Theorizing Student-Centered Sexuality Education within a Reproductive Justice Framework

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved April 2022 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2022

ABSTRACT

An intersectional analysis of sex education in the U.S. reveals a need for a more nuanced and community-based approach to sexuality education. A Reproductive Justice framed sexuality education program attends to the needs and desires expressed by a community, while interrogating and resisting the interlocking systems of power that work to uphold white patriarchy and white supremacy. Reproductive Justice sexuality education is socially transformational when it centers student creation and community participation. Instead of risk prevention and rights-based sex education programs that often perpetuate oppressive structures and erase students' lived experiences, student-centered sexuality education with a Reproductive Justice framework allows for participants to feel safe and valued. This re/imagining of sex education also allows for pleasure instead of shame to be a product of sexuality exploration.

Key words: Reproductive Justice, Sexuality Education, K-12 Sex Education, Community Created Curriculum, Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Intersectionality

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Mighty Oak Tree.

Love, Mama

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my committee chair and members. You all brought me such joy as teachers and encouraged me to believe in my abilities.

Dr. Swadener, your kindness is infectious! Our early morning messages and picture exchanges always make my heart happy. Your presence reminded me to be light and joyful when it feels difficult. Without you, pursuing this degree during a pandemic while teaching full time would have felt a lot heavier. Thank you for all your support, endless contacts, and smile.

Dr. Linton, thank you for introducing me to Reproductive Justice and helping me find my voice. Your class profoundly changed my life. The content, of course, but also the way our class was able to connect and support one another because of your leadership and facilitation. I am so grateful to have been your student.

Dr. Sandlin, thank you for making me laugh, granting me grace, and giving encouragement. I will always giggle when I think of your toilet rat. Thank you.

To my family, thank you so much for supporting me and giving me grace during this time.

Mom and dad, thank you for your support. Thanks for giving me a space to work, cry, or sleep when I needed it. Thank you for being such wonderful grandparents that made my work as a mom easier.

Michelle, thank you for being so willing to take care of Oaklynn! Your support was the reason returning to school was an option for me. Your love and care for Oak made my mom-guilt weigh less.

Laniray, thank you for your endless love and daily support. Coffee, laughter, and tech support were always available because of you. Thank you for being on my team and making me feel like my potential is infinite.

Thank you to my editor, Melanie Weaver. You helped me immensely, starting with the way you made me feel like it would all be possible. Resolving edits brought me so much satisfaction!

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Criss-cross applesauce on the hard carpeted floor of the trailer, I looked around at changes in scenery to our choir room. There were tables with different menstrual products and flyers. A television had been rolled in front of the seating area for our viewing. I do not remember much from that day, but I do remember wondering what was happening in the other trailer where the boys from my class were. Did they have to sit on the ground? What did their video show them? What kind of "goodies" did they get to take home? Would they get to learn about menstrual cycles and training bras?

Perhaps this is a familiar scene for you. Perhaps it is one that brings a specific memory. Or perhaps, this is something you have never experienced. Due to my white, cisgender, heteronormative privileges, this did not feel like a crucial or a traumatizing moment. However, for others, I recognize that it could be both. This was not my first time hearing the information I was being given and although it was the first time in a classroom setting, it was not the last. I would experience other classroom sex education lessons. Most students in United States (U.S.) schools today no longer have these experiences. For many recent and current students, you could graduate high school without ever experiencing a sex education lesson in school. What kind of Sexuality Education (SE) should schools supply students?

Problem Statement

Sex education has been part of a controversial history in the U.S., often perceived as a divisive topic, even though surveys show that most people living in the U.S. believe sex education should be taught in schools (Planned Parenthood, 2019). Sex education in the country also has many implications of the simultaneous social constructions of race, sexuality, gender, dis/ability, class, and citizenship. The history and current state of sex education in the U.S. contributes to oppression, violence, and harm to all people, but exponentially more so for people experiencing marginalization. Currently, in Arizona and many other states in the U.S., sex education is not required and generally not provided to K-12 students. When provided, many school districts are either not able to identify a clear curriculum being used or the curriculum implemented is sourced from a large publishing company. When examining many of these curricula, even the most "comprehensive" programs either perpetuate harmful discourses about marginalized groups of people or attempt to erase the existence of lived experiences of white supremacy and settler colonialism. Instead, SE could provide opportunities for violence reduction, particularly SE programming with a Reproductive Justice (RJ) framework. Aside from reduction of harm and violence, a Reproductive Justice Sexuality Education (RJSE) program could provide space for the exploration of pleasure, desire, and self-determination. Oftentimes, sex education and reproductive health discourses and initiatives focus on a reduction of "risk" instead of production of pleasure and joy. The reimaging of SE that I seek to construct highlights joy and pleasure while utilizing best practices that address and seek

to dismantle systems of power that seek to erase and oppress people outside of the white, patriarchal hegemony.

Policy makers, parents, and organizations that have opposed Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) claim that this type of education sexualizes children, and this has negative effects on children, which disregards recommendations from the CDC, WHO, and other health organizations. When we prevent children from learning about their own bodies, sexuality, gender identity, and relationships, it perpetuates shame, violence or aggression, and hate. When children learn about sexuality, body awareness and autonomy, gender identity, and healthy relationships (sexual and nonsexual), they will be more likely to feel connected to their bodies and experience self-determination, which can positively impact how they treat themselves and others. Teaching students foundational SE provides them with the tools they need to navigate their bodies while experiencing puberty, gender identity, acceptance (of self and others), exploring their healthy relationships, and healthy boundaries. Whereas a lack of SE or Abstinence Only sex education programs do not prove to have any positive impact or risk reduction. I argue that if children learn about their sexuality with honesty, acceptance, and empathy rather than shame, secrets, and hate, violence will decrease.

CSE programs claim to be a holistic approach to sexual health that has many positive outcomes, including sexual violence prevention. However, many CSE programs and curriculums fail to provide a nuanced version that provides education outside of the white, hegemonic, and heteronormative lens. Not only should SE be comprehensive, but

it must be community relevant. CSE is defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as "...a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality" (Herat, Pleasons, Castle, Babb, Changra-Mouli, 2018, p. 16).

My research seeks to theorize the efficacy of community based or community informed curriculum in SE that is built using the RJ framework. The term "Reproductive Justice" was coined by SisterSong in 1994 although they acknowledge and honor the many women who had previously been advocating for the same tenets prior to the term's coinage. Through an intersectional analysis of the oppressive power structures that construct and reinforce classifications of race, gender, class, sexuality, citizenship, and dis/ability, the need for a RJ is apparent.

An SE program that does not address the subjugation and oppression of people's sexual and reproductive health and rights will only perpetuate harm and violence. An RJSE program that creates space for self-determination, however, can prevent violence and provide access to many people who might otherwise be denied such.

Research Question(s)

- How can an RJ framework contribute to a community created SE curriculum? How might an RJ-based and community created curriculum impact SE for K-12 students?

- What are the possible benefits of an SE curriculum that is constructed within a community using an RJ framework?
- What might an intersectional analysis reveal about sex education in the U.S.?
- How does a community created curriculum fulfill the needs of the population utilizing such curriculum?
- How can this type of curriculum be created within a community? What are current examples of similar curriculums? What kind of framework, support, or program would be provided to a community during the creation and implementation?

Standpoint/Positionality

It is important to note the many layers of my identity that either provide insight or produce limitations in my research. I am a white, middle-class, heterosexual, cis-gender female. I am a mother to a toddler and am married. I currently am a teacher and have taught fifth and sixth grade for over ten years in Arizona Public Schools. In addressing my role as a white woman, utilizing RJ, which exists because of the organized efforts of women of color, I turn to the work of a founder, Loretta Ross. According to Ross (2017), RJ is inclusive and encourages all organizations, researchers, and organizers/activists to do their work within the RJ framework. Loretta Ross, a member of the group of Black women who coined the term, states that allies are "not just encouraged, but required" (2017, 14-19).

It is also important to note that I do not self-identify as a survivor or victim of sexual assault but have experienced various levels of sexual violence. I have been a volunteer for an organization, Rise, for over three years and have been working with my teammates to pass the Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights in Arizona. It was in this advocacy work that my research questions began to form. In this role, I have been learning about the politics and policy of sexual assault and wondering what could be done in efforts of violence prevention. Through examining the interlocking systems of oppression and reading the work of scholars from the areas of RJ, Intersectionality, Feminisms, Queer Studies, Disability Studies, and Indigenous Studies, many of my paradigms have shifted during my research. One of the major shifts throughout my research has been in recognizing the ways violence is perpetuated through racialized and gendered discursive regimes, so rather than focus on how sex education can prevent sexual violence, I am choosing to focus on how frameworks and research created by the most marginalized populations must be utilized for any SE program to be sufficient. During this research, I have learned that, although rights are important, a rights-based approach is not sufficient for justice and transformation. Although I plan to continue to advocate for reproductive rights, rights do not signify justice so my emphasis must always be in illuminating and combating oppressive vectors of power.

Theoretical Framework

In my research and thesis, the RJ framework informs my perspective. RJ scholars have articulated two additional concepts that are visible within RJ but distinct from it. Reproductive Health generally is placed within the conversation of sexual and reproductive health care and is utilized typically within a medical model approach. Reproductive Rights is a legal and rights-based approach to advocacy and analysis. Reproductive rights advocacy has historically had an emphasis on choice, which the Reproductive Justice Movement (RJM) seeks to shift due to the complications of choice and access based on reproductive oppressions that people face. RJ does not discount the need for reproductive rights, but rather complicates the rights-based advocacy by utilizing an intersectional analysis of power structures that impact rights. RJ acknowledges the social constructions and conditions which affect a person's access to their reproductive rights (Luna & Luker, 2013; Ross, 2016; SisterSong, 2021). Luna and Luker (2013) describe how "RJ contains multiple modes: analytic framework, movement, praxis, and vision" (p. 328). RJ is centered on everyone's access to self-determination, especially their rights to not become a parent in the way they choose, become a parent if they decide to do so, and raise children in safe, sustainable communities in the ways they desire. The RJ framework addresses reproductive oppressions through a social justice approach, centering the most marginalized communities. As a white, cisgender, heterosexual woman, can I also be a scholar of RJ? RJ is inclusive and encourages all organizations, researchers, and organizers/activists to do their work within the RJ framework. During

my research, however, I must be implementing the RJ tenets and interrogating my relationship to power within the structures I wish to critique. I am grateful to the people of color scholars, activists, and organizations who have created and implemented RJ and see this framework as the necessary lens for addressing the sex education disparities throughout the U.S. Access to relevant CSE is an RJ issue.

I approach this research question with a transformative paradigm and analyze the current literature through this paradigm. I also theorize and re/imagine SE for K-12 students using intersectional feminist epistemologies and theories. I examine the history of sex education and the current realities of SE in the U.S. through an intersectional analysis of the ways in which people experience life differently based on the intersecting vectors of power that seek to dominate, erase, and oppress people outside of the norms of white heteropatriarchy. I argue for local iterations of student-centered and student-created curriculum that reimagine the current CSE program model by reflecting lived experiences of students and their communities. I do not wish to reproduce a neoliberal agenda, which is why I take an intersectional analysis and reimagine SE through a RJ framework. To properly examine SE through an intersectional analysis, the focus must be on power and how power impacts sexuality differently based on the different interlocking systems of power impact people. SE that does not address power cannot and does not seek justice. At the conclusion of this paper, I detail recommendations for future research, coalition building, and curricula creation. Educators, policy makers, advocates, students, community members, and guardians of students all have a role to play in guaranteeing an

SE curriculum that is transformative and aligned to the goals of the RJM. I believe that this research and reimagining of SE can be a major contribution to the RJM and has the power for social transformation.

CHAPTER 2

AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST EXPLORATION OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SEX EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

This evidence-based curriculum . . . is like, “I don’t care about the fact that maybe you are having sex because your father got shot and that is the only way you have got self-care right now. Maybe you are having sex because that is the only way you are making money to pay your bills right now.” I am not caring about all of that if I am just coming in with evidence-based intervention, because my job is to just make sure that you have condoms and you are using less. I am not dealing with poverty. I am not dealing with racial profiling. I am not dealing with all the other shit that you have got, that is informing your sexual decisions. Not only is that part of the problem, but as women of color, I don’t want to speak for everybody, but I will at least speak to me, change is why I go in the room. Change is what I am here for. I do care that you use condoms because I don’t want you to get HIV, but at the same time, I am more concerned about the quality of your sex life. I want you to have a good sex life. I recognize that to be an inherent positive part of your whole development. When I educate you, it is so much more than just evidence. (Flowers 2016, p. 103)

In 1994, mentioning Sex Ed and masturbation proved to be a way to lose your job as a public health official in the U.S. When Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders described

masturbation as "'part of human sexuality and it's a part of something that perhaps should be taught,"' she was asked to resign (Lord, 2010, p.1). Unfortunately, not everyone felt that a Surgeon General, who oversees public health, should speak about sexual health. Exemplifying how RJ is necessary, while both a medical model and a rights-based approach are insufficient, Elders, who was a top health official and a Black woman, is fired for speaking about the right to seek pleasure within one's own version of healthy sexuality.

Due to the decentralized control of school districts, sex education varies widely throughout the U.S., with differences even within the same states between different schools and school districts. Therefore, geography often determines the type of sex education one may receive. Although different communities may have differences in their cultural responses, desires, and needs regarding sex education, deliberate withholding of information is not protective, but harmful. There has been a long-standing argument over the type of sex education that should be required and provided in schools in the U.S. Perceptions about morality and scientific medicine have been at the forefront of this sex education debate, often positioned against one another discounting the possibility that they could exist in tandem, or that there is a transformational approach that reimagines the possibilities of SE. The push for morality centered sex education practices is often embedded with religious notions and the pathologizing of sexuality in a way that is harmful to everyone. It also assumes that there is a universal view of what is healthy in

relation to sexuality and reproductive lives. This is falsehood and erases people's varied life experiences and desires.

This literature review and intersectional analysis of sex education in the U.S. includes addressing the following questions. How have the U.S.' views and debates on sex education shifted over time? How have these shifts been motivated by colliding historical events or paradigms? How does the history of racialized gender formations collide with the history of sex education in the U.S.? How might sex education been informed by discursive, social constructions of race, gender, and sexuality? What has been made invisible or distorted in sex education programs and what can be illuminated by intersectional analysis? How has SE sought to invisibilize certain people or deemed people as deviant?

I will explore the history of sex education in the U.S., ending with some reflections on current programs. For clarity, I want to point out that this review is primarily focused on sex education implemented in U.S. schools and institutions. Therefore, this analysis does not include an exploration of family and community discussions of sexuality and sex outside of these institutions. Programs and discussions about sexuality outside of institutions are necessary and effective. However, there is a need for public education to provide SE and often there is a connection between the state or school policy and the attention of sexuality discourse at home.

An Intersectional Analytic Framework

Before considering the institutionalization of sex education within the U.S., I find importance in laying the groundwork for intersectional analysis. Although intersectionality was not coined until 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, many women of color had been implementing intersectionality as an analytic tool and a praxis for decades (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). The call for intersectionality came from necessity from women of color who were facing "triple jeopardy" as a result of the interlocking systems of power that are constructed to serve racist, classist, and sexist agendas (Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 2).

Black women in the U.S. have utilized the analytic tool and praxis we now know as intersectionality for decades due to the racialization and gendering of their perceived existences. Black women have used intersectional analysis to highlight the ways in which feminisms have ignored their racialized lives and the Black liberation movements have not acknowledged their gendered lives. Women of color in the U.S. have been examining, theorizing, and building coalitions around their lived experiences in ways that highlight the intersecting vectors of power that work to perpetuate white supremacy. Ross describes how white supremacy and reproductive oppressions are not solely perpetuated by one political group, but white supremacy and settler colonialism are systems upheld in diverse ways by either side of the aisle. Ross argues that

> ...many on the Right and the Left wane to restrict the growth of developing world populations, and in this context, "family planning" becomes a tool to fight terrorism and civil unrest. Some on the Left want to increase access to family planning, economic

development, and education to curb population growth, even if achieved through the coercive use of con-traceptives and sterilization. Some on the Right prefer military interventions and economic domination to achieve population control (2009, p. 54). The debates surrounding SE in schools have many connections to the public debate about reproductive rights with a focus on abortion.

When an intersectional analytic framework is applied to SE in schools, students' lived experiences are made more visible and we can begin to address the needs of students who are facing multiple layers of oppression and violence. Currently, this is a very timely and needed analytic for schools to adopt in order to address and combat the attacks on the lives of trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming youth. Therefore, the lives and experiences of youth of color, particularly trans youth of color must be centered and protected. In the following examination of sex education, I highlight how sex education has almost always been constructed and presented with the goal of upholding white patriarchal power structures. These constructions of race, gender, class, sexuality, dis/ability, and citizenship must be interrogated to create an RJSE that no longer perpetuates harm and violence.

History of Sex Education in the United States

Sex education in the U.S. has a long history, however this history has been riddled with divisive debates. Currently, over half of the states do not require sex education be taught in schools. Many of the legislative battles could also be a result of an exaggeration

in the division between the views of U.S. citizens. For example, studies show that a large majority of parents surveyed believe that sex education should be taught in middle school and high school (Advocates for Youth et al., 2015, p. 3). Still, there are public groups such as Stop CSE that are dedicated to prohibiting sex education be taught to K-12 students.

Sex education in the U.S. has experienced different waves or movements, starting in the late 1800s. This history has been detailed in many works that discuss sex education in the U.S., however, the analyses have not consistently or adequately examined the role of power structures and how their intersections map onto different people and communities differently. There has not been enough attention made to the roles of white supremacy and settler colonialism in the discussion of sex education. This is a necessary analysis wherein the goal is to be transformative, and justice centered. For sex education to be created in ways that do not perpetuate harm and violence, we first must examine the ways that it has been crafted to serve white patriarchy and settler colonialism.

One of the first major movements towards teaching sex education in the U.S., came alongside the industrialization of the country. The National Education Association (NEA) was an organization that spearheaded the push for sex education in schools. In 1892, the NEA argued for "moral education in the schools" (Cornblatt, 2010, paragraph 3). During this time, morality was also being constructed as white and femininity was linked with "unreliability, unpredictability, and lust," while masculinity was attached to civic virtue (Glenn, 2002, p. 22-23). Therefore, women were not initially viewed as morally sound.

However, a shift occurred for white women, to uphold white masculinity and white male superiority. White womanhood was constructed in conjunction with white manhood. White women were valued for serving white males as well as reproducing and raising white children, whereas because Black males were not valued, Black women and Black children were also not valued and their lives were not viewed as moral, but instead inherently deviant (Glenn, 2002). White women have often benefitted and therefore actively aligned with whiteness and white supremacy, instead of aligning with women and womanhood (Glenn, 2002; Hong, 2015). Sexual purity, morality, and motherhood were all attributed solely to white women. The construction of white femininity was placed in opposition to women of color and Indigenous women. The implications of which dehumanize and devalue women, while perpetuating white supremacy (Glenn, 2002).

In the nineteenth century, the focus of sex education was largely centered on "social hygiene" and arose from discourse surrounding the protection of the white, hegemonic notion of family and morality, including the Cornstock Act (Lord, 2010, p. 18). There was an increase in industrial capitalism and with it an increase in the legal regulation of reproductive health "...as native White births declined and immigrants with higher birth rates arrived, movements at both the federal and state levels led to restricting access to birth regulation, at least in part to encourage or coerce more White births" (Luna & Luker, 2013, p. 331). Anthony Cornstock was focused on removing anything he deemed sexually immoral, and the Cornstock Act made distribution of contraception

illegal and considered it to be obscene. The Cornstock Act sought to control women's reproductive lives by criminalizing knowledge about and access to contraceptives and abortion. Cornstock was also associated with the YMCA, which in 1885 began a basic sex education program that required purity oaths, linking morality to sexual abstinence. This initiative quickly dispersed but was followed by many similar initiatives afterwards. The public started to believe that sex education was a public health issue, and many programs were focused on military men, again with the continued desire to protect the family and promote social hygiene. There was also an influx of people immigrating to the U.S. during this period, fueling racist notions of hypersexuality and promiscuity of people who were not white U.S. citizens (Lord, 2010). This collided with segregation laws that perpetuated stereotypes and continued pathologizing of sexuality. Many initiatives for sex education during this period were focused on morality and sexual disease prevention, which have been continued trends since.

More national advocacy for sex education began in 1912, when the National Education Association advocated for teacher training in sex education under the leadership of Dr. Ella Flagg Young. In 1913, Dr. Young led the first formal school-based sex education program in the U.S. (Jenson, 2007). The program was approved by parents after Dr. Young was able to present to them the moral basis and focus on "social hygiene" (Jenson, 2007). Again, this vision of morality and disease prevention continued to oppress people using racist, classist, sexist, ableist notions to create policies and systems that restricted the access many people were granted to their own reproductive

rights. Deemed the "Chicago Project," the program was ended due to the violations of the Cornstock Act (Jensen, 2007; Wiley et al., 2020). In 1918, The Chamberlain-Kahn Act was passed followed by a report by The U.S. Department of Labor's Children's Bureau in 1919 calling for the sex education in schools as a means of protection for soldiers against Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) contraction (Harris, 2015). During this time of sex education, not only was there a racialized and gendered construction of morality, but there were also social and pollical constructions of sexuality that was inextricably linked to the notions of race and gender. In examining this moment in sex education through an intersectional lens, a few important points begin to form. Although it is easy to find a wealth of sources on sex education in the U.S. from the 1900s to present, it is much less common to find an analysis of sex education that mentions the ways in which policies and practices impacted people differently. It is assumed in most other works that the white, cisgendered, heterosexual male is the norm. Some analyses attempt to take a feminist approach but fall short again by perpetuating a monolithic white feminist hegemony. In my intersectional perspective, I am noticing that women of color and sex workers were impacted negatively by the social hygienist movement, due to high infection risks coupled with additional barriers to access of resources in comparison to white women. At this time, many white women were moral reformers and felt that sexual activity outside of the heteronormative family was immoral and obscene, including sex work (Luker, 1998). Legislation that criminalized prostitution and "lewdness" was passed by thirty-two states before 1920 (Luker, 1998). Not only did the criminalization of

sexual labor impact women engaged in such labor, but also businesses that could be allegedly creating space for this type of sexual behavior. As Luker details,

Once prostitution had been legally transformed into the crime of "promiscuous sexual intercourse," there was now an expanded network of people whose property, status, livelihoods, or licenses were at risk should they be accused of tolerating these activities newly defined as prostitution (1998, p. 615).

What Luker does not expand on is how this impacted people in numerous ways. Since the only requirement of detainment of women at this time was the suspicion of prostitution and therefore assumption of venereal disease necessitating quarantining, thousands of women were imprisoned. These social and legal constructions of sexuality and sexual deviance were occurring alongside of both the rise of Eugenics in the U.S. and Margaret Sanger's work in birth control advocacy (Roberts, 2017). Due to the hyper sexualization of women of color, I find it plausible that women of color were disproportionately detained during this time where perception of sexuality led to an assumption of STIs, sexual immorality, and therefore a need for imprisonment (Giddings, 2005; Glenn, 2002; Roberts, 2017). During this period where sex education is centered on morality and social hygiene, Black people, Indigenous people, and nonwhite immigrants are being impacted by a multitude of power structures. Class and economic status, race, and geopolitical location impacted the public education available, oftentimes with a goal of assimilation and erasure, general curriculum in schools was harmful and violent to individuals and communities who were not perceived as deviant in relation to white

supremacy and white patriarchy. While public school is constructed as a tool for erasure and oppression, the legal and social constructions of sexuality are simultaneously constructed and constituted with fluidity that serves a white supremacist and settler colonial agenda. As sex education continued to grow in its public perception as a social issue through the 1930's and 1940's, The U.S. Office of Education publishes the first sex education materials and teacher trainings, and sex education courses begin to be offered at universities (Harris, 2015). This expansion of sex education in schools was in tandem with the growth of eugenics, population control, and Margaret Sanger's official founding of Planned Parenthood (Huber & Firmin, 2014). Contraception became more of an emphasis and under the guidance of family planning, white heteronormative family life was valued at the expense of all other communities (Glenn, 2002; Huber & Firmin, 2014).

Reproductive Control as Care

Dorothy Roberts explains that birth control has been used as a form of genocide on Black bodies. Roberts focuses on the history of compulsory sterilization and the 20th century eugenics movement. Both topics collide as racism creates methods of using birth control to prevent Black people from having families. In the opening of the chapter, Roberts describes historic attempts to control Black women's bodies. "While slave masters forced Black women to bear children for profit, more recent policies have sought

to reduce Black women's fertility. Both share a common theme-that Black women's childbearing should be regulated to achieve social objectives" (Roberts, 1997, p. 56). Margaret Sanger, who started foundations that eventually become what we know as Planned Parenthood, became involved in the eugenics movement, and took a significant role in bringing racist practices into the birth control movement. Eugenics contributed to the reimagination of racist policies that control reproduction. These policies were used to dehumanize people of color and those who were deemed "feebleminded," often the poor. Birth control was still prohibited by law until 1965. Roberts discusses how this history of sterilization leads to the reasonable sense of hesitation that many Black people feel surrounding birth control, due to concerns of racial genocide. Essentially, what some may consider the birth control movement quickly became a movement for population control that impacted the racist and sexist policies and views held so commonly today. Roberts states that "America's recent eugenic past should serve as a warning of the dangerous potential inherent in the notion that social problems are caused by reproduction and can be cured by population control." (Roberts, 1997, p. 59) This notion was the dangerous message that Sanger promoted. Even when Sanger opened a clinic for Black women, she kept strict control over it because she did believe she knew what was best for Black people's reproduction.

Roberts recollects the eugenics movement as a means to control the reproduction of people to alleviate perceived social problems. This is also an argument used for abstinence only education. Roberts describes people who have used care and social work

as ruses for racist practices, which has parallels to much of the debate surrounding sexual education. The argument that is used against comprehensive sexual education is framed under a similar lens of care. Opposition to youth receiving accurate and inclusive sexual education claims that this type of education will harm youth by sexualizing them. This assumes that children are not sexually autonomous beings and that they have no reproductive rights. By denying these rights, young people are not cared for, but instead controlled. ACRJ, now Forward Together, states that "Reproductive oppression is the controlling and exploiting of women and girls through our bodies, sexuality, and reproduction (both biological and social) by families, communities, institutions, and society." (Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice., 2005, p.3). While I would expand this definition to include anyone, not just women and girls, the definition is still relevant to make the argument that controlling access to comprehensive and relevant SE is a form of reproductive oppression.

The next major shift in sex education occurred in the 1950s, after the release of what was known as the Sex Education Series. U.S. health official and public policymaker concerns prompted school & community-based sex education policies & programs. In the 1950's, most women living in the U.S. were married before the age of eighteen and nearly half of those women were pregnant within the first year of marriage (Lord, 2010). Like in many times throughout history, premarital sex might have still been seen as taboo and discouraged but many people still partook in sex outside of marriage. During this time there was a rise in sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancies outside of

marriages. In the 1960s, these nonmarital pregnancy concerns caused some policymakers to take a standpoint on sex education. The public also became more public about their discussions of and engagement in sexual activity. Some deem this the Sexual Revolution. In 1964, Mary Calderone founded the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). According to Planned Parenthood, where Calderone served as a director, "SIECUS was created in part to challenge the hegemony of the American Social Hygiene Association, which then dominated sex-education curriculum development" (Cornblatt, 2010, paragraph 7). New York University was given a grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 1968 to develop teacher-training programs for sex education. Conservative parents protested sex education, in reaction to the sexual revolution, again aligning exploration and knowledge of sexuality with immorality. At this point, sex ed became a more direct political issue as conservative groups such as the Christian Crusade and the John Birch Society developed public attacks against sex education and SIECUS. These groups aligned sex education not only with immorality, but with communism. In 1970, Nixon passed Title X as part of the Family Planning Services and Population Research Act, which asserted that the government would help provide services to all U.S. citizens regarding family-planning and contraception. This allowed for access to more information for many people, women particularly, about sexuality and sexual health. In the 1970's Public Health Services focused heavily on the prevention of teen pregnancies, even publishing a pamphlet that stated that teen pregnancy was "everyone's problem" (Lord, 2010, p. 132). Although PHS moved

forward in addressing teen pregnancy, STI's were not a focus on teens and there was still a hesitation to admit that teens were having sex. While PHS attempted to bring sex education to the forefront, cuts to federal spending on programs and a resistance to directly address sexuality or set clear goals, led to a lack of movement.

During the 1980s, the HIV/AIDS epidemic "...shaped the need for and acceptance of formal instruction for adolescents on life-saving topics such as contraception, condoms, and sexually transmitted infections." (Hall, 2016, p. 595) During this time, C. Everett Koop was appointed by President Reagan as Surgeon General, and this decision was met with a lot of controversy. Many people opposed Koop's appointment, some claiming he was inexperienced and others expressing concerns that he was aimed at rolling back abortion rights. After the growth of organizations such as Planned Parenthood, SIECUS, and the Guttmacher Institute, many people living in the U.S. believed that these institutions were providing the most comprehensive sex education to the public, not the federal government. In some ways, sex education advocates strengthened their case during the 1980's, but for Abstinence Only (AO) activists, the AIDS epidemic was utilized as a reason to implement Abstinence Only Until Marriage (AOUM) curriculums. During this time, teens in the U.S. were twice as likely to experience an unintended pregnancy than teens in European countries. This difference in teen pregnancies was due to lack of access to contraception and other family planning services that were more readily available in Europe. In 1986, Koop shared The Surgeon General's Report on Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome in which he had detailed

language and pictures that were easily accessible to the public. In this report, Koop affirmed other public health officials' stances on the AIDS epidemic by stating that this was a problem for everyone to address and asserted the need for education. This report isolated some of the Christian conservatives with whom he previously aligned and identified. Koop was standing between the dichotomy that had been created surrounding sex education. In 1988, the U.S. government funded a pamphlet on AIDS to be sent to all citizens after receiving pressure not only from groups inside the country, but from other countries as well. The mailer advocated abstinence but did include condoms as a prevention method as well and focused on choices.

With the transition from the Bush administration to the Clinton administration in 1992, some notable sex education changes occurred. In 1993, Jocelyn Elders was appointed Surgeon General, and the ACLU won a case which proved that the previous administrations had violated several constitutional amendments by distributing grants that violated the separation of religion and government with the AFLA (Lord, 2010). Sex education advocates made progress in the early 1990s, with every state requiring HIV prevention and the creation of a national task force and national guidelines for CSE.

However, sex education continued to be pushed towards abstinence and "between 1988 and 1999, the proportion of teachers who taught in abstinence-only programs rose from 1 in 50 to 1 in 4" (Lord, 2010, p. 167). In the late 1990's, the discourse on welfare reform impacted sex education as "...abstinence only until marriage (AOUM) sex education was adopted by the U.S. government as a singular approach to adolescent

sexual and reproductive health." (Hall, 2016, p. 595). Since 1996, when "welfare reform" included a provision granting federal funds to abstinence education, there has been a continuation of funding to AO programs and funding cuts to CSE.

In 2007, several reports including the Trenholm Study and the Kirby Study provided evidence that AO programs did not have any impact on teens waiting to have sex, limiting sexual partners, or using condoms (Planned Parenthood, 2019). The Future of Sex Education Initiative (FoSE) published its National Sexuality Education Standards in January 2012. From 2006 to 2013, "...the National Survey of Family Growth show significant declines in adolescents' receipt of formal sex education" (Wiley & Cory, 2013; Planned Parenthood, 2019). This includes declines in information about pregnancy and contraception, consent, and sexually transmitted diseases.

According to Planned Parenthood, "Currently, 24 states and the District of Columbia mandate sex education and 34 states mandate HIV education" (Planned Parenthood, 2019). Many of the restrictive policies regarding sex education have been targeted at populations of a certain socio-economic status. This brief history exemplifies how class, race, gender, and population control have played a role in the perpetuation of AO programs in the U.S. In Arizona and 8 other states, HIV prevention is the only required type of sex education. If sex education is taught, abstinence must be stressed, and information is not required to be medically accurate. These policies impact the types of programs funded, supported, and implemented for students.

Throughout this history, many lived experiences are being ignored in order to push social and political agendas of SE, especially school-based SE. By emphasizing risk prevention and through the erasing and othering of whole communities living in the U.S., sex education was ineffective and even harmful. Has this continued into current iterations of SE curricula?

Current Sex Education Curricula through an Intersectional Analysis

So far in the chapter, an intersectional analysis of the historical implementation of sex education in the U.S. has highlighted how people, particularly those whose multilayered identities were constructed in a matrix of domination, had been made invisible and dehumanized. Specifically, I argue that throughout the construction of sex ed, the systems, debates, and programs may have shifted, but upholding white supremacy remains the constant goal. An intersectional analytic framework also allows me to similarly critique and analyze current curriculums and programs by examining the relationship to power granted to participants and the curriculum creators.

When examining examples of sex education programs implemented in the U.S., I am interrogating if and how the programs address the rights of the participants, combat interlocking systems that create reproductive oppressions, and represent the felt experiences of participants' and communities in which they live.

Abstinence Only Until Marriage and Abstinence Plus

As detailed in the previous section, the U.S. has seen many debates over the types of sex education that should be implemented. In 2008, during the Bush administration, Congress approved the allocation of almost 175 million dollars to be spent on AO programs, years after studies proved AOUM programs ineffective at changing the sexual behaviors of young people or the prevention of HIV (Harris, 2015). Since then, the funding has been cut, but tens of millions of dollars are still spent on AOUM programs. Individual states can use this funding differently and this leaves the U.S. with a patchwork of inconsistent sex education (Hall et al., 2016) The federal programs also targeted low-income communities, were prohibited from including education on contraceptives, and were not required to give medically accurate information. AOUM is sex education that promotes abstaining from sex until married.

This type of program is harmful to many young people, including people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people, sexual assault survivors, and youth who have not abstained by the time they are receiving this education. ASOUM's main goals through implementation are to prevent teen pregnancy and STI spread by delaying sexual activity in teens. Although more effective than no sex education, it is proven to be ineffective at these goals. (Haffner, 1997). "In addition, CSE contributes to fewer unintended teen pregnancies than abstinence-only education" (Forward Together Youth, 2012, p. 2). Aside from this, the harm, confusion, and discrimination inflicted on numerous populations of people by implementing AOUM is vast.

Many tenets of AOUM programs cause an erasure of the reproductive rights of people in the LBGTQIA+ community, people with disabilities, sexual assault survivors, and young people who are pregnant or parenting. (Forward Together Youth, 2012; Haffner,1997) AOUM programs perpetuate the normalization of gender binary and heteronormative ideas. These exclusions not only refuse knowledge and support for LBGTQIA+ youth, but also perpetuate ideas that "other" youth who do not fit into these narrow lenses. AOUM focuses on one type of sexual activity- vaginal penetration from a penis. This excludes many sexual acts and can create confusion by erasing the queer sexual experience. Not only does this type of education erase certain sexual experiences, but also lacks the proper information on puberty for many young people (Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2020).

Another kind of sex education curriculum or program is called Abstinence Plus. Abstinence Plus stresses abstinence, but also includes information on condom use, some birth control methods, and STI facts and prevention. AOUM and Abstinence Plus both include many of the same discriminatory features that cater to while, cisgender, heteronormative, able-bodied males. Unfortunately, since 1996, when "welfare reform" included a provision granting federal funds to abstinence education, there has been a continuation of funding to AO programs and funding cuts to CSE.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CSE provides knowledge and information about all aspects of sexuality and reproductive health. CSE should be holistic and complete, but a quick glance at different

self-identified CSE curriculums shows that they are widely variant. Are the curriculums available truly comprehensive that are created by the same company that creates AOUM programs?

One company, ETR, creates over 20 different sex education curriculums ranging from HIV prevention to AOUM with curriculums that are self-identified as CSE. All these curriculums come at a high dollar cost, which makes it high unlikely that Title I school districts would adopt it especially in states that do not require them to have a sex education curriculum. ETR claims that all the curricula implement approaches that are evidence based. ETR sells curriculums that target communities of color without including those communities as creators. The website describes certain curriculums that are specifically for African Americans and Latinos.

While I can agree that all communities should have curriculums that are responsive to their needs and desires, these curriculums were not made by the communities they are made for and make over-generalizations by assuming all Latinx and Black communities desire and require the same type of curriculum. No group is monolithic, and everyone should have an SE program that values their unique and intersectional identities and experiences.

For curriculums and programs to be comprehensive and address the concerns of an RJ framework, they must center on the most marginalized populations. CSE is often advocated for being implemented with a rights-based approach. Although rights are essential, an approach based on rights alone is still insufficient. By utilizing an RJ

framework, we can imagine a SE program that can address and seek to dismantle the systems of oppression that impact students' lives. SE curricula and programs must include and be relevant to the communities and people that implement and participate in them.

Both the histories of education and Reproductive Health in the U.S. show that the foundations of these systems have been created with and in favor of a white, middle class, heterosexual, cisgender, male lens. The collision of educational oppression and reproductive oppression forms an intersection at SE, and we must put forth efforts to unpack oppressions to truly provide a holistic CSE.

As RJ centers the most marginalized populations, the framework not only looks to people of color, but to the LGBTQIA+ community. Current CSE programs should be following the National SE Standards and therefore should include lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, nonbinary, pansexual descriptions (Wiley & Corey, 2013). However, including descriptions and definitions is not enough. Therefore, curriculums must not only be inclusive of, but relevant to LGBTQIA+ people (Forward Together Youth, 2012; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2020).

YPAR Sexuality Education

An example of an RJ approach to developing and implementing a SE program comes from Forward Together, an organization dedicated to RJ. In 2012, Forward Together developed a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project in which youth created a SE curriculum called Let's Get It On (Forward Together Youth, 2012, p.

1). In this YPAR, over five-hundred students participated in surveys and five focus groups were dedicated to describing the current state of SE in the Oakland school district and the ideal or vision students had for SE. Forward Together stated that, “We found that students are overwhelmingly in favor of a comprehensive SE that is inclusive of and relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students; students with disabilities; and English language learner (ELL) students.” (Forward Together Youth, 2012, p. 1).

From these findings, recommendations were developed for a campus in Oakland. Forward Together Youth also created a campaign called Sex Ed the City.
In a YPAR created curriculum, kids are the driving forces for the creation, which can help provide a form of RJSE that will target the specific, self-identified needs of the participants and their community. A YPAR can also boost community support for implementation and involve community leaders.

Summary of Intersectional Analysis of U.S. Sex Education

In the U.S., SE initiatives and debates have often focused on issues of morality and prevention of STIs or unintended pregnancies. There has been extraordinarily little emphasis on desire, pleasure, and sexual intimacy in these debates. This emphasis has pathologized sexuality in our society and made prevention in fact more difficult due to the shame associated with any perceived sexual deviance. There is a great need to continue to detail the discursive and material constructions of sexuality and sex education

alongside the formations of race, class, gender, ability, and immigration in the U.S. Through my research, I was continuously reminded of the large scope of this work and in a later chapter will discuss recommendations for the continuation of an intersectional interrogation of sex education formation in the U.S. Although Sara Flowers' work has specifically focused on Black women and girls, much of her argument is related to mine, even the most recommended CSE programs are not going to be sufficient at meeting the needs of many young people. Flowers shows how intersectional approaches are necessary in creating an adequate SE program by stating, “Existing theories used to ground comprehensive sexuality education programs are an inadequate foundation for programming that seeks to educate Black girls and women, given their complex context (Bowleg 2012; Flowers 2016)” (Flowers, 2018, p. 312). This is not just true for race and gender classifications, but for ability as well. In Gill’s Already Doing It: Intellectual Disability and Sexual Agency, SE programs are also shown to be inadequate and exclusionary for participants with disabilities. Gill reminds me that “... paternalism is the application of able-bodied standards to adults with intellectual disabilities, who are perceived as perpetual children (as IQ is often translated into mental age), thereby erasing the embodied knowledge and unique epistemology about life and physical maturity of individuals with intellectual disabilities” (2015, p.3). When an SE program does not allow students to participate and see their life experiences represented, it is oppressive and disempowers them.

In the examination of current SE program types, I see gaps that need addressing. Even with recent discourse on consent and sexual assault, there is yet to be a wide-spread understanding of sexual pleasure or addressing of racial, culture, and gendered stereotypes that perpetuate negative outcomes. SE needs to be highly varied as it is based on lived experience. In the following chapters, I will describe the potential for RJSE to create social transformation, reimagine RJSE curricula, and make recommendations for furthering this research and implementation possibilities.

CHAPTER 3

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FRAMEWORK, SEXUALITY EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

How are RJ and SE transformative?

I initially began my research looking for the impact that CSE could have on sexual violence but was struck by the amount of scholarship that discusses the benefits of SE (Schneider & Hirsch, 2020; Miller, 2018; Makleff et al., 2019). Not only have scholars written widely on prevention of violence through SE, but large health organizations such as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have also consistently supported SE as means of violence prevention and reduction (World Health Organization, 2019; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). If SE is proven effective for preventing sexual violence, why is it not implemented? Many programs and curriculums are created, implemented, and evaluated based on the prevention of teen pregnancy and/or reduction of the rates of STIs (Hall et al., 2016). Although important, I find this focus to be narrow and therefore not aligned with the more holistic assumptions of RJ. In our current state of education in the U.S., we have seen an increase of attacks on public education and teachers' autonomy including legislation posing under the guise of anti-Critical Race Theory bills and parental involvement, as well as anti-LGBTQ+ bills (Lavietes & Ramos, 2022). Most of these pieces of legislation seek to restrict teaching accurate accounts of history and would perpetuate the goals of white supremacy (Tawa & Bunts, 2022). It is during this time; I

believe it is even more critical that we examine the restrictions on public education through an intersectional lens as to make visible the knowledge that white heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism continues to seek to erase from public knowledge.

In this chapter, I seek to provide a concise description of the Reproductive Justice Movement and describe the connections and intersections of Reproductive Justice and SE. I am grateful to the people of color scholars, organizers, and organizations who have created and implemented RJ and see this framework as the necessary lens for addressing the SE disparities throughout the United States. After examining these components, I argue for the need for a Reproductive Justice framed SE (RJSE) program that includes participant and community reflection and involvement.

Reproductive Justice: Analytic Framework and Movement

The term "reproductive justice" is defined by SisterSong "...as the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities" (SisterSong, 2021). The term was born through the organizing efforts of Black women to lead this national movement in order to "uplift the needs of the most marginalized women, families, and communities" (SisterSong, 2021). People of color have been committed to RJ long before SisterSong coined the term in 1994 and continue to do so. "A few years later, the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective was formed by 16 women of color organizations in 1997, with a focus on grassroots mobilization and public policy" (Asian Communities

for Reproductive Justice, 2005). Although created by women of color, Loretta Ross, Sistersong, and organizations that are part of the Sistersong collective, such as Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, all explicitly state that the Reproductive Justice Movement (RJM) is inclusive and that “allies" are not only welcomed but required. The organizers involved in the RJM demand that the most marginalized populations be centered, focused on creating better outcomes for communities.

Currently, the RJM can work in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement and advocate for Birth Justice, which are “events that are often neglected by mainstream pro-choice and pro-life movements” (Radical Reproductive Justice, 2017, p. 25). However, RJ also has and continues to be co-opted by white-feminist groups or pro-life organization. These groups frequently use the language associated with RJ without adopting the framework, leading to a misnomer of RJ as an abortion access movement. RJ organizations are not at all positioned against pro-life, they are in support of abortion rights while also in support of the human right to have and parent children as desired. The nuance, complexity, and wide range of issues that RJ seeks to support, and change includes abortion, but does not center abortion access as a sole goal.

The RJM asserts the necessity for personal and social transformation and provides a framework that enables these transformative processes. This section is an exploration and imagination of social change through this movement. How does the RJM work to create social transformation? What social change has the RJM created? How does this work move toward or align with Sustainability Goals?

As the pro-choice v. pro-life debate continues tugging back and forth aggressively, the RJM recognizes nuance and complexity in the interlocking systems of oppression that impact "choice." RJ breaks through the barriers and limits of this dichotomous thinking by offering new language and theorization while looking at reproductive health within a human rights framework. This movement seeks justice regarding not just reproduction, but class, gender, race, settler colonialism, ableism, and more aspects that have been utilized as means of oppression. This movement seeks to shift the narrative away from the binary options of Pro-Choice and Anti-Abortion and create opportunities for social and personal transformation. This is RJM, and the world needs to lean into its message. With women of color as leaders, centering the most marginalized, and using a human rights-based approach to achieve a more holistic view of justice, RJ has a transformational ability. The RJM has proven to construct personal and social transformation since the term RJ was coined over twenty years ago.

The organizers involved in the RJM center the most marginalized populations in their transformative process focused on creating better outcomes for communities. The RJM includes environmental justice, violence prevention, proper healthcare, SE, and educational justice as crucial factors that intersect with race, class, sex, gender, ability, and citizenship in ways to perpetuate reproductive oppression. The RJM shifts seeks to shift the discourse on Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights away from the abortion-focused "Pro-Choice" v. "Pro-Life" debate, as this debate does not address the specific challenges of reproductive oppression of marginalized communities. The

outcomes defined by RJ are instead holistic goals that involve healthcare access and options more broadly, as well access to food, quality education, safety, and economic means. Social change can occur in the shift from abortion-centered reproductive health to a holistic view of community care and justice. This social transformation is related to Horton's work with education and civil rights and utilizes concepts of community organizing.

Many of the Sustainable Development Goals are applicable to the RJM, since part of the mission of RJ is safe and sustainable communities. I see a direct alignment between many of the indicators in these goals to the goals of the RJM.

"Reproductive Justice is purposefully controversial in that it disrupts the dehumanizing status quo of reproductive politics" (Ross, 2017,11). RJ may be controversial, as noted by Loretta Ross, but it also allows space for new language and possibilities outside of extreme pro-life and pro-choice viewpoints. RJ recognizes the interlocking systems of oppression that the binary debate does not even begin to address. This is because RJ activists, scholars, and organizers acknowledge that people's lives do not always operate in the binary space provided by the abortion debate, there are far more nuances that the RJ framework acknowledges in the three major tenets; the right to have children, the right to not have children, and the right to parent children in safe and sustainable communities.

Pro-Choice is singularly focused on having the *choice* to have an abortion, which is an important piece of a much larger picture that RJ organizers envision. According to

Ross (2009), this vision focuses on ends, rather than the means. This is helpful because everyone's reproductive journey, and therefore freedom, is different. It is important to move away from the narrow emphasis of abortion to a more nuanced version of RJ that concerns gender, ability, class, sexuality, and race because having the choice to get an abortion is not the only reproductive right infringed on. In fact, for many people other reproductive health issues and reproductive rights require much more urgent attention. The reproductive right to legal and safe abortion access is an essential component for reproductive freedom, but it should not be sequestered from the vast assemblage of aspects that impact reproductive health and reproductive rights. When activists solely advocate for abortion as a choice, the reproductive freedom of many people is ignored and, in many cases, compromised. The RJM is not only inclusive of, but relevant to anyone and their reproductive needs, while centering the most marginalized populations. SisterSong recognizes that, "our society will not be free until the most vulnerable people are able to access the resources and full human rights to live self-determined lives without fear, discrimination, or retaliation" (SisterSong, 2021).

A heteronormative vision of RJ is several stops short of, and in many cases *stopping*, justice for the most marginalized. It pinpoints the right to safe, legal abortion as the end in mind for reproductive freedom, which ignores the reproductive desires and needs of most people. There is an attempted erasure of the extensive work done in RJ by people of color and LGBTQIA+ people. This vision often misconstrues the meaning of RJ by conflating it with Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights. This limited view

expects that modifications for people with disabilities will be satisfactory. Abortion-only activism ignores the issues that people living in poor communities may face.

While the mainstream pro-choice movement often presents as an anti-abortion movement, the RJ framework can and has been utilized by pro-life feminists. This is evident in the work of Derr (2017) as well as Smith (2017), who make connections to pro-life and RJ in their interactions with Native women's desires and values. Derr credits the RJ framework for providing a way to theorize pro-life feminism as she problematizes the ways that mainstream pro-life movements are centered on life before birth, but not concerned with life after birth. Derr also asserts her disagreement with many aspects of US conservatism and argues that pro-life feminism "...seek(s) to address and relieve the difficult, deeply engrained cultural problems that so frequently disempower women and put them in situations where there appears to be no other or less bad choice than...abortion" (2017, p. 89). Smith asserts that the dichotomy of pro-choice and anti-abortion dialogue is utilizing language that obstructs and limits the expression of values and lived experiences of Native women by detailing examples of women struggling to categorize their viewpoint within this narrow lens (2017, pp. 151-152). Smith goes on to argue that the RJ framework can not only transform the pro-choice/pro-life debate, but also that RJ allows for marginalized people, such as Native women, to attain self-determination for their communities (2017, p. 152).

The RJM does not advocate for either pro-life or pro-choice, but instead demands a paradigm shift from "choice" to "justice" in which "intersectionality is our process;

human rights are our goal" (Ross, 2017, p. 14). In shifting away from the "choice" argument, focusing on legal action as well as awareness through mobilizing people to attain human rights, and opening the parameters to include all groups of people, RJ is more likely to be successful. According to Haglund and Stryker, the framework RJ employs, including benefits for all "stakeholders," organizing communities to highlight the issues faced by marginalized communities and taking legal action to defend human rights, is effective in creating social transformation (2015, p.12-3). Haglund and Stryker analyze social impact of different models by employing their MAPs framework and point out the ways in which different models can be helpful or limiting. Their analysis highlights a need for a balanced approach to create social transformation that is sustainable. By recognizing intersecting identities and the varied reproductive experiences of people, RJ centers storytelling and acknowledgement of nuance as crucial tools to justice. Through RJ, there can be unity between pro-life and pro-choice viewpoints by focusing on lived-experiences, storytelling, and justice.

Reproductive Justice Movement as Social Transformation

Whether spawning other movements or providing others with a more comprehensive framework, the influence of RJ on other movements is vast due to RJ's utilization of the human rights approach. Through the focus on the intersectional experiences of marginalized communities and using the human rights approach to seek justice, women of color RJ scholars and organizers have created a framework that is so

comprehensive and ambiguous, it can be overwhelming. However, this holistic framework can then provide support for more specific movements and organizations. The RJM has grown as a collective of many diverse organizations, which creates space for many people to examine the interlocking systems of oppression from different angles. Some aspects of RJ include disability justice, immigrant rights, racial oppression, LGBTQ+ rights, indigenous sovereignty,

These elements of RJ help provide organizers, scholars, and communities with language, tools, and theory to battle reproductive oppression. Reproductive oppression occurs with communities of color, Indigenous communities, the disabled community, and poor communities as systems infringe on the rights that RJ so clearly defines as human rights. The right to not have children using desired methods, the right to have children with desired methods, and the right to parent children in safe and sustainable communities are tenets that have become the more specific goals of certain movements or organizations that align with RJ. Specific examples of influence and impact of RJ are evident in movements including the Black Lives Matter Movement, Birth Justice, and Trust Black Women.

Due to the history of population control through eugenics, RJ emphasizes not only the right to birth control and abortion, but also the right to *have* children. This particular tenet of RJ has spawned a movement called Birth Justice. Birth Justice honors birth workers of color as they seek to provide marginalized communities with resources and support connected to the birth of their children. Gun violence and police brutality are also

a RJ issue and movements such as Black Lives Matter align with the human right to live in safe and healthy environments. Indigenous rights and calls for decolonization and sovereignty are recognized and supported by RJ as essential for ending reproductive oppression as the nation-state holds power and control over many Native communities.

Women of color are the creators of the RJM and sparked growth in organizing all over the country as individuals and organizations have won legislative and policy victories. RJ also influenced Planned Parenthood and NARAL to shift language away from the pro-life/pro-choice debate. There is recognition by RJ scholars that misappropriation and co-opting occur without true alignment to the RJ framework, but the RJM continues to seek further paradigm shifts with these groups by welcoming allyship and collaboration. Myles Horton described how education is not "...about methods or techniques: it would be loving people first…" and asserted that this would require wanting the best for them, respecting their capabilities, and honoring their experiences (Horton, 1990, as cited in Jones, 2007, p.7). Education in social change is only important if the information and conversation include the experiences of the people who are seeking the change. Similar to Horton's approach to community organization through education, RJ honors the valuable knowledge that everyone, as well as their community, can add to the movement. Ultimately, RJ scholars state that "feminism needs our RJ framework because we value the worth of children of color beyond birth and understand that the struggle for justice is also a struggle against the violence of white supremacy" (Ross, 2017, p. 26). Whereas the pro-life/pro-choice does not even begin to

address issues of life after pregnancy and birth, RJ has provided a framework and tools for many people and organizations to utilize as a means of transformation.

Due to the RJM and the people of color who are leading and powering the movement by collaboratively constructing a vision for the future, changes are evident, but it is important to remember that progress is not linear. This future building aligns with many of the Sustainable Development Goals, of which I will highlight the connections to three. Goal 4 calls for quality education to be accessible for all. Target 4.a. states that it is imperative to "build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all" (The United Nations, 2018). The RJM seeks educational justice as a part of the third tenet of RJ. Sustainable Development Goal 5 is seeking gender equality, which not only does RJ call for, but the organization and leadership of the movement models indicators 5.5 and 5.6.

Women of color created the RJ movement and continue to lead the movement, instead of trying to integrate into existing organizations and navigating the politics of inclusion, the transformation of power relationships starts at the foundational level of the movement. As the RJM centers justice, instead of reproductive "choice" as termed by mainstream feminists, Sustainable Justice Goal 16 is directly aligned. Goal 16 asserts the need to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'" (The United Nations, 2018). The RJ Movement aligns to many of the targets in

these goals through violence prevention advocacy and seeking equity, including target 16.7- “ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels'” which again is part of the fabric of RJ leadership.

RJ is transformative in our society because it shifts away from binary and recycled arguments. Within an RJ paradigm, we can utilize intersectionality to interrogate power systems that harm us all, dismantle these systems, and re/imagine new possibilities. By examining foundational problems with structures, instead of assigning individual responsibility, and therefore blame, we can address harmful systems, such as the myth of privacy.

RJ claims highlight more explicitly and proactively a foundational problem with which US abortion rights advocates have been unable or unwilling to grapple. Privacy assumes access to resources and a level of autonomy that many people do not have. A privacy approach cannot accommodate the fact that many people rely on government support for their daily activities, whether they be education (e.g., student loans), family formation (e.g., tax credits), or employment (Mettler 2011; cf. Reich 1964) (Luna & Luker, 2013, p. 329).

Luna and Luker highlight how privacy and rights-based approaches to reproductive health are insufficient because they fail to address the real conditions with which people are living in the United States. Similarly, this approach is insufficient in relation to SE. The claims of CSE and calls for holistic or inclusive SE, all fall short. An Intersectional analysis reveals the need for an RJ framework. I argue that a RJ framework

is instrumental to guide transformative SE program creation that is built as part of youth participatory action research.

A RJSE can be socially transformational as it will align to the major tenets of RJ. This includes the right to parent, the right to not parent, and the right for families to live in safe and sustainable communities. RJ recognizes that protection of legal rights is necessary, but not the only barrier that many people face in seeking self-determination, particularly as it relates to their reproductive lives. RJ scholars can point out inequities in the ways people are granted or denied their reproductive rights through an intersectional examination of the social, political, and simultaneous constructions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and dis/ability (Luker & Luna, 2013; Ross, 2009).

RJ is a transformative movement for personal and social change as it constructs new language, theorization, and possibilities while expanding the otherwise narrow focus of abortion rights and access to dismantling interlocking systems of oppression to create better outcomes for the most marginalized people. By creating a comprehensive framework, RJ allows for and encourages all people and organizations to utilize the RJ theory as a means of transformation. This movement transforms the paradigm of reproductive health by analyzing and deconstructing reproductive oppression. To create a safe, sustainable, and just society, we must remove ourselves from the pro-choice/pro-life binary and utilize intersectional analytic framing. The RJM challenges us to organize and implement tools for interrogating, navigating, and combating the power structures that continue reproductive oppressions.

CHAPTER 4

RE/IMAGINING SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

Sex Ed:
A Poem

touch yourself early and often
learn your body before you share your body
use mirrors to learn how beautiful you are
let yes come from every part of you before you share you
when your eggs drop, you are in heat
the risk is greater than the heat- use protection
if your pussy gets sick, feed yourself plain yogurt, garlic
drink primrose tea, rub her with coconut oil
when your blood comes, it's time to rest
know that you are never unclean, never untouchable
use a cup within, or a rag without; no trash needed
now you have power of life, a child is a forever decision
your pleasures will grow with you, never say never
whether voracious or sated, you are whole, unbroken
your orgasms are medicine and magic, use them well
be a lifelong lover to yourself, let others join you
always, always: celebrate your miraculous body

- adrienne maree brown, "Pleasure Activism"

By beginning this chapter with adrienne maree brown's poem, Sex Ed, I hope to set the tone for this section and highlight possibilities within this reimagining of SE as RJSE. The argument I make here is that a RJSE should be rooted in embodied knowledge and lived experiences, as well as pleasure. This chapter seeks to not just expand the notion of CSE but to create a new possibility that starts by shifting the focus onto the participant and the messiness of their reality, rather than the sterile focus of medically accurate SE. This is not to suggest that there is not a need for a discussion of anatomy, reproductive health, and science. I am instead proposing that we utilize the *many* knowledge systems available and diverse ways of knowing are valued during the creation and facilitation of a RJSE program. I will start with some current examples that are useful for determining different elements of SE that can be implemented as a part of this RJSE participant focused model.

Instead of school sexual education that is deficit based and centered around protecting the notions of a nuclear, white, heteronormative family, schools must provide SE for K-12 students that is framed from a RJ standpoint and includes community participation.

Rather than morality or values, I am invoking *justice* as the basis of the SE programs. I am specifically calling for RJ, as it acknowledges not only how many vectors of power impact the experiences of people and communities, but also because RJ acknowledges that individuals and the communities with which they identify should be able to decide what constitutes their ideals. I agree with RJ scholars that believe each

person should have the right to self-determination, which includes the ability to decide what is moral, valued, and healthy for them (Flowers, 2018; Luna & Luker, 2013; Ross, 2009; SisterSong, 2021). Therefore, the programming I call for requires both community discussion and individual reflection on their versions of sexual and reproductive health.

In order to imagine such a curriculum, I will look at current examples that can serve as models and then detail the components which must be included in order to align with the tenets of RJ and transform the current notions of comprehensive SE.

This process cannot involve taking a current SE program and then simply adding or attempting to include the RJ tenets. The curriculum for which I call for demands the creation of a brand-new approach. Including community members and diversifying a current curriculum does not sufficiently address the power dynamics that have immediate discursive and material impacts on people's daily lives.

There are several examples of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) created SE curricula. These programs all emphasize the importance of the participants in SE and position the participants' lived experiences as an essential part of the research. As I explore these examples, I notice useful elements to include in an RJSE curricula. Black Girls Equity Alliance does not consist of a YPAR, but I believe the community-based needs assessment of SE in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania and use of an intersectional analysis while examining Black girls' experiences in SE should be implemented in each local community before beginning a YPAR (Brinkman, Garth, Horowitz, Marino, Lockwood, 2019). Another major influence of current work that I utilize in this

re/imagining of RJSE, is a SisterSong virtual summit focused on RJ Sex Ed. As a primer, this virtual conference had five different themes with experts that led me to new sources and research.

RJSE Foundational Elements

CSE and evidence-based (EB) programs are most effective for white students because they are predominantly created for white students by white curriculum designers and medical professionals. These programs will therefore be inadequate for addressing the lived sexualities of many student participants and could potentially perpetuate harm much like AO programs (Advocates for Youth, et al., 2015; Brinkman, Garth, Horowitz, Marino, Lockwood, 2019).

Furthermore, since research is lacking around culturally congruent sex ed for Black girls, polarizing statistics about teen birth and STIs have unfortunately had an outsized influence on the ways that educators approach Black students in the classroom, directing educators' focus overly towards preventing these outcomes, rather than building on students' strengths and addressing other crucial topics such as healthy relationships, positive self-image, and self-advocacy. (Hall, et al., 2016, p.3)

Although this report from Black Girls Alliance is focused on the negative impact for Black girls due to SE and SE research that is not "culturally congruent," I would

argue that potentially harmful effects of SE that does not attend to varied lived experiences and power structures are also evident for students experiencing other intersections of oppression. Black students, Latinx students, Asian students, Indigenous students, Muslim students, immigrant students, students with disabilities, students living in poverty, LGBTQ+ students, female students, and students experiencing marginalization for otherwise being perceived as deviant must be centered when a RJSE program is constructed and facilitated. This does not just mean that these students are included and represented in the curricula, but that the discursive and material impacts of the intersections of their lived experiences are centered when writing the curricula.

Riggs and Bartholomaeus argue that a "...sex-positive approach to transgender people and intimacy will fail if transgender people are not seen as sexual beings, and if transgender people's rights to self-expression and respect are ignored" (2018, p. 387). Berger states that intersectional stigma "...represents the total synchronistic influence of various forms of oppression which combine and overlap to form a distinct positionality" (2010, p. 4). I find intersectional stigma useful for recognizing and attending to the ways marginalization is formed and experienced in SE programs (Berger, 2010). When SE is not available or if the SE program offered is not attending to oppressive narratives of sexuality, intersectional stigma is perpetuated and enhanced. For example, AO and HIV preventions programs stigmatize sexuality for everyone who is sexually active and not white, heteronormative, married, able-bodied person of middle to upper class status

(Advocates for Youth, 2015; Flowers, 2018; Gill, 2015; Grice & Braun, 2017; Haffner, 2017; Brinkman, Garth, Horowitz, Marino, Lockwood, 2019; Levesque, 2003).

This positive impacts of attending to the intersectional stigma that people face in their LGBTQ+ inclusive education has been proven to save the lives of LGBTQ+ youth by reducing suicide attempt rates (Advocates for Youth, et al., 2015). When people see themselves in a curriculum, by this I do not just mean representation but the valuing of their lived experiences, they feel hopeful and empowered.

An RJSE program must eliminate stigmatization of sexuality and start with a medically accurate foundation that is created by experts who are also at the intersections of oppression. The medical professionals and educators who create the base for RJSE should include a team of people who have experienced and are willing to address the intersecting vectors of power that contribute to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and classism. This way, medically accurate SE can be created simultaneously with anti-oppressive practices. This foundational information can be provided to participants who will work to create an RJSE program for their school or school district.

The report by Black Girls Equity Alliance includes a community needs assessment of SE for Black girls in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. The report defines RJ and CSE, then details a concise history of sex education in the U.S. The report focuses on examining the disparities with which Black girls in this county are struggling regarding their reproductive health, reproductive rights, and SE. The key findings show

the inconsistent and harmful sexual education available to Black girls in the area and the authors then give recommendations based on the results of focus groups and health assessments. The recommendations detail what is required for quality sex education for all Black girls in the U.S., then specifically in this county. This report is an example of research in which all communities in the country should be participating. This community-based needs assessment is a good foundation for creating an RJSE program with students and community members that can properly address the needs identified. Let's Get It On, a Youth Participatory Action Research Project that in which students conducted research on sexual education in the Oakland Union School District, can serve as a model for an RJSE program. From their research, students created recommendations for implementing sex education based on student response in surveys and focus groups and started a campaign called "Sex Ed The City." Forward Together Youth, the organization of students who completed the research, use the term "Sex Ed Justice" to describe their work and cite RJ in their report. When asked to complete the sentence frame, "Sex Ed Justice is Important to Me, My Family, and My Community Because…," one student's answer summarized many of my own thoughts on the intersections of sexual education, sexual violence, and RJ.

…it ensures that all students receive equal amounts of sex ed, a comprehensive one. One that includes useful information for the LGBTQ community, disabled, and ESL youth. Not only will including them make them comfortable in freely expressing themselves, but [it will also] help others be more accepting of them, too. Teaching about healthy and

unhealthy relationships could help reduce rates of domestic violence and teaching about body image will promote high self-esteem within insecure youth and make everyone better students. (Forward Together Youth, 2018, p. 19)

With Participatory Action Research, communities can decide and create the type of sexual education they desire and need. Many curricula are currently created without the input of the community for which they are intended. YPAR in a RJSE project can eliminate many of the issues of other SE programs. Knowledge and lived experiences from each community should be honored in a sexual education curriculum that is also comprehensive and inclusive.

Another model of YPAR under the context of RJSE comes from the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (ICAH). ICAH defines itself as "...a network of young people and adults who transform public consciousness and increase the capacity of family, school, and healthcare systems to support the sexual health, rights, and identities of youth" (Huber & Firmin, 2014). ICAH has a range of SE programs and workshops, including participatory plays, podcasts, and workshops for youth, as well as "adult accomplices." ICAH explicitly states their commitment to RJ in their work (Huber & Firmin, 2014). Their work is youth centered and created and focuses on lived experiences as well as pleasure. ICAH's work is a wonderful example of the type of program that could be created as RJSE.

I have detailed how a community might work to create a responsive RJSE program for their school or school district. Using foundational research on sexual and reproductive

information that has been gathered by medical professionals and researchers who utilize an intersectional analytic framework is the first step to an RJSE program. Then, completing a community-based needs assessment is important in order to move beyond assumptions on needs and desires for reproductive and sexual health and instead clearly define what community members want for their own communities. Directly correlating to the RJ tenet of the right to live in safe, sustainable communities, this needs assessment should center the most marginalized populations within a community and identify what safe, sustainable, and healthy means to them. After the local community has clearly articulated their needs and desires for sexual and reproductive health, then a YPAR project can begin to work on creating a RJSE program that will align to these community goals. This YPAR can involve different student groups by grade-level to ensure age-appropriate participation. This process to a RJSE is centered on the community it serves while attending to large systems of power in the U.S. that impact lived experiences. Next, I will examine the need for a centering of felt knowledge and pleasure in crafting this type of RJSE.

Pleasure & Desire

The role of pleasure and desire is important to a RJSE program that attempts to create social transformation. Adrienne maree brown describes how she has personally grappled with the separation of her sensual and sexual self with the side of herself focused on transformation and growth and then came to the realization that "...the link is all in the body as a practice growing for transformation" (Rodriguez, & Piepzna-Samarasinha,

2019, p.116). She goes on to detail how transformation had to begin with acceptance, love, and pleasure within her body as it currently existed and then she was better able to identify the types of transformation that were wanted or needed (Rodriguez, & Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2019). In previous chapters, I examined how current SE needs to be transformed and how RJ and RJSE can bring social transformation. Similar to brown's realization of the body connection needed for transformation, I also contend that embodied knowledge is necessary for transformation and adequate RJSE.

Instead of a risk prevention and deficit-based approach to SE, RJSE will center pleasure, non-sexual in addition to sexual, and embodied knowledge. Contrary to the historical and current iterations of SE in the U.S., one in which Joyce Elders was forced to resign for suggesting masturbation be taught, this re/imagining of RJSE agrees with brown when she contends that "...if more people were encouraged to masturbate early and often, to learn what feels good to them and that they have the right to communicate that, there would be less sexual trauma, assault, patriarchy, misogyny, and general awkwardness" (Rodriguez, & Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2019, p. 118). Brown's book on pleasure activism and bell hooks' works on liberatory education inform my argument for a pleasure centered approach to RJSE.

Community members of color should have their embodied knowledge and experiences valued and their desires should be driving decision making and reconstruction of school settings for their communities.

Committed acts of caring let all students know that the purpose of education is not to dominate, or prepare them to be dominators, but rather to create the conditions for freedom. Caring educators open the mind, allowing students to embrace a world of knowing that is always subject to change and challenge (hooks, 2014, p. 92).

Teachers are then facilitators and encouragers for students as they navigate their own pleasure, sexuality, and version of health. Instead of dictating what is "healthy," "positive" and "normal" for sexuality, the community participants can examine their own personal and collective ideas about what healthy and positive sexuality and relationships can include.

A Call for Community Action

While exploring SE in the U.S. through an intersectional analysis, the need for RJ as a framework and method becomes clear. It is through this examination of SE that ultimately leads me to the demand for an RJSE program informed by the participants, for which I recommend localized YPAR projects. Also, through this intersectional analytic framework, it is clear that marginalized and sexualized populations should have their lived experiences centered and the vectors of power that continue these oppressions must be dismantled. SE that does not address power, does not and cannot seek justice. This means all people participating in RJSE should not only see themselves represented in the RJSE curricula but should be prompted to interrogate and resist sexual and reproductive

oppressive systems. Through an intersectional analysis of SE, students and community members can build coalitions that contribute to the RJM (Guy-Sheftall, 1995).

An RJSE curriculum such as this is more necessary to implement now than ever before, as the rights of Transgender youth are under attack in schools. Since the start of 2022, two hundred and thirty-eight anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced across the U.S. and many of them focus their target on Trans youth (Lavietes & Ramos, 2022). These bills seek to erase and eradicate LGBTQ+ people, both current and past, by creating barriers to healthcare access, school sports, and prohibiting materials in the classroom that would allow children to see themselves as successful in the world. Not only are the rights of LGBTQ+ students being violated, but other bills claiming to be against Critical Race Theory (CRT) are aimed to further erase all intersectional histories from school curricula. Anti-CRT, anti-LGTQ+, and bills against Social Emotional Learning (SEL) all "...weaponize education and health care systems, both of which have long histories of harming and criminalizing communities of color and LGBTQIA+ communities" (Tawa & Bunts, 2022). Through the recommendations I include, I hope that we can collectively combat these violent rhetoric and policies and transform education and SE with the goal of liberation.

Parents, community members, activists, and educators must engage in coalition building at state and local levels to advocate for policy changes. This can include but is not limited to policy changes within school districts, city ordinance, and state legislation. Furthermore, communities can also engage in creating and facilitating this kind of

curriculum through local events and organizations. Community members also must be cautious about buying into divisive narratives surrounding SE. For example, only 11 states in the U.S. currently mandate SE that is LGBTQ+ inclusive, but studies "...found that 85% of parents support teaching LGBTQ inclusive sex education in high school, and 75% of parents support it in middle school" (Advocates for Youth, et al., 2015). The majority of families value SE in schools and want a SE program that aligned with what I am proposing as RJSE, yet policy makers and media outlets are stuck in a state of outrage and division regarding SE that prevents the majority of people in the U.S. from getting the SE programs they want to see in schools. Community members can combat this problem by organizing to advocate for a vision for RJSE that meets their needs. In 2021, SE advocates were hopeful that the introduced bill, the Real Education & Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA), would be passed, but it did not move forward in the U.S. congress (Edwards, 2022).

After working with Rise, an organization founded by Amanda Nguyen that works to pass the Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights, I have a clear understanding of how difficult it can be to pass legislation, even when it has bipartisan support. While I recommend RJSE coalitions continue to do policy work to ensure equitable and community-responsive SE for all students K-12, this work can happen simultaneously alongside local research for community-based needs assessments and YPAR projects. The decentralized implementation of SE in the U.S. creates many disparities; however,

we can locally work within these disparities to create RJSE that meets individual community needs.

Although students should not be tasked with the overwhelming goal of undoing all the systems with which uphold white heteropatriarchy and white supremacy, students who engage in RJSE can feel empowered by examining how these sites of power map onto their lived experiences and learn ways of organizing to resist these systems. Through local YPAR projects focused on building an RJSE created from a community-based needs assessment of SE, students can become agents of social change within their communities and simultaneously work towards self-determination. Students should also be part of the community organizing

Conclusion

Through an intersectional analysis of SE in the U.S., I have highlighted some of the ways that historically and currently SE programming has created and perpetuated stigma and harm. I am unable to meticulously detail all the intersecting vectors of power that oppress, and privilege people differently, but instead provide a foundational understanding. Continued and more specific research is still a need for understanding the

impacts of SE programs. I also hope that as communities implement this form of RJSE, they will be able to utilize an intersectional analytic framework as they conduct the community-based needs assessment. This intersectional analysis shows the need for an RJ framed SE approach, as it illuminates the deficits within the rights-based approach that is often advocated for in CSE. RJ as a framework and movement, especially in SE, has the ability to create social transformation that will align with many goals of sustainability efforts, as well as efforts of public health organizations. The re/imagining of SE culminates in a call for RJSE that is based on community identified needs and constructed by youth through local YPAR projects.

The core of the RJSE I propose in this chapter is centering the community and participants. Participants in the program, which includes students, teachers, families, and community members, are creating the curriculum together. Pleasure activism is an additional cornerstone to call for social transformation through RJSE that highlights the power of pleasure and is described by adrienne maree brown as "...the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy" (brown, p. 13). Pleasure and participants are centered through the RJ Framework, from which is the foundation of this project toward creating a community-based, justice approach of SE. My hope is not that this theorization is an end, but a beginning. A seed planted for us all to cultivate and nurture. I hope continued research and organizing pushes for an even further imagining of a liberatory RJSE.

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