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THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ANTI-FEMINIST PEDAGOGY IN AN
ABSTINENCE-ONLY-UNTIL-MARRIAGE CURRICULUM

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Construction of an Anti-Feminist Pedagogy in an Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage

Curriculum

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Sexuality, sexuality education, and teaching about sexuality are inherently feminist topics. There is a way in which to teach sexuality education that deconstructs dominant power structures, empowers students, and that has life-long positive impacts upon the young people in the classroom. In short, utilizing a feminist pedagogy is extremely important when teaching about sex, sexuality, and sexual health. Recently, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) placed an abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum, Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, on a list of endorsed curriculum with evidence-based comprehensive or abstinence-plus sexuality education curriculum. Much has been written about the false information in Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education. However, less has been written about the gendered implications of this curriculum and what a curriculum such as this means in the context of feminist pedagogy. My project will not just focus on a gendered reading of Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education using an intersectional approach, but will also examine the ways in a curriculum such as Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education works against feminist pedagogies in dangerous ways. The theories I believe will be most pertinent to my project and will inform and frame this paper include Nel Nodding's ethic of care, as well as, bell

hooks' theories on feminist pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, and critical thinking. Through a review of the popular literature around Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum itself, and theoretical texts I hope to achieve a more nuanced critique of this curriculum and its implications for the students it is taught to when it comes to important identity categories, with special regard to gender, but at once not leaving out race, class and sexual orientation, as well as in the context of education and the impact that a curriculum such as this can have on the learning outcomes and future learning of students when it comes to sexuality.

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Table of Contents

Title page	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement and dedication	iv
Table of contents	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1—Abstinence, Feminism, and Pedagogy, oh my!	3
Chapter 2—Heritage Keepers: What’s Happening in the Classroom	40
Chapter 3—So, Where Do We Go From Here?	85
Bibliography	102

INTRODUCTION

This thesis feels almost like the next natural step in the progression of my academic career. Since about the time I was nine years-old when I first started learning about puberty in my health classes and from conversations with my mother, I have had an intense interest in puberty, sexual development, and sexuality. In middle school I would go to the local library after school and look at the books on puberty and reproductive systems. When I entered high school I would often answer my friends' questions about how pregnancy happens and how birth control works.

High school is also when I first had an experience with an abstinence-only-until-marriage speaker. Jason Evert came to our suburban, public New Jersey high school in 2003 and spoke about how waiting until marriage to have sex for the first time was the best choice for all of us to make. He was funny, engaging, and lots of students in the auditorium seemed to be interested in his message of abstinence. Evert spoke about how abstinence was key to a healthy, happy, and life-long committed marriage. As a teenager whose parents are divorced, I was intrigued by this assertion, but something did not feel right to me. The way Evert talked about people, especially women, who had sex before marriage was degrading. He made them seem used up, damaged, as if they were less than whole, and were definitely less worthy of love. My teenage feminist self knew something was not right about what he was saying. Almost as long as I have been interested in sexuality, I have identified as a feminist.

When they passed around the abstinence pledges and urged us to sign them and pledge to stay abstinent until we were married, I refused.

I then entered college at The College of New Jersey and there my undergraduate thesis also centered on abstinence, purity, and sexuality, which I wrote in 2010. When I graduated college, I began working—seemingly by chance—at a comprehensive sexuality education organization.

Looking back at this trajectory, writing my master's thesis on an abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum seems as if this is what I've been working for almost my entire life, let alone my academic career. This is all to say, I've been passionate about this topic for years and I'm excited to add my research to the likes of Jessica Valenti and Jessica Fields, and I'm honored to use the works of Nel Noddings and bell hooks in my research and hopefully contribute to the body of knowledge and scholarship on the topic of feminist pedagogy.

It is my hope that my research can contribute to greater awareness and understanding of the harmful nature of abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and can possibly lead to the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum being removed from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services list of approved curricula and will lead to stricter standards being able to be placed on such a list in the first place.

Chapter 1 – Abstinence, Feminism, and Pedagogy, oh my!

In the spring of 2012, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) placed an abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum, Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, on a list of endorsed curriculum. This list contains middle and high school curricula that are supposed to be evidence-based comprehensive or abstinence-plus sexuality education curriculum, proven to reduce teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD) rates, and delay teen sexual activity. In my thesis I will specifically be focusing on abstinence-only-until-marriage education. More precisely, I will examine and conduct a close textual analysis of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum and the accompanying teacher's manual. I will analyze these materials from a feminist pedagogical standpoint. I seek to show that this curriculum is not only anti-feminist in what it teaches, but in how it proposes students be taught. It is my belief that this curriculum represents an anti-feminist pedagogy.

My personal definition of feminist pedagogy, and the one that informs my research, is drawn from works such as Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, and *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* and Nel Noddings' essay "Care, Justice and Equity"¹ from *Justice and Caring: The Search for Common Ground in Education*. I will look closely not only at what is being said in Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, but also consider the silences—what is or is not being said about young people with disabilities, low-income youth, and minority youth. In addition, I will examine

¹ Noddings' essay was later expanded upon in her book *Happiness and Education* (2003). However, it is this essay in particular that I will be using for this thesis since it was this essay that had a profound impact on the construction of my own personal feminist pedagogy.

specifically *how* this information is being presented and the pedagogy that is proposed through the teacher's manual. I will be applying a feminist intersectional approach to this curriculum, which differs from the way other authors have historically tackled this topic. The term intersectionality was coined in 1989 by critical race theorist and law scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw and was made popular by Patricia Hill Collins in the 1990s. Intersectionality, or an intersectional approach, examines the ways in which different identity categories intersect to create a multi-layered oppression in a patriarchal society (Crenshaw 1989). Instead of examining oppression along a single axis or identity category, race, class, sex, or sexual orientation, for example, an intersectional approach takes into account race at the same time as sex and class and sexual orientation. Intersecting identity categories means that individuals experience oppression in different ways. For the purposes of this work this includes looking at not just the gender of the young people who are subject to this curriculum and examining how this curriculum will affect young men versus how it will impact young women, it means also taking into account the sexual orientation, class, sex, and race of the young people. It means examining the messages of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum along multiple dimensions. In particular, I aim to look at how gender is constructed for both young men and women, but also for those who are gender non-conforming, not middle-class, and not white. I will also consider how sexual orientation is addressed as connected to traditional gender roles as laid out in the curriculum.

In order to understand why the addition of an abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' list of approved sexuality education curricula is such an important, and troubling, development one needs

to understand the differences between the three currently accepted approaches to sexuality education. These accepted approaches are abstinence-only-until-marriage, abstinence-plus, and comprehensive sexuality education. There is a stark contrast between comprehensive and abstinence-plus sexuality education curricula, and abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula. In terms of comprehensive sexuality education, these methods and curricula teach that sexuality is a healthy and normal part of life. Additionally, comprehensive sexuality education teaches healthy sexual decision-making skills, abstinence, and how to prevent pregnancy and/or the transmission of STDs if someone chooses to engage in sexual behaviors. It also promotes inclusion and celebrates diversity when it comes to sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, comprehensive sexuality education teaches relationship skills, healthy communication, how to access birth control and STD testing services, how to use a condom, and advocates respect for all people.

Meanwhile, the second approach to sexuality education, abstinence-plus sexuality education, advocates for abstinence to be practiced by students first but includes teaching about birth control and safer sex methods. While not nearly as inclusive as comprehensive sexuality education, it is still better than no or misinformation. There is a strong emphasis on teaching students to “say no” to sex, but this approach acknowledges that there are methods to prevent pregnancy and/or the transmission of STDs should a person decide to have sex. These curricula teach about the different methods of birth control and how effective they are, as well as the fact that condoms can effectively prevent the transmission of STDs and prevent pregnancy. There is less of an emphasis—perhaps even no emphasis depending on the specific curriculum—on support and

inclusion of LGBTQ students, there is less of an emphasis on the fact that sexuality is healthy and normal, and students are still receiving the message that choosing to not have sex is the “right” decision to make. There is an element of moralizing in abstinence-plus sexuality education that isn’t present in comprehensive sexuality education.

The third approach to sexuality education, which I focus on in this thesis, is abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. Abstinence programs, such as Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, advocate for abstaining from all sexual behaviors until marriage and refrain from any instruction on how to use or access hormonal contraceptive methods or safer sex methods. If there is any mention of hormonal birth control or condoms, it is usually in the context that condoms are not effective and birth control has negative health effects. There is a strong emphasis on the idea that having sex outside of a heterosexual marriage will ruin a person’s life. In addition, many abstinence-only-until-marriage programs reinforce sexist, cissexist, racist, homophobic, and classist stereotypes and power structures, and shame young people for having sexual feelings or wanting to express their sexuality. All of these messages are contained in the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum.

Each state in the U.S. has a different mandate when it comes to sexuality education. That is, if the state requires sexuality education to be taught at all. There is no national standard for sexuality education, nor are there any common core standards for sexuality education (unlike for other core content areas such as history or English). Amongst each state what must be taught varies and within each school district throughout a state there is leeway for individual districts to implement whichever curriculum the administration, school board, and/or teachers prefer. Therefore, it is exceedingly difficult

to know where and exactly how many schools use this curriculum. I have investigated where this curriculum is taught and how many school districts use it however I have not been able to find any data. Even abstinence education organizations and websites do not have this information. We do know, however, that Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is being used in schools and, as prior research shows, will most likely be instated in even more schools now that it has been endorsed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

It is also important to understand the background and broader context related to this curriculum and the organization that produces it. There are dozens of state-level and local organizations that advocate for or provide abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, and there are only several nationally focused abstinence-only-until-marriage education organizations (National Abstinence Education Foundation <http://www.abstinenceworks.org/organizations-mainmenu-47>). Heritage Community Services is a state level organization based in South Carolina that recently has gained further national recognition with the federal approval of its curriculum. Heritage Community Services—the organization that produces Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education—appears to have tie back to the 1980s men’s movement that sought to reinstate man as the head of households as ordained by their Christian beliefs (Swomley 1997).

The men’s movement was a response to “second wave” feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. One backlash to women demanding equality was that some men felt the need to reassert their authority, specifically as authority figures in the home. As Michael A. Messner notes in the abstract to his essay “The Limits of The Male Sex Role: An

Analysis of the Men's Liberation and Men's Rights Movements' Discourse,” “The conservative and moderate wings of men's liberation became an anti-feminist men's rights movement, facilitated by the language of sex roles” (1998 pg. 1). This movement initially had overt Christian ties that still exist in some capacity in certain parts of the abstinence-only-until-marriage movement. While one of the branches of the men's rights movement included religious ties, other branches of the movement focused on father's rights. As with feminism, there were, and are, various simultaneously occurring men's movements. While not true of all members of the men's movement, most were focused on taking back rights that they felt had been stripped of them during the feminist movements. The values and aims of the conservative factions of the men's rights movement can still be seen in the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education in their reinforcing of traditional gender roles and the promotion of traditional heterosexual marriage. While the men's rights movements of the 1980s have since died out—and for the most part have left behind the religious underpinnings that defined the initial movement—the effects are still being felt. Heritage Community Services and the subsequent abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education are one such effect that is still being felt.

Heritage Community Services, which was founded in 1995 and became a 501(c)3 non-profit in 1998, is not a faith-based organization, and Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is a secular curriculum in the sense that it never directly references Christianity (<http://www.heritageservices.org>). However, founder and CEO Anne M. Badgley has direct ties to Christian conservative groups and the Republican party. She founded the Lowcountry Crisis Pregnancy Center in 1986, and has connections to national Christian

anti-choice organizations and was even a fundraiser for then Presidential nominee Georg W. Bush (Kempner 2012). While Heritage Community Services is a non-profit, this does not mean that their financial dealings are above board. Although this is ancillary to the larger issue of feminist pedagogy and abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, I believe it is worth noting that Jessica Valenti found in the course of her research for *The Purity Myth* (2009) that:

...Heritage's leadership is wrought with ethical red flags. The women's legal-rights organization Legal Momentum reports that the Heritage curriculum is produced and sold by Badgley Enterprises, a for-profit company run by Heritage founder and CEO Anne Badgley and her husband... These organizations [Heritage Community Services and the National Abstinence Education Association] and leaders have strong ties to the anti-choice movement and conservative Christian groups. (pg. 115)

Additionally, their Director of Advocacy, Mary McLellan, has ties to the Charleston Tea Party, regularly blogs for Charleston Tea Party's website. (<http://charlestonteparty.org/>). McLellan also maintains her own personal blog—Exposesexednow.wordpress.com—where she claims she will expose the “agenda of Planned Parenthood and their Networks to indoctrinate generations and groom children for sex” (McLellan July 2013). This information, I believe, further goes to show that Heritage Community Services is an organization that is more concerned about various issues that are not related to actually educating young people to be sexually healthy beings than about the young people they purport to educate and serve.

In broader terms of abstinence-only-until-marriage educational programs, there are dozens that have been published, some rooted in Christian or religious values, others are purely secular. However, while many different abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula have been written, none—until now—has ever been evaluated and then been deemed effective at reducing teen pregnancy, reducing the transmission of sexually

transmitted diseases, or delaying teen sexual activity. Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education was evaluated by a team of researchers lead by Dr. Stan Weed, a social psychologist whose work has focused on promoting abstinence-only-until-marriage education, and according to a third party, Mathematica Policy Research, the evaluation was considered sound and therefore the curriculum was deemed effective. However, as will be shown, the study was faulty and the subsequent label of evidence-based given to this curriculum is inaccurate.

The Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum is not only harmful because it hides and distorts the truth about birth control and condoms, its gendered implications and implications for pedagogy are equally harmful to students. This Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum's values, and the values of the Heritage Community Services organization, are antithetical to everything feminist pedagogy tries to accomplish in the classroom. I argue that this curriculum has far reaching consequences for the young people who are subjected to this curriculum beyond just that they do not know how to use a condom or find a local clinic—which a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum would include information on.

The Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum does not foster critical thinking and therefore students are missing out on vital learning and life skills, not just missing out on important content knowledge. Most importantly, I hope to show how harmful the proposed pedagogy within the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is for young people. It relies on the use of fear, shame, and oppressive power structures to scare young people into making the decision the creators of this curriculum see as the right one—abstinence until traditional, heterosexual (middle-class, and cisgender) marriage.

These principles, as well as the fact that LGBTQ youth are invisibilized or outright degraded, and that there are racist and classist undertones throughout the entire curriculum—all things that a feminist pedagogy would never enact—make Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education and its pedagogical methods the antithesis of feminist educational practices and feminist pedagogy.

Sexuality and Feminism

Often the word sexuality in the popular vernacular is used as a synonym for sexual orientation. However, in sexuality education communities, and in my thesis, sexuality encompasses much more than sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is a part of sexuality, but there is more to it than that. Based on the research of Dr. Dennis M. Dailey and his model of sexual beingness, which has been commonly become known as “The Circles of Sexuality,” I take a holistic approach to the topic of sexuality (Dailey 1981). Dailey’s model, “The Circles of Sexuality” posits that sexuality is made up of five interconnected and overlapping areas. This theoretical model, adapted by Planned Parenthood Federation of America, is represented by a Venn diagram where each of the five circles overlaps with the other four.²

According to the Circles of Sexuality model, the different aspects of a person’s sexuality are: sensuality (deriving pleasure from one’s body and the bodies of other people), intimacy (emotional closeness with another person), sexual identity (one’s sense of self including sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity), sexualization (the use of sexuality to manipulate or control others), and sexual health and reproduction (behaviors

² The Circles of Sexuality, while originally developed by Dr. Dennis M. Dailey, were not represented with a diagram, but were rather written about in his text. Planned Parenthood Federation of America has a popular diagram of The Circles of Sexuality that they created and disseminate that visually represents Dr. Dailey’s work. This Venn diagram is popular among sexuality educators to illustrate the theoretical model Dailey developed in 1981.

related to caring for reproductive organs, reproducing, and the consequences of sex) (Dailey 1981). This model views sexuality as comprised of many different aspects that are all a part of an individual and combine to create an individual's sexuality.

Aspects of sexuality are often topics of feminist research or a part of feminist activism.

Advocating for LGBTQ equality, gender equality, rape and rape prevention, reproductive rights, and bodily autonomy are all a large part of feminist scholarship and advocacy, and sexual orientation, gender, rape, reproductive health, and autonomy are all aspects of sexuality. Just as feminism seeks to further equality on the basis of gender and sexual orientation, it also advocates for reproductive rights and bodily autonomy.

Comprehensive sexuality education does the same. Sexuality education—specifically comprehensive sexuality education—advocates for young people to understand their bodies and how they work, and encourages equality and acceptance of marginalized identities. Furthermore, advocating for comprehensive sexuality education is often a feminist cause. Feminist causes often include advocating for birth control, access to it and information on it, yet abstinence-only-until-marriage sexuality education curricula restrict this information. Female sexuality and sexual empowerment are often taken up as feminist causes, yet abstinence-only-until-marriage sexuality education programs, and in particular the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum, shame young people, especially young women for their sexual desires and seeks to oppress sexual expression.

Comprehensive sexuality educators and those that work in the field of comprehensive sexuality education—and I believe feminist scholars will agree—view comprehensive sexuality education as a means by which to affect change and to advocate for equality for all people, including, but especially, marginalized groups. Comprehensive

sexuality education, not just in terms of its noted health outcomes, but in terms of socio-emotional development in young people and in terms of creating a more just and equitable society, is the best approach to sexuality education. I submit then that comprehensive sexuality education is the best approach and the most feminist as well as that advocating for comprehensive sexuality education be taken up as a core feminist cause.

The problem that arises with the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum is that although this is technically considered a form of sexuality education, the curriculum is far from feminist, and does not advocate for any of the above feminist issues. Issues related to sexuality education and comprehensive sexuality education are feminist. From a feminist standpoint comprehensive sexuality education is the only way that sexuality education should be taught. But the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is antithetical to all feminist interventions into the topics of sexuality. This will become evident with the analysis of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum. With this curriculum, the teaching of a topic that should be feminist in and of itself—sexuality—is instead morphed and distorted into an insidious and dangerous anti-feminist curriculum. Mainly, because the point of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is not to teach about sexuality, or to have young people understand their bodies and how they work. Rather the purpose of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum, through the content of the curriculum and the pedagogy enacted, is to deter students from having sex before marriage because that is what the curriculum writers at Heritage Community Services believe is best for them. The content, and the practice of

the curriculum and the intent of its writers, Heritage Community Services, can then be concluded to be anti-feminist.

Limitations

One of the biggest limitations of this study is that the curriculum materials which I have access to are from 2004, making them nine years old. However, the lack of access to a newer version of the curriculum is not for lack of trying.

I first learned about Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education when I was working on my undergraduate thesis for my major in women's and gender studies, which was on the focus on abstinence that was, and still is to a large extent, taking place in U.S. culture. I focused on purity pledges and the commodification of virginity. My work was closely related to that of Jessica Valenti's in *The Purity Myth* (2009). This academic work impacted me in terms of my career as it influenced me to enter the field of comprehensive sexuality education after graduation.

I joined the staff of a non-profit organization based at Rutgers University called Answer when I graduated from The College of New Jersey in 2010. Answer provides and promotes unfettered access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people and the adults who teach them. This is achieved two ways: through our teen-to-teen educational initiative, which includes a magazine, *Sex, Etc.*, and a website, Sexetc.org—both of which are written by teens, for teens. Second, it is achieved through the training of teachers to become more effective sexuality educators. When I first began working at Answer in 2010 I was the Sexual Health Education Expert. In my position I answered teens' questions on the Sexetc.org Forums related to sex, sexuality, and sexual health. My position has grown and developed into the Coordinator of Education and

Communications where I also now work with our Teen Editorial Staff to write and produce content for the *Sex, Etc.* magazine and the Sexetc.org blog, in addition to training the Teen Editorial Staff on issues related to sex, sexuality, and sexual health. While not a traditional classroom educator, I do educate teens on sexuality topics and consider myself to be an educator. In my position I've come to teach not only about sexuality topics, such as birth control, pregnancy, safer sex, and gender identity and sexual orientation, but I've also come to teach writing—my second major as an undergraduate was English—as an editor. In my work with the *Sex, Etc.* Teen Editorial Staff I consciously try and incorporate feminist pedagogical practices and techniques into my work.

Working in the field of comprehensive sexuality education, I was acutely aware of the development when the Department of Health and Human Services placed the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum on their website's page of approved and evidence-based curriculum. I was also already aware of the harmful nature of such a curriculum. Listing the curriculum on this page amounted to a seal of approval and endorsement by the current presidential administration. The Obama administration has heretofore promoted comprehensive sexuality education initiatives, unlike their predecessor the Bush administration. There has been a great deal of frustration within the field with this decision. My professional work in the field of comprehensive sexuality education and long-standing academic interest in abstinence-only-until-marriage programs combined with my interest in feminist pedagogy and thus prompted my current research.

When I contacted Heritage Community Services to procure a copy of their curriculum, they refused to sell it to me. Following the directions on the Department of

Health and Human Services website, I went to the Heritage Community Services website and tried to purchase the curriculum. Instead of being able to order the curriculum and pay for it on-line—which is how I assumed it would work—I was told to e-mail a contact at Heritage Community Services for more information. I did so and in the e-mail I explained that I was a graduate student and was trying to access the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum and was willing to pay for it. I was told they would not sell it to me and that I had to attend a training first which are only held in South Carolina and which run the cost of several hundred dollars, not including lodging—a stipulation not mentioned anywhere on their website nor on the website of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Instead, I was able to access the curriculum from a colleague organization in the field of comprehensive sexuality after the Director of Training at Answer was able to find a colleague who had an older copy. Another organization had a copy as well, however theirs was incomplete due to the same restrictions and limitations. I was first able to access a copy of this curriculum about a year ago in the fall of 2012, soon after it was first placed on the list of federally approved evidence-based sexuality education programs.

In an effort to ensure I had truly exhausted all avenues for obtaining a newer version of the curriculum, I again reached out to Answer's Director of Training in the spring of 2013 and asked for her assistance. She informed me that a colleague organization had been trying since the spring of 2012 to obtain an updated version of the curriculum and they too had been unsuccessful. Furthermore, Answer staff members, along with the same colleague organization, had even tried to have a friend who works in

a Jesuit high school in New Jersey access the curriculum so that the staff members could all read and analyze the content. The colleague who works at the New Jersey high school was informed, and shared with Answer's Director of Training, that they were told that Heritage Community Services requires anyone who purchases the curriculum to sign a memorandum of understanding. This memorandum of understanding states that the curriculum will only be used for its intended purpose inside of a classroom—essentially forbidding the use of their curriculum for research or analysis unless explicitly approved by them, amounting to a binding injunction on research on the curriculum unless expressly approved by the organization. This would imply that the research conducted on the curriculum by Dr. Stan Weed and his teams of researchers in 2005 and in 2011 was approved by Heritage Community Services, perhaps because they knew the findings would be favorable.

While the lack of access to an updated version of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum limits my ability to address updates or possible changes to the curriculum, I argue that these limitations do not harm my research and in one way actually bolsters my thesis. I am examining the values embedded within the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education. Statistics, photos, and cultural references may all be updated but the values and attitudes towards sex and sexuality of Heritage Community Services—attitudes and viewpoints which include sexual abstinence, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, racism, and classism—will not have changed in nine years. Therefore, a curriculum that was copyrighted in 2004 is not, in this instance, out of date.

Relatedly, I believe this lack of transparency and obfuscation by Heritage Community Services only goes to prove that the organization is aware of the critiques

that can be leveled at them and their curriculum. I believe that an organization that has developed a curriculum that has been endorsed by the federal government and that supposedly helps students should have nothing to hide and would want its curriculum to be seen by as many people as possible. It would seem to me that they would want to sell their curriculum in order to increase the number of young people it reaches. It seems clear that Heritage Community Services doesn't want it to "fall into the wrong hands." They only want their curriculum to be blindly followed, not questioned. Not allowing anyone to use their curriculum in a manner that is not approved by them (who could then be in legal trouble if a memorandum of understanding was in place), seems extreme to say the least. There is protecting a copyright, and then there is inhibiting academic research. This leads into the next limitation or critique that could be made of my research.

Some will argue it is impossible to study pedagogy from a curriculum. However, I believe it can be done since I will be using not only the curriculum but the teacher's manual which has strict instructions for how each lesson should be carried out. The extremely rigid nature of the teacher's manual, where the instructions tell teachers exactly what to say and what not to say, and which videos they can and cannot show, speaks to the sort of pedagogy the developers of the curriculum believe should be enacted within the classroom. It also speaks to the values of the organization. The way in which the teacher's manual is written encourages strict following of the curriculum and does not allow for critical thinking which spills over into how teachers enact this curriculum in the classroom. In addition, I argue that the structure and format of the curriculum, which includes the student manual, also is a part of how the curriculum is presented in the classroom and impacts the pedagogy enacted. For instance, asking for student answers on

worksheets, but only giving students one line on which to write before giving them the “correct” answers on the next few pages shows that the curriculum designers are not interested in allowing students to form their own opinions. Nor are they interested in allowing teachers to use engaged pedagogy, or to foster critical thinking.

Terms and Working Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, I feel it is necessary to outline and define certain terms that will be used throughout, just as the nuances between the different approaches to sexuality education were outlined above. Mainly, the terms that need to be described here are ones specifically relating to sexuality education, gender, and sexual orientation. All of these working definitions and my understanding of these issues have been influenced by my work in the field of sexuality education and the training I have received as a sexuality educator at Answer and the particular style guide that I use at Answer as an editor and the Coordinator of Education and Communications.

In this thesis, sexuality education is specifically used as opposed to sex education, which is the common vernacular or a popular synonym. Sex education connotes that only sex, the act and even perhaps how to perform it, is being taught. Whereas, sexuality education makes it clear that the many different aspects of sexuality—which have been addressed above in the discussion on the Circles of Sexuality—are being discussed. The only synonymous phrase that is acceptable and that will be used in this work is sex ed which is merely a shortening of the longer topic area name.

Within this paper, references will be made to different genders or different sexes in order to reflect that there can be more than two genders or biological sexes. This is an effort to be respectful of people whose gender is non-binary, people who may identify as

neither a boy/man nor a girl/woman, and people who are intersex and whose biological sex may not be determinate within the male/female dichotomy. A person who is intersex may have a combination of male and female anatomy, indeterminate anatomy, chromosomes that are not XX/XY, or a combination of all of these possibilities.

Genderqueer is an umbrella term that refers to a person's gender identity and is generally used by those who do not feel the gender identity man or woman fits them concretely. They may feel as if their gender identity is a combination of being a man and a woman, or they may identify more strongly with either being a man or a woman at certain times, or they may feel that they do not identify with being a man or a woman at all but feel that their gender identity is something else altogether. Genderqueer and its use is closely related to the idea that there are more than two genders and is meant to be inclusive of those no-binary genders. It also serves to reference the fact that genders are not concretely constructed boxes, but fluid categories as unique and individual as each person.

Additionally, I will be referring more broadly to the LGBTQ community and using combinations of the acronym when appropriate. When discussing certain sexual orientations, I will list the specific sexual orientation to which I am referring: gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. Queer again is an umbrella term that individuals can use to describe their sexual orientation when they feel that gay, lesbian, or bisexual or some other sexual orientation does not fit them. It just more broadly means not heterosexual. Sexual orientations will be used as adjectives to describe people, except for lesbian which can be used as a noun and adjective. Finally, when it comes to sexual orientation homosexual and homosexuality will never be used. This is because it is commonly

accepted with the comprehensive sexuality education community to be offensive and alienating to young LGBTQ people.

As for the “T” in the LGBTQ acronym, transgender refers to when someone’s gender identity does not match the sex he or she was assigned at birth. This could describe a person who identifies as a man who was assigned the sex of female at birth, for example. The LGBTQ acronym often includes the “T” in with the LGBTQ when one is only referring to sexual orientations and not transgender identities. There are transgender people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer and they are included in this conversation on sexual orientation. However, all too often the transgender identity gets lumped in mistakenly with sexual orientation leading to further confusion on how gender identity works, what being transgender means, and leads to the invisibility and marginalization of transgender issues. Therefore, I will sometimes refer to just LGBTQ identities when strictly talking about sexual orientation. LGBTQ will be used more broadly when referring to the community or if I am speaking about both sexual orientation and gender identity.

While there are only five letters in the LGBTQ acronym, there are numerous sexual orientations and gender identities. I covered some of the most common ones here that are often used when discussing marginalized sexual orientations and gender identities.

Finally, the term cisgender will be used and refers to someone whose gender identity aligns with the biological sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a person who identifies as a man who was assigned the sex of male at birth would be considered cisgender. This would be considered different from being transgender.

Literature Review

My project fills a gap in the existing research and literature on sexuality education and feminist pedagogy. Much has been written about sexuality education and the different forms it can take—from comprehensive to abstinence-only-until-marriage. However, while my project focuses on feminist pedagogy in the context of an abstinence-only-until-marriage program and the anti-feminist and oppressive nature of said curriculum, the existing literature and studies fall into two main categories. These include reviews of curricula that seek to show that abstinence-only programs and comprehensive programs are more alike than different (and subsequently that abstinence-only programs are effective), and studies which demonstrate not only the ineffectiveness of abstinence-only when it comes to health outcomes, but which oppose abstinence-only outright.

The first approach argues that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs are more like comprehensive sexuality education curricula than they are oppositional (Jeffries, Dodge, Bandiera & Reece 2010; Lesko 2010). Research which falls into this category overestimates the quality of abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and assumes that the only difference in comprehensive sexuality education is that condoms and birth control are mentioned—this is false. The assumption is that not teaching about condoms, birth control, or other safer sex methods is not harmful to students—which is, again, false—and overlooks the ways in which abstinence-only programs uphold the dominant power structures in society. Obviously, feminist pedagogy and feminist curricula seek to do the exact opposite, as will be explored further.

Meanwhile, the other set of research focuses on health outcomes which can include STD rates, rates of unplanned pregnancy, delay of onset of sexual activity, and condom use, and may also include the adoption of a method of contraception and safer sex whether that is abstinence, hormonal birth control, and/or condom use. But health outcomes can also include expressing desire in a healthy way, seeking and reciprocating pleasure, as well as supporting LGBTQ students. Though less measurable than some of the other health outcomes, feeling good about one's body and sexual orientation, confidence in one's sexuality and ability to enact it, are health outcomes. As we know, young people who have higher self-esteem are more likely to ask their partners to use condoms or delay the onset of sexual intercourse (Kirby 2002; Laflin, Sommers, and Chibucos 2005; Askew 2007; Fields 2008; Elia, & Eliason 2010; Gresle-Favier 2010; Stanger-Hall & Hall 2011; Rasmussen 2012; King, 2012). These authors are forthright with their opinion that comprehensive sexuality education is the only means by which we should be teaching the subject.

Other literature on the topic which would fall under the category of supporting comprehensive sexuality education and eschewing abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula includes Jessica Valenti's *The Purity Myth: How America's Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women* (2009). However, Valenti's text talks about virginity and how it is constructed and enforced across many different areas of society. As Valenti writes in her introduction, "In *The Purity Myth*, I not only discuss what the purity myth is and reveal its consequences for women, but also outline a new way for us to think about young women as moral actors, one that doesn't include their bodies. Not just because [women] deserve as much, but also because our health, our emotional well-being, and

even our lives depend on it,” (2009, pg. 15). Although she does include a chapter on abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in the classroom, she does not do the close reading of a curriculum which I will be doing here. Valenti’s work looks at how virginity functions as a way to control and punish young women. While the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education as a curriculum fits into Valenti’s thesis and parts of the curriculum are evidence that what she says is true, my work differs from hers in a crucial way—my work centers around feminist pedagogy and the construction of an anti-feminist pedagogy within the context of a particular abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum and specific lessons within that curriculum.

Perhaps one of the most important pieces of literature out on the topic of abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula is a report that was released in April 2013 by the National Abstinence Education Association (NAEA) that claims to prove the effectiveness of abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in delaying teen sexual activity. This report, *Abstinence Works 2013: Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) Abstinence Education Programs Demonstrating Improved Teen Outcomes*, claims to show that abstinence-only programs are effective in getting teens to practice abstinence until marriage. It is a summary of studies done on various abstinence-only curricula, including Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education. The study “Testing a predictive model of youth sexual intercourse initiation³” by Weed, Birch, Erickson, and Olsen (2011), which is included in this summary is the same as the one that was reviewed by a third party, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Mathematica Policy Research’s summary finding that the study done by Stan Weed and his team of researchers was sound is what helped to place Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education on the U.S. Department of Health and Human

³ Written as in original; all lower case in original.

Services' website. Mathematica's findings are also listed on their website as proof of the curriculum's effectiveness (http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/db/tpp-searchable.html).

In terms of Dr. Stan Weed's study, upon close examination it is easy to see that the Weed study's findings are being presented in a misleading fashion by the *Abstinence Works* (2013) report. The abstinence-only-until-marriage movement co-opts the language of comprehensive sexuality educators in order to obfuscate the fact that it is actually pushing an agenda antithetical to the teachings of feminism, feminist pedagogy, and comprehensive sexuality education (National Abstinence Education Association). Comprehensive sexuality education focuses on sexual risk reduction, meaning the focus is on reducing the risk of pregnancy and/or the transmission of STDs through the use of condoms and/or hormonal birth control. Abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, however, claim that one can avoid—hence the term “sexual risk avoidance” used in the title of the report and throughout—all risk by simply abstaining from vaginal, anal, and oral sex until marriage. They claim that abstinence is the only one hundred percent effective way to prevent pregnancy and the transmission of STDs. However, this is obviously incorrect. One would have to abstain from any and all sexual contact including kissing in order to ensure one was not at risk for the transmission of any STDs. And, even then, if one's spouse did not do the same there is at the very least a risk for the transmission of oral herpes. In addition, some children are born with an STD such as HIV or contract oral herpes as small children from being kissed by relatives that have the virus. While this may seem insignificant, the point is that the entire premise of sexual risk avoidance is faulty—and unrealistic—to begin with. Even from there, STDs and

pregnancy can happen in the context of marriage and not teaching young people how to use a condom or birth control as teenagers in order to dissuade them from having sex and instead teaching them to practice abstinence, just means they are less likely to use condoms and/or birth control once they do decide to have sex, even inside of a marriage. The tagline contained in Valerie Huber's introduction to *Abstinence Works*, "abstinence works every time," just isn't true (NAEA 1). Abstinence is the abstaining from all sexual behaviors to prevent pregnancy and the transmission of STDs. And while abstinence, while being practiced is one hundred percent effective, on a long enough timeline, the vast majority of people will engage in sexual behaviors at some point. When this happens, those who were never given accurate information on safer sex or birth control learn that abstinence can fail. If the premise of their entire program is faulty, how can one expect the practices used to teach young people "sexual risk avoidance" to be reliable, respectful, and non-coercive?

In terms of issues with the Weed study particularly, it failed to use randomization, was not replicated, and it is unclear what the control group was learning as compared to the groups receiving the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education program.

The first issue that arises when looking into the study, "Testing a predictive model of youth sexual intercourse initiation" (2011) is that the control group wasn't actually controlled at all. A control group is supposed to be the baseline standard by which to measure a deviation. In this case the deviation or difference being studied is a group of students receiving the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum. The researchers who conducted the study report that the control group received "services-as-usual" (Weed, et al. 14). This leads one to believe that students were receiving whatever

form of sexuality education they normally would in their school in the control group. The problem here is that there were forty-one schools throughout South Carolina who had students participating in the study, both within the control group and as test subjects.

In South Carolina there is no state standard for how sexuality education must be administered. This means that there is no true “control group” since each school within the control group could be teaching radically different curricula. Individual school boards in South Carolina get to determine exactly how and what materials they will use to teach sexuality education with only a few universal guidelines: abstinence must be stressed, teaching about condoms and birth control must be covered but not stressed—simply meaning they must be mentioned but there need not be detailed instruction—abortion can only be talked about negatively, and LGBTQ people and same-sex relationships can only be mentioned if the teachers are discussing STDs (SIECUS 2010). In addition, teachers are encouraged to say that LGBTQ people are a public health risk. This means that in addition to the control groups of students receiving non-standardized sexuality education that differs depending on which school districts they are in, the proposed sexuality education set out by state mandates is closer to abstinence-only-until-marriage programs than comprehensive sexuality education programs.

Essentially, school districts are already required to teach abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in their sexuality education classes, and the control group could have been receiving forty-one different forms of abstinence-only sexuality education. While individual school boards *may* improve upon the mandated approach to sexuality education if possible, there is no evidence that “services as usual” in South Carolina means anything other than de facto abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. Therefore

the claim that Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education “works” supposedly in relation to and better than comprehensive sexuality education is false. It does demonstrate that Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education works better than another form of abstinence-only education or barely any sexuality education at all. It seems there’s been a broad extrapolation of the data. The study that supposedly proves the effectiveness of Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education really just proves that abstinence-only-until-marriage doesn’t work and Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education works slightly better than what little sexuality education is already in place in South Carolina.

Additionally, as of the writing of this thesis, “Testing a predictive model of youth sexual intercourse initiation” (2011) by Weed, Birch, Erickson, and Olsen has not been published, let alone published by any peer-reviewed journal. This furthers the idea that the research performed was not sound. This is also not the first study done on Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education by researcher and social psychologist Dr. Stan Weed. Originally, Weed evaluated the curriculum in 2005; this article was panned by critics in the comprehensive sexuality education community for flawed design and was never accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal either, making this a second attempt with a similar outcome (Schroeder, et al.).

Finally, the research conducted by Weed et al. studied seventh through ninth grade students—presumably making the students between the ages of twelve and fifteen. The research focused on the students’ sexual activity before the study and one year after (Weed, et al. 2011, pg. 14). According to the study, the control group saw an increase in sexually active respondents from 29.2% to 43.2% and in the group who received Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education there was a smaller increase from 29.1% to 33.7% (Weed,

et al. 2011, pg. 25). While the researchers used a matching procedure, the control group was a fraction of the participant group, theoretically making a small number of students who became sexually active in the control group very statistically significant.

Furthermore, it's not discussed, nor can it be known from the study, if Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education had an impact in delaying teen sexual activity or if the trend was in keeping with other accepted research on onset of teen sexual activity. According to the Guttmacher Institute, by age twelve—the presumed approximate younger age of the Weed study participants—only 2% of young people have had sex, by age fifteen—the presumed approximate maximum age—only 16% of teens have had sex. Even by age 16 fewer than half of teens report having had sex (Guttmacher Institute, Facts on American Teens' Sexual and Reproductive Health 2013). Therefore, having participants who it is presumed are sixteen or younger and less than half have had sex after participating in the study is indicative of larger trends in adolescent sexual activity and perhaps not necessarily indicative of the effectiveness of Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education in and of itself.

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services made its determination that Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education should be included on its list of proven effective, evidence-based curricula not by analyzing the study discussed here by Weed, et al., but rather through a third party analysis of several studies that sought to determine whether these studies were performed with sound methods, and actually had a measurable outcome. Mathematica Policy Research was contracted by the Department of Health and Human Services to read through studies and determine whether the studies were well-designed and whether the curricula studied were shown to have any

measurable impact. When Mathematica Policy Research examined the 2005 evaluation of Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education it was found to not be effective (Schroeder, et al.). The executive summary in the final report states that the program “had little or no impact on sexual abstinence or activity” (Clark, et al. 2007, pg. 19). While Mathematica Policy Research initially determined the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curricula to have very little to no effect on delayed sexual activity, use of condoms, or pregnancy and STD rates, this seemed to change when Mathematica Policy Research conducted a second survey of curricula, evaluated the new study by Weed, et al. and recommended the curriculum be included on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services list of evidence-based, effective curricula (*Identifying Programs That Impact Teen Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Associated Sexual Risk Behaviors*). It’s curious that Mathematica Policy Research would reject the first Weed study, yet find the second acceptable, when I believe it’s been shown the second study had serious design flaws and a negligible impact.

The final text I will address in relation to my research is Jessica Fields’s book *Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality* (2008). Of all the research currently being done in the field of sexuality education, hers is the work that comes closest to mine in that she is examining sexuality education in the classroom and how it is being taught. Fields addresses pedagogy as she writes, “Curiosity may be fundamental to instruction that affords young people an understanding of not only risk but also of pleasure, desire, identity, and relationships that recognizes young people as not only vulnerable but also knowing, resilient, and resistant” (pg. 163). Fields is speaking about the shortcomings of sexuality education, specifically abstinence-only-until-marriage education, and how it

short changes young people's agency, and does not allow them to be seen as full people with subjectivity, desire, and experiences that give them knowledge. While to me it appears obvious that she is talking about feminist and engaged pedagogy Fields never actually names these pedagogical practices as feminist. Fields also never directly addresses pedagogy.

Additionally, Fields did research by actually going into schools and observing interactions and lessons in the classroom, whereas my research focuses on one particular curriculum and proceeding by performing a textual analysis. Also, my work seeks to show how Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education constructs an anti-feminist pedagogy. However, Fields's research into how social inequalities can be perpetuated through sexuality education, which I will also show, is valuable.

Finally, the texts that I will be using in order to make a feminist pedagogical intervention into the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education are bell hooks' works *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (2010) and *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), as well as Nel Noddings's essay, "Care, Justice, and Equity" from *Justice and Caring: The Search for Common Ground in Education* (1999, pg. 7-20). There are numerous texts that have been written on pedagogy, and fewer, but still many essays and books written on feminist pedagogy, or pedagogy that contains feminist values. Feminism and gender studies as topics are interdisciplinary and feminist pedagogy is no different. Writings on anti-racist pedagogy, disability pedagogy, or pedagogy when teaching sexuality education could all fall into feminist pedagogy or work well alongside feminist pedagogy. With such a plethora of writings to choose from I chose my texts based on several factors. First, I wanted to

choose canonical authors. bell hooks is widely regarded as one of the foremost feminist scholars writing on pedagogy. Secondly, I chose these texts based on those which I believe uniquely can be applied to feminist pedagogy in sexuality education and thus would contrast well with the anti-feminist pedagogy put forth by the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education. Finally, the texts that I chose inform my own personal feminist pedagogy.

Methodology

While the critiques of the medical and scientific inaccuracies contained in this curriculum have been written about and reported on, the gendered implications and the educational outcomes in terms of a feminist pedagogy of this curriculum warrant closer examination. I will be using an intersectional approach as it is important to examine the ways in which race, class, and sexual orientation are impacted alongside gender in the teaching of this curriculum. One is never simply defined by his or her gender and this curriculum can be read not just as gendered, but as cissexist, racist, classist, and homophobic. In addition, I will be using the feminist pedagogical writers I cite above to examine the ways in which Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education not only goes directly against feminist principles of education and teaching, but how it can negatively impact the learning of students, leaving life-long consequences. In order to examine the pedagogical tools and methods used, I will be closely reading sections of the curriculum as well as the teacher's manual. The student guide and complementary lesson plans for sections 3.3 "How to Abstain from Sexual Activity," section 4.4 "The Making of a Man," section 4.5 "The Making of a Woman," and a part of section 5.2 "Imagine Your Wedding" of the curriculum will be examined in great detail. This is the first abstinence-

only-until-marriage program endorsed by the Obama administration and as such, I believe it warrants a high level of scrutiny.

Within the curriculum I will be looking at the lessons listed above by examining the structure of the lessons and doing a content analysis of the material covered in the curriculum. I have chosen these lessons in particular because I believe they are the most illustrative of the values contained in the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education as well as the values of Heritage Community Services. In addition, the teacher instructions for each lesson in the lesson plans are illustrative of the anti-feminist pedagogy I propose in constructed therein. As with any curriculum, each subsequent lesson builds upon the ones that came prior. I wanted to choose lessons that clearly related to each other in content.

Further, I chose lessons which most clearly exemplified the goals of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum: have teens abstain from sex until marriage, promote a return to traditional gender roles, and promote traditional heterosexual marriage. These lessons most clearly, and shockingly, display these goals. There were certainly other lessons that could have been included, such as other lessons on why students should choose to abstain from sexual activity until marriage, but I did not believe that the lessons left out of my analysis would have added anything further to my thesis then that could not be gained from the analysis of these lessons and the proposed pedagogy of the accompanying teacher instructions. Finally, I strategically wanted to choose lessons without using lessons which would be repetitive because they focused on similar content. In the form of this thesis, I felt that including too many similar lessons would lead to repetition in analysis and therefore a lack of originality in what was being said from section to section. Not to mention, to have analyzed every lesson or every

lesson plan instruction for the teachers would lead to this thesis being quite long and cumbersome. Thus, I tried to be as intentional as possible with the lesson I chose to include for analysis here.

I will be investigating whether teachers are encouraged to adapt lessons for the learners in their classroom, the physical structure of worksheets, the terms used within the instructions for teachers, and what concepts are being taught in the lessons in the students' manual and how teachers are instructed to teach them. Questions I will be asking as I analyze these texts include: Are students encouraged to form their own opinions? Are students treated with respect, care, and dignity based on the language used? Is there allowance for teacher input? Are teachers supported in adapting lesson as needed for their specific populations? Are students given the physical space to offer their own answers or insights? Are teacher told what to do or are activities and discussion questions suggested?

Theoretical Frameworks

Feminist pedagogy or pedagogies, and feminist pedagogical practices seek to empower students, and help bring them to voice. It is my personal pedagogy as informed by feminist pedagogy, that the classroom should be a learning community where power and authority shifts freely between the teacher and the students, that learning should take place together, that education should empower and heal not harm or oppress, and that teachers have a responsibility to care for their students' souls and their full selves that exist outside of the classroom (hooks). I believe this is achieved by encouraging students to become active agents in their own educations, and that teaching critical thinking and engaging students in the learning process is crucial to their success and the success of the

curriculum. I believe feminist pedagogy teaches at the margins and with those that are marginalized. I believe that classrooms should be places where knowledge is created amongst teachers and students, not where knowledge is handed down from the omniscient teacher to the receiving student. The purpose of these feminist methods is to foster students' agency, and to encourage them to become active participants in their own educations. It encourages critical thinking, all the while promoting an equitable and anti-oppressive learning environment (Freire 2000). The specific theories I believe will be most pertinent to my project and which will inform and frame this paper include Nel Nodding's ethic of care, as well as bell hooks's theories on feminist pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, and critical thinking.

When describing the history of feminist education in higher education in *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* bell hooks writes, "Feminist thinking in the classroom brought an energy of opposition and dialectical exchange to the forefront...without a doubt feminist theory and practice was a pedagogy of promise and possibility...Feminist perspectives in the classroom affirmed the primacy of critical thinking, of linking education and social justice" (2010, pg. 94). This is true still and continues to describe the goals of feminist pedagogical practices. Feminist pedagogies in any subject aim to foster critical thinking, energy, passion, and promote equality and social justice. Abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula work directly against this goal. Abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, and more specifically Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, do not promote equality or social justice by virtue of the fact that they refuse to acknowledge and sometimes even denigrate LGBTQ students, as well as students who are sexually active. Furthermore, Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education,

as will be shown, perpetuates dominant power structures, hardly making it a curriculum that promotes equality and social justice.

In addition, Nel Noddings's theory of an ethic of care will be utilized to examine how Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is uncaring and harmful to students. In her essay "Care, Justice, and Equity," she describes an ethic of care as:

Caring now refers properly to the relation, not just to an agent who 'cares,' and we must consider the response of the cared-for... We prefer not to install universal policies that require coercion, because coercion produces resistance and weakens the relation... Children need more than a 'caring' decision; they need the continuing attention of adults who will listen, invite, guide, and support them. (1999, pg.13)

An ethic of care is not determined by the "care-giver," in this case the teacher, and it is not just about a caring action, but the reaction of the person being cared for, or the student. An ethic of care is about the relationship that is fostered so that students feel supported as unique individuals with unique needs as opposed to faceless students in a factory-like system of education. It is easy to understand why exercising an ethic of care within sexuality education, especially when such deeply personal issues can be at play, is crucial. Therefore, when abstinence-only-until-marriage programs insist on abstinence for all students, under all circumstances, until the student is in a heterosexual marriage, the damaging effects become apparent. The damage that can be done to students who were victims of rape or incest when they are told they aren't moral or "good" because they are no longer virgins, or if they are told that girls can avoid sexual advances by not dressing provocatively, is enormous. Similarly, LGBTQ students who are told they aren't valuable or that they don't exist through the silences on sexual orientations other than heterosexual that exist within the curriculum, are damaged. The subjectivity of these students is literally taken away when the curriculum remains silent. Heritage Keepers Abstinence

Education is implicitly stating: “we choose not to see you; to us you do not exist.” It is evident that there is no care for the individual student in these instances. Telling students that they aren’t even worthy of mention can irrevocably damage young people who are seeking validation and support of their identities.

Nel Noddings’s ethic of care will be further applied to each of the lessons being examined to look for instances that are either caring or uncaring. Additionally, the teacher’s guide will be examined for instances where the curriculum allows for teachers to enact an ethic of care or encourage educators to practice an ethic of care. It is my theory that an ethic of care is not only functionally impossible due to the content of the curriculum, but that the way the curriculum is structured and the way the teacher’s guide is written leaves no allowance for an ethic of care. Therefore, it conflicts with feminist pedagogy and actually constructs an anti-feminist pedagogy.

In addition to the ethic of care, I will utilize bell hooks’s theories on caring for the souls of students, her work in engaged pedagogy, and education as the practice of freedom to examine how the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum directly conflicts with these feminist pedagogical ideals. As hooks writes in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, “To teach as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn...To teach in a manner that respects for and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (1994, pg. 13). To reinscribe and reinforce traditional gender roles through lessons on what makes a “real man” and a “real woman” is not freeing to cisgender students and completely marginalizes transgender and gender non-conforming students. It is not caring for the

souls of students to insert racist stereotypes into the lesson by telling young boys that a “real man” doesn’t have children with multiple different women—all of which, as will be further explained, Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education does. hooks goes on to write that classrooms should be sites of resistance and not reinforce systems of domination, which is exactly what this curriculum does (21). There is no freedom in a curriculum that just seeks to reinforce dominant power structures that oppress and marginalize students.

Additionally, hooks advocates for engaged pedagogy, part of which is the shifting of power and authority between student and teacher. hooks writes, “Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process...Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive” (1994, pg. 21). There is no shifting of power in the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education. Students are not allowed to be the authority in any situation in the classroom. There is no real empowerment taking place, where students are encouraged to gather information and make the best and most informed decisions for themselves. Students are given ways to abstain from sex, are given scripts for how to say “no,” are asked to participate in potentially humiliating or embarrassing activities to make them feel shame about their sexuality or sexual desires. That is it. This is not the engaged pedagogy that bell hooks advocates for; this is the coercion and the shaming of young people masquerading as effective educational practices. It is a means by which Heritage Community Services and the writer of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum seek to deny young people their full agency and subjectivity as sexual beings.

I will read and analyze Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum through these feminist pedagogical frameworks. I seek to prove by reading this curriculum alongside feminist pedagogical theories, particularly those of hooks and Noddings, and by incorporating a feminist intersectional approach that the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum is in fact the antithesis of feminist pedagogy in terms of both its proposed educational and pedagogical practices and in terms of the content of the curriculum itself.

Chapter 2 – Heritage Keepers: What’s Happening in the Classroom

Sex Has Dangerous Consequences

In the first section of the curriculum to be examined, section 3.3 “How to Abstain from Sexual Activity,” the focus of the lesson is on how to say “no” to sexual behaviors. The lesson prompts students to think of reasons why teens should choose to abstain from sex and then goes on to list some possible “negative” outcomes from sex such as sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. While contracting an STD or becoming pregnant may not be favorable, especially as a young person, both can also happen inside of a marriage. These consequences are set up as ones that are only possible if teenagers have sex outside of marriage. In addition, certain STDs can be cured through the use of antibiotics, but this information is not given to young people. They aren’t told that contracting a sexually transmitted disease is not necessarily a life-long consequence. Nor are the students told that most STDs, including HIV, can be transmitted from a pregnant woman to her fetus, meaning someone could have an STD even if they have never engaged in sexual behaviors with a partner. These consequences and the lack of detailed information about how STDs are contracted or transmitted, are really only meant to scare young people, without giving them the full truth about how these situations are possible even if they abstain from all sexual activity until marriage.

While some of the outcomes of having sex listed on the student worksheet are gender neutral, several are obviously directed at young women—such as “emotional hurt and regret,” “raising a child alone,” “cervical cancer,” and “increased abuse from a partner” (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 35). Not only are these consequences presented as almost a given consequence anytime someone has sex outside of marriage, but the listed

consequences are actually not true in some cases but are based on distorted information. For example, one is not at an increased risk for abuse from a partner because one is engaging in sexual behaviors. There is no evidence to support this statement. In addition, cervical cancer is not a consequence of having vaginal sex—certain strains of the STD the human papillomavirus (HPV) can cause cervical cancer, but not all do. Cervical cancer is not a consequence of sex, it's merely a possibility if someone contracts the STD HPV. Therefore, STDs can be a consequence of sex, not cervical cancer. But this nuance is not presented in the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum.

The other negative consequences described just serve to shame young women. The idea that young women are more likely to experience emotional hurt and regret plays into the gendered notion that women are more emotional and cannot simply have sex because they enjoy it. Such an approach discounts their agency, desire, and personhood. This lesson tells young women that sex is not for their pleasure and having sex purely because they want to, is not just wrong, but seemingly impossible. Even more distressing however, is that if a young woman's first experience with vaginal sex was through sexual violence, and she experiences these "negative" outcomes in the context of this lesson, the blame is placed upon her and not the perpetrator. If she is experiencing abuse in a relationship where she and her partner are having sex, she is led to believe it is her fault because she chose to have sex. This could very well lead a young woman who is subjected to the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum who is also being abused by a partner to not disclose the abuse to anyone, putting her health and safety at risk—all because she believes it is her fault.

Finally, the last consequence listed, “raising a child alone,” simply shames single mothers. We know this is aimed at young women because this lesson goes on to state, “legal and financial responsibility for a child until he or she is at least 18,” which we can infer is aimed at young men since typically it is men who are expected to pay child support. It is interesting that the consequence, which reads perhaps more like a threat, is that a young woman will have to raise a child by herself—something many women do all the time quite successfully. It’s set up as a terrible outcome, when in fact many children are raised by single mothers and are well-adjusted, and some people choose to have children without partners. Furthermore, it is not a forgone conclusion that young men will not be interested in raising children. Again, this “consequence” is really more of a possible outcome and not necessarily a negative outcome at that. Then, it can be concluded the purpose of listing this consequence is only to shame young single parents, and may even cause teens being raised by single mothers or single parents, or in non-traditional families to feel shame.

Meanwhile, as mentioned above, the one scare tactic from this lesson that could specifically be considered for young men and is not a gender neutral consequence is “legal and financial responsibility for a child until he or she is at least 18” (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 35). There are no emotional consequences for young men who engage in sexual behaviors outside of marriage according to this lesson, just financial ones. This shortchanges young men and denies them their full humanity as emotional creatures, and characterizes them as being unable to experience emotional connections with their partner and as only able to care about whether or not they will have to be fiscally responsible for children. This tells young men that they can, and should, have sex for

pleasure and that they aren't expected to want an emotional connection, when we know that young men are just as emotionally complex as their female peers. This consequence aims to speak to young men where the writers of the curriculum seem to think they will feel it most, their wallet, and plays on tired stereotypes that young men not only are the primary earners in a relationship, but that they are more concerned with their bank account balances than with being good fathers. These are both perfect examples of the curriculum using fear and scare tactics and relying on stereotypes in order to get teens to practice abstinence until marriage.

In addition to using fear, this section seems to ignore the fact that young men can experience abuse and young men can be single parents. There is no discussion of either of these occurrences and again leaves young people to—I would argue not mistakenly—assume that the consequences involving abuse or raising a child alone are specifically for young women. These can leave young men experiencing abuse from a partner feeling like they are the only ones, and like their female counterparts, unlikely to seek help. Finally, this lesson assumes for students of all genders that raising children alone is a possible consequence of having sex as teenagers. But, really, it is a possible situation for anyone with children. Parents can pass away or divorce can happen; raising a child as a single parent is merely something that can happen as a consequence of life and it is not necessarily because a teenager had sex outside of marriage. The entire list should be about possible outcomes of having sex, regardless of one's age and that may happen not even because someone has had sex.

Another omission in this lesson, and the curriculum at large, is the mention of LGBTQ youth. Pregnancy is not possible for two young women or two young men in a

relationship who are having sex. They most likely won't have to raise a child alone, or pay child support as teenagers. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth are completely left out of this conversation then. Here it is made clear that in the context of this curriculum, LGBTQ people do not exist. This curriculum erases the margins and invisibilizes marginalized identities. The only possibility set up by this lesson is to be a cisgender person in a traditional heterosexual relationship and to practice abstinence until marriage.

What has been established thus far is that this lesson, and indeed the entire curriculum, seeks to humiliate young people, distorts information, denies young men their full humanity, and refuses to acknowledge LGBTQ youth. However, there is more harm that this lesson, and actually only this first part of the lesson, does than this. It's not just *what* this lesson teaches but *how* it teaches the material. Feminist pedagogy, as I have defined it, operates with an ethic of care. It is hardly caring to shame or frighten young women into not engaging in sexual behaviors. As Noddings writes, "The care perspective...instead of assuming a false universalism...recognizes deep and perhaps irremovable differences—differences which counsel against sweeping solutions that affect people's lives directly and preclude their effective use of self-chosen strategies" (1999, pg. 19). In essence, an ethic of care is about recognizing that there is no universal answer or one way to approach learning, it is about adapting strategies that speak to each individual learner in the way that he or she needs. Abstinence is not the right decision for everyone, and for some that decision has been taken from them through sexual abuse or assault. Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education universalizes their value of abstinence instead of recognizing that each individual student may have different values or

experiences. By universalizing the experience of all young men or all young women, the curriculum refuses to acknowledge the varied or nuanced lives that people live.

Additionally, their insistence on ignoring the fact that intersex, transgender, and non-heterosexual people exist means they are refusing to concede that there are more than just two genders, two sexes, and one acceptable sexual orientation. A multitude of students are pushed out of the conversation, there is nothing for them in this curriculum, and no one is caring for them or seeking ways to connect best with them.

Furthermore, using lies and fear goes against everything feminist pedagogy stands for. Caring for students means trusting them; it means giving them *all* of the *correct* information and then allowing them to make the decision that is best for them. In this case, telling young people that cervical cancer is caused by having sex or that engaging in sexual behaviors with a partner puts them at increased risk for being abused is an extreme distortion of the truth. Telling young people outright lies because the creators of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum do not want young people to have sex outside of marriage is the opposite of caring. Lying and shaming young people, discounting their agency and their ability to think critically is not compassionate as many abstinence educators try to frame it. As the teacher's manual instructs educators to read to the students—which will be examined further below—“Considering the possible consequences, the reasons [to have sex outside of marriage] are not good enough. A new generation of teens is saying ‘no’ to sexual activity of marriage because of the many negative consequences. They also realize it does not provide the deeply satisfying experience they are really looking for in a relationship” (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Teachers Manual 1 1999, 53-54). Students who may have already had sex are

being told that their relationships are not deeply satisfying, and students who are having sexual feelings or experiencing desire for partners are told that their feelings are wrong.

So far, I have argued that the information and how it is framed is anti-feminist. However, the anti-feminist sentiment extends beyond what is said in the curriculum; the structure of the worksheets and lessons within the student guide are also anti-feminist in their pedagogy. The layout and structure of the worksheet allows for very little input from the students themselves. The worksheet gives the “correct” answers for the question “why should teenagers abstain from sex?” and lists the supposed consequences related to having sex. Meanwhile, after asking the students a question, and a personal one at that, it offers just one line where students can write down their own reasons. This and the subsequent scripts that are given to students for how to tell someone they do not want to have sex—which will be discussed further—are prime examples of the banking model of education. bell hooks, borrowing from Paulo Freire, defines the banking model as “...the assumption that memorizing information and regurgitating it represented gaining knowledge that could be deposited, stored and used at a later date...” (1994, pg. 8). The students, it is implied through giving them just one line to write out their own response, are expected to just write what they have been told is the “correct” answer. This is the epitome of the banking model. A more feminist pedagogical approach would be to allow students to write down several reasons they’ve heard why someone might abstain from sex, and several reasons why someone might not, and then construct their own reasons why or why not. There could, for example, be a class discussion followed by some journaling. Regardless, the fact remains that the worksheet is constructed so as to limit independent thought or personal reflection.

The teacher's manual, which allows for a fuller examination of the proposed pedagogy, titles the discussion that the teacher should lead before going into the listed "consequences" of sex outside of marriage, "Discussion of wrong or inadequate reasons for having sex⁴" (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Teacher's Manual 1, 1999, 53). What follows is essentially steps telling teachers to refer to the lesson in the student manual and script to read to the class. The italicized font and the way it reads (as if meant to be said by the teacher to the students) makes it clear that this is what the organization Heritage Keepers intends for teachers to say directly to their students. There are no questions to help lead a discussion, other than first asking students why some people might have sex at the very beginning of the lesson, as was discussed in the context of the student manual, there are no other places where students are called to engage in a discussion with the teacher or with their fellow students. Instead, they are to sit and listen as the teacher reads the script provided by Heritage Community Services about why it is wrong to have sex outside of marriage.

The lesson continues by offering up various statements that someone might use to convince his or her partner to have sex and possible responses that someone could use to explain he or she is abstaining and does not believe in having sex outside of marriage. According to the scripts provided in Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, one of the supposed things someone might say about having sex before marriage to a partner is that if people are in love and are committed to each other then it is OK to have sex. The suggested response is, "For me, MARRIAGE IS the COMMITMENT [sic]" (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 37). From a comprehensive sexuality education and feminist pedagogical perspective, this could actually be a healthy conversation about values,

⁴ Written here as in original; all lower case in original.

personal boundaries, and whether or not each partner feels ready to engage in sexual behaviors. Negotiating boundaries, forming personal values and sharing those with a partner are integral and normal developments within a healthy relationship. However, instead of normalizing this conversation the given exchange makes it seem as if talking about sex is always coercive—one partner is trying to “convince” the other to have sex—when, in truth, expressing sexual desire is not inherently coercive, and there are many ways in which discussing values can be respectful, even when two partners have different opinions on when to have sex.

This lesson ends up setting up one partner as the “bad” person who wants to have sex, and students in class are being taught to be the “good” students by learning what to say in response to their hypothetical partners saying he or she would like to have sex outside of marriage. Discussing the evolution of these scripts and how comprehensive sexuality education differs, Jessica Fields writes, “Abstinence-only advocates wanted to prepare students for no more than a brief conversation in which they said ‘no’ to sex. Educators and advocates who promoted comprehensive programs—the counterpart to abstinence-only programs—asserted, however, that school-based sex education should have broader ambitions regarding talk about sex,” (Fields 2008, 68).

Fields is describing exactly what is seen in the above example from Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, an abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum giving students a pre-fabricated ‘no’ response. Fields continues, “Effective and skillful verbal and nonverbal communication contributes to sexual well-being and safety and helps people navigate the complex social nature of sexual interaction” (68). Instead of allowing students to form their own values within this lesson or learn how to communicate their

personal values to a partner, the lesson gives students what it perceives as the “right” answers, pre-formed and approved responses about how they are abstaining from having sex. The lesson takes a “one size fits all” approach and doesn’t allow for critical thinking or independent thought. This lesson never actually teaches students how to have conversations about sex, boundaries, values about sexuality; this lesson merely teaches students how to regurgitate the required responses regarding conversations about sex. Students learn lines as if in a play, not effective communication skills necessary to navigate real life and set the foundation for future healthy relationships. In contrast, feminist pedagogy would encourage students to form their own responses based on their individual needs and values related to sex. As bell hooks writes in *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*, “Critical thinking is an interactive process, one that demands participation on the part of the teacher and students alike...[Critical thinking] is a way of approaching ideas that aims to understand core, underlying truths, not that superficial truth that may be most obviously visible” (hooks 2010, 9). Critical thinking in this context would include allowing and helping students to find their own inner truths about whether or not having sex, when and with whom is right for them. As Paulo Freire writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness; the latter strives for the *emergence* of consciousness and critical *intervention* in reality” (Freire 2002, 81). Telling young people the answers a teacher or curriculum want and then expecting them to regurgitate the information on command requires no actual thought on the part of the student. The students aren’t asked to reflect, but merely to memorize and

parrot. Whereas imploring students to form their own answers through self-reflection, research, and asking their own questions requires students to learn how to critically examine and synthesize information. It allows young people to form their own conclusions and come to answers—in the case of deciding whether or not to have sex before marriage—that is right for them. In the long run, a feminist pedagogical approach will serve students better not only in caring for them as individuals with differing needs, but also as scholars who will be better students because they have been challenged to think critically and deeply.

In addition, this part of the lesson, aside from discouraging independent and critical thought and the formation of personal opinions and values, when it comes to whether or not to engage in sexual behaviors, is heteronormative. Feminist pedagogy values intersectionality and it would be remiss not to examine this curriculum from this angle. This lesson is heteronormative because it only talks about marriage and, as we know in the United States, not everyone can be married. Same-sex couples are still, depending on the state, waiting for marriage equality. I would venture even further to state that this curriculum is in fact homophobic. It is homophobic in the sense that the lessons fail to even mention people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. For a lesson or a curriculum to condemn lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer identities it must inherently acknowledge that they exist as identities that individual people claim. Indeed, lessons or educators that tell young people that being gay is wrong, or a sin, are homophobic also, but at least they acknowledge that people in the LGBTQ community exist. This curriculum chooses to not even acknowledge the young people who do identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. Its authors choose to act and write this lesson as if these students do

not exist. What is more anti-feminist than telling young people “you do not exist”?

Several more scripts mention marriage but none acknowledge that there are long term or life-long commitments or even marriages—in some states—between same-sex couples.

The emphasis is always on heterosexual marriage. Furthermore, applying Nel Noddings’s theory of an ethic of care, it is easy to see how this lesson fails to care for the individual student. It fails to utilize any sort of feminist pedagogy in theory or in practice, in the way it is written to the way teachers are told to present the material in the classroom.

At the end of this lesson, students are encouraged to practice these responses so that they are in control. They are told, “This is the beginning of the true maturity that makes a real man or real woman” (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 40). The authors couch the idea of abstaining in ideals of traditional gender and try to tell young people that these scripts give them control or agency. However, the only “agency” they are allowed is if they make the “right” choices according to the values of this curriculum. In Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education there is no space for students to develop their own values related to sex and sexuality and they are not allowed to think critically. As hooks writes, “In simpler terms, critical thinking involves first discovering the who, what, when, and how of things...and then utilizing that knowledge in a manner that enables you to determine what matters most” (2010, pg. 9). There is no space here for young people to write their own responses or to think about how to negotiate their own personal boundaries related to sexual behaviors. A curriculum that does not allow for or encourage critical thinking cannot be called feminist in terms of its pedagogy in the slightest. The heading for the teacher’s manual is “Discussion of wrong or inadequate reasons for having sex:” already setting up that when the teacher asks the question they are directed

to ask students why people might have sex outside of marriage, that these reasons are incorrect because people should only have sex within marriage. This means teachers must tell students the answer before they form their own opinions and that students aren't allowed to think critically for themselves.

What Makes a Man?

This leads into the next two lessons to be examined. These two lessons are separate but are meant to be complementary, sections 4.4 and 4.5, titled "The Making of a Man," and "The Making of a Woman." I will be examining them, as with the other lessons, in the order in which they appear within the curriculum. In "The Making of a Man," students are asked what makes a "real man." "Not anatomy," the lesson states after the initial question, "but actual qualities" (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education 2004, pg. 49). Students are asked to list what qualities they believe make someone a man. As with lesson 3.3 "How to Abstain From Sexual Activity," there is only a very small section where students can write in an answer to the prompt. This sends the message that the students' opinions aren't really valued. In any case, the lesson goes on to assume that all of the students' answers they have written down are wrong. The student manual proceeds, under the two very short lines students may write on, with the subheading: "Are your answers true for every man?" (pg. 49). It is worth quoting the lesson somewhat at length to get a sense of the way in which the lesson tries to be progressive and yet fails, thereby upholding traditional gender roles and gendered norms while completely invisibilizing and ignoring LGBTQ students and intersex students once again. The reason this curriculum and its creators seek to seem progressive is to appeal to a wider audience, and at this historical moment a more liberal and progressive administration. This helps

them gain access to circles of influence, such as the Department of Health and Human Services' list of approved and effective curriculum. This in turn makes it easier for this curriculum to be used in schools across the country and for Heritage Community Services to make more money from the sale of its curriculum and trainings, which will be discussed in more detail later. The lesson reads:

Did you say men like football? A lot of men like football, but could a 'real man' not like football? Of course! There are some men who don't particularly like football, but like other sports. There are many that don't like any sports at all. But they may like something completely different—maybe working on computers or building houses. It certainly isn't football that makes a 'real man.' (pg. 49)

The next three paragraphs continue like this exploring different stereotypes such as, men can't dress themselves well, men have muscles, men have fancy cars, and finally, men have sex with many different partners. Beginning with a rhetorical question guessing at a stereotype that a student might list and explaining why this stereotype is not always true is actually a great feminist pedagogical strategy. It could help students realize that gender can be enacted in numerous ways and that being a man is not defined by a concrete set of likes and dislikes. However, it becomes clear that this is not actually the goal of this section of the curriculum when not only are further stereotypes listed as things that men can enjoy—such as, men can like computers or construction not just sports—but when it becomes clear that the whole point of the lesson is to demonstrate that a man is defined by characteristics and personality traits not material objects. And, most notably, the definition of a man as provided by the Heritage Keepers curriculum is one who practices abstinence in a way that highlights his masculinity, especially as it relates to the protection of his assumed female partner's femininity.

The last paragraph, which begins in the same way as above, is all about how a “real man” does not have sex with multiple partners. Again, quoting at length is crucial to understand the messaging in this curriculum, as well as the embedded pedagogy. Section 4.4 “The Making of a Man” reads,

There are some young men who go from woman to woman, starting families all over town and not loving or taking care of any of them. Others work hard to make sure their wives are well cared for, and their babies have food and a place to live. Which is the ‘real man’? Many would say that a real man can control his sexual urges and waits for a woman he commits to through marriage. It isn’t sex with a lot of women that makes a man a ‘real man.’ That only proves his genitals work. Most men can claim this. (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education 2004, pg. 50)

The final point this part of the lesson seeks to make is that “real men” do not have sex with a lot of women, since this doesn’t prove they are men, but only “proves his genitals work. Most men can claim this” (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 50). While this is the last point made, to me it is one of the most telling. From a feminist intersectional standpoint, this statement—the idea that a “real man” is able to contribute to a pregnancy, and that his genitals consist of a penis and testicles—is problematic in many different ways. First, this completely ignores transgender young men who may not even have a penis or who will never be able to contribute sperm to a pregnancy. The assumption within this curriculum is that biological sex has a direct link to gender identity, that someone who is male is a man and someone who is female is a woman, and there are no other gender identities and people are always born male or female, all of which we know to be untrue.

Transgender youth are completely absent from the conversation, there is no mention that not everyone who is a man is born male and not everyone who was born male identifies as a man. Part of sexuality education should involve a discussion of

gender identity and sexual orientation, and yet, there is no mention of either here. Aside from the lack of discussion of gender identity and transgender identities, intersex youth who may not have genitalia that are definitively male or female, or youth who are differently-abled when it comes to sexual functioning, are told that they aren't normal. By implying that most men can contribute to a pregnancy because their genitals work is insensitive. Intersex youth who may be infertile or sterile cannot contribute to a pregnancy, their ability to engage in sexual behaviors may also be different than other people's, but does that make them not real men? Additionally, there are many young people who are differently abled physically. They are being told that if their genitals don't work in an average way then they are not real men or not able to fulfill their gender role. Finally, if gay, bisexual, or queer young men aren't having sex with women at all, then what are they? Certainly not "real men" by the Heritage Keepers' standards. Thus, many young people are just completely excluded from the conversation.

So many young men are told they aren't "real." From a feminist pedagogical standpoint, telling—or at the very least implying—to young people that they are abnormal or strange or weird because their bodies are or function differently than their peers can be devastating. As bell hooks writes in her introduction to *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, "Since the vast majority of students learn through conservative, traditional educational practices and concern themselves only with the presence of the professor, any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone's presence is acknowledged. That insistence cannot be simply stated. It has to be demonstrated through pedagogical practices" (hooks, 1994, pg. 8). The lesson in the student manual makes it clear that not only is the professor or teacher's presence the only

one that is acknowledged, but that the only student that is acknowledged and validated is one who is heterosexual and cisgender. This lesson does nothing to allow students to offer their own perspectives on gender or to widen the acceptable ways to express masculinity. Any time students are asked for their opinions on the worksheet, there is very little room for them to write, and after every chance for them to offer their own opinions the lesson goes on to state more of Heritage Community Services' messages on gender without acknowledging the students' voices in any way that feels authentic. This approach makes it clear which students are valued and which ones the creators of the curriculum would rather not even acknowledge exist.

It is not just issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation—specifically transphobia and homophobia—which come up when examining Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, but issues of race and class. While not explicitly stated, there is a distinct racist and classist undertone in the lesson. I believe this is best captured in the student worksheet which reads, “There are some men who go from woman to woman, starting families all over town and not loving or taking care of any of them” (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 50). The image evoked is of a young man of color in the inner city—indeed one of the images in this section is a picture of a young man of color. It is a blatant racist and classist stereotype that young men, more often than not of color, have multiple children with different women and cannot afford to or refuse to provide for them. While there are people who have children who are the products of different relationships, if the notion of a traditional nuclear family were not such an important value within the curriculum this would not even need to be mentioned. The race of the person being described does not need to be mentioned, and that is because when the

curriculum plays on such a widespread, well-known stereotype, there is no need. In addition to racism, the other message is that only middle-class or wealthy people should have children.

The contrasting image presented to young men with many children from different relationships is the idealized image of middle-class men who “...work hard to make sure their wives are well cared for, and their babies have food and a place to live” (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education 2004, pg. 50). The image of a hard-working man who is the provider of food and shelter for his lawfully-committed spouse and children born within marriage brings with it the assumption of a certain socio-economic status. People within a lower socio-economic status, it is implied, do not “deserve” to start families in whichever way is authentic or right for them. From a feminist pedagogical standpoint this invalidates the families that some students may come from. It does not allow for the fact that some families do not consist of a mother, father, and children, and it refuses to acknowledge the presence or perspective of these young people. As bell hooks writes, “...the professor must genuinely *value* everyone’s presence. There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes” (1994, pg. 8).

It is obvious from the content that not everyone is valued by this curriculum, and that only the values of the curriculum’s authors are considered correct when it comes to what defines a man. Not everyone is seen as a valuable part of the classroom dynamic. How can they be when there is no mention of anyone who isn’t able-bodied, heterosexual, or cisgender and when identity categories such as race or class are so blatantly stereotyped? As Jessica Fields writes in *Risky Lessons: Sex Education and*

Social Inequality, “Racism, classism, and sexism are entrenched in part because so many of us do not recognize these issues. Recognition of these social divisions and inequalities is crucial to problematizing ideological notions of children as sexually innocent or ‘at risk’” (2008, pg. 49). And yet, that is exactly what this curriculum does when it comes to painting a picture of a young man with children from different relationships whom he cannot provide for financially. The authors of *Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education* never state the race or socio-economic status of the young man, but they do not have to because these racist and classist images are so ingrained in the collective cultural mind. Ignoring race or class does not make the lesson and the rest of the curriculum “color blind” or “class blind.” This does not promote equality, but instead only serves to ignore race and class thereby collapsing difference into sameness and only upholding the norm as white, heterosexual, and middle-class while invisibilizing every other experience. Promoting racism and classism are hardly effective pedagogical tools, never mind the fact that they could never be called feminist.

The lesson in the student manual ends with telling students what makes a real man. According to the curriculum, “A MAN IS STRONG,” “A MAN IS RESPECTFUL,” “A MAN IS COURAGEOUS,” and “A MAN PROTECTS⁵” (*Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education*, 2004, pg. 52). It is clear the message the authors want to send is that a man is defined by his character—an admirable message, actually. However, considering the classist and racist ideas running beneath the surface, the message rings a bit hollow. More than anything, the significance of this message is in when it is contrasted with what the curriculum later tells students, makes a real woman. This will be studied in more detail in the examination of lesson 4.5 “The Making of a Woman,” but is

⁵ All capitalization is in the original.

worth mentioning here. The content of the curriculum speaks volumes, but the instructions for the teachers on how to teach this material is especially revealing.

What Makes a Woman?

This leads us into the related lesson “The Making of a Woman.” As mentioned, this lesson follows almost the exact same formula as “The Making of a Man.” There are stereotypes about women listed, the assumed link between biological sex and gender is made, and there is again the invisibility of LGBTQ youth. The stereotypes this lesson seeks to undermine but ultimately ends up upholding are that women like shopping, are emotional, and like jewelry. The underlying message is that these pursuits, or being emotional, are frivolous and there are plenty of women who are “like men” or have more masculine traits. The curriculum and subsequent lessons on gender set up two extremes of being either very stereotypically feminine—which is set up as silly—and being more stereotypically masculine—which is presented as more desirable. The reasoning behind this to me is two-fold. I believe the authors of this curriculum truly think that men are better and more moral subjects than women. Hence, the emphasis on a man’s characteristics that define him and a woman’s dress that, as we will see, define her. Thus, liking traditionally “masculine” objects or pursuits makes one “better.” However, one would be hard-pressed to find that this goes beyond superficial favorite activities. The curriculum certainly would not, and indeed does not, push this too far lest traditional gender roles become distorted. For example, liking football might be OK for women, but the message would remain that wives should listen to their husbands on the important things which would uphold the traditional idea of heterosexual marriage—which we will see turns out to be one of the main goals of this curriculum. The second part behind this

seemingly progressive language is the effort to co-opt the “empowering” language of the early feminist movements that tries to defy traditional gender roles. Notice that the Heritage Keepers’ Abstinence Education curriculum uses minor and sometimes shallow examples. For example, there is no mention of men staying home with the children or women choosing not to have children, or more serious breaking of traditional gender roles within adult heterosexual relationships.

In the paragraph discussing women being emotional, the curriculum reads, “Did you say a woman is emotional? Could a woman not be emotional? ...There are women who calculate statistics, are in charge of military outfits and who counsel others all day. It is crucial tat [sic] they do not give in to emotions so they can keep a clear head and make decisions. Does that mean they are not ‘real women’? It does not” (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, 2004 pg. 53). The underlying message is that real women are emotional, but some women need to learn to keep their emotions in check in order to perform more masculine roles. They are still real women; they’ve just learned how to not be as emotional. Instead of helping students to see that there is a spectrum to how gender can be performed, the rhetorical question at the end instead sets up being emotional as the normal state all women are in, but some just learn to control it. When they learn to control it, it doesn’t make them not real women, yet the authors of the curriculum imply that all women are still emotional creatures. The problem lies not in the fact that women are deemed emotional. Indeed, expressing emotions is healthy, but in the larger culture the trope of the overly emotional, or hysterical, woman is so denigrated that setting up all women as this way in fact becomes a critical remark on femininity instead of a progressive or transgressive reading of gender performance and reshaping gender roles.

Playing into the idea that all women are emotional or that emotions figure heavily into a relationship for women, the final paragraph in this lesson that discusses stereotypes addresses having sex, the same way in which lesson 4.4 “The Making of a Man” was constructed. “There are many women who don’t have sex until they are married,” the curriculum reads after asking rhetorically if the students had responded that a real woman has had sex with many different partners: “They have decided they want sex to be a part of a relationship that is based on much more than just a physical relationship, and want to wait until they are married to have sex...many would say that it takes character, self-control and strong values to refuse to go along with a culture that promotes sex” (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, 2004, pg. 54). The implication is that women cannot have sex simply because they enjoy it, but are too emotional or are more interested in a relationship with emotional intimacy rather than one with physical intimacy. One’s strength of character lies in resisting. The message is clear: deciding to not have sex is the moral and “right” choice to make; you are a better person if you choose to not have sex outside of marriage. When choosing to not have sex is set up as a decision that requires self-control and strong values—revered characteristics—the opposite becomes that choosing to have sex means a young woman has loose morals and no self-control. This is the message being sent to young women whether or not they have already engaged in sexual behaviors. Young women, who have engaged in sexual behaviors, are being outright shamed within the classroom. The teacher’s instructions are to essentially read over the student worksheets together. While, of course, an individual teacher may engage her own personal pedagogy to shape this curriculum or make it more inclusive, the proposed pedagogy by the writers of Heritage Keepers Abstinence

Education, Heritage Community Services, is that students read this with their teacher, the teacher validates the messaging, and students imbibe the message to be regurgitated at another time.

This message and how it is conveyed in the classroom goes against everything feminist pedagogy stands for. As hooks writes in *Teaching to Transgress*, when discussing teaching as a performance, "...it is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning... We communicate best by choosing that way of speaking that is informed by the particularity and uniqueness of whom we are speaking to and with," (1994, pg. 11). It is abundantly clear that this is far from what the lesson "The Making of a Woman" is trying to do in what message is being conveyed and in how it is being conveyed. Instead, the student manual again relies on shaming young people, and alienating them. Young people who have had sex are shamed and are told they are not good people. And, it is worth repeating briefly again, that many young women are forced out of the conversation entirely and are made invisible because they are not heterosexual or cisgender. The fact remains that there is no mention that a young woman may not be having sex with young men because she is lesbian, bisexual, or queer and she is engaging in sexual behaviors with another young woman, or perhaps her partner or she herself is genderqueer and does not identify as a woman. These transgender, genderqueer, or women who are having sex with other women, are not "real women" according to the curriculum, and indeed the curriculum would rather pretend that they do not even exist. If this lesson were to engage a feminist pedagogy the material would adapt to the uniqueness and particularity of the

audience, or it would at least try to be as inclusive and respectful as possible of all the differing experiences of the students within the room.

Finally, the one major gendered difference in this lesson is on the last page when it describes what a “real woman” is much in the same format as the complementary lesson “The Making of a Man.” For men the qualities described are strength, courage, respect, and protection. These are typically masculine characteristics, but are generally seen as good qualities for someone of any gender to have. Whereas in this lesson a real woman knows herself, is confident in who she is, is caring, and “sends a clear message” (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 55). While a “real man” is about how he treats others and whether or not he is a good person, being a “real woman” is about not being sexually available or sexually suggestive. The message is that a “real woman” knows herself well enough to know that she shouldn’t have sex outside of marriage. The curriculum warns:

A Real Woman [sic] sends a clear message. A Real Woman’s speech, dress and behavior do not give people a wrong impression of who she is. Right or wrong, people sometimes make assumptions about what kind of person you are based on the way you look and the way you act. Choose your clothes, expressions and gestures carefully. Remember, most guys are more visually stimulated than girls are, and they might mistake your fashion statement for a sexual statement. Make sure your sexual messages match your sexual values” (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 55).

The irony of this statement is that the curriculum writers are judging young women who dress or act a certain way and are warning other young women to not act that way. Even worse however is that this paragraph is a prime example of rape culture. Rape culture is “a systematic belief system supporting sexual violence...[and] perpetuates norms of sexual aggression while lacking an understanding of consent.... normative ideas of sexual violence based on rape culture, influence which survivors are deemed credible (Guckenheimer 2008, pg. 58). A direct result of rape culture is victim-blaming, or the

myth that a victim of sexual assault was somehow the cause of their own assault. Jessica Valenti addressed a similar passage in the curriculum *Sex Respect* in her book *The Purity Myth*.

Making women the sexual gatekeepers and telling men they just can't help themselves not only drives home the point that women's sexuality is unnatural, but also sets up a disturbing dynamic in which women are expected to be responsible for men's sexual behavior... When abstinence curricula contain information about sexual abuse or assault (though they often don't), the message is similar: The onus of preventing sexual assault is on the girls—not on men. (Valenti 2009, pg. 108)

We can see this above. The underlying message is that women who dress in a sexually arousing way are responsible if young men take this as an invitation to actually become sexual. The young women's subsequent rape or sexual assault is their own fault.

What then happens if a young man “gets the wrong message”—or rather does not ask for, or get, consent—and then sexually assaults a young woman? According to this curriculum, and the larger culture, it was her fault because of how she dressed. If she did not want to be raped, she should have worn a longer skirt. The idea embedded in this section is that a girl or woman is “asking for it” if she is dressed a certain way. We see this play out in the larger rape culture all the time, whether it's how someone was dressed, whether she had had sex in the past, or how much she had to drink. This trope of blaming the victim plays out in the news media too often to enumerate. Young people receive this message from media, people in their lives, and now in school. If a young woman dresses in a certain way, she must want sex and it is on her to control the actions of others instead of teaching young men not to rape. Jessica Fields, in *Risky Lessons*, writes of rape crisis center speakers coming to a middle school classroom she observed. The speakers discuss consent and what constitutes rape, in this case, that someone who is passed out or intoxicated cannot consent, even though she may have in the given scenario

kissed the young man and invited him into her room. The messages transmitted during the ensuing conversation when young men assert their sexuality aggressively and deny rape and blame the young women are eerily similar to those in Heritage Keepers

Abstinence Education.

Their behavior affirmed a hidden lesson...if anyone were to establish and maintain sexual restraint in young people's heterosexual relationships, it would be the girls. At the same time, the classroom curriculum suggested that the girls had little hope of success; they would instead face violence, coercion, and disrespect as they tried to control boys' sexual aggression. The classroom curriculum also indicated that boys had no reliable role to play in any effort to achieve sexual abstinence or respect. (Fields, 2008, pg. 90)

Just as the teachers in the middle school Fields studied never contradicted these messages, neither does this curriculum.

The burden of sexual abstinence being laid at the feet of young women who are to prevent their own rapes is not the only way in which the curriculum is an example of rape culture. It also reduces young men to sexually rapacious beings, who cannot ask women what they want and instead merely make assumptions based on what they are wearing. If that results in disrespect, catcalling, sexual harassment, or rape it is her fault. In addition, this section of "The Making of a Woman" ties a young woman's value to her body and her gender performance. How much skin she shows—or rather her decision to dress modestly and without exposing an "inappropriate" amount of skin—determines whether she is a "real woman." Dressing otherwise makes one not a real woman. Whether or not she has had or wants to have vaginal sex is signaled, according to this curriculum, through her clothing. The converse implication is that young men cannot ask for consent, or respect boundaries. It implies that they are unable to think or treat women as full human beings with agency and opinions when their hormone levels rise or they are

feeling sexually aroused. This sort of thinking is reductive and dangerous for both young men and young women. As Fields writes on observing conversations about rape and gender inequality in schools and how to address these topics:

Sex education's aim could be to create classroom environments in which students and teachers listen to one another out of a commitment to recognize and contend with sexual desires, power and inequality. Young people already negotiate heterosexism, sexism, and other institutionalized inequalities in their lives both inside and outside of school. Reflective sexual communication and sex education are fundamental to an antisexist, antiheterosexist education that helps to ensure their experiences and voices count. (2008, pg. 97)

Fields makes clear that sexuality education should discuss gender inequality and sexism and work to eradicate these institutionalized inequalities not uphold them—which is exactly what the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education does. It makes young women the gatekeepers to sexual activity and places all the responsibility on them to not be raped, as opposed to working to undermine the culture of rape that makes it their supposed responsibility to prevent their rape in the first place. What Fields describes is a feminist pedagogy that should be in place in the sexuality education classrooms, but that is grossly ignored within this curriculum. There is no allowance for self-reflection and the experiences and voices of the students are not welcome. There is no examination of privilege or oppressive structures, merely the upholding of them. When bell hooks writes in her essay “Feminist Revolution” in *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* about the role that education has played in the feminist revolution, she acknowledges that a backlash has also occurred. As hooks describes the way in which education was and is used to uphold patriarchal ideals, it seems as if she is specifically writing about Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum. “Education was used as a tool to reinforce the political system of patriarchy,” hooks explains. “The impact sexist thinking and biases

had on ways of knowing created distortions and systematically supported misinformation and false assumptions, ...and thereby robbed learning of the integrity that should always be the foundation of knowledge acquisition” (2010, pg. 91). The sexist—and racist, classist, homophobic, and transphobic—thinking within this curriculum is used to support the patriarchy both in what it is teaching, such as young women are responsible for making sure they aren’t raped, and in how they teach it, such as through memorization instead of critical thinking. These messages, the misinformation within them, and the methods through which they are taught directly contradict feminist and feminist pedagogical principles.

Because these two lessons, “The Making of a Man” and “The Making of a Woman” are meant to be taught as complementary lessons, they must also be examined against one another. According to these lessons, whether or not someone has a penis or a vagina means different expectations for them, socially and sexually. Again, this curriculum erases young people who are marginalized and seeks to collapse all men into one and all women into one. There is no individual subjectivity allowed, no discussion of non-normative masculinity or femininity, and no allowance for students to think critically about gender roles or what they think it means to be a man, woman, neither, or both, all of which oppose the idea of feminist pedagogy.

While the teacher’s manual suggests asking students what they think make a man or woman, it uses language that encourages teachers to discount student responses in favor of the “right” answer. Words such as “accept a few responses” or giving examples before even asking for the student’s opinion discounts student responses before even hearing them; the teacher’s manual makes it seem that teachers are supposed to ask

questions as a formality (1998, pg. 66-8). However, even more concerning is the difference in the way in which proposed pedagogy for the lesson, “The Making of a Man,” differs from the proposed pedagogy for the lesson, “The Making of a Woman.” The lesson plan in the teacher’s manual for “The Making of a Man” begins in the same way as the lesson plan for “The Making of a Woman.” For both lessons, it is encouraged that classes that are all female only go over the main points of the handout for “The Making of a Man” and go into more detail for “The Making of a Woman.” As is to be expected, all male classes are encouraged to only go through the main points of “The Making of a Woman,” while going into more detail in the lesson, “The Making of a Man.” This strategy goes against feminist pedagogy in the sense that by breaking up classes along these lines the curriculum assumes and propagates the idea that biological sex dictates one’s gender. But, it’s not necessarily true that someone born male will be a man or someone born female will identify as a woman. Again, transgender young people are completely left out of the conversation. In addition, there are people who might not have been born as one definitive sex and identify as intersex. Finally, this structure assumes that young men don’t need to really know about women, and that young women don’t have to know anything about young men. This in turn sets up a false dichotomy that pits young men against young women and serves to make another gender seem mysterious and unknowable. This serves to make someone of another gender seem less human. It is harder to respect the agency of a partner when you’re never allowed to think about or discuss them as fully formed emotional beings.

The lesson plans begin the same, but they start to become quite different quickly. While in “The Making of a Woman” there is some allowance for discussion at certain

points in the lesson, the same questions are asked over and over again, namely, “what is a real woman?” or asking for “false standards” of womanhood—such as liking to shop. The lesson ends rather abruptly when the final step instructs, “Distribute the Real Woman [sic] handouts and explain the true standards for being a Real Woman [sic]” (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, 2004, pg. 68). There are no discussion questions and no other steps. The implication is that students understand that they are to just absorb the material given to them in the classroom without any discussion, critical thinking, or ability to question what the worksheet says. Additionally, by instructing the teacher to tell the students that these standards—the ones discussed and examined above—are what constitutes “true” womanhood, they are told if they deviate from this list then they are not “real women.” Furthermore, students are just given the expected answers or responses without any regard for the fact that students might want to redefine femininity for themselves.

While this ending to “The Making of a Woman” is concerning in and of itself, when contrasted with “The Making of a Man” it becomes even more so. Instead of ending with distributing the handout for what makes a man, the lesson continues with a detailed outline of what teachers are supposed to say about each point made on the worksheet. There are suggested responses for if students push back or ask questions. And then the lesson concludes with suggestions for commercials from the Campaign For Our Children, Inc.—a conservative organization that promotes abstinence and other causes through mass media campaigns aimed at teenagers—to show after the discussion (Cofc.org). While students may not realize that one class is getting to go deeper or think more critically about the material or have a discussion where they can at least voice their

opinions, and ones that may differ from what the teacher wants to get across sends a message not just about gender expectations, but about who as students are valued more. The expectation, it seems to me, is that young women are expected to passively accept the information presented to them. They are told what the “true standards” for womanhood are and they are expected to just accept them and not offer any original or conflicting opinions.

Meanwhile, it is expected that the young men will naturally be more critical thinkers, or more assertive and discerning scholars who will challenge information before accepting it. There are two instances within the outline for a longer discussion on the handout in “The Making of a Man” that state, “If students challenge...” and then goes on to give ways to reason with students so they accept the point being made (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Teachers Manual I, 1998, pg. 67). Additionally, the teacher is encouraged to compare certain points to other real world examples, such as school, cars, or working out. While these are stereotypes of what interests men, pedagogically pairing abstract ideals with real life examples is a good tool to use in the classroom. This approach helps students synthesize information and learn to make connections between the abstract and the concrete. However, the young women who go through the lesson “The Making of a Woman” are never afforded the same possibility. There is no way that neither “The Making of a Woman”—nor any lesson in this curriculum—be considered feminist in what it teaches or how it teaches it.

A feminist curriculum cannot promote traditional gender roles, uphold rape culture, or tie a young woman’s worth to her virginal or non-virginal status. A feminist curriculum would and should promote equality of different genders and sexes, allow

young women, and all young people, to make choices about their bodies, such as when to have sex, that are right and true for them. A feminist curriculum would place the onus of preventing rape on the rapist. Adding to this, a feminist curriculum would engage feminist pedagogical practices to promote equity not just in what the curriculum is teaching, but in how it is teaching the material. Considering all this, it is my belief that a curriculum cannot be anti-feminist in content and feminist in pedagogy or vice versa. There is no way to teach a curriculum that spreads harmful stereotypes or distorts information in a way that promotes critical thinking or the exploration of ideas—the two are mutually exclusive. Still, for the sake of argument, in this lesson engaged pedagogy would be a useful pedagogical tool to incorporate feminist pedagogy. hooks writes, “Engaged pedagogy necessarily values student expression” (hooks, 1994, pg. 20). Students, in a lesson or a classroom where engaged pedagogy is being enacted, would be able to express what they think makes a “real woman” without being told or relying on stereotypes or “false standards,” such as liking fashion, and without it having to be the strict traditional feminine characteristics listed on the worksheet. The lesson and proposed pedagogy do not allow for the possibility that young women will want to completely redefine womanhood or what it means to be a real woman. There is no time or space given to young women to think for themselves or break from traditional gender roles without relying heavily on tired tropes.

Now, it could be argued—albeit insensitively—that these lessons within the curriculum are just trying to reach the most common or “average” student, which the authors of the curriculum see as cisgender and heterosexual. However, trying to teach to the middle is not caring and goes against the feminist ethic of care in education. As

Noddings notes, “I think care theory favors a differentiated curriculum because it seems likely that as we work closely with students, we will be moved by their clearly different needs and interests. In any case, our claim to care must be based not on a one-time, virtuous decisions, but rather on continuing evidence that relations are maintained” (1999, pg. 13-14). A feminist ethic of care favors diversity and inclusivity, not exclusion and marginalization. A feminist ethic of care within the classroom goes back to hooks’ idea of adapting to the unique needs and particularity of the students within the classroom. Education should not be about a one size fits all approach, but rather an approach that values difference and promotes students to be as included as possible so that they too may express themselves in an authentic way.

White Dresses and Wedding Photos

The final lesson to be examined is section 5.2, “Imagine Your Wedding.” The entire lesson consists of students reading a scene told in the second person. The reading is almost like a guided meditation. The reading is all about the wedding day and how the student’s partner is either walking down the aisle to them (because they are a guy marrying a girl) or waiting for them at the alter (because they are a girl marrying a guy) depending on the gender of the reader. Both end of the readings, regardless of the gender of the reader, conclude with mentions of how wonderful the students’ wedding night will be because they have never had sex, and this is the best choice they could ever make. However, this message differs in a significant way between the two genders, once again. For young men it reads, “With all of your heart, you want to protect her, and, by waiting, you have” (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 59). The point here is that young men wait to have sex to protect their future partners. But for young women the lesson reads, “You are

ready to trust him with all that you have and all that you are, and, because you have waited, you have it all to give” (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, 2004, pg. 59). Young men are told that they are protecting their partners and being good men by waiting, whereas young women are not whole if they do not wait to have sex until marriage. When the students who are young women are told that they have “all of themselves” to give—meaning their virginity and their hymens—the insinuation is that if they have not waited until marriage to have sex, then they are not whole on their wedding day, they are damaged. The young women are presented as worth less—or even worthless—if they have sex before marriage because they do not have “all of themselves” to give to their partner. Once again young women and their proper enactment of gender are tied to their reproductive and sexual capacities, but young men are determined to be good people and worthy partners based on their characteristics.

How are LGBTQ young people to see themselves as worthy of love, and commitment if the only way to be committed is to be in a marriage in the context of this curriculum—an institution that has historically been off limits to them? While more and more states are allowing for marriage, and the Supreme Court of the United States has recently overturned the federal ban on same-sex marriage (known as DOMA or the Defense of Marriage Act), there is still a long way to go before every state has, and recognizes, same-sex marriage. Students deserve to hear that they matter. hooks in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* advocates just that: educating in order to free students or assist them in freeing themselves. It is not freeing to dictate to a student how to be a woman or a man, it is not freeing to ignorantly stereotype young men of color, and it is not freeing to exclude gender-nonconforming, transgender

people, or intersex people from the conversation entirely. It is not freeing to tell young women they are responsible for keeping men's sexual desires in check and it is their responsibility to prevent their rape. Feminist and engaged pedagogy "highlights the importance of independent thinking and each student finding his or her unique voice, this recognition is usually empowering for students. This is especially important for students who otherwise may not have felt that they were 'worthy,' that they had anything of value to contribute" (hooks, 2010, pg. 21).

This curriculum does none of this; it seeks to oppress not empower. As hooks writes from the feminist perspective of the possibilities of liberatory teaching practices, "The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy... Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries" (1994, pg. 12). A curriculum and the proposed pedagogy that goes along with it that reinforces dominant power structures, reifies hierarchies of power and oppression is not radical, it does not push boundaries or transgress. It is anti-feminist in theory and practice and it harms young people. Advocates of abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculums might claim that they are caring for students by advocating for abstinence since they see it as the "best choice," or that they are teaching critical thinking by encouraging students to question the sexualization that is rampant in our culture. However, these superficial arguments can easily be dismantled through the values of feminist pedagogy when we realize that allowing students to determine the best choice for them—whether to have sex or not have sex—is more caring. Teaching students

critical thinking also involves allowing them to form their own values, not just absorb the choices, values, or thoughts of the authors of this curriculum and is far more caring and feminist than whatever this curriculum proposes.

While there are no specific instructions that state in the teacher's manual this lesson is to be carried out in single gender classes, the instructions strongly imply this. It is implied that for this lesson students should be split into separate classes of young men and young women.

The lesson begins, according to the instructions for the teachers, by "asking students whether or not they would mind having their wedding photographs taken before the wedding so that they can get to the reception faster" (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Teachers Manual I, 1998, pg. 72). While it would seem that the lesson is asking for the input, opinions, and ideas of the students, by using wording such as "get to the reception faster" it signals to students that the authors of this curriculum do not think this is acceptable. It also implies that students who would choose to get to the party faster are frivolous or immature. The language of the question counteracts any attempt at critical thinking or engaged discussion amongst students.

There follows a short paragraph then for teachers to read to the students—for both classes of young men and classes of young women—about how it has only recently become common for a groom to see his bride before the ceremony. The teacher is supposed to explain, "The bride's beautiful white dress represented her virginity and was a symbolic celebration of her purity. Why didn't she let the groom see it before the wedding? Was it because she did not love him enough? No, it was because she loved him too much" (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Teachers Manual I, 1998, pg. 72).

The message is that brides who take their pictures before the wedding don't really love their grooms. But, a much subtler and hidden message is being transmitted. The lesson isn't really about waiting until after the wedding ceremony to take photos; this part of the lesson is really a metaphor for practicing abstinence until marriage. The coercive nature of this lesson starts right from the beginning. It literally tells young people that couples who are really in love wait until after they are married to engage in sexual behaviors. This then, it can be inferred, insinuates that those who have had sex before marriage will never really be loved or be able to love their future spouses. To tell young people that their marriages won't be as filled with love, or that they don't really love their partners or their partners don't love them if they have sex before marriage is extremely coercive. The lesson essentially tries to guilt young people into being abstinent. It places their future happiness and relationships on the line, and then tells them to choose. The choice is between their supposed future happiness and sex before marriage. This lesson is pure manipulation.

Additionally, it would be remiss not to mention the potential impact for young people who are survivors of sexual assault or rape. It is hard to imagine the pain they must feel to listen to this lesson, then be subtly told their partners won't love them because of what they experienced. This is a whole other level of victim-blaming beyond what has been in this curriculum thus far. From the beginning, this lesson is as far from caring either in Noddings's theory of an ethic of care (where students are treated as individuals who may have individual needs within the classroom), or hooks's idea of caring for the whole person not just the student.

This part of the lesson also places the onus of abstinence on the young woman once again. It makes abstinence not only her responsibility, but she becomes the only person whose virginity matters. There is no mention of any symbolism of virginity in a tuxedo or in a bride seeing her groom in his tuxedo for the first time as she comes down the aisle. There is no mention of how a groom doesn't let his bride see him in his tuxedo because he loves her too much to let her see him before the ceremony. This is all about how young women must preserve their white dress—read: their virginity—and not let their grooms see them before walking down the aisles on their wedding days.

However, the harmful messaging within this lesson about marriage does not stop there. The language used is homophobic. There is no mention of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer youth. This lesson could easily use gender neutral language such as spouse, partner, or fiancé instead of bride and groom. It could discuss making a life-long commitment, instead of talking about marriage—which would be more inclusive of students who don't even want to be married but may be in long-term relationships. However, instead of trying to be inclusive of LGBTQ youth, which could have been easily accomplished, the language is exclusionary. This lesson, it is apparent, is about promoting heterosexual marriage.

The lesson continues with students listening to a reading of a scene told in the second person. There are two variations of this scene, one for a teacher to read to a class that consists of all guys, and one to be read of a class of all girls. Both readings are like guided meditations, all about the wedding day and how the partner is either walking down the aisle to them—because they are a guy marrying a girl—or waiting for them at the alter—because they are a girl marrying a guy—depending on the gender of the class.

Both ends of the readings conclude with mentions of how wonderful the students' wedding nights will be because they have never had sex, they will be having sex for the first time with their husbands or wives, and this is the best choice. However, this message differs in a significant way between the two genders, once again. For a class of young men it reads, "With all of your heart, you want to protect her, and, by waiting, you have" (Heritage Keepers 2004, pg. 73). The point being that young men wait to have sex to protect their future partners. It could be inferred that the groom in this scenario could feasibly have sex before marriage with another partner so long as he doesn't with his future wife and preserves her virginity. So long as the first time these two partners have sex is on their wedding night it is implied then everything is alright. Even if the young man is not a virgin, so long as his bride is then she has been "protected" and he has fulfilled his responsibility as a man according to the curriculum.

Meanwhile, for classes of young women the lesson reads, "You are ready to trust him with all that you have and all that you are, and, because you have waited, you have it all to give" (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, 2004, pg. 73). Young men are told that they are protecting their partners and being good men by waiting, whereas young women are not whole if they do not wait to have sex until marriage. When the students who are young women are told that they have "all of themselves" to give—meaning their virginity and their hymen since virginity here it is implied means penetrative vaginal sex—the insinuation is that if they are not virgins, then they are not whole people. Young women are literally told that they are broken, that they are damaged if they have sex before being married to their partner. The message is that sex irrevocably changes a person and takes something away from their value, yet there's no explanation as to why

this isn't true of sex within a marriage or for young men. Being a good woman is tied to one's reproductive and sexual capacities, but young men are determined to be good people and worthy partners based on their characteristics and the ability to protect others.

The differences in what is told to young men versus young women are more than concerning, however, by now these differences should be far from surprising. As Fields found in her research on sexuality education in different school districts in North Carolina, and which can be extrapolated to the rest of the country, as well:

Conservatives maintain the sacredness of sexuality by, among other things, resisting the commonplace secular idea at the core of comprehensive sex education—that sexuality is natural. Christian abstinence-only education wraps the female body in a mystifying beauty and asserts that any sexual behaviors outside of marriage compromises the integrity of that wrapping, makes sexuality ugly, ruins young people (especially girls), and wreaks consequences that extend well beyond the lives of individual young people. (Fields, 2008, pg. 101)

While Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is not a Christian or faith-based organization, it is not hard to see that there are conservative Christian values woven throughout this curriculum. The emphasis on marriage, the erasing of LGBTQ youth, and the antiquated gender roles represented are all in line with the conservative Christian values Fields describes. While Heritage Abstinence Education is not a faith-based community organization, that does not mean there are not Christian values or influences which influence the curriculum. It is easy to see what Fields has encountered in other abstinence-only-until-marriage programs—sexuality is presented as disgusting, dangerous, abnormal, and shrouded in secrecy. The Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum and the problems inherent in its messaging are not unique. The problematic messages about sex, sexuality, and gender are found in many abstinence-only-until marriage programs. However those other programs are not endorsed by the

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In particular, one of the biggest ways in which this lesson in particular fails when it comes to pedagogy is the way in which it is structured. The lesson begins with a monologue, then goes into another monologue where the teacher asks students to imagine their wedding. Initially, it seems progressive to allow students—including young men—to imagine what they would want their wedding to be like. It seems as if, at this point at least, the curriculum will encourage young people to think critically about what they want their marriage or future partnership to be like.⁶ It seems as if students will be asked for their input, opinions, or ideas. However, it quickly becomes apparent that students will be led through a guided scenario. They are told exactly what to imagine—a traditional, vaguely Christian ceremony. Students may be able to impose themselves or their style onto the scenario being read to them, but it is meant to be a “one-size fits all” imagining of a wedding. Traditional ceremony, gender roles, and values are what this lesson is trying to foist upon all students with little regard for individual needs or thoughts. It is clear that this lesson, like the others, lacks an ethic of care and any sort of fostering of critical thinking. It also lacks any sensibility of feminist pedagogy.

Again the treatment of LGBTQ young people within this lesson is problematic. LGBTQ young people cannot see themselves as worthy of love, and commitment, if the only way to be committed is to be in a marriage in the context of this curriculum, while marriage is an institution that has historically been off limits to them.

⁶ Obviously, not all students will want to be married, and some students may not be able to be married if they are in a same-sex relationship. Regardless, envisioning a ceremony of commitment or the more general imagining of the kind of partnership students would like is important. Hence, the imagining of a wedding, while the wedding part is problematic and exclusionary, is a way that the lesson could be more progressive, but once again fails to be.

Feminist and engaged pedagogy “highlights the importance of independent thinking and each student finding his or her unique voice, this recognition is usually empowering for students. This is especially important for students who otherwise may not have felt that they were ‘worthy,’ that they had anything of value to contribute” (hooks, 2010, pg. 21). This curriculum does none of this; it seeks to oppress not empower. As hooks writes from the feminist perspective of the possibilities of liberatory teaching practices, “The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy... Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries” (1994, pg. 12). A curriculum accompanying pedagogy that reinforces dominant power structures, reify hierarchies of power and oppression are not radical, do not push boundaries or transgress. They are anti-feminist in theory and practice and they harm young people. Advocates of abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculums might claim that they are caring for students by advocating for abstinence since they see it as the “best choice,” or that they are teaching critical thinking by encouraging students to question the sexualization that is rampant in our culture. However, these superficial arguments can easily be dismantled through the values of feminist pedagogy when we realize that allowing students to determine the best choice for them—whether to have sex or not have sex—is more caring. Teaching students critical thinking also involves allowing them to form their own values, not just absorb the choices, values, or thoughts of the architects of this curriculum, and it is far more caring and feminist than whatever this curriculum proposes.

The lesson continues and comes to an end with a long written monologue for teachers to deliver to students. “The time has come for you to decide what you are going to do about abstaining from sexual activity” the section for teachers to read begins (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Teachers Manual I, 1998, pg. 74). This beginning actually seems quite promising. The idea seems to be that students are going to be encouraged to actually make their own decision about whether having sex outside of a marriage or waiting to have sex until they are married is the best choice for them. This would be an example of feminist pedagogy. Students are being encouraged—or so it seems at the outset—to make their own decisions after collecting information. The teacher’s job is then to help students come into their own, to develop and form their own values. This approach is actually quite similar to bell hooks’s concept of engaged pedagogy and the encouraging of critical thinking. When students are encouraged to be a part of their own learning, to apply what they learn to their own lives, and learn to synthesize information the learning that takes place goes far deeper. Additionally, giving students information and then allowing them to investigate, explore, and form their own opinions is not only an incredibly valuable skill, but also shows respect for students as full people, with agency, who are able to think for and make decision for themselves. As bell hooks writes in her essay on critical thinking, “The most exciting aspect of critical thinking in the classroom is that it calls for initiative from everyone, actively inviting all students to think passionately and to share idea in a passionate, and open manner” (hooks 2010, pg. 11). And that’s what the lesson seems to be inviting here: open dialogue and discourse, where students are invited to share their thoughts and opinions that have been formed throughout the curriculum.

However, it quickly becomes apparent that the creators of this lesson are not interested in actually hearing what students think, especially if it is not in line with what they want students to think. The entire monologue then continues about how it's been proven to students through this curriculum why waiting to have sex until marriage is the right choice and outlines all the points the lessons have made about why having sex before marriage is the wrong and bad choice with terrifying consequences, ranging from developing cervical cancer to contracting an STD to being physically abused by a partner.

The narration for the teacher to read continues:

Now it is time for you to make the commitment for the very best for yourself, to wait for the commitment of marriage to have sex. Once you make that commitment, you hold the power to not only hold out for that person you love enough to marry, but to be free of the consequences that are related to sex outside of marriage – free to reach you [sic] potential in life, and to become all you are meant to be! Make this commitment for yourself, those you love, and the ONE you marry, Do it for you, for them, for your hopes, dreams and goals, for your future family that deserves the very best! You will be glad you did! (Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Teachers Manual I, 1998, pg. 74)

The lesson plan with the narrative for teachers continues in this same vein before telling teachers to pass out commitment cards. The commitment cards are abstinence pledges where students sign a card that pledges they will remain abstinent and not engage in any sexual behaviors outside of marriage. Students are encouraged to have an adult witness their signature—such as a parent or other family member—to make their commitment public and to have someone to acknowledge their pledge of abstinence until marriage.

This is the final lesson in the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum. From this lesson alone, it is clear that Heritage Community Services and Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education have the idea that teachers are merely there to relay the messaging and values of their organization and curriculum. The teacher's manual literally

tells teachers word for word what they should say. It encourages teachers to practice the speeches and monologues so they sound natural, but there is no mention of teachers adapting the curriculum based on the students in the room or the individual needs of the students. There is no space for teachers to even open up a conversation about whether students will choose to be abstinent or why being abstinent may not be the right choice for everyone within the confines of this curriculum and the accompanying teachers' manual. Just as the values in the curriculum are expected to fit every student, the pedagogy is so rigid that there is little to no space for teachers to inject their own pedagogy—which could very well include feminist pedagogy. In messaging, in the practice of the curriculum, and the proposed pedagogy it is clear that what is actually being enacted is an anti-feminist pedagogy. This is a pedagogy which goes against everything feminist pedagogy and feminist values stand for. Indeed, this is not just a difference of ideology. As I believe has been shown, the consequences when young people are subjected to this sort of pedagogy are heartbreaking.

Chapter 3 – So, Where Do We Go From Here?

Far-Reaching Effects

I believe my analysis from a feminist pedagogical standpoint of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum shows that this curriculum has damaging and far-reaching implications. They are greater than that the students do not know how to use condoms or practice safer sex. This curriculum leaves students at a great disadvantage when it comes to their social, emotional, and personal well-being. Young men are told they are nothing more than their basest desires and young women are taught to be the gatekeepers of sexual activity. Ironically, while the authors seek to portray a curriculum that fosters respect among partners, in actuality young men are given the message that women are objects they must convince to have sex with them. Young men are told they must rise above their nature of being sexual beings with uncontrollable desires. It's apparently natural for them to have sexual feelings and to want to act upon them, but they should overcome these desires. The other side to this message is that if young men do not rise above or are unable to control their supposed basic instincts, they are given the excuse that it's not their fault. They tried and failed, and are given permission to try again. Young men are being told they have a reason and a right to be sexual, but more than that they are told they must have sexual feelings. Young men who may not want to have sex are being told they should have sexual feelings, by their peers most likely and then by this curriculum.

Additionally, young gay or bisexual men are being told they are abnormal for having feelings for other men. By not normalizing same-sex feelings, by not even mentioning same-sex attraction young people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual are told they aren't even worth mentioning. Their experiences are not good, or normal. This is a

dangerous form of masculinity that is being taught to our boys, and denies them their full humanity and the ability to have a range of emotions—far from a feminist value.

While young men are being given dangerous and emotionally stunting messages within the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum and are being harmed by the pedagogy proposed by the teachers' manual, this curriculum is especially harmful to young women. Young women are shamed for their sexuality, are told their sexual feelings are wrong and immoral. Young women are objectified, and are presented as objects that men will try to have sex with, not subjects with sexual agency. Young women are told that they are only valuable to society if their hymens are intact, they are told they are unworthy of love, unworthy of being called “real women,” and that they will suffer emotionally and physically if they are not virgins on their wedding nights. There is no space in this curriculum for young women to try and create their own empowered sexuality, one that allows them to be agents in their own lives, that allows them to determine what makes a good woman based on their character and not what they wear or whether or not they have had sex.

Meanwhile, LGBTQ youth do not exist in this curriculum. The implication is that being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer is wrong and not an option. Transgender and gender non-conforming young people are also told they do not exist; furthermore they are lead to believe that their sex determines their gender and that there is only one right way to enact that gender. Intersex individuals who may not have a determinate sex and thus whose genitalia and chromosomes, and thus gender may not fall along the dichotomous male/female and man/woman lines, are completely invisible.

Furthermore, no one is given the space to think critically, to critique these restrictions, or to envision a society where one can change prescribed gender roles. A feminist pedagogy would encourage young people to question the world around them, to seek justice, to change dominant patriarchal, racist, homophobic, sexist, and transphobic power structures. A feminist pedagogy would promote equality. Students who go through the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum will suffer emotionally and socially as has been detailed above, yes, but students are harmed academically as well. Through the use of the proposed pedagogy in this curriculum students are not challenged to become scholars or to study sources, gather information, and independently come to conclusions. These are valuable lessons that all students need to learn not just to further their academic careers, but these are skills that will serve young people as they navigate their lives outside of the classroom, as well. A feminist pedagogy would encourage young people to do all of these things—research, synthesize information, and come to an informed conclusion on their own. I believe it has been shown that the pedagogy of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education does none of these things and thus represents an anti-feminist pedagogy.

It is not just the values and messages contained in this curriculum that are anti-feminist and damaging for young people. The ways in which these values are taught represent anti-feminist pedagogy for two reasons. First, it is wholly impossible to teach anti-feminist values—or values that seek to uphold and reinforce dominant racist, patriarchal, and homophobic power structures—in a feminist way. The two are diametrically opposed. One cannot teach sexist values using feminist pedagogy. One may utilize feminist teaching strategies—such as journaling, which may be used in a feminist

classroom to bring students to voice—but feminist pedagogy encompasses so much more than just activities or teaching strategies that it is impossible to enact a feminist pedagogy while teaching anti-feminist values.

The argument could be made that a radical feminist teacher could try and temper the sexist, racist, homophobic, and classist messages of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum and use feminist pedagogy to enact the curriculum, I submit that what is created then is no longer the original curriculum nor is the pedagogy the prescribed pedagogy of the creators of the curriculum. In sum, by altering the curriculum and the teaching of it so drastically the outcome is that the anti-feminist pedagogy of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum is no longer enacted. I want to be clear that I support teachers and believe that they have the agency and ability to deconstruct curricula and adapt it to fit their classroom needs. My argument is not that there aren't feminist or progressive teachers who can and do adapt curricula to be more respectful and less harmful, or that there are not teachers who cannot infuse feminist pedagogical tools into a proposed anti-feminist pedagogy, but rather my argument is that by doing so the curriculum is so changed as to no longer be relevant to my original assertion that Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is the construction of an anti-feminist pedagogy. The argument stands that while a teacher may be able to revolutionize the proposed curricula or change it altogether, the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education in its original form remains anti-feminist in content and pedagogy. This is not an indictment of educators, but rather is the reflection on the curriculum and the proposed pedagogy of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum.

In addition, the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum does not even attempt to use feminist pedagogy or feminist teaching strategies. The methods suggested by the curriculum—coercion, shame, memorization of information as opposed to critical thinking—for teachers to use are far from feminist. Equally insidious as what the curriculum says implicitly and explicitly, is how it is said. A curriculum that does not allow, let alone promote, critical thinking, agency, subjectivity, or care is dangerous. It is dangerous because young people are not allowed to be fully human; they are being told they have basic instincts related to their specific sex that correlate to their assigned gender. Those instincts are presented as a pre-determined fate. They cannot go against their gender and roles they have been assigned by the larger culture. There is no room for young people to determine what their gender is and how they will present and enact that gender. They are given a mold to fill, and when they do not fit the mold (because they are not heterosexual or are transgender for example), they feel abnormal. On the other hand, if a young man has sex with a woman and breaks his promise of abstinence, he has already been given the message that he just can't control himself, it's natural. He has also been told that a young woman is the gatekeeper of sexual activity and either she is promiscuous and not a "good woman" or she was "asking for it" through her clothes or her actions. In every way, young people have been betrayed by this curriculum.

Not Just a List

A critique could be made that while this curriculum has been added to a list of federally approved curriculum that it is merely a list. What significance does a list on a government website, that in truth not many people are aware of, have on the real work being done in a classroom? How does a list impact, if at all, the young people in this

country on an individual level, let alone a national level? After all, hardly anyone has been talking about this curriculum or this federally approved list on the Department of Health and Human Services website. Surely, the critics would say, this is merely an academic exercise in analysis with no real-world implications. It is true that after initial outrage by several comprehensive sexuality education organizations⁷ and supporters of comprehensive sexuality education, and the ongoing opposition to the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum and its place on the Department of Health and Human Services website by these same organizations and supporters, little if any attention has been paid by the larger media or policy makers.

I can attest to the fact that most people are unaware that the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum was placed on the list of effective curricula. Peers, and friends of mine who are politically engaged otherwise were unaware that Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum existed until I informed them of my research. It is then that it can seem like this is an academic exercise, but I feel that one of the reasons there hasn't been more outrage amongst supporters of comprehensive sexuality education is that there hasn't been enough coverage of this event. One of the only news websites offering ongoing coverage of the adding of this curriculum to the approved list was and is *RH Reality Check*, a new, online, daily publication with a focus on reproductive health and reproductive justice topics. But while few people are paying attention to this list and this curriculum that does not mean that more people shouldn't be or that the consequences of this curriculum being listed on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' website aren't dire.

⁷ In the spirit of full disclosure, the non-profit organization where I work was one of the sexuality education organizations that opposes the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum and its place on the Department of Health and Human Services list of approved and evidence-based effective curriculums.

The lasting consequences of this curriculum being added to the federally approved evidence-based curricula list are outlined in one of the first oppositional pieces written on this event. One of the first critiques of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum and its place on the evidence-based curriculum list was published on *RH Reality Check* by three of the biggest national comprehensive sexuality education organizations in the United States. The Executive Directors of Advocates for Youth, Sexuality Information & Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), and Answer, along with the former executive director of Answer wrote an op-ed published May 1, 2012. After that spring, however, the initial outrage among comprehensive sexuality education organizations died down. Currently, while the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum may be held up as the epitome of what is wrong with abstinence-only-until-marriage education (as I have tried to show in this thesis), little if anything is being done about removing the curriculum from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services list of evidence based curricula. The page the list is presented on, on the Department of Health and Human Services website, was updated on July 19, 2013 (Office of Adolescent Health 2013). And as of November 2013 and the completion of my research, the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum is there on the list of approved curricula.

Again, some may wonder why exert the effort to remove the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum from a list that seems to have little significance, that few people even know exists or pay attention to? The answer to this question has multiple parts. First, the Department of Health and Human Services' list of approved and evidence-based curricula is considered a prestigious list. As the executive directors of

Answer, Advocates for Youth , and SIECUS wrote in their article “He-Men, Virginity Pledges, and Bridal Dreams: Obama Administration Quietly Endorses Dangerous Ab-Only Curriculum”:

No notice, not even a press release to announce the addition of three programs to the coveted list of 28 deemed effective and carrying the HHS seal of approval. Until now, this list was the holy grail of the Administration’s commitment to a science-based approach to teen pregnancy prevention and a directive for grantees of the President’s Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI). (Hauser, Rodriguez, Schroeder, and Sorace 2012)

How exactly this curriculum came to be on the list, who in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommended it be placed there, and what the motivation was is unclear. With no announcement made in the spring of 2012 when the addition happened and no comment since despite the criticism from leading sexuality education organizations, it would seem the administration seeks to bring as little attention to this development as possible. The only abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum added at that time, before or since is Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education. The Obama administration, unlike the Bush administration before it, has made much of backing comprehensive sexuality education initiatives and valuing curricula that are evidence-based. The Obama administration has depicted itself as for LGBTQ rights, including marriage equality. The hypocrisy then in adding this curriculum, almost in secret, without wanting to draw attention to the fact that this happened, is apparent. In and of itself, holding the political and governing bodies that we have elected to the standards they have promised to uphold is enough to warrant the critique and analysis of this particular curriculum.

However, the second reason why such an analysis is important goes much deeper than mere accountability. During the Bush administration hundreds of millions of dollars

each year went to supporting abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. For example, in 2007 alone \$176 million went to funding these programs in states across the country (Wiley and Wilson 2009, pg. 565). In this case, states would agree to enact abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and receive federal funding to do so. Some states did turn down the funding, but many did not. When the Obama administration came into power, the funding for these programs stopped. But the addition of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services list of approved curricula is not about regime changes or funding sources.

Due to the large amounts of money being given out to state governments juxtaposed with the growing body of evidence at the time—which has only grown since—that comprehensive sexuality education is effective while abstinence-only programs are not, lead researchers Kelly L. Wilson, Ph.D. and David C. Wiley, Ph.D. to explore what factors impacted which curricula and programs were adopted by educators. As Wiley and Wilson (2009) showed in “Influence of Materials on Teacher Adoption of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs” (2009), how and why which curricula are adopted—abstinence-only-until-marriage versus comprehensive—has a lot to do with which ones are endorsed on the state and federal level. Wiley and Wilson studied high schools in Texas in particular, the state that received the most federal funding for enacting abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in 2007. The most important finding for my analysis is that individual teachers and entire school districts are more likely to adopt curricula that are endorsed as effective. While there were many factors, including ease of access to material and how easy a curriculum could be understood, as well as the religiosity of the educator, one of the other large influences was state and federal

endorsement. As Wiley and Wilson note on whether or not teachers would deviate from the curriculum that had been given to them by the school:

Seven percent of teachers requested to purchase curricula (outside the approved textbook) to teach abstinence education, as opposed to 5% of teachers requesting to purchase curricula (outside the approved textbook) to teach comprehensive sexuality education in their respective health course. Almost 45% were not likely to do either of these. Teachers were most likely to allow state or federally funded programs to be offered and presented in their schools (75.6%, n = 245). (2009 pg. 570)

Teachers were not likely to bring in outside materials. The materials that make it into the classroom the vast majority of the time, are the curricula that are endorsed by state and federal governing bodies. During the Bush administration that meant teachers in Texas schools would be using abstinence-only-until-marriage materials, even if they were unaware if their schools were receiving federal funding to present these materials (Wiley and Wilson, 2009).

While this analysis was only done in Texas, it is not a stretch to assume that educators regardless of location are likely to adopt and use curricula that have been supposedly vetted by state and federal bodies, because they assume these are the best and most effective materials and because these are the materials being given to them by the school district. Although this study was done in 2009 and involved federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula the findings are still relevant today. Due to the fact that individual teachers are usually unaware if their schools are receiving federal funds to implement a certain curriculum, whether or not the schools receive funding for enacting the curricula on the Department of Health and Human Services is irrelevant. The important thing to educators is that the materials are approved and that they are given to them by the school or school district to use.

In turn, schools are more likely to use an approved curriculum because educators are being told this curriculum works. It is easy to imagine school administrators using the Department of Health and Human Services' website to find an evidence-based curriculum to use in their districts. When the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum was added to the list, school districts received the message that this curriculum was proven to reduce teen pregnancy, reduce the rate of the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, and delay the onset of sexual activity. However, as I have argued, the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education has not been proven to impact any of these outcomes. Therefore, this means that this curriculum, while historically popular only within South Carolina where Heritage Community Services is located, will now spread to more states and school districts throughout the country. This is why listing a curriculum on the Department of Health and Human Services' website on a list of approved curricula has such a potentially large impact.

My research has not yielded any studies that specifically ask teachers what they think or if they like Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education, but from my personal experience working in the field of sexuality education there are several camps of sexuality educators. There are those who believe in and are staunch supporters of comprehensive sexuality education, then there are educators who are firm believers in abstinence-only-until-marriage program, and finally there are those who have been thrown into teaching sexuality education. All of these teachers generally are health and physical education teachers who have little to absolutely no background in teaching sexuality education. There is very little in the way of human sexuality education or preparing teachers to teach sexuality education at the undergraduate level. If educators do

not come in with opinions on sexuality education program, and have no idea on what they're doing or how to effectively teach sexuality education, they are likely to just teach whatever curriculum the school districts gives them. It is very, very rare that a sexuality education teacher get into teaching the subject because they explicitly want to. It can and does happen, especially in community based organizations and non-profit education organizations, but in the school setting it is exceedingly rare. For most sexuality education teachers unfortunately, and through no fault of their own, teaching young people about sexuality is usually a job requirement alongside teaching gym and driver's education.

In terms of general reactions from educators on Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' list of endorsed curricula, there are some teachers who are supporters of abstinence-only-until-marriage programs who most likely think this is great news. There are also sexuality education teachers who are proponents of comprehensive sexuality education who probably oppose Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education and therefore are upset at this development. Yet, there are others who most likely are not aware of this development, and even if they were may not understand the implications. Ignorance and ambivalence are two of the biggest obstacles comprehensive sexuality education advocates are up against.

Where do we go from here?

Moving forward, I believe there needs to be an advocate for a push for more comprehensive sexuality education with feminist methods and pedagogy undergirding it across the country. There should be stricter methods for evaluating curriculum and reviewing research related to approving sexuality education materials. There also should

be standardized methods for conducting educational research on curricula. Another good start would be for research and governing bodies to only evaluate independent research that has been accepted by peer-reviewed journals in order to add in a layer of checks and balances. In addition, there needs to be greater transparency in how a department of the federal government comes to approve a curriculum and add it to its list of approved and evidence-based curricula. This would also be a welcome and necessary change. Not to be forgotten, gender and LGBTQ inclusive sexuality education should also be a priority at the state and local level. And, finally young people's voices need to be heard in the discussion of sexuality education. In essence, incorporating the feminist pedagogical practices of shifting authority and allowing young people to be active participants in the conversation and the process needs to be a priority. In terms of politics, there needs to be a focus on electing political leaders who value comprehensive sexuality education, who value non-oppressive curricula, and who identify as feminists. Political leaders who are already believers in comprehensive sexuality education need to become more vocal advocates for comprehensive sexuality education and allies in this fight.

Most of all, in my opinion, attention should be paid to sexuality education and comprehensive sexuality education in general. There are certain organizations, such as Answer, Advocates for Youth, and SIECUS, who are doing this work to great effect—raising awareness, keeping tabs on abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and their motives, as well as incorporating the voices of young people. In fact, many young people support learning about more than just abstinence but policy makers do not seem to care about what young people think (Albert 2012). National organizations such as Answer and Advocates for Youth, along with numerous state and local organizations, utilize the

voices of young people for peer-to-peer education when it comes to issues of sexuality and sexual health. However, these organization and these young people do not make policy, and most of these organizations do not reach into the classroom. For the most part, organizations that promote comprehensive sexuality education are advocacy organizations. With the piecemeal nature of sexuality education across the U.S. it is hard to achieve consistency and accuracy across school districts, let alone states, as of now.

There is currently no federal mandate for sexuality education let alone comprehensive sexuality education. However, the majority of adults, 74 %, in the United States support teens receiving information on *both* abstinence and birth control. (Albert 2012). Even when asked about federally funded teen pregnancy prevention programs 65% of adults believe, “these taxpayer programs should provide teens with information about both birth control and postponing sex. Again, *both* not either/or” (Albert 2012, pg. 7) So while most adults support teaching teens more than just practicing abstinence only until marriage, and support using federal funds for it there is still no federal educational mandate for comprehensive sexuality education.

While common core standards are being implemented across the country for subjects such as math or social studies, there is no such movement when it comes to comprehensive sexuality education. There are the National Sexuality Education Standards (2012). The National Sexuality Education Standards are educational standards that list what topics should be covered in sexuality education from kindergarten through twelfth grade. These standards offer a comprehensive look at sexuality education, the different topics, and when it is age and developmentally appropriate for each one to be taught. They are the closest approximation to core common standards that sexuality

education has. However, these were developed by national organizations dedicated to providing and promoting comprehensive sexuality education, not by school districts or educational policy makers. There is no imperative for these standards to be adopted across the country, unfortunately. Hence, states are left to determine for themselves what is taught. The young people in each state learn at the whim of the current state government and whichever party is in control of the state legislature. For some states that means advocating comprehensive sexuality education, for others that means abstinence-only, and in the remaining states there could be no mandate for sexuality education at all. Even in states with a mandate for sexuality education, there is usually no mention of an explicit curriculum or a method by which to teach. The mandate will be a general statement that says sexuality education must be taught, but each school board is able to institute whichever curriculum it wants and that means for some school districts curricula such as the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum. In some states where there is a mandate for sexuality education with a focus on abstinence, there will be a stipulation that if LGBTQ people are mentioned at all it must be in the context that they are more likely to contract the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)—a statement that is patently false and yet certain states mandate schools to tell this lie to students.

It has been standard for states to mandate lying to students or presenting false information to students for quite some time, and before the current administration, advancing abstinence-only-until-marriage programs was rewarded monetarily by the federal government as well. When the Obama administration took office the hope was that comprehensive sexuality education advocates would have an ally in the White House and the federal government would finally support accurate, evidence-based curriculum

that was inclusive and respectful. It was the hope that the Department of Health and Human Services would only back curriculum that is actually evidence-based, accurate, and effective—and Heritage Keepers is certainly not any of these things, as I hope I have proven here.

Conclusion

This curriculum has consequences beyond a young woman not learning how to access birth control, or a young man not learning about condom use. This curriculum leaves students at a great disadvantage when it comes to their social, emotional, and personal well-being. Young men are told they are nothing more than their basest desires and taught to treat women as objects they should convince to have sex with them. And young women are shamed for their sexuality, objectified, and are only valuable to society if their hymen is intact. LGBTQ youth do not exist in this curriculum, and the implication is that being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer is wrong and not an option. Transgender and gender non-conforming young people are also told they do not exist, but further more they are lead to believe that their sex determines their gender and that there is only one right way to enact that gender.

The Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education curriculum uses sexist, misogynistic, racist, classist, and homophobic language and implies that anyone not white, middle-upper class, heterosexual, and abstinent is going to lead an unhealthy and unhappy life. To the students in the classroom who must listen to and participate in this curriculum, learning to use a condom or how to prevent the transmission of STDs should they choose to have sex is important, but more important is to hear that they are healthy, normal, and sexual beings, and that they are empowered and supported. This curriculum is devoid of

feminist values, devoid of feminist pedagogy, and outright harmful. If we want our young people to be smart, engaged, critical thinkers who are empowered when it comes to their sexuality and their education, then they deserve a comprehensive sexuality education that enacts a feminist pedagogy. They do not deserve to be subjected to Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education. Unfortunately, many of our young people are not getting what they deserve and must be in classrooms where Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education is taught. Quite frankly, our young people deserve better, and we owe it to ourselves to do better for them.

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