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Evaluation of Sex Education Curriculum and Policy Related to the Needs of LGBTQ+ Latinx Youth

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by

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Sex education is a contentious issue in the United States. With no federal policy mandating sex education, access to sex education, and the quality of that education, is largely determined by location; broadly, the state where a family lives, and more specifically, the schools a student attends. When sex education is available, communities can be resistant. Parents even in "liberal" states and cities push back against legislation and sex education curricula for being "graphic" ("Parents protest "graphic" sex ed curriculum in Calif. Schools", 2017., "Bill mandating sex education in Washington schools passes Senate", 2020). In 36 states and DC, parents can opt their children out of receiving sex education ("Sex and HIV Education", 2020). Through school choice, the decision to opt out of lessons, and the connection to outside resources, families ultimately have significant impact on whether or not a student receives sex education as well as what that education looks like. The inconsistent access to accurate and inclusive sex education is a concern, both because it represents a disparity in education quality and because young people are at high risk for STIs and unintended pregnancy (CDC, 2019a., CDC, 2020a). Young people between the ages of 15 to 24 account for roughly 50% of new cases of STIs yearly, despite making up only a quarter of the sexually active population (CDC, 2020a). The United States has a high teen birth rate compared to other Western countries, overall, 18.8 per 100,000, with rates for Hispanic teens, Black teens, and American Indian/Alaska Native teens all more than twice the rates for white teens (CDC, 2019a).

Health inequities intersect along a variety of axes. Most data focus on adults and consider youth as a subpopulation. Men who have sex with men, abbreviated as MSM, have higher rates of STIs than women and men who only have sex with women. This inequity is increased for

MSM belonging to racial minorities, those who are of low socioeconomic status, Hispanic MSM, as well as among young MSM (CDC, 2019c).

HIV continues to be a problem within LGBTQ+ populations and the larger community. The CDC attributes a large portion of the difficulty in prevention to inadequate sex education (CDC, 2020h). In 2017, Latino/Hispanic gay and bisexual men represented 20% of HIV diagnoses, and 2 out 3 were in people ages 13 to 34 (CDC, 2021b). The Hispanic/Latino population overall made up 26% of HIV diagnoses in the same year (CDC, 2020e). All youth, ages 13 to 24, were 21% of new HIV diagnoses and the least likely compared to other age groups to be aware of their HIV positive status.

Trans people, especially trans people of color, are also at risk for HIV, but trans health care is not well studied, and data is limited. A 2019 estimation suggested that 44% of Black/African American trans women and 26% of Hispanic/Latina trans women have HIV, compared to an estimated 7% of White trans women (CDC, 2019b). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System surveys in 2014 and 2015 found that roughly two thirds of trans people had never tested for HIV (CDC, 2019b). Reisner et al. found that experiencing stigma in HIV care was associated with trans youth missing HIV health appointments (2017). Overall, HIV diagnoses are decreasing in the United States, but new diagnoses are clustered in racial and ethnic minorities and in the Southern states. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness that HIV is a relevant issue (Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy, 2020). Some of the problems in addressing the prevalence of HIV include inadequate sex education, stigma, racism, transphobia, and homophobia (CDC 2020h, CDC 2019b, CDC 2020g). Sexual health and HIV education that are inclusive and accessible to vulnerable minority and youth populations have the potential to assist in the goal of reducing the transmission of HIV.

However, sex education refers not only to needed health information, but can encompass teaching about healthy relationships, building skills, and exploring identity. Blake et al. found that gay sensitive HIV instruction reduced risky behavior among gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) students (2001). In their study, GLB students were more likely to report substance use, higher numbers of sexual partners, and higher rates of pregnancy, in addition to being more likely to plan or attempt suicide. Attending schools with gay sensitive HIV education seemed to be protective, while GLB youth who did not receive gay sensitive HIV education had higher risk for HIV infection, pregnancy, suicide, and victimization (Blake et al., 2001).

Students in GSA programs report wanting more information about LGBTQ identities included in sex education curriculum (Jarpe-Ratner, 2020). LGBTQ+ Latinx youth and youth of color in a New York study were interviewed about the sex education programs at their schools. Students discussed feeling unsupported by the staff, not feeling represented in the content, and the difficulties of being targeted for their sexuality and racial or ethnic identity (Roberts, 2020). LGBTQ youth of color need and desire spaces and education that are able to cater to the experience of being both a person of color and LGBTQ as they are likely to face racism in White LGBTQ spaces and homophobia in communities of color and other areas of life (Brockenbrough, 2016). LGBTQ+ and Latinx youth have unique cultural and social needs that responsive sex education and the communities that can be fostered with such sex education can address.

Researcher Positionality

In my personal life, I use the labels bisexual and queer. My mother's family immigrated from Brasil, and I am in the process of finding a description of myself that acknowledges this and feels accurate. I am American, and I am White; which are descriptions of where I live, how people perceive me, and the culture in which I was raised, rather than declarations of

patriotism/nationalism. In relation to this study, I have been a participant in OWL for grades 4-6 (2009), 7-9 (2012), and 10-12. I was taught sex education in public school in California in 5th grade, and in middle school, but not as a high schooler. I am not a member of a LGBTQ+ Latinx social community. I do believe I have personal understanding of the importance of valuing the identities and cultures of minority groups. In my own family, I understand more and more how pressure to assimilate to American culture and English monolingualism has negatively affected my grandparents, my mother, and her siblings, and taken away opportunities for my brother and I to connect with our family. I approach this research with the stance that making space for and valuing students' cultures and non-english languages in education is vital in making space for and valuing those students and their communities.

Literature Review

There is not a wealth of peer reviewed research specifically on LGBTQ+ Latinx's experiences as students in sex education programs. Neither is there on Our Whole Lives nor FLASH curricula specifically. There are many studies describing more generally the needs of LGBTQ+ populations and Latinx populations and students of color. This review will discuss some of the findings in these areas as they inform the study ahead

The Latinx community is highly diverse in terms of immigration status, country of origin, linguistic background, and other factors. Given this diversity, it is not desirable nor possible to make generalizations. However, a general sex education curriculum must be able to attend to the needs of all potential students, with any potential background.

Definition of Terms

Within the analysis of this study, the term LGBTQ+ Latinx has been chosen as broad term(s) to refer to the community of interest with the full understanding that there is ongoing

debate about the definitions and uses of these and other terminology (Vidal-Ortiz, 2018). LGBTQ+ refers to the terms: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, along with relevant breakdowns or expansions including other terms including but not limited to: Genderqueer, Bigender, Non-binary, Questioning, Two-spirit, Asexual, and Aromantic. Latinx is one of several alternatives to Latino or Latina, intended to encompass more than the gender binary. Other terms or spellings with similar goals include Latino/a, Latin@, and Latine. When citing other research, the terminology used by the original source is maintained. There is significant overlap between the wide variety of labels and terms used to describe the communities referenced here as LGBTQ+ and Latinx. Because, at a certain point, labels include those people who identify with them, regardless of the diversity of definitions, this study does not make an effort to define or delineate between these variations.

Latinx Students in Sex Education

A study in 2009 in the Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal asked Latino parents and adolescents about their perception of adolescent needs in their community. From the results they identified six main areas of concern: 1) adolescent sexuality, 2) relationships, 3) abuse and victimization, 4) socioeconomic stressors 5) adolescent behavior problems, 6) education and career planning (de Anda et al., 2009). Parents and adolescents agreed on the order of importance, placing education and career planning first and victimization second. The study concluded that there is a need for resources in general, support, information, and skill building, which can assist youth, and parents, in managing the stressors they encounter by helping build and identify additional ways of coping that are culturally relevant and accessible. These very general suggestions come up in various forms in almost every other article.

Specifically, youth who have recently immigrated to the United States face a special set of challenges and have increased needs for support and resources. These newcomer youth lack both social and cultural capital with which to navigate American school systems (Szlyk et al., 2020). The study conducted interviews with these youth and their family and emerged with six themes of their experience in school: Socialización con los Demás Compañeros [socializing with other students]; Poca Confianza (Little trust); No sé lo que dicen (I don't know what they are saying); It's a hard landing; Education, Interrupted; Estoy Agradecido [I'm grateful]. In order to navigate relationships and their education, students need reliable friendships with peers, adults they can trust, and services in Spanish. Additionally, they need services and communities where their culture is valued and accepted. Both articles make this point that skills and resources need to match with the cultures of the communities in order to be relevant and useful. Newcomer students who lack English language fluency rely on their peers for support in relationships and also with learning English, but may not have a large group of companions from their home country, which still leads to some cultural mismatch even within the common experience of speaking Spanish (Szlyk et al., 2020).

With the common theme of needs for information and resources comes the question of how to offer information in a culturally relevant and accessible way. A study of how to communicate information about Emergency Contraception in a culturally relevant way was conducted in 2010 with focus groups of Mexican and Caribbean women. The participants offered insights into the barriers to access, including cost, lack of insurance, and a distrust of systems (Colarossi et al., 2010). The messaging the focus groups offered input on were testimonials, some in English and Spanish, which the participants helped phrase and communicate values. Participants centered safety of using emergency contraception, and the usefulness for family

planning when the time is right. In general, participants had interest in learning about emergency contraception, and cared about being educated in order to be able to educate their own children in ways their parents had not been able to do during their childhoods (Colarossi et al., 2010).

LGBTQ+ Students

Sex education that centers dominant cultural and majority identity participants leaves out information that all students, but especially LGBTQ+ students, need know. This includes information about non-procreative sex and the associated risks of STI's, as well as information on relationships that include LGBTQ+ partners. It is possible to adapt curriculum to be LGBTQ+ inclusive, as Boyce et al. investigated in their 2018 study. This study compared survey responses from students who received sex education with and without an LGBTQ+ supplemental lesson. Students who received the lesson overall rated the quality of their sex education as higher than those who didn't, although groups were not randomized (Boyce et al. 2018).

Given that it is possible and beneficial to include LGBTQ+ content in sex education curricula, there are still barriers and other considerations. A study of Chicago Public Schools used interviews, focus groups, and observation to seek understanding of how inclusive LGBTQ+ sex education was working and how to improve them. Some teachers took it upon themselves to include more content related to LGBTQ+ students' needs at their request, even when curriculum didn't require it, but regardless it was identified that teachers needed additional training and support to teach the subject appropriately and communicate with parents. Without specific guidance, and over multiple class periods, teachers' inclusivity may be inconsistent, and they may need to modulate the presentation or manner of address to suit the needs and reactions of the class (Jarpe-Ratner, 2020). LGBTQ+ students offered critiques of the superficial nature that LGBTQ+ identities were discussed, noted instances of stigma and stereotypes in language use

and lesson material, and wanted acknowledgement of pleasure as a reason for sexual activity, and more diversity in discussion of identities and family formation. The study's suggestions for improving LGBTQ+ inclusivity in sex education curriculum were to consistently include LGBTQ+ topics and identities, offer a more holistic discussion of sexuality, include holistic information about identity development, create a safe space, and provide more support for teachers (Jarpe-Ratner, 2020).

LGBTQ+ Latinx Students

The difficulty facing LGBTQ+ students of color is twofold. In 2019 Roberts et al. published an article detailing the experiences of LGBTQ+ students of color in sex education programs in high school. The students overall reported negative experiences in their school which were overall grouped into four main feelings of being unrepresented, unsupported, stigmatized, and bullied. Students described the lack of safety at school because of microaggressions, stigmatizing teaching materials, and insufficient support from staff. While they did not receive enough information relevant to LGBTQ+ identities, they did express that sex education could help all students understand each other better, and considered the school guidance counselor a resource. Regarding the intersection of sex education and racial identity, one student felt positively about sharing a Latina identity with her sex ed teacher. When asked, students were mostly positive or confused about the idea of race and ethnicity being relevant in a discussion about sexual identity (Roberts et al., 2019).

Given that, as in other studies, school itself was not a sufficient resource, students turned to other sources of information and support. Parents were not the most desirable place for support because of concerns of discrimination from parents with particularly religious or more conservative cultural views. However, the internet, peers, trusted adults, clinics, and sex

education programs outside of school were all identified as resources potentially available to students. External sex education program experience placed some students in the role of peer educator. The students desired sex positivity in sex education, and access to local resources (Roberts et al., 2019). The lived experience of these students reinforces the need for specifically targeted programs like the one offered in the Beltrán et al. study. The need for information and access to local resources is a common theme throughout these studies.

There are local resources in some places that embody the recommendations and desires described in Roberts et al., specifically the Midtown AIDS Center (MAC) which is the location of Brockenbrough's article. The success of this community center's work with Black and Latino urban queer youth (BLUQY) is supported by their mission of culturally responsive pedagogy, anti-racism, anti-homophobia, anti-sexism, and consideration of social and economic factors in the lives of the youth it serves (Brockenbrough, 2016). This space is necessary, as other articles like Roberts et al. and Jarpe-Ratner's describe, because LGBTQ+ youth of color face both homophobia in communities of color and racism in White LGBTQ+ spaces, with schools being inadequate to provide sufficient relevant information and safe spaces for these youth. MAC offers youth cultural competency, safety, a sex positive, queer inclusive environment, while encouraging the found families the youth created through their cultural back grounds and sexual minority statuses (Brockenbrough, 2016). MAC is uniquely positioned as an incredible collection of resources like the youth in the previous study mentioned needing and relying on.

Research Questions

This research will examine the content and structural policies of sex education curriculum in order to understand how: 1) formal sex education curricula (OWL and FLASH) respond to the cultural, emotional, social, and physical needs of LGBTQ+ Latinx youth; and 2) what the

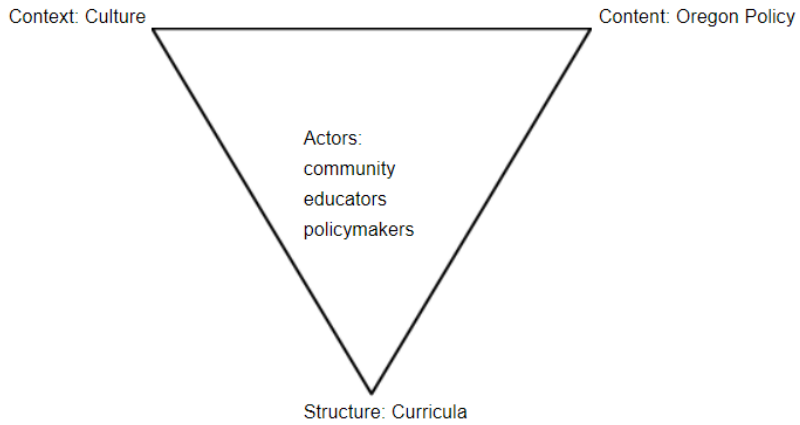
interaction is between legislation (OAR 581-022-1440) on sex education and sex education curricula (OWL and FLASH)?

These questions will be examined through: A) a scoping search of literature related to the culture, resources, and needs of LGBTQ+ Latinx youth, B) a specific search of literature related to the sexual health education needs of LGBTQ+ Latinx youth, and C) policy and curricula analysis related to the needs identified

Methods

This project includes an analysis of two formal sex education curricula designed for various school ages, Our Whole Lives (OWL) and FLASH. Additionally, this analysis considers Oregon policy requiring comprehensive sex education in schools, Oregon Administrative Rule 581-022-1440 ("Oregon Department of Education"). OWL and FLASH are not specific to Oregon; however, the law depends on the existence or creation of curricula to fulfil its specifications. The curricula, OWL and FLASH, are analyzed with a critical feminist lens and connections to Oregon policy with use a triangle policy analysis (Walt and Gilson, 1994). The goal is to center identities that are frequently overlooked, in the context of power relations. The triangle analysis breaks down policy into four areas, the context, content, process, and actors. This study will draw from an adapted version of the triangle analysis which uses the terms context, content, structure, and actors, with a focus on the issue related to the policy (VeneKlassen, 2007). As the intention of this research is to relate the policy to the curricula, this analysis focuses on the curricula as the implementation of the policy. Visualized in figure 1, the context refers to the cultural and political values expressed in the content, the policy itself, in relation to the cultural values and needs of the population of interest. The process aspect is focused on the idea of implementation, the curricula, and understood as structure. In order to

maintain focus on the curricula and population of interest, analysis of actors centers on the LGBTQ+ Latinx youth community, who receive the impact of the policy. Other actors, such as educators and policy makers also contribute to the impact of the policy and the implementation of the curricula.



Scoping Review of LGBTQ+ Latinx Youth Needs

To identify the needs of LGBTQ+ Latinx youth, I searched existing literature about sex education, LGBTQ+ youth, Latinx communities, with the goal of finding previous studies on this population and closely related groups and sub groups. Methods of finding articles included searching journals with relevant topics and themes such as sex education, referencing articles cited by relevant studies that had already been identified, and searching databases first with broad search terms, and narrowing appropriately. This process was self-referential as the information from the literature search allowed for more specific searches. During and after the search process, I kept track of related themes and created a list of needs of LGBTQ+ Latinx youth related to sex education. These needs are not meant to be representative of all youth, nor to represent every need, but to consider some important ways that LGBTQ+ Latinx youth as a very diverse group have needs of sex education curricula that may not be addressed by the stipulations

of ‘medically accurate’ and ‘comprehensive.’ The information from the literature search was used to analyze the curricula and inform the policy analysis. At the beginning of analysis, the chart for the curricula tracks whether the curricula: Is available in Spanish; cultivates student trust with adults; cultivates student trust with peers; is applicable and sensitive to students of diverse cultural backgrounds; encourages connection with diverse cultural knowledge and values; provides information about local services; provides information about navigating potentially hostile systems; offers roles models; encourages connection with caregivers on matters of sexual health; is gender inclusive; is sexuality inclusive; includes holistic/positive information about gender, sexuality, or culture. These needs or sub-themes were categorized into the broader categories or themes of Safety, Systems, Access, Responsive, Strengths and Modeling, and Connection to Caregivers.

Thematic Analysis of Sex Education Curricula

This study will focus on a qualitative analysis of the two sex education curricula. Qualitative data analysis is necessary to respond to the question of *how* these curricula do or do not include material that is relevant to potential students who hold LGBTQ+ and Latinx identities. As this is a curriculum analysis, there are no participants and no sampling involved. OWL and FLASH were chosen for study as established sex education curricula based on their assertions of being comprehensive and medically accurate, and for their adaptability in different locations and settings. I purchased copies of the curricula from their respective publishers. To code the curricula, I read each chapter and took note of sections and pages that met or contradicted one of the needs from the list I had compiled. This process was ongoing, concurrent with additional literature searches as the curricula content prompted new questions and as comparisons of the curricula led me to review previous parts. After reading through the curricula

and applying the themes, I used a 0 through 5 scale to represent the results in a table format. The curricula were rated on each sub theme as follows: 5--the curricula makes active and explicit efforts to []. 4--the curricula makes active or explicit efforts to [], with some gaps. 3--the curricula makes some/inconsistent efforts to []. 2--the curricula makes few efforts or has unacknowledged opportunities to []. 1--the curricula has a consistent actively opposed message towards []. 0--not addressed/not applicable. No sub theme received a 1. The goal of this section was to identify which needs were being met, and how consistently. Throughout this process I communicated with my advisor to help my thinking and reflection on the role of myself as an author on my analysis.

Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis

The data for the policy section of this project are the components of Oregon's policy on sexual health education available on the Data and Policies, Rules and Policies section of the Oregon Department of Education's page on the state's website. This includes OAR Rule 581-022-1440 and the HIV/AIDS Law.

To analyze the data, I used the Intersectional Based Policy Analysis framework from Hankivsky et al.'s 2014 article. This framework includes a total of twelve questions broken into two sets, descriptive and transformative. The policy in question is Oregon's Law and Policy for Sexual Health Education. The phrasing of the IBPA questions implies a new or proposed policy, but will be applied to the existing policy. To address these questions I read the policy, took notes, and revisited the questions several times in communication with my advisor. The use of the IBPA framework and the consideration of policy as an aspect of creating sex education supports the content portion of the triangle analysis. To answer the questions posed in the IBPA framework information was gathered from other research on sex education policy, queer theory,

feminist theory, and websites such as the CDC and Planned Parenthood among others. The IBPA framework provides a context within which the needs identified from the literature review can be related to the policy. A chart was created to organize the sections of the policy that correspond with meeting specific needs. The analysis compares the ways the curricula address the needs and the way the policies address the needs to consider whether the policy and curricula, the content and structure aspects of the triangle analysis, are adequate to addressing the need for sex education for LGBTQ Latinx youth.

Findings

Alignment of LGBTQ+ Latinx Youth Needs and Sex Education Curricula

OWL and FLASH are established sex education curricula and have many strengths, however, when applying a thematic analysis to their content, several areas of weakness come to light. With the themes that emerged from the literature review, I created a table to organize key examples from the content of the curricula.

Table 1

Thematic Analysis

Thematic Curricula Data

Themes	Curricula	
	OWL	FLASH
Safety		
cultivate student trust with adults	5	5
cultivate student trust with peers	5	5
Systems		
offer information about local services	2	5
offer information about navigating potentially hostile systems	2	2
Access		

make information applicable to students of diverse cultural backgrounds	2	2
encourage connection with diverse cultural knowledge and values	2	2
available in Spanish	0	0
Responsive		
recognize/value gender diversity	2	3
recognize/value sexuality diversity	3	3
Strengths and Modeling		
provide holistic/postive information about sexuality, gender, and culture	3	2
offer role models	3	2
Connection to caregivers		
encourage connection with caregivers on matters of sexual health	4	5

Safety

This theme was broken down into two aspects, student safety with adult facilitators and with other student peers. Given that this study is only concerned with the curricula, there are mitigating factors that heavily impact the sense of safety that a student would feel that cannot be captured in this evaluation. Both OWL and FLASH include opening sessions which encourage the development of ground rules and agreements to be used throughout the sessions. FLASH's Climate Setting lesson 1 states the goal of "reviewing the FLASH Bill of Rights and collaboratively developing ground rules to ensure a climate of safety and respect" (FLASH Lesson 1—1). The Bill of Rights include "the right to one's beliefs, including the beliefs of one's family, culture, and faith" (FLASH Lesson 1—5) and example ground rules include "no mean comments about people's bodies or sexuality" and "protect confidentiality" (FLASH Lesson 1—6)]. Both OWL and FLASH discuss confidentiality.

OWL is designed for use in community settings not limited to schools. Accordingly, their efforts to promote trust begin before the lessons themselves. OWL's curriculum instructs organizers to make attempts to "secure the endorsement and support of your organizational leadership and the parents of participants" and provide suggestions for doing so including sharing materials, program philosophy, training facilitators, and addressing questions (xiv). At this level, there is an emphasis on communicating and gaining the trust of the community of participants, especially parents and caregivers. OWL's opening session is centered around creating rules and guidelines to make learning and talking about sexuality comfortable. They "ask 'What can we do to make this a safe and comfortable group for discussing sexuality? What ground rules should we set up?'" and require ground rules to include confidentiality, right to pass, no killer statements, respect for diversity, openness, I-statements, no direct questions, and the right to call one another on the ground rules (OWL 22-23). OWL relies on a set of program assumptions one of which is that participants "have the right to . . . be treated with respect by leader and participants in this group" (OWL x). These program assumptions also support a focus on discussing sexuality in holistic manner but present a difficulty in discussing asexuality in an inclusive manner.

Both curricula rely on the climate setting and opening sessions to create a classroom climate that supports student learning and creates safety going forward. The rules created are referenced in subsequent lessons and should be displayed in the classroom.

Systems

Youth of all ages are learning to navigate systems and are exposed to the potential for discrimination. As youth begin to navigate systems such as health care independently, they have a great need for information about what resources are available to them and how to access them.

LGBTQ+ Latinx youth face multiple forms of discrimination and additional barriers to accessing resources. They have a unique need for information that addresses both the resources available and how to navigate potentially hostile environments while accessing services such as health care.

FLASH offers a resource sheet for King County, a national sheet, and includes instructions for developing a list of local resources multiple times in various lessons such as Lesson 3 Pregnancy, Lesson 10, Lesson 11, and Lesson 13. The instructions for developing a local sexual health resources list "recommends referring young people to clinics and agencies that are teen and LGBT friendly, culturally competent, supportive of all pregnancy options, and that consider the teen to be the primary client" (FLASH Lesson 3). Lesson 7 has a handout of Washington laws and instructions to make a local handout. The individual homework is 'Being a Resource and Finding Resources' which prompts students to write how they could "talk or intervene with a friend who you have seen touch someone in an inappropriately sexual way at school" (FLASH Lesson 7). Lesson 8 has a handout for parents about online safety. Lesson 13 has an activity for students to find a local clinic that does HIV or STI testing and collect some information about it. It also includes an activity to advise and support a fictional student getting an STD test. This activity prompts for various topics including being welcoming to LGBTQ people. In this activity FLASH does not bring up concerns of how race and culture might affect one's experience at a clinic or seeking medical care. Facilitators are instructed to look up the laws in their state about testing for minors in preparation for the lesson and the appendix has a sheet of laws relevant to a sexual health unit.

OWL is not as thorough or proactive about including information about local services. Workshop 6 AIDS and other STDs is the only one that includes a resource sheet. Facilitators are

advised to add local resources to the existing handout which has toll free hotlines (56, 62). This sheet being created at the time of publishing could be updated to include web-based information which might be more useful in today's world. There is no language around vetting clinics or resources for their approach to LGBTQ+ youth or for the concerns of Latinx youth in engaging with medical systems. Workshop 5 Reproductive and Sexual Health Care includes two narratives about clinic visits, from a cis woman's perspective and from a cis man's perspective, in support of the workshop's goal of increasing participant comfort with "addressing sexual health care needs" to "prevent problems and feel positive about taking good care of themselves" (OWL 48). While the end of the workshop references that men may avoid seeking preventative or ongoing medical care, overall concerns over accessing medical care related to gender, race, or culture are absent from the information provided.

The Resources section at the end of the curriculum has a wider variety of resources including websites and books some of which are specific for LGBTQ+ people, but is not formatted as a handout nor referenced in workshops.

Access

The establishment of values in the opening sessions of both OWL and FLASH make reference to culture, but throughout the curriculum culture is not attended to with depth or consistency. FLASH includes homework for each lesson, with individual and family options. The purpose of the "Family Homework is a chance to share your beliefs about sexuality and relationships, and the beliefs of your family, culture or religion" however culture is not necessarily brought up in the lesson specific prompts, nor in the lessons themselves. For example, in Lesson 10 on Birth Control Methods, culture is mentioned in the family homework ["Tell me about our family's, culture's or religion's beliefs about birth control"] but not brought

up in the lesson. FLASH comes close to addressing issues of culture when discussing gender stereotypes in Lesson 5, as gender stereotypes are inherently related to culture, but it does not explicitly bring up culture or race nor their impact on these stereotypes. Gender intersects with race in visible and concrete ways, so the lack of attention is telling. FLASH discourages discussing stereotypes of men's sexuality on the basis that they have positive connotations, which, along with shutting down possibilities for discussing the positive parts of gender, is untrue when race and sexuality are taken into account. The lesson is unprepared for relevant discussions of how race impact people's performance and experience of gender stereotypes, especially when overlapping with stereotypes of sexuality. This is an odd oversight considering FLASH does make a point to bring up homophobia and transphobia as influences of stereotypes and as a danger to LGBTQ+ people in the same lesson.

Culture is relevant regardless of whether it is acknowledged which cultural position the lessons speak from, and unfortunately, FLASH does not capitalize on these opportunities in most cases. In Lesson 11, the curriculum uses the term "Graffiti Sheets" to describe stations along the wall or whiteboard where students can write on the whiteboard or large pieces of paper. This activity has nothing to do with graffiti as an art form and never makes any explanation of the name.

The OWL curriculum lacks detailed and consistent attention to the impact of culture similarly to the FLASH curriculum. OWL's activities and word choice often center an unacknowledged White American perspective on cultural values and teachings. This can be seen in phrasing such as the use of "our culture" (OWL 138, 146, 233). Workshop 17 Sexuality Time Line does position "other cultures" in a positive light in their statement, "In other cultures, people revere and respect their elders. Our culture is ageist;" (OWL 138), however, it is not

directly inviting students to consider their own culture nor discussing the intricacies of what they consider "our culture" to be. OWL's use of "our culture" and "other cultures" here is offering value towards the tradition of respect for elders, but through the phrasing creates a divide and literally 'others' anyone in the room from a culture which does have a value of respect and reverence for elders. The curriculum demonstrates an understanding that culture plays an important role in sexuality and in how people understand the role of sex in their lives, but does not take care to use language that acknowledges the potential diversity in the room.

In Workshop 22 What Makes a Good Relationship? the suggestions for facilitators to prompt characteristics that may be important to someone for a long-term relationship include "same religion," "same race," and "same political beliefs" among other things such as "attractiveness," "trust," and "good communication" (OWL 164). The surrounding text, guiding the lesson for facilitators, does not mention race, religion, or political beliefs. The word culture is not used, but is adjacent to questions of race, religion, and political beliefs. These aspects of relationships are incredibly important; however, this is also a moment in the lesson where concern should be paid to the safety of people of color in the classroom. The lack of guidance in this area leaves great potential for harm if conversation implicitly or explicitly perpetuates racism, xenophobia, or other forms of discrimination. Without context, the intent of including 'same race' as a suggestion of something important in a long-term relationship is unclear and given the historical context that interracial marriage was illegal in many states until 1967, likely to be interpreted as hostile. Once again, OWL demonstrates an understanding that factors such as race (and culture) play an important part in understanding sexuality, but it does not approach the topic with sufficient care to safeguard students.

There are many opportunities in OWL's curriculum to discuss culture that are not taken advantage of, similarly with FLASH. Activities like the Language of Sexuality Brainstorm on page 26, Workshop 21 on communication, and Workshop 27 Images of Love and Sex in Music and Video could all be enhanced by being more explicit in their connection to culture (OWL).

Neither curricula are available in a language other than English. Although FLASH's family homework is available in multiple languages on their website, this is not the same as providing a lesson for a student who primarily speaks another language such as Spanish.

Responsive

FLASH's efforts to be inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity are clear, but not always successful. FLASH makes an effort to use gender neutral language, such as in Lesson 3 Pregnancy when describing the timeline of pregnancy, but also uses binary language in some places such as Lesson 6 Healthy Relationships which includes a handout activity called How I Want to be Treated by My Boyfriend or Girlfriend. This activity does allow for multiple sexualities, including an example of a couple who have typically male names and use he/him pronouns, and in addition some of the text of the lesson uses the phrase "dating partner" (FLASH Lesson 6 — 6), but binary language is centered in the title of the activity.

FLASH's Lesson 6 advises facilitators to monitor discussion during activities with a note that "the gender of the volunteers is not important . . . stress that they should not be mocking of gay relationships . . . refer to material covered in the previous Gender Stereotypes lesson . . ." (FLASH Lesson 6 — 9). Lesson 4 Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation contains the most material education about those topics, but still centers straightness with a video that "imagines a world where heterosexuals are the minority" (FLASH Lesson 4 — 5). The lesson does not mention two-spirit or asexual people but does include definitions for LGBT identities. FLASH is

attentive to the problem of homophobia and transphobia in subsequent lessons, but remains based on a binary perspective that is clear in the often binary language and structure of lessons such as Lesson 5 Gender Stereotypes.

This version of OWL's curriculum uses outdated gendered language such as "his/her" rather than "their," and uses gender binary language in place of gender-neutral language to refer to people in general. OWL avoids the singular neutral use of 'they' but does sometimes use gender neutral language such as 'partner' or phrasings that avoid gendering people or acts. Workshop 30 includes written scenarios for role playing breaking up which are written in second person and avoid gendering the participants and have mostly gender-neutral names (OWL 193-5). As a whole however, the curriculum is extremely binary and gendered in its phrasing. OWL has issued corrections and updates for the 7 to 9th grade curriculum that are partially applicable to this curriculum as well, however it would benefit from an updated version to address this and other concerns of out-of-date language, resources, and topic suggestions. Workshop 12 does educate on "Biological Sex, Gender Identity, and Gender Roles" which includes the terms intersexuality and a definition, transgender and a definition, as well as two-gender and two-spirit, however this minilecture contains the same concerns of outdated language, binary focus, and centering of cisgender people that the rest of the curriculum displays (OWL 100-101). Another issue is Workshop 23 Questions of the Other Gender which is entirely binary and does not include instructions for adapting it to trans and non-binary participants nor does it address the way it highlights gender differences and divisions even in a group of entirely cis people. Workshop 38 Gender Equality is also focused on the binary.

OWL does a better job with including multiple sexualities, although it centers straightness. Workshop 13 Sexual Orientation is designed around a speaker's panel of LGB

people who come to share stories. The instructions are to try to find a group of people who are diverse in "age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other categories" and to "use this opportunity to break down preconceptions" (OWL 110). Alternatively, there are written stories that can serve if panels are not possible. The discussion questions for this workshop are centered in heterosexuality which is a missed opportunity to maintain the focus on centering minority sexualities. OWL defines various sexualities in Lesson 4 (OWL 102) and brings up LBG relationships in multiple lessons including the speaker's panel, Workshop 19 Sexual Expressions and Relationships, and Workshop 37 Gay Pride Parade (OWL 102). As always, the language could be updated in many of these workshops.

One key problem that OWL faces in terms of being inclusive and appropriate with regards to sexual orientation is the program's use of the word sexuality in a way that is not synonymous with sexual orientation. OWL states in their program assumptions that all persons are sexual, which is language that does not align well with discussing asexuality. Workshop 17 Sexuality Time Line is an exploration of OWL's conceptualization of sexuality. The workshop "encourages participants to broaden their view of sexual expression and to recognize that people of all ages are sexual although they may express sexuality differently at different times in their lives" (OWL 135). Leader Resource 15, Sexual Being, defines the aspects OWL considers part of sexuality, including sensuality, intimacy, sexual identity, sexual health and reproduction, and sexualization. The lesson itself does not use the term asexuality anywhere, but does mention abstinence as possibly being part of expression of sexuality. Overall, OWL presents a conceptualization of sexuality that, while not devoid of value, is unlikely to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for asexual participants.

Strengths and Modeling

FLASH struggles with providing strengths-based content in some lessons and does not incorporate direct role models, however, it does have moments which promote strengths. Lesson 6 Healthy Relationships begins by discussing characteristics that are positive and desired in a relationship. Lesson 9's Refusal Skills Scenarios include examples with a trans girl and two girls in a relationship, and model behavior centered on respect and boundary setting in the context of abstinence. Lesson 14 includes two boys in a relationship as an example and is also centered around practicing communication skills and integrating material learned in previous lessons. Lesson 15 Improving School Health has students create posters to educate their peers on teens sexual health and behavior, setting them up to be role models and educators for their peers. The appendix includes guidelines for recruiting guest speakers but does not require guest speakers as part of the curriculum. FLASH's difficulties with strengths lie in the proportion of attention to problems of gender stereotypes, homophobia, and transphobia, without significant attention to the beneficial or positive aspects of gender or being LGBTQ+.

OWL does state explicit values around being holistic and offering positive messages about sexuality in their introduction. They state that "sexuality is a good part of the human experience" and "sexuality includes much more than sexual behavior" (OWL x). OWL's Workshop 17 Sexuality Timeline, which was also discussed for its difficulty in being inclusive of asexuality, devotes a significant portion of time towards a goal of understanding sexuality over the lifetime and in different ways. The message in the curriculum that sexuality itself is a complex and integrated part of life is consistent. OWL does not have quite the same consistency especially with regard to culture, but does through the speakers panel encourage including role models for participants.

Connection to Caregivers

FLASH and OWL have different approaches to cultivating connection with caregivers. OWL's approach toward directly bringing parents to participate in their own orientation session demonstrates their value towards caregivers' roles in sexuality education and offers tools for parents to understand their role as well, but it is separate from facilitating parents and youth connecting directly. FLASH's system of family homework does not lay the same groundwork as OWL's parent session but does provide a consistent tool and motivation for caregivers and youth to connect with one another. FLASH also includes some information for parents about the family homework system and online safety (FLASH Lesson 1, Lesson 8).

Intersectional Based Policy Analysis

This analysis uses the IBPA Framework to consider how policy is meaningfully related to the issue of sex education access and quality. The IBPA Framework uses the following questions to guide analysis:

Table 2

Intersectional Based Policy Analysis Framework Questions

Intersectional Based Policy Analysis Framework	
Descriptive	Transformative
What knowledge, values, and experiences do you bring to this area of policy analysis?	What inequities actually exist in relation to the 'problem'?
What is the policy 'problem' under consideration?	What are feasible short-, medium-, and long-term solutions?
How have representations of the 'problem' come about?	How will proposed policy responses reduce inequities? [What is the impact of the existing policy on inequities that exist nationally?]
How are different groups affected by this representation of the 'problem'?	How will implementation and uptake be assured? [How is implementation and uptake assured?]
What are the current policy responses to the 'problem'?	How will you know if inequities have been reduced? [Are/have inequities [been] reduced?]

How has the process of engaging in an intersectionality based policy analysis transformed:

- Your thinking about relations and structures of power and inequity
- The ways in which you and others engage in the work of policy development, implementation, and evaluation
- Broader conceptualizations, relations, and effects of power asymmetry in the everyday world

These questions are addressed in the section below as well as through other sections of this study including the Literature Review and Researcher Positionality sections. Some questions (What are feasible short-, medium-, and long-term solutions? How will implementation and uptake be assured? [How is implementation and uptake assured?] How will you know if inequities have been reduced? [Are/have inequities [been] reduced?]) are not fully addressed as they require further research into the current impacts of sex education practices on LGBTQ+ Latinx youth which are beyond the scope of this study.

This study is based on a value of sex education being needed and desired to promote health, wellbeing, and informed decision making among young people, as well as a value that macro level forces, such as policy, have a large impact on the existence or lack of sex education offered to students. Barriers to sex education exists at all levels, and the existence of sex education for minority students is compounded at the macro level by the same structural oppression that keeps political power centered around privileged identities. The specific concern of this project are the needs of youth at the intersection of identities (LGBTQ+ and Latinx) who may have a unique need that is not served by ‘general’ sex education requirements. The needs of

LGBTQ+ Latinx students cannot be met if the needs of LGBTQ+ students are not being met. They cannot be met if the needs of Latinx students are not being met. But attention to the needs of LGBTQ+ students and attention to the needs of Latinx students does not necessarily equate to attention to the needs of LGBTQ+ Latinx students. This is further complicated by the fact that LGBTQ+ Latinx students may be of many genders, sexualities, races, countries of origin, religions, and may also identify with other cultural groups as well.

Debates about sex education and access to sexual health care and resources are a consistent part of national and local political conversations. Groups such as Advocates for Youth, SIECUS, and Planned Parenthood are visible in the national conversation advocating for sex education, and working with youth advocates and other partner organizations. Youth advocates can and do successfully advocate for sex education and sexual health resources in their schools, communities, and as a part of larger organizations. Planned Parenthood includes information on advocating for sex education and has profiled youth activists, like Alba Alvarado, who worked to get condom access policy passed in her school district ("#SexEdForAll Month" 2019). Advocates for Youth supports a variety of advocacy and education programs, and also features youth voices prominently in such campaigns like #MyStoryOutLoud which is centered on LGBTQ+ youth of color ("#MyStoryOutLoud").

SIECUS cites various surveys of public opinion that reflect that sex education is desired by a majority of people in all states and political parties ("On Our Side" 2018). Despite public opinion, the CDC reports that "Across states, fewer than half of high schools (43%) and less than one-fifth of middle schools (18%) teach key CDC topics for sexual health education" (2018 School Health Profiles). There remain states that require emphasis on abstinence, whose sex education policy stigmatizes homosexuality, and states that do not require information on barrier

contraceptives or healthy relationships (Hall et al., 2019). These discrepancies point to the impact of institutional level oppressive forces impacting state policies, particularly sexism and homophobia. Lack of information and resources on sexual health contributes to the health disparities surrounding sexual health issues which fall heavily on racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender minority communities (CDC 2020b, CDC 2020c, CDC 2021a, CDC 2020d, CDC 202f).

OAR Rule 581-022-1440 includes language that responds to at least part of all the larger themes that were identified in the literature review except for the theme of safety (see table 3). Although all the themes may be relevant in any area of education, safety applies much more broadly than the policy's focus on human sexuality education. Additionally, in the theme of cultural access, the policy makes no mention of what language shall be used in instruction. Like with safety, language is a much broader consideration in the world of education. There are strong pressures in the United States towards monolingualism and assimilation. Oregon law requires that schools develop ways for students who primarily speak a language other than English to participate, however, ORS 336.074 requires teaching primarily in English with exceptions "in order that pupils whose native language is other than English can develop bilingual skills to make an early and effective transition to English and benefit from increased educational opportunities" which implies significant pressure to focus efforts on developing English skills without acknowledging the potential benefits of maintaining connections to one's culture in an educational environment through the use of native languages (*"Oregon Secretary of State Administrative Rules"* Chapter 336, 2019)

Compared to other states, Oregon's policy seeks to address many of the inequities in sexual health and considers the need for inclusivity with regard to culture, gender, and sexuality (Hall et al., 2019). Although it is a broadly applicable policy, it explicitly mentions culture,

gender, and sexuality as areas that must be inclusive, and it also requires providing information about the resources in the local community. This statewide policy relies on districts to implement appropriate programs.

Table 3

Comparing Policy Sections and Themes

	OAR 581-022-1440	
Themes	Policy section	Policy text
Safety		
cultivate student trust with adults		
cultivate student trust with peers		
Systems		
offer information about local services	6j, s	j. Provides students with information about Oregon laws that address young people's rights and responsibilities relating to childbearing and parenting, and prevention of the spread of STDs, STIs, including testing for STDs, STIs, HIV and pregnancy; s. Includes information about relevant community resources, how to access these resources, and the laws that protect the rights of minors to anonymously access these resources;
offer information about navigating potentially hostile systems		
Access		
make information applicable to students of diverse cultural backgrounds	6t	Is culturally inclusive.
encourage connection with diverse cultural knowledge and values		
available in Spanish		
Responsive		
recognize/value gender diversity	6r	Uses inclusive materials, language, and strategies that recognizes different sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expression;
recognize/value sexuality diversity	6r	

Strengths and Modeling		
provide holistic/positive information about sexuality, gender, and culture	2, 6g, 7b	2 " . . . Course material and instruction for all human sexuality education courses that discuss human sexuality in public elementary and secondary schools shall enhance students' understanding of sexuality as a normal and healthy aspect of human development. . . ." 6g. Discusses the characteristics of the emotional, physical and psychological aspects of a healthy relationship; 7b. Provides students with the opportunity to learn about and personalize peer, media, technology and community influences that both positively and negatively impact their attitudes and decisions related to healthy sexuality, relationships, and sexual behaviors, including decisions to abstain from sexual intercourse;
offer role models		
Connection to caregivers		
encourage connection with caregivers on matters of sexual health	6l, m	l. Encourages family communication and involvement and helps students learn to make responsible decisions; m. Encourages positive family communication and involvement and helps students learn to make responsible, respectful and healthy decisions;

Further research would be necessary to discover how well implementation of Oregon's policy works in classroom settings and what the effect is on students. Considering policy from this intersectional lens has changed my approach as it is clear that policy change or the existence of desirable policy is only one piece of a complex system working towards multiple impacts both intended and unintended. This analysis has also increased my interest in policy as an area where community input, specifically from youth, has a potential for great impact. This analysis has

enhanced my understanding of how systems such as education participate in perpetuating xenophobia and heteronormativity in subtle ways.

Discussion

OWL and FLASH are largely unprepared to deal with detailed and involved discussions of culture, neither dominant White American culture, minority cultures in the United States nor cultures from other countries. Both acknowledge the impact of culture on the topics in their own ways, FLASH especially in the family homework, but do not make consistent efforts to include cultural connection in the lessons themselves. While both curricula make a clear effort to address sexuality and gender issues, the culture pieces being lost leaves all students without the chance to consider their identity in full. A particular quote comes to mind frequently from Cherrie Moraga's *La Güerra*. The English version reads "When the going gets rough, will we abandon our so-called comrades in a flurry of racist/heterosexist/what-have-you panic? To whose camp, then, should the lesbian of color retreat? Her very presence violates the ranking and abstraction of oppression" (53). This phrasing seems to embody the central concept identified in reviewing literature about the experiences of LGBTQ+ Latinx youth. Focusing only on one aspect of identity creates spaces that cannot adequately serve people with other marginalized experiences as they will continue to be marginalized in those ways. OWL and FLASH, of course, are not specifically aimed at any minority student group, but in lacking the effort to acknowledge that identity is intersectional, they cannot fully address issues of gender or sexuality.

Several overarching questions came from the detailed analysis which I used in communication with my advisor as guides to avoid losing sight of the big picture: When considering questions of gender, is the impact of culture considered as well? When considering

the question of sexuality, are gender and culture considered? Are minority voices and needs being centered?

In the most reductive sense, the answer is no in each case. Both OWL and FLASH have consistent overt and subtle messaging that clearly positions the texts as speaking from a dominant perspective, that centers White, American, straight, and cis gender experiences. Both curricula could do much more, much more consistently. Updating out of date language would be a relatively simple fix. Changing gendered activities and wording to incorporate gender neutral language where appropriate and acknowledge gendered concepts where necessary requires more in-depth changes to curricula and structure. Both curricula are much weaker in the area of culture. The lack of self-reflection on the part of the curricula leaves Whiteness in an unspoken position of power and fails to support students of color and students of other ethnicities in their education. With the statements that both curricula make toward the importance of culture in regards to sex education, it would be reasonable to update the structure and content of the lessons to reflect that and to give students a chance to consider their cultures in the classroom setting. This attention to culture could also help bring attention to Whiteness and its impact for White students as well.

Oregon's policy related to sex education addressed the majority of the concerns raised in the literature review as well as addressing some major concerns with sex education requirements nationally. Safety and language of instruction are not discussed but do relate to other more general educational policy and practices. One specific aspect not included in the law that is highlighted in this study is the connection with caregivers as it relates to navigating systems. The policy requires information that "encourages family connection and involvement" and allows parents to opt students out of receiving sex education. However, Oregon's policy does not

address concerns that students whose parents opt them out still may desire or need access to information and resources about their sexual health. Oregon's policy does not itself work towards making hostile systems, such as education, more accessible to Latinx students and families, or families from other minority groups. Section 3 lists "Parents, teachers, school administrators, local health department staff, other community representatives, and persons from the medical community" as those who will develop a plan of instruction but the policy overall does not specifically discuss efforts to promote trust or support within communities, although this is an area that the curricula discussed the importance of (Oregon Department of Education). Although it has many strengths, Oregon's policy does not center the needs of minority communities to the effect that the policy does not attempt to mitigate the effects of Whiteness in itself and therefore does not fully address some of the systemic problems caused by the centering and prioritizing of Whiteness. The requirement to "respond to culturally diverse individuals, families, and communities in a respectful and effective manner" is an important one, but is not to the level of disrupting the power that Whiteness holds at the center of the conceptualization of sex education curricula like OWL and FLASH.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study is the single authorship. Qualitative data analysis in this case would benefit and be more rigorous if multiple research team members could collaborate and corroborate the findings of the others. A limitation of this study is the methods are insufficient to offer specific recommendations for editing the curricula, although the findings may offer insight into future revisions in a general sense. This study does not attempt to be generalizable. The goal of this study is to provide an impetus for future research into the

implementation of these curricula and the needs of actual students for changes to these curricula or more responsive curricula to be offered or developed.

Conclusion and Opportunities for Future Research

This study identifies areas of unmet need in sex education curricula and sex education policy. OWL and FLASH have strengths and weakness in all areas. Oregon's policy itself addresses the majority of concerns of this study although it does not challenge the power dynamic that prioritizes Whiteness, Straightness, and Cisness.

Safety, for both curricula, is clearly articulated as a priority. The ground rules and facilitator guidelines are clear about the desired classroom space. Because the environment, people, and real-life context would affect the actual sense of safety it cannot be determined whether either OWL or FLASH would succeed in making a safe space despite their efforts.

Systems information was identified as important by both curricula, but not always integrated or made specific for each lesson. FLASH includes their resource sheet in multiple lessons and has instructions for creating a local resource sheet for other areas. FLASH—like OWL—does not consider the ways that the systems it interacts with may be threatening to students based on their sexuality, gender, or culture, which is a significant gap.

Access, meaning that information is accessible across different cultures, was the least well attended theme from this analysis. OWL and FLASH struggled to consistently incorporate non-White non-American perspectives.

Responsiveness to gender and sexuality was also a priority for OWL and FLASH. Gender neutral language was a difficulty in both curricula, as was consistent centering of LGBTQ+ perspectives. The effort was clear, but the curricula did not move away from straight and cis centered presentation of information.

Providing information on strengths and including role models specifically for LGBTQ+ Latinx students was not a direct priority for either curricula. OWL's goal to present positive messages about sexuality was consistent throughout. Both OWL and FLASH work to present models of healthy relationships and communication skills.

OWL and FLASH both are dedicated to connection with caregivers in their respective approaches. While OWL's connection happens between the program and parents FLASH is more direct with connecting youth and parents to each other.

Future research is necessary in the classroom setting and on a mezzo level to determine how students are impacted by the sex education they are receiving, whether there are other unmet and unknown needs, and how well schools and communities are doing in ensuring young people have sex education at all. This study highlights the importance of sex education curricula that do focus on culture explicitly and as a source of strength.

The relevance of this study to social work is most directly related to health. One of the 12 Grand Challenges for social work is closing the health gap ("Close the Health Gap", n.d.). Additionally, health is identified by the International Federation of Social Workers as a human right ("Health", 2012). Sex education is also related more broadly to the general principles of equity and social justice, important to social work. LGBTQ+ Latinx youth have a right to sex education that attends to their needs as people, as students, and as members of specific communities. Social work's ability to move between the areas of education, policy, and community services positions the field and the individuals who work with in it to attend to issues like this one.

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