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A critical review on studies of relationship education in the gender equity education of Taiwan: 10 years and beyond

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\section*{ABSTRACT}
With discourse analyses, this paper attempts to review the research development of relationship education in Taiwan for nearly a decade after the Gender Equity Education Act was announced in 2004, including the research topics generated, the knowledge accumulated, and the results achieved. This paper focuses not only on how the power and impacts of the academic institutions evolves through the production process of knowledge from the research, but also on how the gender perspectives are placed or filled into the discourses. Tracking and reflecting on the discourses and the development of relationship education researches in Taiwan, this paper aims to examine the interwoven effects and influences that social cultures, structures, and institutional power play on the knowledge production and research development of relationship education. The trajectory of Taiwanese experience illustrates a good example for policy making and legislative initiatives in legislative procedures in regard to certain gender knowledge and subjects. It is essential to utilize and coordinate the national resources and academic institutions with further awareness for the direction and promotion of gender knowledge in order for the education and research to root, grow, and prosper.

\section*{Introduction}
Since the 1970s, Taiwan has undergone massive transformations in politics, economy, and society. The state-society relationship has made transition from “political power as absolute dominance” and “economic power as relative leading force” to “mobilization by social force”. The political transformations and social movements of the 1980s gave a helping hand to the development of women’s movements and educational reform, and indirectly accelerated the establishment of gender education policy (Hsieh & Lee, 2008).

The 1990s accounted for the most fervent decade for social and educational revolution. It also set up the key foundation for Gender Equity Education to progress in Taiwan. The Ministry of Education established the Gender Equity Education Committee in 1997, which set off governmental forces to promote gender equity education. As more scholars and experts proposed, the Gender Equity Education Act was finally announced in June of 2004. In the Enforcement Rules for the Gender Equity Education Act, “The curriculum related to gender equity education referred to the second paragraph of Article 17 of the Act shall cover courses on relationship education, sexuality education, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) education in order to enhance students’ gender equity consciousness”.
Therefore, the Gender Equity Education Act provides a legal basis of the curricula and study for relationship education.

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of cases that involved relationship conflicts on campus at Taiwan. Those incidents have not only propelled the administrative departments of education to pay attention to relationship education, but have also provoked the debates about “what to teach” and “how to teach” among religious groups and gender organizations. In particular, the society and culture of Taiwan has been infused with ethics and comportments of Confucian tradition. Thus, the discussion of relationship and discourse of love have not been an easy topic to be articulated or taught in the public education (Yang, 2014a). According to Kenway, Willis, Blackmore, and Rennie (1998), gender revolution serves to be a domain of discourse, in which the meaning, with regard to gender revolution, consists of continuing compromises and challenges as well as truth that has been produced and reproduced with regard to the meaning of domain. The discourse is a medium of power manoeuvring (Foucault, 1979). Therefore, it intrigues the curiosity of the authors that, after the announcement of the Gender Equity Education Act in 2004, how far and wide have feminist theories and the perspective of gender equity imbued and impacted the research development of relationship education in Taiwan? In addition to women's movements, are there other factors that accelerate or limit the research development of relationship education and the production of knowledge? Placed under the viewpoint of knowledge, discourse, and power relations, apart from probing which research topics are produced or omitted, and which perspectives are used or neglected, this research believes that it is necessary to examine how and why these discourses are developed, and which factors influence the acceptance and utilization of certain discourses.

Therefore, this research focuses on the research development and knowledge production of relationship education in Taiwan. The research objects include the dissertation, theses, journal papers, and the funded research projects by the National Science Council (NSC) of Taiwan in a decade, starting from 2004 when the bill of Gender Equity Education Act was passed. With discourse analyses, it explores what kind of knowledge and discourse has been employed. More specifically speaking, what research themes related to relationship education have been established by the academic institutions and organizations that function as the important production units of knowledge? In a word, the researchers attempt to increase the depth of discussion on the topics produced by the study of relationship education after the gender equity education was institutionalized.

To begin with, one term has to be clarified. The term “relationship education” used here has a different connotation from the Western usage of “relationship education” that often appears in the context of marriage education or couple therapy in English literature (e.g., Halford, Markman, Kling, & Stanley, 2003). The “relationship education” here, corresponding to the Gender Equity Education Act, refers to the education that established relevant topics of intimate relationship from the perspective of gender equity in schooling, including teaching young students how to be aware of and understand their own feelings toward others, how to establish positive knowledge and relevant techniques for intimacy. Therefore, the data analyses of this paper are focused on the research related to the topics on the intimate relationship of school students.

This article aims to provide reflection as future reference for related education and research practices. The authors argue that examining and knowing well the status quo and current achievements leads to a better understanding of the area where there has been insufficient efforts. It also helps rethink alternative routes for positive progressing in the future.

Gender equity education: women's movement, education reform, and discourse competition

The politics of the women's movement was said to be the midwife that delivered American women study (Gunew, 2002). In Taiwan, the Gender Equity Education Act was the outcome of the efforts converged by the women's movement (or in broader definition, gender equity movement) and the movement of educational reform. In the process of drafting the Gender Equity Education Act, this act was nourished...
by the legacy of several related acts in the West. The *Gender Equity Education Act* of Taiwan referenced the *Education Amendment Act of Title IX* and the *Women’s Educational Equality Act*, encompassing two principles, “no discrimination” and “enhancing diversity of equity” along with the spirit of equity for “positive discrimination treatments” (Hsieh, 2014, p. 19).

The years from 1995 to 2004 marked the pivotal 10 for the development of gender educational policy in Taiwan. The legislation has propelled the promotion of gender equity education to the extent that the speed of development and the scope of coverage were considerably remarkable. The Gender Equity Education Act (2004) specifies in the articles that the central governmental authority, local governments, and schools of all levels have to establish a “Gender Equity Education Committee”, which is responsible for drafting policies and annual projects related to gender equity education as well as promoting research and development of curricula, teaching, and assessments on gender equity education and related issues, with an attempt to generate respect for gender diversity, eliminate gender discrimination and promote substantive gender equality through education.

The *Gender Equity Education Act* provides the legal basis for curriculum and research of relationship education. However, only the statements alone do not make reality. In Taiwan, the goal of school education predominantly surrounds the preparation for enrolment or admission to the educational institute of next level, citizen cultivation, professional training, among others. The performance on academic subjects such as English, mathematics, and science still draws more attention on every school day. As Yang (2014a) points out, relationship education in the school education still remains marginal and is not much valued by the school or parents. You (2014) examines the result of the promotion of gender education in Taiwan and finds that, though it has been 10 years since the *Gender Equity Education Act* was passed, new themes and challenges continue to emerge. For example, the implementation of LGBT education contradicts conservative religious organizations. How to transform the intersectionality of gender phenomena into educational implementations as well as how to realize gender education within the field of special education are the examples of severe challenges.

As Stromquist (1997) states, the well-designed policy might well be out of shape in practice. Schools are the domain for diverse discourses and practices that present competitions and oppositions of the truth for relationship education among different participants and discourses. As a result this domain displays contradictions, contentions, and power relations. Thus, these complications in the process of implementing policy should not be dismissed. This research focuses on the scope of relationship education, in order to deliberate what discourses are produced to buttress the educational policy in promotion and implementation, especially what is the stance upon which certain institutions of authority and power produce discourses and what power effects are generated accordingly.

### The intertwined history and politics of relationship and sexuality education

After the gender education was institutionalized by passing of the *Gender Equity Education Act*, the continuing development of gender education policy affected many aspects at schools of all levels, and resulted in the situation of interwoven discourses associated with power relations, and competitions. Take an example for illustration: the discourse of sexuality education from the perspective of health education still greatly renders influences on campus at schools. This kind of sexuality education arose earlier in Taiwan, closely binding sex together with the health curriculum of physical growth and development in order to teach students to understand the arrival of puberty and the secondary sexual characteristics of the two sexes with individual differences, to know the structures and functions of sex organs of the two sexes (Yen, Lee, Lin, Chang, & Bai, 1992). To treat the sexuality of adolescents as an object to be controlled and regulated, the discourse emphasizes abstinence and chastity (Yen, 2011). Due to the conservative stance held by the majority of society in Taiwan, the discourse of sexual abstinence is generally accepted by the public, especially the parents and teachers. Within the context of Taiwan, the emphasis on the role of marriage and family as well as the heterosexual norm is still the leading tone for the content of sexuality education at schools, which augments the impacts on the teaching and research of relationship education.
According to the research of Yang and You (2014), it indicates that the research on intimate relationship and relationship education of Taiwan in the recent 10 years can be categorized into three genres: First, the quantitative investigation and research on the experience of and attitude toward significant relationship or intimacy of two-sexes; second, the development of questionnaires and evaluation charts on intimacy or relationship, such as charts for the strategy to deal with conflicts during dating, for the break-up adjustment and evaluation, for the investigation on relationship satisfaction level, or for the research on the quality of relationship; third, the design of curricula, and the research on teaching intervention and activity. These researches mostly design experiments and quantitative questionnaires with pretests and/or posttests to study the curricula and teaching effect. Though these researches touch the topic, “gender”, the depth often stays at the level of static binary description, or just treats gender as one demographic variable, without paying attention to the dynamic of gender relations, or totally ignoring the existing gender oppressing structure.

In fact, the discourse of sexual abstinence is dominant in the school domain, which is not a unique educational phenomenon in Taiwan. Fine (2003), showed that the traditional sex education and sexual discourses that emphasized the so-called “just say no” rule ignored the existence of desires, especially female desires. She advocated the discourse of desire based upon subjectivity and invited students to be initiators and negotiators on the topics of sexuality and to utilize their power of subjectivity. In the United Kingdom, the Education Reform Act 1988 became the legal basis of sex education in schools. In 1999, the national curricula were criticized by young students to be deficient by the absence of discussions on feelings, relationship, and values in England and Wales (Halstead & Reiss, 2003). In 2004, the Sex Education Forum defined Sex and Relationships Education as lifelong learning about sex, sexuality and emotions (Sex Education Forum, 2004). These values and assumptions attracted many debates over Britain, especially on the marital views. Blake (2008) identified that the courses of sex and relationship education in the United Kingdom still wanted for the topic of sexuality and pleasure.

According to the discussions aforementioned, the connotative meaning of implementing relationship education cannot stand alone without taking gender perspective into consideration. Furthermore, the connotation of relationship education definitely involves sexuality and intimacy. The relationship education and sexuality education overlap but still can be distinguished and classified. For example, the latter involves health topics like sexual physiology and prevention against sexually transmitted diseases, which are not the focal interests of relationship education. Yet, the expression and communication for relationship, and the relations of gender and power that relationship education pays attention to are not within the implementing scope of sexuality education. Therefore, this research will not do the analysis on sexuality education on the whole, but instead will include the topics of sexuality and relationship education associated with intimacy, sex between partners, and relationship and communication, into the probing scope of researches and results of relationship education. This research affirms that effective relationship education needs to meet the real needs of students on the topics of sexuality and intimacy as well as to undertake the task of researching relationship education from gender perspective. Only through the knowledge production and accumulation will the teachers be assisted to effectively implement relationship education and realize the practices at schools of all levels.

**Methodology**

This research adopts discourse analysis, mainly in view of its analyses on knowledge, power, and power structure and the relations in between that discourse analysis entails (Foucault, 1979). The virtual foci are not only the existing conditions and the reality of domain, but also the conditions constructed by
the discourses, the characteristics of the phenomena in details, and the inter-relationships among all

the above. Focusing on the studies of relationship education from 2004 to 2013, including dissertations,
theses, journal papers, and the funded research projects by the NSC of Taiwan, the research also pays
attention to the impacts that the production units of knowledge render while the knowledge of rela-
tionship education is constructed. Thus, this research includes the projects funded by the NSC into its
analyses as well as all the theses and dissertations generated after the four gender graduate institutes
were founded (from 2000 until present). In accordance with the principles of discourse analysis, on
the basis of who, at what position of power, locating under what systemic context, and making what
statements, this research will examine what is said and what is obliterated (Foucault, 1979).

We search the data from three online databases: National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations
in Taiwan, Index to Taiwan Periodical Literature System, and Government Research Bulletin of Taiwan. To
use keywords as filters, the relevant research papers or projects of relationship education in the domain
of school education are sorted and classified to be texts to be analysed. The keywords used include:
relationship education, intimate relationship, partner relationship, love, falling in love, romantic love,
confession, pursuit/pursuing, breaking up, entering a relationship, dating, and friendship. After the
retrieval, collection, and organization of data, there are approximately 90 theses (no dissertation), 39
journal papers, and 35 funded projects by the NSC. The three types of texts total 164 (Table 1).

Among the 164 texts, the most frequently used keywords are “intimate relationship” and “love” that
generate more papers than other keywords, no matter which genre the text is of. As for the research
objects, the most are university or graduate students, accounting for 43.7%. Next are senior high school
and vocational school students (23.4%) and middle school students (15.6%). The rest are respectively
elementary school students (4.8%), kindergarten children (4.2%), and texts (3%) as the objects of research.

The most applied research method is questionnaire (48%) and in-depth interview of qualitative
approach is next (25%). Next are action research (7%), experimental method (5%), and textual analysis
(4%). And the rest are less used methods, such as case study and Delphi. Among the 39 journal papers,
there are 11 of general journal papers and 28 of academic journal papers. Only four out of the 28 aca-
demic journal papers are published in highly-acclaimed academic journals, with three in psychology
journals and only one in an education journal.

More specifically speaking, this research excludes the research regarding marital relationships (for
instance, the topics of parents and children, husband and wife, family violence, etc.). There are two
reasons in so doing: first, the domain for the effort to promote the Gender Equity Education Act
and to implement the curricula of relationship education in Taiwan is still at schools. Second, the majority of
students at schools are still unmarried young people. In particular, the targeted groups for implement-
ing relationship education in Taiwan chiefly are the students of elementary schools, middle and high
schools, colleges and universities.

The researcher establishes the categories according to the research inquiries, including research
topics, the production units of papers, the theoretical perspectives or frameworks, certain ideologies,
and research findings. Then these categories are constructed into structural coding charts. They are
organized and filed before text analyses are thoroughly conducted. In the procedure of coding and
analysis, this research first is processed for coding done by one of the authors and one assistant who is
equipped with the background of gender study and has completed the training for coding. These two
have been confirmed to have the same comprehension for the categorized items and have the agree-
ment on connotations to ensure the consistence in the process of classifying and organizing data. The
reliability is built through cross-analysis and discussion. According to the preliminary analysis result,
the authors then conduct advanced discourse analysis on the data. This research adopts quantitative
content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis: first to grasp manifest meaning on the initial layer
of texts through organizing statistical data, and then to find the latent meaning by decomposition and
discussion in depth.

The authors profoundly comprehend that all researches can only produce “partial truth” (Lioncoln,
Lyham, & Guba, 2011, p. 125). The analyses that this research conducts are no exception. Perhaps the
comprehensive discussion toward the existing literature is not completed here. Yet, we believe that
this research result will contribute to the promotion of relationship education for the future, no matter in research development or at teaching practices.

**Findings and discussion**

*From dating, hanging out, to premarital sexual behaviour: thoroughly analysing the dominant influence of the hetero-centric discourse of abstinence/protection*

After analysing the research development and knowledge production of relationship education in the latest 10 years, the authors find that discourses of sexual abstinence with the viewpoint of protection and heterosexuality are still dominant. The existing dominance and impact rises with the fact that researchers still embrace the hetero-centric discourse of abstinence/protection and repeatedly reproduce it in the process of their research. Within these texts, about 65.12% papers are identified with hetero-centric discourse of abstinence/protection, including those that “sex equals to violence”, that “sex is victimization and endangerment”, and that “sex accounts for personal morality” (Fine, 2003, p. 40–42). Texts of gender perspectives and the discourse of sexual desires account for 19.38% and the rest 15.5%. There are only six out of 164 papers about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ), which take up 3.66%. As for the four graduate institutes of gender/sexuality studies, theses of Graduate School of Human Sexuality (GSHS) from STU\(^3\) are mostly hetero-centric discourse of abstinence/protection, which account for 88.24% of its whole production since 2004.

By using the keyword “dating”, we collect 31 papers that explore dating violence, relationship conflicts, and violence study. The research of this sort usually circumscribes the viewpoint from developmental psychology, embraces “two-sexes” from the perspective of abstinence, and often places sexuality in the discourses of “sexuality as violence”, “sexuality as victimization”, and “sexuality as individual morality”. On the other hand, there is an official silence prevalently toward “the discourse of desires” (Fine, 2003, p. 43). For example:

The adolescence serves to be a transitional period from childhood to adulthood at which the individual physical body matures to become interested in the opposite sex…..To adolescents, improper dating experiences would cast negative shadow on the growing process of body and mind. For example, when the adolescents receive rejection while dating may cause them to feel isolated and reversely repel the opposite sex; or the overwhelming frustration due to the rejection from dating may make their relationship superficial and fail to establish a stable long-term relationship with others; or settling down with certain partner too early in life may cause pre-marital sexual behaviors, pre-marital pregnancy, infection with sexually transmitted diseases, or an early marriage at young age. (Ferng & Yen, 2007, p. 88)

First of all, the typical proposition for this kind of research is the linear psychological development. It assumes that each person has to go through “the same path” in his/her life so that it is natural for the individual to become interested in dating the opposite sex when the physical growth is culminating maturity. Such assumptions not only overlook the fact that not everyone values or hopes to have a love relationship, but also disregard the subjectivity of homosexuality or the existence of other sexual identities and relationships. The discourses on “Love is Supreme” or “Love Makes Completion”

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**Figure 1.** The interrelation of related discourses of love and sexuality.
embarrass those who do not have craving interests toward “going out with the opposite sex”. They may feel themselves imperfect or defected somehow with a need to review and reform their own personality or gender relationship. Moreover, the only concern for this kind of research is whether there are violent behaviours occurring during the dating process. As a result, it advocates that girls need to learn how to prevent the potential aggressiveness from the males in order to protect themselves from infection of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), getting pregnant, or being taken advantage of. The empirical conclusion here would be the reinforcement on the activity designs for “Just Say No”, on the buttress for abstinence, on the lists of dangers in sexual intimacy, on the lists of possible STD, among others. These papers with the themes about dating only show an evident deficiency in their outcomes to merely provide the view of sexuality as violence, or the discourses of dangers and victimization (Fine, 2003). They also obviously present the overall insufficiency with complete ignorance on the gender perspective for dating behaviours and interactional process, such as gender and power relations, the impacts of gender characteristics to the mutual interactions.

Another variety of papers on the dating subject is to investigate whether or not there is significant correlation between dating and the occurrence of sexual behaviour. For example:

Those who do not have ideal family relationship may tend to initiate actions to actively become acquainted with people of the opposite sex, and thereby increase their probability to have premarital sexual behaviors. (Yen, Liu, & Ferng, 2009, p. 328)

The purpose of the research is to analyze the related adolescent dating and the sexual behaviors, in order to explore the correlation between the male and female adolescents’ dating and sexual behaviors and the change of time. After children enter puberty, the sex hormones accelerate the mental physical growth so that adolescents start their curiosity toward ‘sex’ and ‘the opposite sex’. If they have insufficient knowledge of intimate relationship or lack of competence to handle the situations, they usually would result in injury or harm to the other or themselves too; for example, premarital pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV), sexual assault, etc. (Yen, Liu, & Cheng, 2009, p. 252)

After reviewing these researches, we find the focus of this kind of research that concerns the researchers is on whether or not any pre-marital sexual activity occurs while the adolescents date. This concern creates the same discourses as the discourse on abstinence only or the discourse of prevention from victimization as previously mentioned. Likewise, the purport of the education is equipped with the view points of “endangerment and victimization” and “protection” with no discussion or teaching that helps students to cultivate the competence in the relationship and interactions. Correspondingly, these surveys on dating pay attention solely to “the intimacy between males and females” and its related sexual behaviours during the dating of the two-sexes as well as the risks or violence accompanying dating, but apparently are deficient in the related topics and study on the homosexual/sexual minority of students.

By the keyword “hanging out (as a couple)”, the collected papers particularly encircle the motif of “hanging out with the opposite sex”. Besides, these papers frequently hypothesize what factors influence the quality of “hanging out” often by using quantitative approach. For example:

There is positive correlation between the harmony of parents’ marriage and the communication between the parents and the children who hang out with the opposite sex as a couple. There are significant differences between male college students and female college students when they communicate with their fathers and mothers respectively about their hanging-out together with the opposite sex. (Lin & Chou, 2010, p. 105)

This kind of researches that hypothesize the situational outcomes usually use the background of students, such as single-parent family with only father or only mother, to predict its impacts on the attitudes of the adolescents who “go out together with the opposite sex”. Or, through categorizing the parental educational styles, the parental marital relationships, the interactions between parents and children, the adolescent behaviour of using the internet, or the characteristics of personality, these papers “predict” the attitude and the relationship quality for adolescents while hanging out with the opposite sex. Almost unanimously as following a single formula, these papers ultimately make educational or counselling recommendations as their conclusion on “hanging out with the opposite sex” for workers in the field of education. These papers that hypothesize situations “while going out together with the opposite sex” not only contain the confusion and presumption that centres heterosexuality
to overemphasize the relationship through personal characteristic or behaviours, but also neglect the necessity of devoting attention to the social structure, the position and order of gender in the culture, and the complexity interwoven with a variety of structural, micro, and macro factors during the individual interplay in intimacy as in a process of gender relationship.

Figure 1 shows the intertwined ideologies embedded in the discourses of love and sexuality in the existing literature of relationship education in Taiwan.

With analysis, the researchers find out the dominant discourse of relationship education still centres on the viewpoint of abstinence and hetero-centric thinking, ignoring the multifold themes on sexuality and relationship education. The ideologies involve “chastity”, “prevention against diseases”, “avoidance from injury and harms”, and “blindness toward sexual orientations”, which want for gender sensitivity and do not come close to the sexual subjectivity for and the real life of students, including the obliviousness of reality and needs of students in the growing process due to the context interwoven with sex, gender, class, and ethnicity. From the perspective of gender equity, relationship education should contain the establishment of self-identification, self-respect, and self-confidence, the examination on various values, and the learning of negotiation on sexuality and intimate relationship, mutual respect, and the striving for common view. However, in the present research and knowledge production, the production of the discourses still needs to be enhanced and expanded. The majority of researchers still embrace the discourses of sexual abstinence and hetero-centric thinking, which manifests the necessity to further unveil their academic field, especially on the academic culture and the contextual meaning. This is the vital point of the discussion followed, about which systems and institutions continuously make certain discourses the “most valuable knowledge and research”.

**Old bottles with old wine: in need of research topics that come close to the societal trends**

Curricula are the core of educational setting, the provisions for teachers to teach, and the goals for students to learn. Curricula occupy the keynote position in the educational process (Hsieh & Lee, 2008). Yet, after examining the existing research related to relationship education, there are few or nil of the papers about the curricula or teaching evaluation of relationship education. Neither are there any papers about the topics of policy or teacher training and cultivation programme for relationship education. After further exploration, there are a few findings in the following.

First, by taking the students as the subject to examine the research topics, under the modern social forces and the impacts of new media and technology, what is intimacy to young students? What is love? What is the reality of their intimacy or relationship practice? How do students view themselves and re-shape the sexuality and/or gender identity of themselves related to their interaction with others? How does the new technology and internet transform the intimacy and interaction among young students? There are relatively few researches of intimacy or relationship education related to new technology. In other words, viewed from the existing research outcomes, it is foreseeable that the influences from the development of new technology onto relations and relationship education definitely provide a new horizon of research for further enhancement. The connection of technology with its advanced applications (such as for communication, social media) in the intimate relationship today radiates influential waves toward the development and maintenance of relationship and the relations among the communicational applications and social media, which may bourgeon into various new themes in the fields of gender, technology, and society.

Moreover, either among theses or among journal papers, the majority of researches do quantitative analysis (54% and 46% respectively). The topics also tend to surround the analysis on the elements of heterosexual love or on satisfaction levels at the relationship. Or in view of the love perspectives or attitudes of the research participants, the types of love are differentiated. Or the researches focus on the correlation between types of interpersonal dependence and the impacts to love. For example, in a paper that investigates the interpersonal dependence, love relationship, and break-up adjustment of college students, the authors compare the differences in adjustment after break-up between male and female students and point out:
(1) There is correlation between the adjustment after break-up and the characteristics of interpersonal dependence of college students. The higher in the degree the characteristic of interpersonal dependence is, the higher at the level negative emotions become, like 'pain after break-up,' 'self-doubt and self-denial,' 'impulse to take revenge' and 'self-blame.' (2) There are gender differences for the adjustment after break-up. Male college students perceive more negative emotions than female college students in 'pain after break-up,' 'impulse to take revenge,' and 'self-blame.' (Lin, Huang, & Lin, 2010, p. 119)

This type of quantitative research points out the attitudes and views of males and females toward break-up, or indicate the gender difference in the interactions of love, or show us the variables that influence the love attitude and behaviour of teenage boys and girls. Yet, it does not further the investigation to see why males and females would have such different attitudes and thinking, or what kind of factors influence such thoughts and actions. These simplified “relevant researches” and “predictions of love relationship from personal characteristics” cannot explain the relationship experience and learning process of the teenagers in ordinary everyday life. When we explore the relationships of young students, it cannot be neglected to see the supervision and dominance of “the male in the head” (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 2004, p. 10) of the action-takers that have behaviours or the two parties that mutually interact in their relationship? How does this kind of impacts reflect onto the interaction and rapport of their relationship? The research results of this sort cannot explain how the social systems and cultures make the discrimination between males and females. They also ignore the crisscross impacts from gender relationship, patriarchic systems and social structures as well as the dynamic complication embedded in the interactional process of contextual factors under different circumstances interlacing with the intimate relationship, with no sufficient narration to make the delicate development of male and female relationship understood.

Hsieh and Yang (1999) review the gender discourse of educational research from 1987 to 1997 and find that, though women are the major subject for discussion, the emphasis is limited on the traditional family roles, without attention to the possibility of gender equality, or to the needs and development for the women themselves. The literatures are mostly quantitative research with analyses at individual level to explore gender difference, with little on the reflective assessment or critiques on patriarchic power. Besides, based upon physiology and medical theory, the discourse of sexuality education in the “health education” emphasizes the temperament and role differences between the two-sexes, targeting at “complete and perfect family” as the ultimate goal of sexuality education with much protection and defence for traditional gender values. You, Hwang, Pan, and Hsieh (2004) review the journal papers of “female adult education” and “sexuality education” from 1991 to 2003. They point out that the discourse of sexuality education still regards the system of “health education” as the mainstream. After the mid-1900s, with the gender perspective, the inception of researches exploring sexuality, body autonomy, and homosexuality take place. Yet, on the whole, “sex is appalling and needs to be stopped”, and the “hetero-centric” ideology still exists in the discourses in the manner of writing.

To compare the research of Hsieh and Yang (1999) with that of You et al. (2004), even though Taiwan has undergone social changes and educational reforms, the discourse of abstinence still dominates and renders impacts that influence the practices, the development of research topics, and the knowledge production of relationship education. Upon examining the topics of existing research, this research finds that the majority of research themes conceal hetero-centric thinking and gender-blindness, ignoring the facts that students are the subject of sexual desires and that desires grow and unfold, and neglecting the fact that internet technology and social media have influence on the management of intimate relationship. Moreover, it is indispensable to positively confront the impacts from the cultural diversity and value clashes onto relationship education. The society of Taiwan faces the new challenges for relationship education, due to the aging populations, the falling birth rate, the addition of new immigrants and their rising birth rate to the demography, which not only significantly alter the population structure and characteristics of the society with a great deal of new tasks and considerations, but also challenge the further development and expansion on the research subjects accompanying these changes.

To view relationship education as a whole, we find that the fruition of existing academic research on relationship education does not contribute much to the principal teaching of intimate relationship
on campus, and it surely demands further examination on many gender themes during the teaching process. It should also initiate more establishments on related curricula and teaching that take students as the subject and undertake the research of relationship education with the topics up-close to the pulse of the society.

**Knowledge production and power effects: examination on the operational models of academic and governmental institutions**

This research explores the relations between knowledge production and power distributions. The production of certain knowledge has to be placed within the political economy of the local society as well as under the social context to be meaningful. Following this understanding, it is necessary for this research to examine the production units of knowledge, what statements they have created, and their influences of power.

In Taiwan, the NSC has driven and regulated the modes of knowledge production, promulgation, innovation, and popularization. It even explicitly labels what the “most valuable research and knowledge” is. In recent years, the higher education of Taiwan increasingly accentuates the efficiency, productivity, and performance effects of academic workers. Among the majority of evaluations and assessments, the proportion of research on the score calculator not only outweighs other items but also makes the superiority of research the ideological gene code (Lin, 2012) hidden behind various texts and the college and university teachers who undertake academic works. The fact of “valuing research, belittling teaching” is well-known in the academic. The gender equity education is an important national policy. Yet, why are there so few research projects on relationship education that are funded by the NSC in the latest 10 years? To be exact, there are totally 35 projects funded for relationship education in the recent 10 years and there are only two long-term research projects in the total. The long-term research projects have been encouragingly supported by the NSC, which made us curious enough to ask why the long-term NSC projects on relationship education research have been as few as two since the *Gender Equity Education Act* was announced several years ago. One probable answer is that, to begin with, the number of the research projects interested in relationship education has been small. Yet, the number associated with research interests as well as the number of the projects funded by the NSC in fact indicates the interests of the centre of knowledge and power. Some of the research subjects probably have been consciously pre-selected in the mind of the researchers before application. That is, the researchers have chosen the subjects “reasonably” and “comprehensively” that they should research on.

Thus, the question we should ask here is, what kind of systems and regulations automatically produce such filtering mechanism in the mindset of the researchers themselves? What kind of evaluation systems and networks choose to fund such few projects on relationship education? This research furthers the analysis on the grand public announcements posted by the NSC in the last decade. It is obvious that, since the *Gender Equity Education Act* was announced, “gender and relationship education” has never literarily appeared in any grand public announcements posted by the NSC or in any specific NSC recommended funded projects. In the analysis on the relationship of discourse techniques and power manoeuvring, Foucault points out that, (1) discourse embodies the functions of exclusion and differentiation to set up framework and select objects. (2) In the combination of knowledge and power, especially in the manoeuvring, knowledge equals to strategies and techniques. Power is not isolated from other kinds of relations, but exists within each type of relations. Power relations do not exist in superstructural positions that only play the role of stopping or decorating but instead play the major role of production that influence all types of relations (Foucault, 1979). This echoes the arguments of Hwang and Hsieh (2011), education as applied science embodies the functionalist perspective that emphasizes norms and regulations. Under the special political and socio-historical context of Taiwan, the mainstream educational and academic systems closely connect with national systems and institutions.

In addition, Hwang and Hsieh (2011) also address how to evaluate the impacts of gender study and feminist theory. The method often used is to analyse the publication rate of the papers on gender study in the significant academic journals. Due to rigorous review process, these academic journals are
publicly recognized to have highly-acclaimed academic reputation. The topics published by these journals are thought to have certain significance with high citation impact so that the journals serve to be the major field of academic exchange for scholars. The publication rate of papers on gender study in these mainstream journals thereby can be used to index the academic influence of feminist movement or to indicate the mainstreaming degree of gender study. If we look further into the fact that the papers about relationship education are hardly published in any highly-acclaimed academic journals, then we find out the subtlety of hidden house rules and the linking impacts resulted from the intertextuality (Smith, 2005) under the constructed discourse structures. The NSC, by its standards, grades the projects to fund 50% in accordance with the publication record of the researchers, especially by the number of the publications in the top-level journals, that is, highly acclaimed academic journals. If we run the cross analysis between these NSC research projects and the published journal papers, we can see that most of the funded projects with the research results have never been published in Taiwan, or have been published in foreign journals or in books of compilations (e.g., Yang, 2012, 2014b). In short, there have hardly been any published journal papers on the theme of relationship education from the funded fruition by the NSC in these 10 years. Moreover, these funded projects by the NSC usually are qualitatively-orientated but there are a relatively moderate proportion of quantitative papers (with the ratio approximately 6:4). Yet, more than 80% of published journal papers are quantitative research papers.

As for journal papers, the papers of relationship education are mostly published in not-so-highly-acclaimed journals (non-academic journals), that is, journals ranking in the back row. To Taiwanese scholars, due to the NSC evaluation system and tenure pressure, it will be beneficial for the individual researchers to apply and publish papers in the academic journals that rank highly at the top. Thus, since publication in a top-level journal is essentially important for funding by the NSC and to an individual’s tenure track, why do the papers on relationship education hardly get published in such academic journals? Does the problem dwell on the quality of such papers themselves? Or is it because top-level journals reject such papers? To continue the discussion above, does such reality have impacts on the selection of research direction for the scholars? The contentions between the discourse of relationship education from the gender perspectives and the discourse based on sexual abstinence with “fear to annoy people” plus the attitude, “what if somebody would review”, have woven a web of fear. Is it possible that such reality also hinders researchers from advancing forward but instead causes them to move sideways to be closer to the topics that embody more security?

Power and knowledge are not mutually independent without any relationship, but, rather, they are mutualistic symbiosis that mutually aggregate, mutually employ, and continuously change and reproduce (Foucault, 1979). The phenomena above, in addition to influencing the judgement of the researchers what to be “valuable” research topics, have to be juxtaposed with the phenomena in which the Gender Equity Education committee at the central level (the Ministry of Education) does not render leadership function in developing policy and research. The Gender Equity Education Committee at the Ministry of Education, as the highest-ranked administrative unit that bears the responsibility to promote the research of relationship education, have not made any response, let alone an effective one, to the contentions and disputes of society on the discourses of relationship education in the past few years, with no approach taken in the policy or discourse research, including the debates of what to teach and how to teach for curricula and teaching. In recent years, the Right-Wing Christian groups supported the advocating discourse on abstinence, and protested against the teaching of relationship education, sexuality education, LGBT education in schools.

On the stance of feminist groups, it should be censured that the Ministry of Education that is in charge of the educational policies does not make any positive response to defend the policy and standpoint for gender equity education, when it faces the forceful pressure. Kenway (1990) ever illustrates the relations between gender and nation. She believes that nation and power mutually influence each other and power in fact exists among gender, class, and ethnicity. The complexity of inter-relationship cannot be reduced to merely the functions for nation and other powers, but, rather, the nation even participates in the ever-changing modes of power. This research considers that no response by “doing nothing” is a way of participation by the Ministry of Education. Such participation lets the dominating
and controlling values of patriarchy go unchecked, as the sociologist, Allan Johnson, emphasizes, “We share responsibility for any system we participate it, whether or not we had a hand in creating it” (1997, p. 221). To such unfair systems that are running, “doing nothing” definitely is the worst “participating” way. As we see more of what is going on, questions come up what goes on everywhere. We can see plenty of situations in which we can make a difference. However, disappointedly, even though many years have passed after the Gender Equity Education Act was announced, the way that the officials of educational administration handle matters still remains the same. This is the reason that many feminist scholars in Taiwan still hold reserved attitudes in evaluating the effects of realizing the Gender Equity Education Act.

Moreover, putting the theses of relationship education under scrutiny, the majority of these, from the disciplines of psychology, guidance and counselling, education, and graduate schools of gender study, have constantly surveyed on the degrees of satisfaction on the topics of love and relationship, on the attitude for love, or for hanging out with the opposite sex. The methodology adopted by these surveys is often a quantitative approach, frequently with no gender perspective for analysis. This kind of research neglects the dynamics of interaction in relationship and the relation between gender and power, there is limitation of insights that they could provide for the progress of relationship education.

Furthermore, this research finds an interesting phenomenon. All are theses with no dissertation. Feminist sociologist Devault (1999) ever points out that doctorate students often confront the perplexing problem that “they won’t let us do such research” (p. 198). Such perplexing problem involves “the organization of knowledge”. Upon selecting the research topic with more originality, students often have to encounter external hindrance because the “mainstream” and “standardized” knowledge of the academic field has been recognized by the public to be the “orthodox”. Plus, the research novices may be afraid to do self-revealing and undertake self-supervision so that they constantly stand between the “mainstream” and the opposite side and undergo the negotiation process that in fact is a complicated calculation of thinking (Devault, 1999).

From the analysis above, it can be seen that power, knowledge, and subjectivity is in the relation of cyclic constraint (Foucault, 1970) and how the power of knowledge production units that grasp certain discourse right render impacts on microscopic individual research or at macroscopic policy level through various discourses and ideologies. Yet, for the feminist theory or the knowledge and discourses with the perspective of gender equity to give free rein to the impacts, the knowledge production units have to give free rein to their social accountability. The questions of “what to teach” and “how to teach” in the contemporary relationship education are highly complicated and disputable but are valuable and demand voluminous research to answer and buttress. The practices of gender equity education policy have to be undertaken within the existing educational environment and cultural context. Therefore, we expect that individual academic workers have equipped themselves with sensitive awareness and defensive strategies toward the structural power relations so that it is possible to turn around the dominant sexuality discourse as well as to reveal and dissect the mechanism that the superior groups use to sustain their gained benefits. Yet, the action-takers within the knowledge production units should well utilize the power to construct and manage more advantageous structural conditions in order to help deliver more precious knowledge that responds to the social changes.

**Conclusion**

This research has endeavoured to discuss the topics and contents produced by the study of relationship education after the gender equity education was institutionalized in Taiwan since 2004. Also, it dissects and reveals the hidden discourses of the knowledge production units and the impacts to the research development of relationship education.

The findings of this research verify that knowledge is never merely knowledge. Perhaps knowledge itself does not contain substantial political connotation, but knowledge is meaningless if taken out of the context of time and space for discussion. In Taiwan, though the gender equity education has become the important educational policy, it fails to reflect in the mainstream educational and academic field. It indicates that the gender study in the field of education has been severely marginalized. Moreover, the
publication rate of the research of relationship education is not high in the mainstream journals or the "highly acclaimed journals" that are publicily recognized by the academic groups and organization, which shows that feminist or gender perspective is not fully accepted by all the researchers. All the above demonstrate the limited impacts of the feminist discourses of relationship education, let alone being mainstreamed theoretical model.

Pondering upon the research findings and discussions above, this study makes three suggestions here for the future direction of the research on relationship education. First of all, it is necessary to promote the academic contribution and social responsibility of the knowledge production units. In review of the 10 years, the academic research institutes and governmental bureaus are unable to actively provide suggestions or proposals to develop the policy for relationship education so that the research development of relationship education becomes stagnant with no advance. The NSC and the Ministry of Education that in fact are in charge of most administrative and research resources should create more encouraging mechanisms to lead the research promotion of gender study and relationship education from policy and institutional levels. The educational functions endowed by the Gender Equity Education Act for the Ministry of Education, local governments, and the gender equity education committees of schools at all levels should be enhanced, including the negotiation and promotion of relationship educational policy as well as the research and development of curricula, teaching, evaluation of relationship education.

Secondly, the feminist discourses of relationship education need to be enhanced toward “the remodelling of old theories and the expansion of new ones”. From the past to the present, feminism has been criticizing the patriarchal system but the latter, in form and at operation, might not stay unchanged. Has the system today been the same as that of the past? The sensitivity and consciousness of gender in reality has grown along with the promulgation of the gender equity education and the transformation of the social structure. Since then, what regular rules have structurally transformed or gone off the track? How could relationship education take advantage of such favourable situation to advance? Furthermore, in the field of developmental psychology, the underlying assumptions and paradigmatic perspectives toward intimacy, sexuality, love, and adolescence need to be instilled with new doses of conceptualization and to be deconstructed and reconstructed to be compatible with the new era. The traditional theories or paradigms are incapable of tackling the current dynamic development of relationship and relations. The new theories are in great demand, and so is the attention to the local contextual developments. At the turning point of epistemological transformation, the progression of the turning wheel on the methodology is required to move forward with the expansion of paradigmatic techniques. Moreover, the research motivation and recognition are correlated at certain level. The fact that the researcher selects a certain topic or perspective to do research usually is related with the recognition of a certain theoretical perspective. Viewing from the angle, perhaps the researchers can ponder upon “the remodelling of old theories and the expansion of new ones” to more strategically make more people understand, know, and thereby recognize and apply the discourse of intimate relationship and that of relationship education, both of which are based on gender equity.

The last but not the least, to construct democratic relationships involves examinable topics that are massive and profound, and moreover demands concrete and feasible teaching practices. Thus, it is necessary to conduct a large number of researches to support and develop these practices. These are the academic and social responsibility that the governmental bureaus and departments (especially the NSC and the Ministry of Education), the academic institutes, private women's organizations, and individual researchers all are able to and must bear. Since the transmission and utilization of discourses is a process of power operation, therefore, the teachers, graduate students, and researchers, who also have the knowledge production authority, should not dismiss or belittle their own responsibility and power. In particular, the source of gender learning for students today is not solely limited in the schools. Both the internet and electronic media have become important learning channels and resources. The researchers, teachers, and other practitioners can proactively pay close attention and make efforts to work on more researches in this area. In so doing, the awareness and knowledge of gender equity will be expanded and increase its educational impacts. After all, research is the very cornerstone for educational
reform. We think that the abundant wealth of knowledge production of relationship education from the perspective of feminist and gender equity is the pivotal mission. The missing topics that are indicated by this research during the research review on relationship education in Taiwan definitely can be the developmental topics undertaken by the policy-makers, teachers, researchers, and practitioners of gender education for the policy promotion, research, and teaching for the future.

Notes

1. For convenience in writing, projects by the National Science Council would be shorted as projects of the NSC.
2. There have been four graduate institutes of gender and sexuality studies founded since 2000, including The Graduate Institute of Gender Education at National Kaohsiung Normal University (NKNU) in 2000, The Graduate Institute of Gender Studies at Kaohsiung Medical University (KMU) and Graduate School of Human Sexuality at Shu-Te University (STU) in 2001, and Graduate Institute for Gender Studies at Shih Hsin University (SHU) in 2003.
3. GSHS and STU are referred to in footnote 2 in detail.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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