularly engage in social media and influencer discussions on race and culture, indicating the need for educators to adapt curriculum and pedagogy to better represent the lived experiences of their students.

Professional Development

Effective pedagogy is the product of good training and practice. Studies in Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick found that teachers receive little to no adequate training on sex, consent, and relationship education (Meaney et al. 2009; Garcia 2015; Kelly 2017; Almanssori 2022a; Almanssori 2022b). Training gaps often translate into a lack of confidence in curriculum development and delivery. Study participants echoed literature findings, speaking candidly about the lack of sex and consent education training available to them during initial teacher education or Ontario K-12 professional development. Related, some stakeholders reflected on how ill-equipped educators were in responding to instances or disclosures of violence.

These findings show the need for improvements to initial teacher education programs, as well as professional development initiatives for K-12 educators. Greater collaboration is needed between feminist researchers, policy writers, and educators so that pedagogy is informed by best practices. While professional development is not a panacea, training would significantly improve support and confidence for educators, complement curricular updates, and benefit students in Ontario public schools. A participant from the Ministry of Education spoke to the importance of training and professional development initiatives to help educators feel "empowered to be able to carry this [curriculum] out in the classroom." Participants who were parents were also more likely to support consent and violence prevention initiatives if accompanied by professional development and adaptable blueprints or resources for teaching, including assessment tools and rubrics. The larger study (Moorhouse 2023) begins to fill that gap but also calls for further support from other feminist researchers and educators.

Educator Collectives

This study also revealed that "safety" and "community" were key themes for participants working to implement consent, sex, and relationship education. Educators expressed difficulty balancing effective delivery of curriculum with external pressures from parents, school administrators, board trustees, and other government officials. External pressures threatened a sense of safety for some educators. Others discussed how the curriculum changes made it "difficult to plan lessons," as it regularly takes educators time to implement change effectively and with confidence.

Some K-12 teachers and library staff shared how they created safety. One Ontario middle-school teacher talked about how he "built community" online, citing Facebook, WhatsApp groups, Twitter chats, and hashtags as places he used to cope with "feeling alone" in pedagogical or political pursuits. Others discussed how social media channels helped educators unite across schools, provinces, and national borders. These virtual connections became precious community space for sharing lesson plans, educational resources for students, resources for learning such as podcasts, workshops and books, and strategies for negotiating with administration and/or parents.

These community spaces are powerful because they transcend neoliberal values and embody transnational feminist bridges across identities and disciplines (Alexander 2005; Anzaldúa and Moraga 2015), even if stakeholders did not name it "transnational feminism." These educators embodied transnational feminist practices of uniting across social differences for common political goals: discussing common challenges, sharing resources, improving teaching, and transcending barriers in education. These educators united with the goal of sharing political consciousness and love, or the "desire to nurture" that bell hooks (2000) describes. This is best expressed by study participants who describe their profession as "a career, not just a job," "a duty," or "a calling." Other educators in the study noted they took their job "more seriously than the average." This finding contradicts research claiming that change is implemented by those who feel a sense of ownership of educational changes (Fenwick 2003). Instead, the data aligns with studies claiming that educators who are earlier in their careers are more adaptive to change compared to seasoned educators who are sometimes "disenchanted" (Hargreaves 2005; Harris and Graham 2019). This finding is practically and theoretically significant because it highlights the need to support those invested in change as opposed to those with more institutional power. It also highlights the need to unite those interested in creating change as a solution to the barriers and feelings of isolation. A community or a collective was also listed as a support that helped overcome fear of any backlash from parents or administrators—a common strategy in feminist and social justice organizing.

Parent/Community Councils

The study also found that parent collective and community councils were essential places for dialogue, activism, and sharing of resources about consent, sex education, and healthy relationships. This finding is especially significant in Ontario given the great deal of media attention that was given to the racialized and immigrant parents who protested the sex education curriculum updates, as discussed in the introduction to this paper. Many consent scholars theorized the Ontario debates about sex and consent curriculum updates in Ontario. However, few scholars have mapped *how* to foster civil conversations within and across communities with different values, cultural norms, and gendered scripts to ensure that diverse racialized and religious communities feel heard in consent conversations. This is due in part to the dominant frameworks in the field of "consent" that focus on the global North and have yet to use transnational approaches to consent-based discussions. A more holistic perspective could include reflection on the *quality* of relationships one has, naming specific attitudes and behaviours and methods for conflict resolution. In-depth examples of what this could like in the form of curriculum templates are discussed in the larger study (see Moorhouse 2023).

An important way to shift conversations about consent is creating community spaces for people to discuss across communities. Parent and school councils could help address the gatekeeping of violence prevention initiatives in education because they are created by/for community members. These spaces are not free from conflict. Schools each have their own ecosystems where racial animosities, class divisions, and other tensions become apparent. However, stakeholders who understood their importance were interested in using communication to resolve conflict. History also shows that dissenters indeed mobilized to repeal the Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum (2015) when they felt that their needs were not heard in relation to consent and sexual health education.

Community-based discussion that is open to debate is a key form of practicing non-violence and a transnational feminist practice because it encourages discussion across communities, rather than simply working in silos of presumed safety that still contain lateral violence. Discussion across groups would also reduce misinformation, while also reducing the disconnect between researchers and the public. Some stakeholders who were parents and teachers spoke to feeling that their needs and wants were not always represented in research, curriculum, and educational policies. Others felt that research was inaccessible and not easy to implement into practice but that curriculum modules, such as the media literacy modules outlined in Moorhouse and Brooks (2020) and Moorhouse (2023), were easier to implement in classrooms.

Lastly, councils provide opportunities to discuss "taboo" topics that are often ignored, including consent, sexuality, and family violence, even in feminist spaces. For example, one participant who identifies as feminist was quick to defend her father who accepted what she described as "deeply misogynistic" narratives in film. Another participant admitted that she understood that her parents were quite controlling of her younger sibling but rationalized the behaviour as "care." It is important to create spaces for public reflection on when feminists actively challenge problematic narratives and when we stay silent. Spaces for dialogue allow us to practice aligning our theory to our everyday practices. It is interesting to note the hesitance to avoid challenging discussions on problematic attitudes and behaviours within family. These examples are highlighted not to shame participants but to encourage them to practice accountability and to live their feminist values more consistently.

Related, hooks (2000, 47) reflects on the contradiction posed by those who claim that physical violence in a romantic relationship is unacceptable while supporting a parents' right to physically punish their child. Taboo topics such as discipline are hard to address. Taking community-centered approaches to conversations on topics such as parenting, discipline, sex education, media, and emotional literacy could give par-

ents the necessary tools to change their own practices and would help gain community support for the implementation of feminist innovations to curriculum and pedagogy in K-12 classrooms.

Conclusion

Sexual and gender-based violence permeates daily life in connected but distinct ways. The solutions mapped in this paper are specific to Ontario and, therefore, scholars and practitioners across the globe should be mindful of demographic, historical, and political differences when applying findings. This paper maps pathways forward that may unite diverse stakeholders in implementing feminist curriculum about "consent" and non-violent relationships in Ontario classrooms. The factors that united and activated support do not dismiss the political struggles and structural barriers. Rather, they are a call to action inspired by transnational feminist scholar Cherie Moraga who writes, "I can't afford to be afraid of you, nor you of me. If it takes head-on collisions, let's do it: this polite timidity is killing us" (Moraga 2002, 32). Opportunities for political transformation are created when we practice courage by engaging in conversations aligned with our feminist values and commit to working together across differences. The curriculum module offers youth the opportunity to practice communicating about desires, fears, uncertainty, taking accountability, and repairing relations. Feminists must also embody these practices by working across our differences in educational spaces. Relational skills are not only possible to improve through in education, but necessary for non-violent futures to be born.

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