

TEACHING MORALITY:
THE GENDERED CONSEQUENCES OF ABSTINENCE-ONLY
SEX EDUCATION

By

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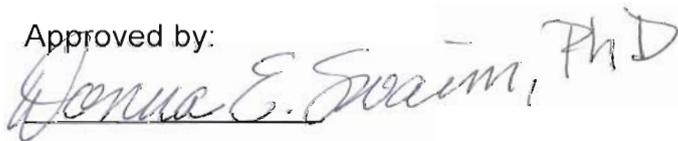
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Abstract

As the ASUA Women's Resource Center Health and Sexuality Committee chair, I oversee our Sex Ed, College Style program, a peer-to-peer education program. Having experienced abstinence-only-until-marriage sex education in high school, I am not surprised by the lack of knowledge and misinformation expressed by University of Arizona students. Through my studies of feminist theories, I came to understand that systems of power and privilege exist in order to maintain male, heteronormative dominance. This paper is an analysis of the role abstinence-only sex education and the Religious Right play in upholding patriarchal values and institutions.

Although my analysis of patriarchy, sexual agency, and the Religious Right come from secondary sources, I chose to do a close reading of abstinence-only curricula used in classrooms around the country. Extensive research has been done on the medical and factual inaccuracies of these curricula, so I limited my analysis to representations of gender and promotions of heteronormativity and conservative Protestantism. These findings were categorized according to processes outlined by feminist scholar Patricia Zavella.

The abstinence-only sex education curricula demonstrated a dedication to representing unequal gendered experiences of sexuality and promoted heteronormativity and conservative Protestant values and institutions. These programs should be understood as an important aspect of the Religious Right's social and political efforts to reassert patriarchal and conservative Protestant hegemony in the United States.

Introduction

Since 1996, funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage sex education programs has increased greatly. These programs have been heavily criticized by medical experts, public health policy makers, and civil rights advocates for their medical and factual inaccuracies and promotion of conservative Protestant values. This paper will explore representations of gender in abstinence-only curricula and will demonstrate that abstinence-only sex education is a critical

step in the Religious Right's sociopolitical efforts to reassert patriarchal and Protestant hegemony in the United States.

Using a feminist lens, this analysis will interrogate the construction of heteronormativity as natural and ideal. In this conception of sexuality, young women bear a disproportionate physical, social, and economic burden, not only for engaging in sexual activity, but for simply existing as a woman. Feminist theory has demonstrated that limiting women's sexual knowledge and controlling women's sexuality are necessary to maintain heteronormative male dominance at the social, political, and economic levels. By limiting young women's sexual knowledge and exposing them to gendered consequences of sex, abstinence-only sex education programs impose patriarchal and conservative Protestant norms on young women; it is through these inequalities of experience that heteronormative male dominance is reproduced.

A Feminist Framework

Feminist scholars have undertaken extensive analysis of the relationship between patriarchy and women's sexuality. In order to maintain male dominance, women's sexuality and sexual knowledge must be managed and repressed. Since the early modern period, with the rise of Western science and capitalism, women's sexual agency has been appropriated by masculinist institutions. Women had previously dominated medical professions, as midwives and practitioners of herbal medicine. The "witch scares" attacked women who held sexual knowledge and practiced traditional medicine; these women were declared to be in violation of "God's will" and were denounced as "witches" who received their knowledge of reproduction and contraception from satan, rather than from their own experience and intelligence (Gordon 2006, 34).

Since the medieval period, contraception and non-procreative sex had been increasingly criminalized; by the twentieth century, women's bodies were well defined as "public territory" (Federici 2004, 89). The criminalization of contraception cause a break in generational knowledge, and when contraception did resurface in the twentieth century, it was not produced by women's knowledge, but was instead male designed, and male controlled (Federici 2004, 92). Women had fallen under the "biological hegemony of the medical profession" and were left divorced from reproductive knowledge as well as their own bodies (Ehrenreich et al. 2006, 79).

As women were denied knowledge of their bodies and excluded from practicing medicine, their labor was disregarded and their bodies valued only for their reproductive capacity. The emerging capitalism of the early modern period only valued production for market, women were barred from waged occupations and homework became invisible. This gendered division of labor fixed women to reproductive work and increased female dependency; although proletariat women were disposed like poor men, their lack of access to wage labor resulted in "chronic poverty, economic dependency, and invisibility as workers" (Federici 2004, 75). By denying women control over their bodies, maternity became forced labor, while at the same time, women were defined as "non-workers," therefore solidifying women's economic dependency and reproductive slavery.

In her article, "*Talkin' Sex: Chicanas and Mexicanas Theorize about Silences and Sexual Pleasures*," Patricia Zavella identifies the patriarchal practices that repress women's sexuality, the consequences of these practices, and the role these consequences play in reproducing inequalities of gender. There are six practices which are relevant to this paper's analysis of abstinence-only sex education:

1. Traditional gender roles are enforced at puberty;
2. Women are given clear instructions not to “lose” their virginity;
3. Women are denied knowledge regarding sexual protection and contraceptives;
4. Women are estranged from their own bodies;
5. Silence surrounds sexual violence; and
6. Silence surrounds homosexuality, especially lesbianism.

Traditional gender roles are enforced at puberty. At puberty, young women are exposed to the realities of gender inequality and double standards. Through the imposition of traditional gender roles and expectations for gender relations, male privilege becomes visible. Young women are taught that they must be modest and restrained, and that they must take certain safety precautions, such as not being alone with men or out late at night (Zavella 2003, 239). Double standards become more apparent as young women’s virginity is guarded carefully by their families and society, and often becomes the subject of community celebrations (Zavella 2003, 240).

Women are given clear instructions not to “lose” their virginity. Not only is the concept of “virginity” outdated due to criticisms of heteronormativity, social narratives regarding the “loss” of one’s virginity assumes that sex is something designed for men in which women receive little pleasure (Doan et al. 2004, 6). Additionally, emphasis on (vaginal) virginity redefines what it means to be “sexually active,” and therefore delegitimizing homosexual behaviors (Luker 2006, 49). Zavella states that young women are told they will be unlovable if they engage in sexual activity before marriage, and that they are threatened with the fact that others will be able to “tell” that they are sexually active. Examples of young women being told they will be unlovable include admonishments such as “When you marry you have to be a

virgin,” “Nobody is going to want you no more,” and “You are dirty after you do that” (Zavella 2003, 238). Threats that sexually active young women would be found out include “women who were no longer virgins would walk differently,” “virgins do not dress provocatively,” and “by the looks on their faces, they seem ashamed.” In these ways, young women’s bodies are policed and their reputations guarded by their families and the community; the consequences for transgressing are severe (Zavella 2003, 238).

Women are denied knowledge regarding sexual protection and contraceptives. Despite admonishments not to engage in sexual activity, most women do become sexually active before they marry. Evangelicals consider sexual activity and related health issues a result of “too much information,” rather than of misinformation or a total lack of sexual knowledge (Luker 2006, 32). However, due to strict management of their sexual knowledge, young women do not have the necessary information to practice STI prevention or contraception. Young women also lack information about STI testing and abortion (Zavella 2003, 243).

Women are estranged from their own bodies. This occurs in two ways, in the repression of women’s sexual knowledge and in the denial of female pleasure. Women are not given information regarding menstruation, ovulation, and fertility—severely inhibiting their agency in becoming, or not becoming, pregnant (Zavella 2003, 243). Women are further estranged from their bodies through the social devaluation of female pleasure, a devaluation which is internalized by many women. Additionally, there is little social expectation of female orgasm, and this too is accepted by many women and their partners (Zavella 2003, 245).

Silence surrounds sexual violence. Zavella writes that silence surrounding sexuality during childhood and sanctions against childhood sexual experimentation leave children

vulnerable to sexual violence, and that this vulnerability continues into adulthood (2003, 236).

In what is described as “pervading themes of silence and violence,” emphasis on female obedience and female virginity occludes women’s ability to feel they have the right to say “no” and keeps them from discussing sexual violence for fear of being labeled “impure” (Zavella 2003, 247).

Silence surrounds homosexuality, especially lesbianism. In heterosexist constructions of sexuality, the male is the primary actor and primary recipient of pleasure. This, together with the denial of female pleasure discussed earlier, constructs sexual activity between two women as impossible and hardly desirable (Zavella 2003, 237). Not only does the acknowledgement of homosexuality challenge heterosexist gender roles and family structures, but the recognition of female sexual activity and pleasure without the involvement of a man threatens men’s sexual dominance over women. Maintaining unequal gendered experiences of pleasure is necessary to maintaining control over women’s sexuality.

According to Zavella, the consequences of these practices of sexual repression are:

1. Women are taught to deny their own self worth and sense of pleasure;
2. Many women rebel against these practices by engaging in sexual activity, but do not have the knowledge to employ safe sex precautions;
3. The lack of social support systems reproduces women’s dependency emotionally, physically, and economically.

The Religious Right

Introduction

In the last several decades, the Religious Right has emerged out of an apolitical evangelical subculture to become one of the most prominent and potent forces in American politics. As a highly organized minority faction, the movement works in cooperation with neoliberal politicians to enact socially and economically conservative legislation. The Religious Right has proven especially effective in its ability to mobilize its grassroots base through the emotionally-charged rhetoric of sexual morality. The intimate relationship between conservative Christianity and neoliberal politics is mutually beneficial— it provides a conservative voting base for pro-business politicians, while allowing evangelical Christians to inform national social and economic policy.

It is important to understand that the Religious Right is committed to influencing policies which are presented as “morality politics,” as well as those which are constructed as “strictly economic.” Conservative Protestantism is highly invested in patriarchal institutions and heteronormative values. Feminist scholar Allan Johnson defines patriarchy as a social system which is male-dominated, male-centered, and male-identified (2005, 20); heteronormativity describes social norms which privilege heterosexuality and sanction homosexuality, while also dictating appropriate gender relations and ideal masculinity and femininity as white and bourgeois (Jackson 2006, 68). In order to uphold conservative Protestant values in national politics, the Religious Right must therefore also promote policies which maintain male dominance, heterosexism, female dependency, white supremacy, and economic inequality.

History

Since the turn-of-the-century, conservative Protestants, often called “evangelicals,” have been suspicious of social change, denouncing it as “modernism.” Politics were considered “corrupt and corrupting,” and by the 1920s, evangelicals had completely withdrawn into a subculture— most were not even registered to vote, choosing to devote their resources, time, and energy to the “Kingdom of God,” rather than to society (Balmer 2010, 38). It was not until the 1960s that membership in evangelical churches began to outpace that of mainline churches, primarily a result of evangelists’ attempts to reconnect with mainstream society through anti-communist rhetoric (Balmer 2010, 51). By 1980, all three candidates for president claimed to be “born-again,” and it was in this race that most evangelicals voted for the first time (Balmer 2010, 56).

Evangelical involvement in politics initially began as a fight against perceived government interference in conservative Christians’ right to free exercise of religion (Balmer 2010, 64). Conservative Christians were especially likely to become political after conflict with a government entity (Murray Brown 2002, 168). However, the formation of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition demonstrated that the Religious Right sought not to uphold the First Amendment but to challenge the Establishment Clause. Pat Robertson, one of the leaders of the Religious Right, stated that the separation of church and state is an “abridgement of the religious freedom of Christians” (Murray Brown 2002, 184). For the last thirty years, conservative Christianity has purported itself to be “under attack” by secular forces, and has disguised its attempts to inscribe fundamentalist values into federal law as merely their right to free exercise of religion (Capps 1990, 10).

However, from a Weberian perspective, religion reflects a desired social order (Capps 1990, 6). Efforts of the Religious Right to “protect” the religious freedom of conservative Christians should then be understood as an attempt to maintain white, male, bourgeois, heterosexual hegemony. The Religious Right insists that the United States is, and always has been, a Christian nation, and believes that it “carries the authority of both the Bible and guiding philosophical principles of the nation’s Founding Fathers” (Capps 1990, 3). In reaction to Civil Rights, Feminist, and Gay Rights movements, the Religious Right seeks to maintain the social structures of the Bible and Revolutionary America— a social order which benefits white, middle-class, heterosexual men.

The Religious Right is well-known for its “morality” campaigns against abortion, pornography, and gay marriage (Doan and Williams 2008, 1); however, for the purposes of this paper, I will discuss two causes of the Religious Right which have previously been constructed as strictly economic: the IRS case against Bob Jones University and the passage of welfare reform in 1996.

Although the issue of abortion is often believed to have been the catalyst for evangelical entry into politics, Walter H. Capps and Randall Balmer argue instead that it was the attempts of the IRS to implement Civil Rights legislation that first drew conservative Christians out of their apolitical subculture and into national politics. In 1976 the Internal Revenue Service threatened to withdraw the tax-exempt status of Bob Jones University, an evangelical college in South Carolina, if it did not abolish its ban on interracial dating (Capps 1990, 92). Supreme Court decisions *Coit v. Green* (1971) and *Green v. Connally* (1971) ruled that a private school which practiced racial discrimination could not be eligible for a tax exempt status (Balmer 2010, 62). Bob Jones University did begin admitting African-American students in 1975, but it

implemented a strict ban on interracial dating, which mandated expulsion for transgressors and even those who vocally challenged the ban. The case remained in court for years until 1983 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Bob Jones University v. United States* that the IRS could revoke the tax-exempt status of private institutions which are contrary to established public policy (Capps 1990, 93).

The administration of Bob Jones University, purported themselves to be the victims of “discrimination,” being punished for maintaining that anti-racist Civil Rights legislation infringed on their right to free practice of religion (Murray Brown 2002, 243). This was the impetus for the formation of the Moral Majority and the entry of evangelicals into US politics—interracial dating seems devoid of religious significance, but in consideration of Protestant investment in heteronormativity, the case against Bob Jones University can clearly be seen as an important battle in the Religious Right’s war to maintain traditional social structures.

The Religious Right is often described as “neo-conservatism,” the marriage of neo-liberalism and conservative Protestantism; neoliberal ideology presents itself as an affirmation of personal responsibility and individual liberty, and its proponents seek to minimize government in favor of privatization and pro-business policies. In August 1996, President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). The primary goals of PRWORA were to cap annual federal spending on public assistance, turn the responsibility of welfare administration over to states, promote independence through employment, and lower the out-of-wedlock birth rate, nowhere was poverty reduction listed as a goal (Rodgers 2006, 141).

The welfare programs which survived the 1996 reforms were Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), which provides aid to primarily single-parent families and emphasizes work

and self-sufficiency, the Food Stamp Program (renamed the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2008, and Medicaid, which provides insurance to low-income children, parents, pregnant women, the elderly, and the disabled (Fix 2009, 7). The influence of neoliberal values is evident in the welfare programs which survived the 1996 reforms; the programs that remained constructed people mentally or physically incapable of work as deserving of public assistance, while those deemed capable of work are excluded from receiving welfare benefits. In addition, by limiting cash benefits to two years and requiring welfare recipients to work, PRWORA reaffirmed the neoliberal narrative that those who work will be able to make a living and will succeed in being independent.

The reproduction of female economic dependency is foundational to the survival of patriarchal social structures; the welfare reforms of 1996 are a concerted effort to limit women's social and economic agency by attaching a stigma to welfare recipients and seriously crippling poor women's ability to provide for their families. Welfare, previously called "mothers' pensions," was originally intended for "deserving" women (white widows), and it was not until Black women were included that welfare carried a stigma (Roberts 1997, 207). Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon write that the rhetoric of "dependency" has historically been linked to racist imagery (Fraser, et al. 1994, 309). Subsidies to the (white) middle class, such as entitlements, tax breaks, and Social Security payments to "survivors," are not viewed as "dependency," whereas welfare benefits to (presumed) Black recipients is considered "dependency" (Roberts 1997, 220). While "poverty" is viewed as an objective state, "dependency" has been constructed as a mental state, which has been feminized, pathologized, and individualized (Fraser et al. 1994, 326). The "Family Wage Ideology" of the Industrial Age cast women, not as partners, but as "parasites"; although Family Wage ideology allowed middle-class housewives and children to be

dependent in a “good” way, single-mothers and the poor were a part of a decidedly “bad” form of dependency (Fraser et al. 1994, 320).

Dorothy Roberts states that the US welfare system was never intended to combat poverty, but was instead only to provide subsistence to the poor. Neo-conservatives sought to dismantle the welfare system, using the rhetoric of “welfare dependency” in order to keep women in another form of dependency—to low-wage work (Fraser et al. 1994, 322). The gendered nature of labor and poverty shapes gender roles and relations; the social devaluation of women and women’s labor contributes to female economic dependency, therefore reproducing heteronormative gender roles, relations, and institutions (Federici 2004, 100).

Abstinence-Only Sex Education

In the 1970s, most public schools instituted sex education without a government mandate or financial support. Although evangelicals initially saw sex education as an assault on parental rights and fought to eliminate programs, by the 1980s it became clear that sex education could not be kept out of the schools—as a result, abstinence-only-until-marriage sex education programs were developed to replace existing comprehensive programs (Doan et al. 2004, 27). Evangelicals understand teen sexuality and related health issues as a result of “too much information” (Luker 2006, 32). When teen sexual activity, pregnancy, and STIs are constructed as a result of weakening morals, the answer is therefore to strengthen morals; the Religious Right developed a new strategy, “stealth morality policy,” to allow unpopular policies to be passed without undergoing legislative debate or public scrutiny (Doan et al. 2004, 2).

This method was used to pass funding for abstinence-only sex education programs in the 1996 welfare reforms. During the final edit of the legislation, corrections usually limited to grammatical and technical revisions, funding for abstinence-only programs was added, with no floor debate or separate vote (Doan et al. 2004, 33). The legislation was a victory for the Religious Right; it codified a particular moral agenda and provided material support for evangelical social and political agendas. Previously, contraceptive knowledge and resources compromised heteronormative institutions by separating sexual activity from procreation, and therefore challenging the importance of marriage in US society (Luker 2006, 53). Abstinence-only sex education by nature denies contraceptive knowledge and advocates a “return” to traditional values regarding gender and sexuality, attitudes which are demeaning to women (Doan et al. 2004, 1).

Abstinence-only-until-marriage sex education programs receive support from three streams of federal funding: the 1982 Adolescent Family Life Act, Title V Section 510 of the 1996 Social Security Act, and Community-Based Abstinence Education, formerly SPRANS, under Title XI Section 1110 of the 2001 Social Security Act (Advocates for Youth). In a 2004 United States House of Representatives report, *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs*, commonly called “The Waxman Report” after Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA), it is reported that the federal government spent approximately \$170 million on abstinence-only education programs in 2005 (United States Cong. House 2004, i). Advocates For Youth, a supporter of comprehensive sex education, reports that the federal government spent \$176 million on abstinence-only programs in 2006 and \$176 million in 2007 (Advocates For Youth 2007, 4).

In 1996 with the passage of welfare reform, the Social Security Act included a \$50 million allocation to abstinence-only programs as well as a definition of abstinence-only which is still used today (Advocates For Youth 2007, 1). This definition, often referred to as the “A-H definition” reflects, not public health goals or social science research but, conservative Protestant morals and social institutions. The federal definition of an eligible abstinence-only education program is one that:

- A) Has as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;
- B) Teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the *expected standard* for all school-age children;
- C) Teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the *only certain way* to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
- D) Teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the *expected standard of human sexual activity*;
- E) Teaches that sexual activity outside the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
- F) Teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child’s parents, and society;
- G) Teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increase vulnerability to sexual advances; and
- H) Teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity (Advocates For Youth 2007, 1).

The Waxman Report finds that eleven of the thirteen abstinence-only programs which receive federal funding contain “false, misleading, or distorted information about reproductive health” (United States Cong. House 2004, i). Specifically that the curricula contain false information about the effectiveness of contraceptives, false information about the risks of abortion, blur religion and science, treat stereotypes about girls and boys as scientific fact, and

contain scientific errors. There is no scientific evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of abstinence-only sex education, and it is clear that abstinence-only proponents seek to continue teaching abstinence regardless of its effectiveness. One author of abstinence-only curriculum states that it does not matter whether abstinence-only reduces risk, “we teach abstinence because it is the truth” (Doan et al. 2004, 14).

This analysis will examine two of the curricula discussed in the Waxman Report, *Why kNOw Abstinence Education Programs* and *WAIT Training: Learn How to Have the Best Sex...By Waiting Till Marriage!* These curricula were chosen because they are two of the thirteen programs which receive federal funding, contain errors as discussed in the Waxman Report, and were available through Inter-Library Loan at the University of Arizona. *Why kNOw* was produced by AAA Women’s Services and Chattanooga’s Pregnancy Center, now renamed “Choices Pregnancy Center,” a crisis pregnancy center. Although the organization calls itself “Choices,” it does not offer abortion services. In fact, the website boasts that Chattanooga, Tennessee is now “one of the largest cities in the United States without an abortion clinic,” and goes on to say, “This is the story of a mighty victory, events which only point to the power of the Lord we love and serve.” *WAIT Training* is produced by “Friends First,” in collaboration with the Center For Relationship Education and the National Association for Relationship and Marriage Education—two evangelical Christian groups. The mission statement of NARME says the group’s goal is “building strong marriages, fathers, and families.” The Waxman Report states that of the 69 recipients of SPRANS funding, seven use *Why kNOw* and nineteen use *WAIT Training*.

The Curricula

It is clear from the federal government's definition of abstinence-only education that these programs are not intended to promote sexual health, responsibility, and empowerment, but are instead designed to bring conservative Protestant morals and social institutions into public schools with the use of public funds. While the Waxman Report focused on medical and factual inaccuracies, this analysis will focus on representations of unequal gendered experiences of sexuality, promotion of the heteronormative nuclear family, and promotion of conservative Protestant values and institutions.

Drawing on the theory of Chicana feminists, a close reading of the curricula demonstrates that abstinence-only sex education programs employ the practices of patriarchy which repress women's sexual knowledge and sexuality in order to reproduce male dominance at the sexual, social, and economic levels. The promotion of the heteronormative nuclear family and of conservative Protestant values is quite obvious, and has been contested in court by groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, for violation of Church and State by using federal funds to teach religious material in public schools. I chose to present the citations from the curricula in the form of a chart to make clear that these are not statements made once or twice, but are foundational attitudes to abstinence-only sex education found on nearly every page of the curricula.

Patricia Zavella discusses the patriarchal practices that repress women's sexuality as:

1. Traditional gender roles are enforced at puberty;
2. Women are given clear instructions not to "lose" their virginity;
3. Women are denied knowledge regarding sexual protection and contraceptives;

4. Women are estranged from their own bodies;
5. Silence surrounds sexual violence; and
6. Silence surrounds homosexuality, especially lesbianism.

In a close reading of the curricula, I found that abstinence-only sex education emphasizes traditional gender roles and relations through *representations of unequal gendered experiences of sexuality*. These categories are discussed as “Expectations for interpersonal romantic/sexual relationships” and “Compromising women’s individual empowerment.” Women are given clear instructions not to “lose” their virginity through representations of the “Social stigma attached to young women,” whether they are sexually active or not. Women are denied knowledge regarding sexual protection and contraceptives through the very nature of abstinence-only sex education; throughout the texts, sexual protection and contraception are either completely ignored or discussed only in terms of failure rates. Women are estranged from their own bodies through representations which deny female sexual pleasure, discussed as “Denial of female sexual pleasure.” The discussion, or lack thereof, of sexual assault in abstinence-only sex education is appalling and contributes to the silence surrounding sexual violence, as well as reproducing victim-blaming narratives. Finally, homosexuality is made invisible in abstinence-only education by the exclusion of homosexual identities, bodies, and behaviors and the promotion of heteronormative gender relations and institutions; the only mention of homosexuality is in reference to gay men and HIV/AIDS.

In the following charts, “*Why kNOw*” refers to:

Franie, Kris, Martha Swearingen, Pam Sulser, and AAA Women’s Services. *Why kNOw Abstinence Education Programs: Curriculum for Sixth Grade through High School*. Chattanooga, TN: AAA Women’s Services, 1999.

“*WAIT Training*” refers to:

Friends First. *WAIT Training: Learn How to Have the Best Sex...By Waiting Till Marriage!* Longmont, CO: Abstinence and Relationship Training Center, 1996.

Representations of Unequal Gendered Experiences of Sexuality

<p>Expectations for Interpersonal Romantic/Sexual Relationships</p>	<p><i>Why kNOw</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men and women have trouble communicating because of innate psychological differences (123). • Asked of male students, but not of female students: “Do you think it’s appropriate for a girl to ask a boy out?” (123). • Asked of female students, but not of male students: “When a guy gives you a gift or flowers, how do you feel?” (123). • Examples of men leaving a young woman “pregnant and alone” (34). • Examples of young women deceiving men to get pregnant in order to stay together (34, 112). • “Using someone’s body without any concern for <i>her</i> as a person” [my emphasis] (34). • Men using women for sex (112). • Most teen fathers don’t help raise the child (84). • Although acknowledging that 15 out of 100 married couples have experienced in a one-year period, assertion that the “marriage commitment plays a vital role in the protection of women and children” (88). • “When you are attracted to someone, you start to make plans to be with <i>him</i>” (107). • Men pressuring young women for sex (136). • Women giving sex as a gift (136). • Example of a girl being “possessive” of her boyfriend (136). • Example of a boy initiating sex (136). • Example of a boy ending a relationship (136).
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	<i>Why kNOw, cont.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example of a girl who wants to stop having sex with her boyfriend, but “can’t” (136).
Social Stigma Attached to Young Women	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A young woman wearing a “short, sexy” dress who says she doesn’t want to have sex before she gets married, “Her actions, however, are not matching her words” (76). • Girls are told to “dress appropriately” (Dating Guidelines transparency). • Students are asked to fill in the blank: “Some girls lead guys on by_____” (125). • Asked of girls: “What is one thing you would like to change in the way girls are viewed in your high-school and society?” (125). • In the past, “if a man <i>took</i> the virginity of a woman who was not his wife, it was a disgrace to <i>her</i>...<i>She</i> would be scorned by society” [my emphasis] (59). • Women’s sexual purity important to make sure that “any children she bore were his” (61). • The first question a man asks when his partner informs him she is pregnant: “Are you sure it’s mine?” (61,112). • In an example, Batman falls for Catwoman, described as a “bad girl” who is “sexually aggressive” (85). • A girl with crabs described as “that dirty girl” (136). • An example of a girl who gets pregnant and has an abortion (136). • Not asked about boys: “What are some clues that a girl is selfish?” (123).
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young women get pregnant in order to “get back at their parents” (69).
Denial of Female Sexual Pleasure	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An entire section on the “Lies of the Sexual Revolution,” including the belief that without abandoning “archaic rules” governing sexuality, women could be left “frigid and passionless” (74). • During adolescence, young men are trying to learn sexual “self-control,” while young women are trying to “understand her identity” (17). • “Healthy relationships are built not on sexual compatibility, but on trust and commitment” (34). • Section on anatomy covers sources of male sexual pleasure (penis, testes, scrotum, prostate gland), but includes only female internal/reproductive organs

Denial of Female Sexual Pleasure, cont.	<i>Why kNOw, cont.</i>	<p>(fallopian tubes, uterus, ovaries, cervix, vagina), omitting the possibility of female sexual pleasure (Anatomy Transparency).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The entire purpose of puberty is to prepare the body for the time when it will be able to reproduce” (3). • “Human Sexuality: the character of being male or female” (10). • “Sexual Progression”: no oral sex, no anal sex mentioned (108).
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Steps of Intimacy”; no oral sex, no anal sex mentioned (66).
Sexual Assault	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are reminded that it is “Ok to say no” (Dating Guidelines transparency).
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-committed sex as the “ultimate abuse of young women” (12). • If a student has been sexually abused, they are told to speak to a family member, teacher, pastor, rabbi, or counselor (65). • After a long discussion on how pre-marital sex destroys one’s ability to “bond” with their future sexual partner, victims of sexual abuse are assured that they “haven’t lost ability to bond” (65). • “Ways to Say No”: Dress appropriately (86). • Men’s testosterone makes it “hard to stop” sexual activity (91). • Men interpret flirtations as “sexual interest”; “Women need to realize that actions speak louder than words,” and that this can cause “extreme problems”; “asking herself what signals she is sending could save both sexes a lot of heartache” (121).
Compromising Women’s Individual Empowerment	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assertion that there will be “good times and bad times” in marriage, and that “divorce in our country has become all too common” (81). • In a discussion of wedding traditions, the bride price, and dowries, brides are described as “valuable,” a “real commodity” (87). • “If human sexuality were ‘no big deal’ adultery and unfaithfulness would not matter” (87). • An entire section on the “Lies of the Sexual Revolution,” including the belief that having multiple sex partners will lead to a more satisfied life (50). • “Lies of the Sexual Revolution,” including the belief

<p>Compromising Women's Individual Empowerment, cont.</p>	<p><i>Why kNOw, cont.</i></p>	<p>“traditional” families made up of “workaholic fathers and worthless housewives” were mistakes (50).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lies of the Sexual Revolution,” including the belief that the “Age of Aquarius” would bring peace and love, “But did it bring better relationships? Decrease out-of-wedlock pregnancy? Make stronger marriages? Increase respect? Improve male-female relationships?” (89). • Since the Sexual Revolution, “respect between the sexes is at an all time low” (89). • Birth Control pills as an attack on proper sexuality; “Women thought they had been liberated,” Birth Control took away the fear of pregnancy, which had kept many women from sexual activity; erasure of a double standard cast as a negative thing (74). • “Although education and careers <i>may</i> be important, there should be more time in educating young people about the importance of a successful marriage” [my emphasis] (58). • “Young girls especially have a tendency to get their identity from a young man and the relationship” (35). • “Knowledge is power—NOT” (27) • “Knowledge will only add more stuff to your brain” (27). • Example of a couple in which the man goes to college and the woman goes to beauty school (120). • Criticisms of “Women’s Lib”: equality erases difference, “In the age of Women’s Lib, different is assumed to mean not equal” (120). • “Men and women are equal, but are very different in the ways they approach life, love and relationships” 120). • Difference is “not a criticism of men or women, but an aid in appreciating the unique aspects each gender brings into a relationship” (120). • Girl’s puberty experience: Her hips will widen, “preparing her for future children,” and her body fat will increase—“What a bummer!” (15). • Premarital sex will destroy “freedom” in future marriages (11). • Increase in single mothers cast as a negative thing; why was there an increase? “Fathers refused to take responsibility” 74).
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Compromising Women's Individual Empowerment, cont.	<i>Why kNOw, cont.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lies of the Sexual Revolution,” including “women saw no need to be ‘shackled’ to men they could not get along with outside the sheets” (74)
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If your love tank is full, it will overflow with love to others. If it is empty, it will be hard for you to give what you have seldom received” (30). • Assertion of the “emotional pain associated with early uncommitted sexual involvement” (5). • The “ ‘Dumbing down’ of girls at the secondary level. Some believe this is due to gender discrimination. Many teen girls lose their focus because of sexual activity and fears associated with disease, pregnancy, or broken hearts” (12). • Numbers given on pre-marital sexual activity and regret are only given concerning women: <i>Redbook</i> survey (29), Roper Starch survey (33), Emory University survey (33), EDK and <i>Redbook</i> survey (33). • Students are told that, like a piece of dirty tape, they will not be able to “bond” with their future spouse if they engage in pre-marital sexual activity (64). • Discussion of “Secondary Virginity” (108). • Discussion of “Renewed Virginity” (65). • An entire section on the “Differences between men and women”: Females “think out loud,” are “detail oriented,” “enjoy the process leading up to a goal,” appreciate “notes, calls, and gifts,” and value the importance of the “past more than the present and future” (120-122); Males “think concretely,” are “solution-oriented,” are “problem solvers,” are competitive, and are “goal-oriented” (120-122). • Women “gauge happiness and success by their relationships” (121). • Women view “sex as a sign of commitment” (121). • “Marriage helps to make one more stable and able to leave parent’s home and create a self-sufficient, self-reliant household” (27).

Abstinence-only sex education curricula seeks to reassert patriarchal and conservative Protestant hegemony, not only through maintaining unequal gendered experiences of sexuality, but also through the *promotion of the heteronormative nuclear family* and the *promotion of*

conservative Protestant values. The heteronormative nuclear family is presented as natural/ideal, stable/healthy, and moral; the heteronormative nuclear family depends on unequal gender relations, the gendered division of labor, and the elimination of homosexuality.

Conservative Protestant values are promoted through assumptions that these values are universal, discussions of Protestant institutions as natural, ideal, moral, and insistence that “things have changed,” support for religious activities, and the use of religious language. Abstinence-only proponents present their values as universal, despite the fact that studies show 84-98% of parents in the United States want their children to be taught how to use contraception and where to obtain it, 82% of parents support comprehensive sex education, and only 30% of US adults believe premarital sex is “wrong” (Doan et al. 2004, 7). The promotion of conservative Protestant values and institutions in public schools must be recognized as an effort by the Religious Right to hold US youth to a specific moral code through the degradation of all other value systems, systems of social organization, and non-heteronormative identities, bodies, and behaviors (Luker 2006, 29).

Promotion of the Heteronormative Nuclear Family

Natural/Ideal	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margaret Mead quote: “When we survey all known human societies, we find everywhere some form of the family... by which males assist females in caring for children” (1). • Students are to understand the “benefits of having both parents active in raising a child” (4). • Students are asked: “How could a single parent affect the family balance? How could this affect children?” (4). • “There is no society that considers it ok for the woman to have more than one husband” (87). • Socially and economically, the healthiest and safest form of sexual activity is a faithful, monogamous,
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Natural/Ideal, cont.		marriage relationship” (49).
	<i>Wait Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Goals: “To identify the benefits of healthy marriage relationships to individuals and society” (5). • Curriculum Core Values: “Marriage and family is indispensable framework” (7). • The qualities of sacrifice, humility, flexibility, empathy and delayed gratification are increased with marriage... These traits benefit society... These traits benefit children” (30).
Stable/Healthy	<i>WAIT Training, cont.</i>	
	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medically and physically, “the healthiest and safest form of sexual activity is a faithful, monogamous, marriage relationship” (49). • “85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes; 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes; 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes; 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes; 85% of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes; Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school” (4). • “Marriage plays a vital role in the protection of women and children” (88). • Marriage protects women “legally, physically, emotionally” (87).
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Are We All At Risk for AIDS?” Not if: “Parents value privacy and modesty... and they model healthy relationships themselves”; Not if: “Young adults meet and marry—both virgins!”; “How can AIDS penetrate a closed circle?” (80). • Married people live longer, and are more emotionally and physically healthy (27). • Married people have a lower incidence of suicide; married people need less health care; married people have prolonged access to increased intimacy [no citation provided] (27). • “Married people are more stable” (30).
Moral	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Goals: “To reframe the act of sexual intercourse as best and appropriate between two committed, married people who love each other” (5).

As the “A-H Definition” states, abstinence-only curricula must that a “mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity.” Marriage, of course, is central to conservative Protestant sexual and social norms—but abstinence-only curricula do not simply support marriage, these programs press all students toward heterosexual marriage and involvement in conservative Protestant religious activities (Doan et al. 2004, 6). It should be noted that the authors of abstinence-only curricula often produce two versions—a religious version to be used with youth groups and other private organizations and a secular version to be used in public schools; the following chart demonstrates that these versions are hardly “secular” (Doan et al 2004, 45).

Promotion of Conservative Protestant Values and Institutions

<p>Values as Universal</p>	<p><i>Why kNOw</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are to understand that sex outside of a faithful marriage commitment “breaks the rules of relationships” (11). • Marriage must be “faithful and committed” (26). • “Healthy relationships are built not on sexuality, but on trust and commitment” (34). • Anti-pornography: “Pornography destroys marriage, families, lives”; linked to rape, murder, and Ted Bundy (43). • Murder and rape incited by pornography, occult, and music (65). • “One of the worst consequences of the 60s was what is called the Sexual Revolution” (74). • “When you are attracted to someone you start to make plans to be with him” (107). • In a role-play, sex before marriage is described as a “black box” full of “diseases, heartache and impurity” (117). • “The marriage factor separates this course from one that teaches sexual postponement, thus providing students with an objective versus subjective guideline” (Why kNOw Introduction). • Students to learn “fundamental truths” (2). • “In our culture we will eventually marry someone we
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<p>Values as Universal, cont.</p>	<p><i>WAIT Training</i></p>	<p>date” (75).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Program philosophies offered in the context of local community norms and traditions” (4). • “The cultural norms and traditions of the community are respected” (4). • Program provides students the opportunity to reach the “highest attainable level of expectations and standards” (4). • Curriculum Core Values: as “objectively true and good,” and as “objective standards” (7). • Curriculum Model Focus: Abstinence from pre-marital sex as the “Best or healthiest choice” (7). • Sexual Rights and Relationships presented in program “linked to society’s moral code” (8). • “How to Appeal to the Common Sense of School Leaders Regarding Teaching Abstinence”: “Many parents are not willing to...allow access to individuals and organizations that might not share their values” (13). • Assumption that all relationships intend to result in marriage: “Of 100 couples who begin living together, 50 will break up before marriage. Of the 60 who marry, at least 45% will divorce” (29).
<p>Protestant Institutions as natural, ideal, moral</p>	<p><i>Why kNOw</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students to understand the “importance of families and marriage” (5). • “ A strong stable, loving family is necessary for child’s success” (27). • Parents treated as benevolent, with children’s best interests at heart; parent’s values understood as ideal (46). • A section entitled “Traditions Have Value” which discusses the importance of family dinners, holidays, and Protestant wedding rituals (57). • Marriage described as the backbone of the family unit and society at large (58). • “There should be more time in educating young people about the importance of a successful marriage” (58). • Students to perform a role-play wedding (59). • Students told to “test” media’s values: Is “marriage viewed as desirable?” (69); Are the negative consequences of sex outside of marriage shown?” (70). • “Divorce in our country has become all too common” (81).

Protestant Institutions as natural, ideal, moral	<i>Why kNOw, cont.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If human sexuality were ‘no big deal’ adultery and unfaithfulness would not matter” (87). • “Marriage protects legally, physically, emotionally (87).
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching the curriculum will “Impact a generation toward...ultimately [having] healthy families” (2). • Information about contraceptives “should be imparted in the context of marriage and family commitment” (7). • Curriculum Model Focus: “Family-centered” (7). • Sexual activity appropriate in the context of “committed love within the context of marriage” (8). • Curriculum Decision Making Model: “In context with family, community, and moral values” (8). • Marriage described as a fishbowl: “Inside of marriage, there are many freedoms, yet stepping outside of the protective shell leaves you exposed to a potential disease, infertility, emotional damage, heartache, etc.” (66). • “How Teens Misuse Sex”: Treating “sexual behavior...as a rite of passage into adulthood. More often this behavior is associated with low self-esteem and an inability to mature gradually” (69). • Students to list the “benefits of marriage” to a man, woman, child, family, community, society, one’s health or well being, economic status (111). • “Nearly 70% of juveniles incarcerated come from homes with no father...Most gang members, 60% of rapists, and 75% of teenage homicide perpetrators come from single parent homes” (121).
Insistence that “things have changed”	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenagers encounter “Greater pressure than ever before” (19). • Teen relationships were different 30-40 years ago (35). • “Never before in history has there been such a massive breakdown of families and traditional values” (58). • 30 years ago marriage was considered “natural and expected.” • “We have left the traditional marriage culture once dominant in our society” (2).
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When I was your age, many of these doors were locked, but today they are off their hinges [SIC]” 28.

Support for Christian religious activities	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of responsibilities includes “Church” (21). • Support for Focus on the Family’s “Plugged In” (63). • Support for Southern Baptist Association’s “True Love Waits” (132).
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth groups, go to church, pray together listed as activities for couples (34).
Use of Religious Language	<i>Why kNOw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex forms a spiritual bond (34). • Being able to share oneself “spiritually” necessary to have the “best sex” (81). • “Sanctity of marriage” (88). • Fertilization as “creating a new life” (96). • Reference to Song of Songs (108). • “Secondary Virginity” (108). • Allusion to 1 Corinthians 13:4 (113), traits used as a list of “real love v. false love” handout (118). • Greek “Four Loves”—elaborated on by C.S. Lewis (127). • “Conviction: Something firmly believed” (10).
	<i>WAIT Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Spiritual” listed as a component of life, along with physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and financial (19, 27). • Youth ministers included in a list of adults eligible to become WAIT Trainers (2). • “Temptations” (29). • Concerns in the Public Setting: “Be very careful not to refer to religious precepts.” “Any reference to scripture reflects the instructor’s opinion, not that of FRIENDS FIRST” (14). • “Spiritual” listed in “What is Sexuality?” (32). • “Spiritual” listed as a way to express sexuality (34).

Analysis and Conclusion

Practices of Repression and the Curricula

Chicana feminists have demonstrated the relationship between control of women's sexual knowledge and sexuality and the maintenance of male-dominated social systems. The consequences of these practices of sexual repression are that women are taught to deny their own self worth and sense of pleasure; many women rebel against these practices by engaging in sexual activity, but do not have the knowledge to employ safe sex precautions; and the lack of social support systems reproduces women's dependency physically, socially, and economically.

Abstinence-only sex education plays a significant role in the Religious Right's efforts to control women's sexual knowledge and sexuality. Women are taught to deny their own self worth through the curricula's attacks on women's individual empowerment, and the feminist movement as a whole. Women are also taught to deny their sense of pleasure through the invisibility of female pleasure in the curricula and the heterosexist construction of "sex" as an activity which is male-dominated and male-focused.

The denial of reproductive knowledge and sexual protection and contraceptive knowledge is a basic tenant of abstinence-only sex education, and this withholding of informational serious endangers women who do engage in sexual activity. Not only are women unaware of their own biological functions, and therefore unable to control their fertility, they are also exposed to sexually transmitted infections—for which they have not been educated in the importance of STI testing and the existence of cures and treatments for STIs.

The lack of social support systems in the United States especially punishes women; the 1996 welfare reforms, supported by the Religious Right, exacerbated the feminization of poverty

and work along with abstinence-only sex education to maintain systems of male dominance. Young women who engage in sexual activity are punished with a social stigma against them, especially those who become pregnant. Young women also bear an unequal physical burden for sexual activity, as they can become pregnant and experience more devastating consequences for untreated STIs. Finally, women are already more inclined to poverty due to unequal wages in the workforce, but this inequality is exasperated by women's greater childcare burden.

Conclusion

Rather than make a policy recommendation in support of comprehensive sex education, I instead assert that policies that support sex education programs along with economic equality and support for non-heteronormative identities must be implemented. This analysis has demonstrated that abstinence-only sex education is an assault on women's sexuality and sexual knowledge that works in concert with other social systems in order to maintain male dominance at the sexual, social, and economic levels. While ending all funding for abstinence-only sex education programs and funding comprehensive sex education programs is an important step in breaking systems of male heteronormative privilege and restoring sexual agency to women, this process cannot be complete without increased development and funding of social support systems. It is fundamental structural changes that will challenge the patriarchal and conservative Protestant values and institutions advocated by the Religious Right and will bring true respect and support to women and non-heteronormative identities.

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