

LGBTQIA+ Sex Education and Queer Pedagogy

Roland Del Mundo

University of California Davis

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The outbreak of sexually transmitted diseases has been a massive issue in the LGBTQIA+ community despite awareness efforts. The underlying solution that exists through the transmission of these diseases is prevention. In addition to finding a cure for these diseases, a methodical approach includes integrating information and perspectives for LGBTQIA+ youth into sex education curriculum. Because it is not required for sex education to be inclusive of these unique identities, sex education remains cis- and heteronormative. One main question that exists is how can sex education in schools be more inclusive towards LGBTQIA+ youth? The elements of sex and gender literacy appear to be vague when viewing them through the context of LGBTQIA+ youth. As a society, it remains of utmost importance that we look at our existing resources and identify solutions that may aid the community as a whole.

Certain sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that are apparent within the LGBTQIA+ community also carry heavy stigmas. HIV/AIDS remains the main STD that carries the largest stigma within the LGBTQIA+ community. The idea of HIV remains symbolic to the LGBTQIA+ community, representative of its difficult past and previous social movements. Our depictions regarding HIV/AIDS may result from “ideas about HIV that first appeared in the early 1980s ... [and] the lack of information and awareness combined with outdated beliefs” (CDC, 2017). These “outdated beliefs” consist of the general belief that LGBTQIA+ behavior remains “promiscuous.” This prevailing stereotype resulted in the harm of many LGBTQIA+ individuals during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s; the spread of these diseases was due to these risk-taking behaviors. Doctors and public health officials approached the issue regarding HIV/AIDS differently due to the “prejudice that comes with labeling an individual as part of a group that is believed to be socially unacceptable” (CDC, 2019). The resulting stigma has also resulted in the

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non-cooperation of LGBTQIA+ individuals within sex education and resulting ignorance regarding this disease. Eliminating the stigma may potentially broaden one's sex literacy, allowing for greater inclusion of individuals who possess these incurable diseases. While HIV may act as a tool of oppression, the stigma around this disease must be shattered in to promote inclusivity of all LGBTQIA+ individuals, which in turn may alter the perception of youth on what it means to be part of the community.

While resources remain generally available to the LGBTQIA+ community, certain subcommunities that consist of people of color are more adversely affected by these health disparities. Although a minority group in itself, the dominance of certain racial subgroups has the potential to put others at a disadvantage. This exists to the point where certain racial subgroups and “transfeminine POC are much more likely to be androphobic and at high HIV risk compared to Euro American transfeminine people” (Hwanhg & Nuttbrock, 2014). This is one of the many ways in which varying identities are subjugated to disapproval from the community as a whole. The derivation of this risk may come from the belief that “HIV risk may be, at least in part, traceable back to origins of colonization, slavery, and genocide” (Hwahng & Nuttbrock, 2014). The disproportion of risk that exists within the community may be attributed to several factors: lack of access to resources, lower-income, and higher involvement in risk-taking behavior. The community itself must support these groups in to develop equality amongst the latter. Positive support may result in an even broader expanse of inclusivity within education as a whole, attributing to greater advocacy for LGBTQIA+ youth.

Race	Prior Studies	NYC Study
African American	41–63	48
Latina	23–29	49
Asian/Pacific Islander	4–27	20
Euro American	3–22	3

(Nemoto et al., 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Clements-Nolle et al., 2001; Kenagy, 2005; Kellogg et al., 2001; Nuttbrock et al., 2009a).

Table 1: HIV Prevalence of Transfeminine People by Racial Categories (Percentages)

Public depictions of LGBTQIA+ conduct have influenced youth and their perceptions of what expectations exist within the community. Some popular depictions of LGBTQIA+ youth include the common depiction of a “gay, white, youthful male” (Drazenovich, 2015). With this development of an ideal stereotype, this promotes exclusion of other LGBTQIA+ individuals who do not feel they identify with the view of the ‘common gay.’ These depictions may affect youth to the point where these “popular media depictions of LGBTQ identities serve to facilitate subtle strategies of containment and ghettoizing” (Drazenovich, 2015). These depictions may result in negative outlooks on how LGBTQIA+ students view themselves which may result in lower self-esteem and negative outlooks on life. Ignorance for the diversity that lies within the LGBTQIA+ community can drastically alter one’s perspectives and how they view their participation within the community itself. The development of these stereotypes has resulted in “a lack of access to information about trans identities [that] may have contributed to a delay in their gender transition” (Hobaica, 2019). Individuals and their lack of gender literacy can potentially result in the further exclusion of these subcommunities. An inclusive sex education could resolve the issue of a dominating stereotype; education of various gender identities could potentially promote inclusivity of all unique identities. However, the community itself must

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shatter these expectations to promote inclusivity of all LGBTQIA+ identities in order to promote a further inclusive education that is not only targeted towards the stereotypical gay male.

In most instances, the issues regarding sex education revolve around the political nature of LGBTQIA+ support in modern America. Although laws exist that prevent discrimination against LGBTQIA+ youth, some laws exist that work to disadvantage the LGBTQIA+ community. Of the twenty-three states that require schools to teach sex education, “four of those states requires that teachers only include negative information on LGBTQ identity” (McNamara, 2016). By dismissing the concerns of LGBTQIA+ students, these states are promoting the anti-gay agenda that may potentially destroy the idea of inclusivity. However, Crowell states that “educators ultimately must be the ones to implement these ant-gay sex education curriculums” (Crowell, 2019). While educators possess the power to teach what they choose, educators should keep the best interest of all students in mind. If an educator could recognize that they are subjugating a certain minority group to further torment required by law, they should also be smart enough to recognize that some of this curriculum could be excluded from their classes as a potential solution. While some acceptance may arise from educators that do support LGBTQIA+ efforts, plain tolerance of the LGBTQIA+ communities will not be enough to shape the minds of legislators to promote inclusiveness. To make effective decisions, a more eclectic approach should be considered that interprets “human sexuality politically, socially, and culturally” (Drazenovich, 2015). In the looking glass of all these lenses, the light of inclusivity may shine through. Change arises from legislation, and by shaping laws around inclusive sex education, a more inclusive sex education may come forth.

Because the topic of LGBTQIA+ identities and being queer remains highly stigmatized, it is difficult to effectively advocate for a group that remains hidden within youth. A study

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conducted by Hobaica et al. (2019) states that students described their sex education experiences as “gendered, insufficient, and exclusive of trans identities...feeling out of place and lacking knowledge on others’ reproductive systems” (p. 366). To rid the feelings of isolation present within LGBTQIA+ youth, an effective solution would be to have members from the LGBTQIA+ community advocate for youth, providing an individual to share experiences with. The idea that heterosexual individuals can effectively educate LGBTQIA+ students is possible, however, not all are qualified. The reason behind this is that “sexuality is still confusing for adults who never had comprehensive sex education” (McNamara, 2019). Educators lack the necessary sex literacy to educate these students, thus resulting in the exclusion. A shift in the educators’ perspective on sex literacy through potential LGBTQIA+ and sex education training programs could mitigate this issue. With the support of instructors, schools may shift their key roles to “provide information about LGBTQ identities and health... which may reduce stigma and acts of victimization” (Hobaica, 2019). Extending the learning to all educators rather than the students may promote this agenda. With improved instructors, LGBTQIA+ students may continue to feel understood and represented which will hopefully improve participation and activity within these sex education programs.

The actual sex education that is given to LGBTQIA+ students remains extremely limited within various school systems. Most sex education remains heteronormative and cis-gendered, sex that is described between male and female partners exclusively, thus ignoring a large proportion of individuals who do not find these sex topics relevant towards themselves. According to the study conducted by Hobaica et al., “trans individuals have insufficient information regarding their identities and sexual health...which may contribute to the disproportionately high number of adverse health outcomes” (p. 380). If hypothetically sex

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education plans were perfectly implemented within schools, they would remain ineffective as long as no comprehensive information exists. To reduce adversities that may affect LGBTQIA+ students, sex education should effectively incorporate ideas such as LGBTQIA+ sex practices and identities that could further cater to their lack of literacies. By developing a more comprehensive form of sex education that includes LGBTQIA+ discourse, inclusion would arise from this development.

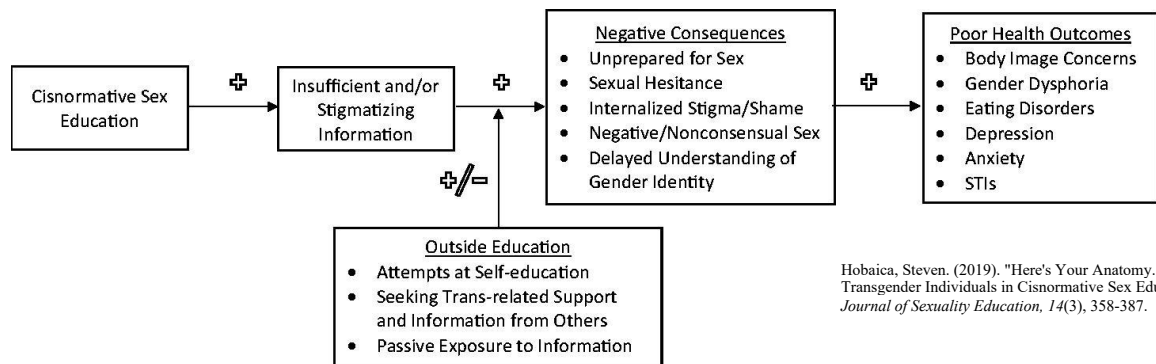


Figure 1: Proposed effected of cisnormative sex education.

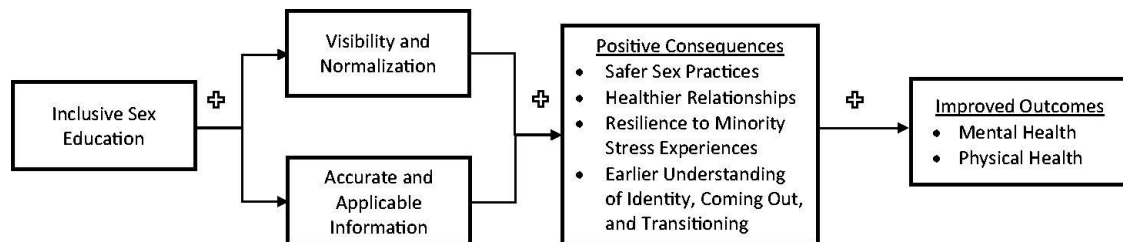


Figure 2: Proposed effects of inclusive sex education.

Hobaica, Steven. (2019). "Here's Your Anatomy...Good Luck": Transgender Individuals in Cisnormative Sex Education. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 14(3), 358-387.

Finally, there are plenty of ways that prove to be effective in spreading LGBTQIA+ resources that may work to promote inclusivity. With the growth of the digital age, more platforms and outlets exist that can further educate youth on these influential topics. Many groups exist that work to support LGBTQIA+ youth: The Trevor Project, Drag Queen Story Hour, etc. all work to support these youth groups. Many of these groups already provide

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information such as infographics or public ads that relate to LGBTQIA+ sex literacy, and by promoting these groups we may further educate the community as a whole. By providing students with more access, “students who are questioning their identities will be allowed to gain an understanding...and seek out appropriate resources when needed” (Hobaica, 2019). Part of the change to sex education curriculum could include radical collaboration across these LGBTQIA+ youth groups along with public schools to support and empower students through their advancement of self-identity. Connecting students within a common network will promote activism within the general youth, a great portion that has been disregarded amongst all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation.

To promote inclusivity of LGBTQIA+ sex education within public schools, an eclectic approach consisting of advocacy and social change is required. We as a society must further recognize the outdated stigmas that affect the LGBTQIA+ community and resolve them as insignificant to our modern issues. Also, to promote further inclusivity within public schools, the community must advocate for its youth through legislation and reaching out to public officials. However, to promote actual change within LGBTQIA+ sex education, the community and its allies must be responsible for acknowledging modern LGBTQIA+ sex practices to promote equality and safety while discussing these sensitive topics. More research is needed on the social aspects of queer identities and how LGBTQIA+ youth development within a critical society. The possibility of ever reaching a truly inclusive curriculum may seem difficult, however, with universal support a simple unity may be created that can potentially assist all youth.

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