

THE LIMITS OF EVIDENCE:
QUEERNESS IN PROGRESSIVE VISIONS OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION

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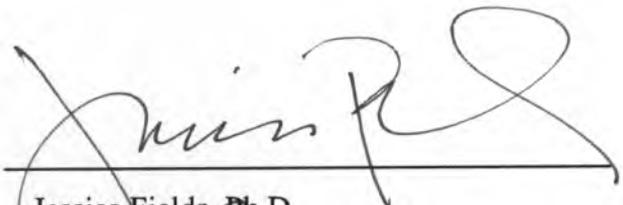
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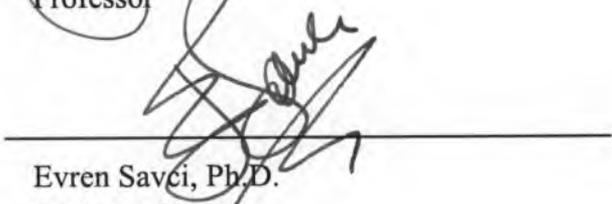
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *The Limits of Evidence: Queerness in Progressive Visions of Sexuality Education* by Jamie Elizabeth O'Quinn, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in Human Sexuality Studies at San Francisco State University.



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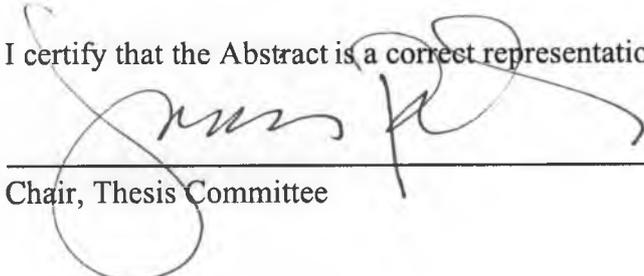
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THE LIMITS OF EVIDENCE:
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2016

“Evidence” has replaced “abstinence” as the idea with foundational cultural authority in sexuality education debates, policy, and practice. In a move emblematic of this shift, leading sexual health organizations recently proposed the Future of Sex Education (FoSE), the first national standards for evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education. I conduct a queer analysis of FoSE, examining how it attempts to broaden the scope of traditional evidence-based sexuality education policies and how sociological feminist analyses and queer theory can advance understandings of sexuality education’s capacity to effect social change. Despite its inclusion of LGBTQ youth, FoSE’s reliance on scientific discourse forecloses possibilities for students to experience and learn about queerness and sexual subjectivity in sexuality education classrooms. I explore how FoSE’s limitations are entangled with the possibilities it imagines for students’ sexual subjectivities.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



Chair, Thesis Committee

5.21.16

Date

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In 2011, organizers and advocates from the leading sexual health organizations Answer, Advocates for Youth, and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) met to create the first proposed federal standards for comprehensive sexuality education in the United States—the Future of Sex Education (FoSE). Committed to providing “evidence-informed, age-appropriate, and theory-driven” sexual health information to youth across the country, FoSE has garnered support from sexuality educators and policy-makers alike (FoSE 2011:6; Shah 2012). It has received backing from politically powerful health organizations across the country, including the American School Health Association and the Guttmacher Institute, which heralded it as “just what is needed for this country at this time” (FoSE 2011; Boonstra 2012:6). The Guttmacher Institute has also praised FoSE as both “progressive *and* pragmatic” (emphasis theirs), arguing that it represents the “best thinking from experts in the field” (Boonstra 2012:2), while journalists have expressed hope that FoSE will be adopted into schools under the “hopefully progressive [Obama] administration” (Marty 2010). FoSE has certainly been critiqued by organizations committed to abstinence-only sexuality education, which have argued that sexuality education standards should not be decided at the federal level and that FoSE does not adequately stress abstinence (Shah 2012); however, the breadth of FoSE’s support has far outreached its criticisms.

Evidence-informed “progressive sexuality education” is nothing new (Rasmussen 2016). FoSE’s creation was engendered by a history of organizations’, advocates’, and policy-makers’ attempts to extend the reach of comprehensive sexuality education.

Organizations like GLSEN have previously called for LGBTQ- (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer) inclusion in K-12 education and the increased presence of Gay-Straight Alliances in schools (GLSEN 2016), and SIECUS has helped shape policy supporting comprehensive, evidence-informed sexuality education (SIECUS 2016). Currently, FoSE represents the strongest voice on the political left's particular vision for sexuality education that stems from these efforts. Encompassing issues like sexual orientation and gender identity, pregnancy options (including abortion), and contraception, FoSE moves beyond abstinence-only rhetoric common in sexuality education policies and represents endeavors to include LGBTQ youth in sexuality education. This inclusion represents FoSE's intervention in sexuality education policies to consider the needs of a group not typically affirmed in sexuality education classrooms (Schalet et al. 2014).

This intervention, however, gives rise to the need for new understandings of how queerness functions in LGBTQ-inclusive sexuality education policies and the impact of queer understandings in the classroom on students' abilities to develop sexual subjectivity. Queerness, in its "ambivalence toward sexual categorization," strays from LGBTQ identity politics and describes a more ambiguous understanding of sexuality unbound by categorical imperatives (Stein and Plummer 1994:181). In this paper, I conduct a queer analysis of FoSE's standards, deconstructing the assumptions embedded in knowledge-making practices surrounding sexuality and problematizing systems of categorization (Sedgwick 1990; Seidman 1996; Myerson et al. 2007).

My focus is how the standards attempt to broaden the scope of traditional “evidence-based” sexuality education policies and how sociological feminist analyses and queer theory can advance understandings of sexuality education’s capacity to effect social change. I begin by considering the politics of sexuality education, situating FoSE within the rise of scientific, evidence-based policies that rely on their apparent objectivity. I then explore FoSE’s intervention in comprehensive sexuality education standards, seeking to understand its contribution to progressive narratives of sexuality education. Then, I examine what FoSE’s intervention does not allow for, exploring the ways in which LGBTQ-inclusive sexuality education can foreclose possibilities for students to access queerness in classrooms and develop sexual subjectivity, finally calling for new understandings of how sexuality education can expand students’ access to queerness.

THE RISE OF EVIDENCE-BASED STANDARDS

Sexuality education practice and policy continues to be contested in local school board meetings and national policy arenas (Irvine 2002; Fields 2008; Jones 2011). According to a survey conducted in 2004 by National Public Radio (NPR), the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University, 67 percent of parents believe that the federal government should fund comprehensive sexuality education that includes information about contraceptives (p. 7). Despite this, abstinence-only sexuality education curricula have (until recently) received the most federal funding and therefore been the most

prominent offerings in US public schools (Santelli 2006; Fields 2008; Franklin and Dotger 2011).

In 2016, President Obama cut funding for abstinence-only sexuality education programs from the federal budget and channeled more federal money into comprehensive programs, allowing many schools to garner the financial support they needed in order to adopt comprehensive sexuality education curricula for the first time (WITW Staff 2016). President Obama's changes to the federal budget reflect a broader shift in favor of comprehensive sexuality education in the United States. At the heart of this shift has been another shift in ideas about sexuality education: notions of evidence-based standards, or standards rooted in medical accuracy, now enjoy "cultural authority" (Fine and McClelland 2006; Schalet et al. 2014).

Evidence-based sexuality education standards conventionally draw on scientific evidence that focuses on preventing teen pregnancy, the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and young people's engagement in "sexual risk behaviors" (determined by number of sexual partners, condom use, and rates of sexual activity) (Schalet et al. 2014). This risk-oriented approach to teaching about sexuality, seen throughout scientific discourse adopted in classrooms, reinforces "compulsory heterosexuality" among students through its deployment of reproductive heteronormative frameworks for understanding sex and sexuality (Rich 1980; Butler 1996; Schalet et al. 2014).

On one hand, evidence-based discourse limits teachers' lessons to a scientific perspective, leaving students to learn about pleasure, subjectivity, and agency through other venues. However, these lessons persist beyond the "formal curricula"; teachers subject students to the "implicit messages" embedded in their lessons, or "hidden curricula" (Becker 1961; Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte 1995; Fields 2008:71-72). Lessons that focus on scientific discourse may also obscure talk about agency and pleasure and reinforce sexist and heterosexist assumptions about sexuality. By centralizing the science of reproduction in understandings of sexuality, sexuality education affirms reproductive heterosexuality as normative sexuality and offers little sexual health information to those embodying marginalized sexual identities or engaging in non-reproductive sex (Martin 1991).

These potential dangers include increased transmission of STIs and unwanted pregnancy—the very things evidence-based sexuality education claims to prevent—as well as other less discussed but equally important consequences, including decreased sexual agency, pleasure, and communication (Lewis 2010; Santelli et al. 2006). Centralizing reproduction is particularly troublesome since reproductive science "produces intelligible 'sex' by imposing compulsory heterosexuality on the description of bodies" (Butler 1996:67). Evidence-based sexuality education's focus on human reproduction ignores LGBTQ issues in the classroom and renders heterosexuality the only form of intelligible sex, affirming that one's cultural intelligibility is dependent on their being "coherently sexed" in normative ways (Butler 1996; Fields 2008). Normative

is not only heterosexual, but also masculine—that is, “constructed through the abjection and erasure of the feminine” (Butler 1996:67-68). Sexuality education obscures desire in classrooms and acknowledges reproductive sexuality as the only legitimate form of sexuality (Fine 1988).

The heteronormative paradigm grounding much sexuality education limits evidence-based curricula’s abilities to include possibilities for understanding and engaging with young people’s sexual subjectivities, LGBTQ issues, and the structural inequalities that shape students’ sexual experiences (Bay-Cheng 2003; Cianciotto and Cahill 2003; Sanchez 2012; Schalet et al. 2014). By relying on scientific discourse that focuses on pregnancy, STIs, and “sexual risk-behaviors,” evidence-based standards reinforce a risk-oriented approach to teaching and learning about sexuality, reaffirming a health/risk binary that asserts some aspects of sexuality as healthy and others as risky (Schalet 2011). This approach indicates a commitment to scientific understandings of sexuality that are largely uninfluenced by feminist scholarship. Some standards—and FoSE is one important example—have attempted to broaden the scope of evidence-based curricula by including topics not typically covered in sexuality education. However, such a scope relies on the assumed authority of scientific evidence and supports a heteronormative approach to producing knowledge that risks devaluing knowledge created outside a post-positivist framework (Holmes et al. 2006; Zeeman et al. 2014:102). An evidence-based framing affirms the authority of science and obscures queer notions that knowledge claims are ultimately unstable—that is, “embodied, performative ...

socially constructed and culturally mediated” (Zeeman et al. 2014:102; see also Haraway 1988; Hill Collins 1990; Fields et al. 2014).

By reifying the authority of scientific evidence, evidence-based standards exemplify the danger of “embedded science” in sexuality education (McClelland and Fine 2008). In their analysis of sexuality education evaluations, Sara McClelland and Michelle Fine (2008) describe embedded science as scientific discourse employed in curricula that “pass[es] without critique” due to its alignment with “already existing ideology” (p. 53). Embedded science dominates evidence-based sexuality education curricula and relies on its apparent objectivity. McClelland and Fine (2008) identify concerns with sexuality education policy’s embracing of embedded science, arguing that “when evaluation research is overly embedded, it tends to be dominated by political ideologies” that often go unexamined (p. 50). Traditionally, abstinence-only sexuality education curricula has utilized embedded science to legitimize cultural norms surrounding sexuality that have historically been tied to whiteness and class privilege (Bay-Cheng 2003; Fields 2008; García 2012). Embedded science within evidence-based comprehensive standards serves to reinforce risk-based notions of youth sexuality that yield similar consequences.

A queer critique of such a framework illuminates the power relations rooted in the apparent authority of scientific evidence (Zeeman et al. 2014). By resting on the “myth of objectivity,” evidence-based standards riddled with embedded science foreclose possibilities to examine the cultural beliefs that lend scientific knowledge authority and

devalue other potential authorities on sexuality (Fifield and Letts 2014:398; Zeeman et al. 2014). By relying on the cultural authority of scientific discourse, authors of evidence-based standards limit opportunities for students to be understood as “sexual knowers”—authorities on their own sexualities, sexual experiences, and understandings (Fields 2008:80; see also Epstein 2008). By doing so, they limit opportunities for classrooms to engage with students’ lived experiences and foster students’ sexual subjectivities—fundamental to young people developing self-reflection and agency (Tolman 2002; Fields 2008; Tolman 2012).

Deborah Tolman (2012) describes individuals as having sexual subjectivity when they understand themselves as sexual beings and have sexual agency (see also hooks 1988). Young people’s abilities to understand their sexualities and assert themselves as sexual subjects is fundamental in their abilities to develop sexual subjectivity and understand themselves as agentic subjects of their sexual narratives, since it allows them to identify themselves as experts of their own sexualities (hooks 1988; Tolman 2002; Fields 2008; Tolman 2012). The presumed authority of embedded science within evidence-based standards, therefore, poses a threat to young people’s abilities to understand themselves as such experts. If educators and policy-makers understand young people as sexual knowers, understandings of sex and sexuality may exceed a heteronormative framework (Fields 2006; Fields 2008:80).

Queer efforts to assert such understandings and destabilize the authority of scientific discourse shed light on the “credibly struggles” inherent in knowledge-making

practices (Epstein 1998). Laura Mamo (2008) discusses queer reproductive practices' ability to delink "reproduction from heterosexual intercourse," thus challenging the authority of scientific discourse rooted in "hegemonic foundational assumptions" of compulsory heterosexuality (p. 22; Rich 1980). However, queer attempts to disrupt the heteronormative framework in which evidence-based sexuality education is situated are also flawed. Queer theories attempt to deconstruct normative binaries—for example, health/risk, man/woman, female/male—in order to destabilize master narratives that reinforce compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980; Butler 1996; Sullivan 2003). However, the opposition to sexuality education's reliance on heteronormative binaries risks reinforcing binary thinking (Smith 2010; Fifield and Letts 2014).

In their exploration of science education and queer theories, Steve Fifield and Will Letts (2014) invite scholars to embody more ambivalence when approaching the deconstruction of normalizing binaries, arguing that sexuality and gender identity politics (largely rooted in normative binaries) have an ability to create political change that renders "queering ... paradoxically alluring and irritating" (p. 394). Jessica Fields, Jen Gilbert, and Michelle Miller (2014) express a similar desire for ambiguity and ambivalence in the politics of sexuality education, calling for scholars to "allow ... for an expansive approach to learning and knowing that opens with and sustains questions," rather than reinforce binary thinking (p. 384; see also Gilbert 2010 and Fields 2013). This ambivalence is particularly imperative in understanding risk, which Jessica Fields and Deborah Tolman (2006) point out is a "necessary part of life," and can thus be

understood as compatible with, rather than the opposite of, “health” (p. 72; Schalet 2011; Fields et al. 2014). With these understandings in mind, I practice ambivalence in my navigation of FoSE’s intervention in traditional understandings of evidence-based sexuality education curricula. I explore the ways in which FoSE both relies on a heteronormative framework for teaching and learning about sexuality that is dependent upon embedded science and resists the limitations of such a framework by broadening the scope of evidence-based sexuality education to include information about LGBTQ students in its standards.

EMERGING UNDERSTANDINGS OF EVIDENCE

The inclusion of such information falls within FoSE’s authors’ commitment to “clear, consistent and straightforward guidelines” for comprehensive sexuality education, informed by a wider variety of scientific discourse than traditional evidence-based curricula (FoSE 2011:9). The standards also represent an attempt to address social inequalities that stem from unequal access to sexual health information (FoSE 2011). The Guttmacher Institute reports that fewer than half of states (twenty-four plus the District of Columbia) require that their schools teach sexuality education (see Figure 1), and only eighteen states (plus the District of Columbia) require that when sexuality education is taught, their schools cover contraception (see Figure 2). States that mandate sexuality education and cover contraception tend to be located on the East or West Coast (see Figures 1 and 2), leaving schools in midwestern and southeastern areas of the country

Figure 2. Contraception Coverage Requirements by State

- - Covered
- Not covered



As Figure 3 indicates, over half of states (twenty-six, most of which are located in the south-east and mid-west) require that health education classes stress abstinence, and nineteen states mandate that sexuality and health curricula stress the importance of sex only within marriage (Guttmacher Institute 2016). While some states currently require school districts to address contraceptives, pregnancy options (including abortion), and gender and sexual identity, most do not (FoSE 2011; Guttmacher Institute 2016). FoSE's implementation in US policy would expand the role and scope of sexuality education in most states.

specialists to teach the classes (most sexuality education courses are taught by non-specialists) (FoSE 2011; Parsad et al. 2012). By writing standards that address students throughout elementary, middle, and high school, FoSE calls for sexuality education to follow a trajectory that more closely mirrors other non-standardized courses available to students (FoSE 2011).

While topics traditionally covered in evidence-based sexuality education—for example, risk-oriented sexual health issues like pregnancy, STI transmission, and sexual “risk behaviors”—are central to FoSE, the document’s authors also demonstrate a commitment to expanding evidence-based knowledge by including information on LGBTQ issues (FoSE 2011:7; Schalet et al. 2014:1595). The document recognizes LGBTQ students as having been fundamentally underserved in sexuality education’s consistently heterosexist framework. Again, state-level policy is illustrative. While nearly three quarters of parents believe that sexual orientation should be addressed in middle and high school sexuality education classes (NPR, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Kennedy School 2004), only thirteen states require that schools provide information about sexual orientation in sexuality education classes (see Figure 4). Of those thirteen states, six require information on sexual orientation to be “negative” (Guttmacher Institute 2016). Arizona, for example, requires that schools cannot “promote” a “homosexual lifestyle,” while Oklahoma mandates that teachers can only discuss “homosexual activity” in relation to “the AIDS virus” (Guttmacher Institute 2016). This assumed link between homosexuality and HIV and AIDS is a common narrative in

legitimacy to the notion that violence is a natural (but ignorant and morally wrong) reaction when confronted by deviant sexualities. FoSE reinforces this link.

Mary Lou Rasmussen (2016) describes “anti-homophobia education” as education that addresses the ways in which “young people, teachers, and teacher educators are trained to think about what it means to be tolerant of people who claim diverse forms of embodiment, gender, and sexual identity” (p. 22). FoSE represents a mainstream effort to assert “anti-homophobia education” in schools. Its authors include information on LGBTQ issues at every grade level in the standards—ranging from students “identify[ing] different kinds of family structures” in kindergarten (HR.2.CC.1) to “differentiat[ing] between biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression” at the end of high school (ID.12.CC.1). They also challenge students to reflect on tolerance and acceptance across sexual differences: by the end of fifth grade, students should be able to “demonstrate ways students can work together to promote dignity and respect for all people” (ID.5.ADV.1), and by the end of twelfth grade, students should be able to “advocate for school policies and programs that promote dignity and respect for all” (ID.12.ADV.1).

FoSE’s anti-homophobic approach—perhaps one of the standards’ biggest interventions in contemporary sexuality education curricula—frames LGBTQ youth as at-risk of bullying and homophobia and in need of institutional intervention through school-based sexuality education. While prioritizing such considerations reinforces reductive stereotypes of LGBTQ youth, it also indicates a commitment to students’

development of understandings of sexuality and gender outside of heterosexual, cisgender binaries. Students' abilities to think critically outside of such binaries also contribute to their development of sexual self-reflection and subjectivity. By including LGBTQ issues in the standards, even in a reductive approach, FoSE's authors allow for such a development to take place in the classroom.

Such critical thinking skills would support students making "active sexual choices" and asserting themselves as agentic sexual actors—necessary steps toward sexual subjectivity (Tolman 2002:5-6). FoSE's authors indicate a commitment to sexuality education's role in aiding students in developing the decision-making skills required to make such choices. Beginning in grades 6-8, students should be able to "demonstrate the use of a decision-making model" for various sexual health decisions, including "choices about contraception" (PR.12.DM.1) and "choices about safer sex practices, including abstinence and condoms" (SH.12.DM.1). FoSE's authors call also for students to reflect on their sexual choices by "evaluat[ing] possible outcomes of decisions [they] might make" (PD.8.DM.1)—again, characteristics of youth with sexual agency and subjectivity.

However, sexual desire—missing from FoSE's framework of understanding youth sexuality—is also "at the heart of sexual subjectivity" (Tolman 2002:5-6). FoSE's authors diminish sexual desire's role in young people's lives by conflating sexual orientation with romantic attraction. By the end of 5th grade, students are expected to be able to "define sexual orientation as a romantic attraction to an individual of the same

gender or of a different gender” (ID.5.CC.1). By muting sexual desire through conflating it with romantic attraction, FoSE’s authors affirm heteronormative notions of monogamous love and romance. Such notions risk foreclosing possibilities for youth to understand themselves as sexual actors, and therefore, to develop sexual subjectivity (Tolman 2002).

The muting of LGBTQ sexualities, specifically, is seen throughout the standards. In the glossary, FoSE’s authors define “sexual intercourse” as “when a penis is inserted into a vagina, mouth or anus” (FoSE 2011:40). Recognizing oral and anal sex within school-based sexuality education in itself transverses the scope of traditional sexuality education curricula and opens possibilities for understanding queer sexual practices—that is, sex outside of the confines of penile-vaginal sex. However, FoSE’s penis-centered approach to understanding sexual intercourse dismisses sex between a range of people without penises, including cisgender women and many transmen (since, although some transmen undergo genital surgery, most do not [Schilt 2010]). By doing so, FoSE’s authors reinforce the idea that such relationships exist in relation to love, romance, and relationships—not sexuality.

Hand-in-hand with FoSE’s disregard of sexual desire is its implicit disregard of sexual pleasure. Not only do FoSE’s standards never discuss pleasure, but they also advocate an understanding of human bodies that allows little room for pleasure, particularly for women and girls. One of FoSE’s seven main “topics” is “Anatomy & Physiology” (FoSE 2011). In this section, the only anatomy or physiology that FoSE’s

authors address is that of “male and female reproductive systems” (AP.5.CC.1; AP.5.AI.1; AP.8.CC.1; AP.12.CC.1). FoSE’s authors’ commitment to sexuality education focused on the science of reproduction threatens to diminish discussions of sexual pleasure in students’ lives. Not only does orienting an understanding of bodies around the gender binary and science of reproduction limit possibilities for LGBTQ and gender non-conforming students to experience sexual embodiment, but it also may have particular consequences for girls. Boys have easy access to lessons about men’s organs fundamental to both reproduction and pleasure (e.g., the penis), but lessons focused on reproduction suggest girls may learn only about women’s organs fundamental to reproduction (e.g., the uterus and ovaries). The absence of clitorises and other parts of genitals in female anatomy “reduces sexuality to an issue of reproduction in women’s and girl’s lives” (Fields 2008:103). This absence also has consequences for individuals who do not identify as girls or women but who have clitorises (including transmen and some gender non-conforming individuals), and contributes to sexuality education’s diminishing of queer sexual pleasure. Exploring sexuality through a framework of desire and pleasure rather than scientific discourse also sheds light on the “cultures, actors, narratives, metaphors, analogies, and facts” within embedded science that ignore certain bodies (McClelland and Fine 2008; Fifield and Letts 2014:404).

Orienting the science of reproduction at the center of sexuality education also reinforces ideals of female sexual passivity. Biological discourse routinely casts women as passive agents in reproduction (Schatten and Schatten 1984; Martin 1991). Mainstream

biology textbooks, for example, do so through conceptualizing sperm and eggs as embodying stereotypical gender roles (Martin 1991). Such textbooks portray sperm as aggressive and agentic, describing them as “penetrating” eggs, and eggs as passive agents who function as “sperm receptor[s]” (Martin 1991:495). In addition to conflating cis-girls with all girls, abstinence-only curricula that focus on the biology of reproduction alone reinforces girls as passive agents not only in their decisions about whether or not to engage in sex, but also in the biology of reproduction itself. Since mainstream narratives surrounding women of color and transwomen characterize them as sexually excessive and aggressive (Collins 1990; Collins 2005), such depictions indicate that reproduction-focused curricula are only considering certain girls: ones who are white and cisgender. FoSE, even as it tries to move away from abstinence-only instruction, echoes this thinking and therefore risks depicting a narrow consideration of girls as sexually passive individuals and hinders their development as sexual subjects.

FoSE’s anti-homophobia efforts also deviate from traditional evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education in their inclusion of evidence regarding the impact of larger social structures and systems of inequality on young people’s sexual health. Social inequalities such as poverty have a negative impact on youth sexual health since poor youth have less access to resources than non-impooverished youth (Duncan and Rodgers 1988; Brooks-Gunn et al. 1997; Dinkelman et al. 2008; Duncan et al. 2010). Sexuality education has largely ignored the social structures that impact youth sexuality, such as poverty, racism, gender inequity, and heterosexism (Schalet et al. 2014), and sometimes

reinforces damaging stereotypes of young people of color that stem from such structural inequalities (Fine and McClelland 2006; Fields 2008; García 2012). Traditional evidence-based sexuality education looks to individual behaviors, not the social structures that impact such behaviors, as its object of analysis (Schalet et al. 2014). FoSE's authors attempt to broaden sexuality education's scope by including information on social and cultural factors that impact young people's sexual health and sexual decision-making, including the impact "friends, family, media, society, and culture" have on sexuality (ID.2.INF.1). By including such standards in the curriculum, FoSE's authors indicate a desire for young people to understand their sexualities as situated within a vast and complicated social context.

FoSE's expansion of evidence-based sexuality education curricula's scope has no doubt allowed for the standards to address issues that affect young people and that lie outside of traditional evidence-based sexuality education curricula. However, its reliance on the authority of scientific evidence affirms the assumption that such evidence is predictable. This exemplifies the danger of embedded science in sexuality education: its ability to go unchallenged due to its apparent objectivity (McClelland and Fine 2008). While the standards themselves are contested between comprehensive and abstinence-only sexuality education advocates (Shah 2012), the scientific framework that FoSE's authors use as a basis for teaching and learning about sexuality remains largely unopposed by sexuality educators and policy-makers.

Although feminist traces are evident throughout the document (for example, understandings of abortion as a viable pregnancy option and the importance of affirmative consent), FoSE insistently prioritizes scientific evidence over feminist calls for more nuanced understandings of sexuality outside of a health/risk binary (Schalet 2011). Throughout the standards, FoSE's authors cite quantitative, science- and risk-based studies that detail conventional risk-oriented approaches to understanding youth sexuality, conducted by organizations like the CDC, the National Survey of Family Growth, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, and the Office of the Surgeon General (FoSE 2011:7-8). While FoSE may extend the conventional boundaries of evidence-based standards by including topics outside of the traditional sexuality education canon, its understanding of the scientific discourse that underwrites such evidence remains grounded.

WHAT'S QUEER ABOUT LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE SEX ED?

FoSE's narrow consideration of evidence, produced through heteronormative and cis-normative post-positivist frameworks, limits students' abilities to understand and embody queer sexualities (which exist outside of identity politics). The authors attempt to anticipate a *future* (of sexuality education as well as of youth more broadly) that relies on systems of categorization bound by a heteronormative framework of scientific evidence and narrows understandings of queer sexualities in the classroom.

While sexuality education's treatment of queerness has no doubt changed in recent years, one thing has remained consistent: policy and practice routinely characterize queerness as tragic. FoSE falls into such a trap, with its authors appearing to consider queerness primarily when arguing that comprehensive sexuality education is needed in schools in order to address harassment of LGBTQ students. FoSE's "Rationale for Sexuality Education in Public Schools" section illustrates such a characterization:

According to the 2009 National School Climate Survey, nearly 9 out of 10 lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) students reported being harassed in the previous year. Two-thirds of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe and nearly one-third skipped at least one day of school because of concerns about their personal safety. LGBT students who reported frequent harassment also suffered from lower grade point averages. (FoSE 2011:7)

The focus on harassment, safety, and suffering resonates with familiar narratives of struggling LGBTQ youth. As such, the language is likely compelling to many FoSE readers. However, by addressing and understanding LGBTQ students as characterized and shaped by issues of bullying, harassment, and suicide, FoSE's authors provide space for the "hidden curriculum" that queerness is marked by tragedy, loss, and heartbreak.

Such understandings are common in evidence-based sexuality education. While an abundance of work conveys nuanced understandings of young people's queer sexualities (see, for example, Fields 2008 and García 2012), most recent research on

LGBTQ youth focuses on bullying, harassment, and suicide (see, for example, Bailey 2015; Bratsis 2015; Espelage et al. 2015; Kessel Schneider et al. 2015). There is little room for evidence-based sexuality education to engage with queerness without reinforcing dominant and familiar tropes that characterize LGBTQ youth as tragic (Schalet et al. 2014). This evidence simply does not exist.

These conceptualizations engender an “evaded curriculum” in classrooms that goes unaddressed (Fields 2008): some people are queer and lead happy and fulfilled lives, uncharacterized by calamity. Unlike a “hidden curriculum”—what students are taught through the hidden assumptions embedded in their lessons—“evaded curriculum” describes the topics that teachers inadequately address or completely ignore in classrooms (Fields 2008:72). By ignoring queerness outside of tragedy and risk, sexuality educators may reinforce damaging stereotypes to students. In order to stop evading positive aspects of queerness in the classrooms, teachers must explore more nuanced understandings of queerness that affirm a range of experiences, rather than reinforcing stereotypes of the tragic queer youth.

FoSE’s inclusion of such tropes reinforces a prevalent understanding of queerness across a sexual life course: for young people (particularly in schools), sexuality and queerness presents oneself with anxiety and troubles, and it is only in adulthood that sexuality (and in particular, queer sexuality) can contribute to one’s happiness. While FoSE’s authors maintain that “sexual development [is] a normal, natural, healthy part of human development,” they also suggest throughout the document that sex and sexuality

is only “natural” and “healthy” in the realm of adulthood (FoSE 2011:6). In its “Rationale for Sexuality Education in Public Schools” section, FoSE’s authors argue that comprehensive sexuality education should be promoted in schools, since

Evaluations of comprehensive sexuality education programs show that many of these programs can help youth delay the onset of sexual activity, reduce the frequency of sexual activity, reduce the number of sexual partners, and increase condom and contraception use. (FoSE 2011:7)

By indicating that the goal of the standards is to reduce what they refer to as “health-risk behaviors” among youth, FoSE’s authors repeatedly characterize sex among young people as risky (FoSE 2011:7). The aims not only to delay sexual activity among youth, but also to reduce the frequency of sexual behavior and the number of sexual partners, situates youth sexuality within a health/risk binary and reinforces monogamy as ideal (Schalet 2011). This conceptualization leaves little room for LGBTQ youth to develop sexual subjectivity in the present, as it reinforces “healthy” sexuality as only existing in the future, specifically in adulthood.

By presenting both happiness and sexual health as something that LGBTQ youth can experience only in the future, FoSE fosters a youth-negative approach to queer sexualities. This approach situates LGBTQ youth at the losing end of an adult/adolescent binary (Gilbert 2014). By perpetuating the notion that youth sex is inherently risky, FoSE’s authors reinforce a dominant narrative in psychological and biological discourse:

adulthood is a developmental life stage that individuals reach, rather than “a cultural discourse to which individuals orient their personal narratives” and understandings of selves (Hammack and Toolis 2014:43; see also Cohler 1982 and Elder 1998). This particular way of understanding adulthood and sexuality simultaneously characterizes youth (and in particular, queer youth) as “not-yet-of-age,” and therefore unpredictable, uncontrollable, and unequipped to make decisions about their sexual health in the present (Lesko 2001:3).

Queer theories are helpful in understanding such characterizations of youth. José Esteban Muñoz (2009) develops a theory of “queer futurity,” arguing that the anticipatory nature of queer political hope situates queer sexualities in the future, as the present is dominated by heteronormative frameworks, or “straight time” (p.22). According to Muñoz (2009), the future does not simply include queers; it is, in fact, primarily a space for queers. When understood through Muñoz’s framework, FoSE’s authors’ depiction of queer sexualities as viable in the future provokes queer utopian imaginaries—imaginaries largely rooted in the hope for an intersectional future that critically analyzes race, class, gender, and sexuality in society (Muñoz 2009). However, this “educated hope”—a constant state of anticipation for a queer future—points to the ambivalence residing within progressive visions of queer sexualities (Muñoz 2009:3). While sexual subjectivity allows students to engage with and understand their sexualities (hooks 1988), such imaginings are always constrained by a hope for the future. The constant search for “something else, something better, something dawning” limits understandings of

queerness (and its place in sexuality education classrooms) in the present (Muñoz 2009:189). Muñoz (2009) is correct in asserting that queerness exists in the realm of the “then and there;” part of FoSE’s limitations stem from its creation within the “here and now.” FoSE’s authors attempt to surmount the here and now, aiming for sexuality education to produce sexually healthy adults in the future, rather than enabling the hope for an intersectional, inclusive future to positively impact sexuality education standards the present. Instead of falling into this trap, schools may affirm young people’s sexualities in the present, fostering understandings of queerness and validating queer temporalities outside of straight time (Muñoz 2009).

Instead of situating queerness within an individuals’ future and conceptualizing youth sexuality as only valuable in its potential to become adult sexuality, sexuality education standards, schools, and teachers can foster imaginings of children and adolescent’s sexual potentialities in the present (Gilbert 2014). By doing so, they may offer all students’ sexualities (and the conflicts embedded in them) a space in the classroom. Such space has not always been available to students and can foster their development of sexual subjectivity (Gilbert 2014:94). By understanding young people as sexual actors and knowers, rather than potential adults, sexuality educators may imagine possibilities for queerness in youth that destabilizes the adult/adolescent binary that reinforces a youth-negative approach to teaching and learning about sex and sexuality.

CONCLUSIONS: THE FUTURE OF QUEERNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

FoSE provides new understandings of evidence within sexuality education, expanding comprehensive sexuality education's scope by creating a space for LGBTQ topics in the classroom. Such understandings rely on scientific, heteronormative frameworks for examining sex and sexuality that restrict queer sexualities to the realm of an individual future that is embodied in adulthood, rather than a social future (as envisioned by Muñoz). Such restrictions limit possibilities for exploring queerness in classrooms and restrain the development of students' sexualities and sexual subjectivities. Sexuality educators instead may implement more ambiguous and nuanced understandings of sexualities in the classroom that may allow for new possibilities for students' sexualities.

Such understandings call for a different kind of sexuality education policy advocacy—one that moves beyond expanding the scope of scientific evidence in sexuality education curricula. Policy-makers' efforts to expand the possibilities of "progressive" evidence-based sexuality education to include scientific discourse that supports schools' acceptance of LGBTQ identities is not enough. Rather, sexuality education policy should reflect a desire to expand understandings of sexuality itself, rather than expand understandings of evidence.

Undoubtedly, sexuality education should affirm the identities and stop the harassment of LGBTQ youth. However, by only understanding queer sexualities in relation to LGBTQ students, LGBTQ-inclusive sexuality education limits possibilities for all students to access and embody queerness, regardless of who they are partnered with.

Sexuality education may help destabilize systems of categorization that inhibit students' understandings of a more complicated sexual story. Such stories may flourish in the classroom—with queer students resisting biological essentialist discourses common within gay and lesbian identity politics and heterosexual students understanding their different-sex attraction as unstable and socially constructed—describing the lived experiences of all students whose sexualities do not fit neatly into intelligible boxes. This kind of sexual subjectivity moves beyond young people simply identifying themselves as sexual agents and calls for understandings of sexuality and identity that allow room for ambiguity as well as ambivalence.

Such considerations also move beyond FoSE, sexuality education, and schools as sites of such development, and illuminate prevailing narratives surrounding queerness, youth, and sexuality in society. FoSE exemplifies a larger effort on behalf of politically powerful, progressive adults to imagine a future for young people—one that is entwined with identity politics and scientific, heteronormative notions of “healthy” sexuality. Youth and adults alike need discourses that affirm the lived experiences of youth and grapple with the ambivalence, conflict, and ambiguity embedded in sexuality.

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