No Youth Left Behind! Centering LGBTQ Youth in Sex Education Programming

Who is left out of sexuality education?

Possible impacts of exclusion

- Documented disparities in reproductive and sexual health and trauma among cisgender lesbian and bisexual women ages 15 – 20
- Lack of support for trans-identified youth regarding present/future reproductive health decision-making
- Perpetuating stigma/existing lack of support through silencing

How are LGBTQ youth left out?

- Passive silencing
- Active silencing
- Heterocentricity
- Pathologizing
- Exclusive Language

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Out of Home Care

Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Trauma Survivors
Passive Silencing

LGBTQ discourse is absent from curricula/discussion altogether
- No discussion of LGBTQ relationships
- Language that doesn’t acknowledge LGBTQ people, families, experience
- Gender discussed only in terms of the binary (M or F)

“…”They never mentioned LGBTQ at all”

“…”It was never brought up”

One youth on how passive silencing affects them:

“It kind makes it seem like they’re [LGBTQ individuals] freaks... like aliens or something. [Teachers] don’t really say that there are actually [LGBTQ] people or anything”

Active Silencing

Teachers ignore/avoid LGBTQ topics, or aren’t allowed to discuss
- Lack of access to information
- Constraints of local politics, climate, laws

“They would find some way to get around answering our questions”

“The teacher told us she wasn’t allowed to talk about queer issues”

Youth on how active silencing affects them:

“If [teachers] had talked about gay issues, I would have been less scared in school”

“They [LGBTQ youth] would just hide and they wouldn’t really say anything...just too shy and scared”
Curricula/educators assume that heterosexuality is the ‘norm’

- Lessons focused on vaginal intercourse and pregnancy prevention
- Material not relevant to LGBTQ experiences and needs

"This doesn’t apply to us"

"I didn’t feel that a lot of it had to do with me"

Equating LGBTQ identity with being wrong or harmful

- Only talking about LGBTQ people when discussing HIV/AIDS or other STIs
- Equating LGBTQ identity/families with harmful consequences
- Sexual activity outside of penis-vagina intercourse labeled dangerous or risky

"[We learned that] homosexuality goes with disease"

"We watched a movie about AIDS and that was the only time in the entire sex ed class that we heard anything about the gay community"

Gendered Language

Language that equates a certain body part with a certain gender identity, or assumes there are just two genders

- Boyfriend/girlfriend
- "man’s penis" “woman’s vagina"
- "Men and women"

"The only way a female can get pregnant is if sperm cells enter her vagina and fertilize one of her egg cells"

"Vaginal intercourse between a man and a woman can lead to pregnancy"

"It is both the male and the female’s responsibility to prevent pregnancy"

"Vaginal intercourse refers to a man’s penis in a woman’s vagina"

"STIs, including HIV, can be spread during oral sex on a man or a woman"
The good news: sex ed is an opportunity for change!

Sex education is where a lot of people learn about sexuality and gender identity. If we're inclusive of all genders and sexualities when teaching sex education, the world will be more inclusive and kind to all genders and sexualities...

No youth left behind!

Centering LGBTQ youth at Out Youth

- Youth-led activities
- Collaborate with youth to craft sex ed sessions
- All programming/language inclusive of all genders and sexualities
- Youth create group norms and hold each other accountable
- Banish the binary
- Check assumptions

Strategies for centering LGBTQ youth in sexuality education:

- Use inclusive language
- Separate gender identity from body parts
- Talk about fertility, conception, reproduction in gender neutral terms
- Leave the binary behind (in thinking and teaching)
- Broaden your own understanding of gender and sexuality

Debunking the Gender Binary

- F
- M
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex Assigned at Birth</th>
<th>Gender expression</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What parts were you born with?</td>
<td>How do you show the world how you feel inside?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender identity</th>
<th>Sexual/Romantic orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What gender do you identify with?</td>
<td>Who are you attracted to?</td>
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</table>

### Gendered Language: Examples

- "The only way a female can get pregnant is if sperm cells enter her vagina and fertilize one of her egg cells"
- "Vaginal intercourse between a man and a woman can lead to pregnancy"
- "It is both the male and the female's responsibility to prevent pregnancy"
- "Vaginal intercourse refers to a man's penis in a woman's vagina"
- "STIs, including HIV, can be spread during oral sex on a man or a woman"
Inclusiveness Inventory from Office of Adolescent Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six LGBTQ Inclusivity Constructs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational policies and practices</td>
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<td>Points of entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical space</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff competency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
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<td>Content</td>
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Thank you!

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