

“Bad Sex vs. No Sex: The Rhetoric of Heteronormative Temporality in Utah’s Abstinence-Based Education”

Nina Feng

Abstract

This article examines Utah’s abstinence-based sex education materials for junior high and high school students through the lens of queer linguistics and discourse analysis. Regardless of popular opinion and evidence-based research behind comprehensive sex education, abstinence-based education remains Utah’s approach for adolescents. I argue that heteronormative temporality is built into the language ideology of the sex education materials. The language ideology in an introductory PowerPoint for teachers and junior high and high school resource guides iconizes heteronormativity as the morally “good” identity, at the expense of marginalized social groups.

Introduction

Scholars in many disciplines, including rhetorical studies, have engaged in the study of language and sexuality, though the intersections of queer studies and critical discourse analysis are not yet discernible in our field (Alexander and Rhodes; Alexander and Wallace). Recognizing the work of interdisciplinary queer studies scholars, we have seen the emergence of queer linguistics, a poststructuralist approach which is surfacing in recent academic work on gender and sexual identities (Chavéz; Bucholtz and Hall; Leap; Motschenbacher). Queer linguistics focuses on “the linguistic construction of heteronormativity,” or the discursive construction of heterosexuality as normal and natural (Motschenbacher 151); this methodology seeks to foreground discursive practices of sexuality to disentangle their power operations and denaturalize normative processes. Aligned with queer linguistics, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is also post-structural, grounded in the idea that language is inextricable from social and cultural processes (Fairclough and Wodak). CDA is distinct from discourse analysis because of its dedicated aim to critique and transform problematic social structures (Fairclough and Wodak; Titscher et al.), though queer linguistics has not always engaged CDA methods (Leap).

In utilizing explicit CDA tools within a queer linguistics framework to analyze data, I aim to bring together these two strands of investigative thought, strengthening the rigor of both frameworks. One particular criticism of critical discourse analysis, which is the inability to analyze discourse that is absent (Blommaert), invites space for queer linguistics to offer rhetorical scholars a methodology to enrich the study of language and power. In using a queer linguistics lens on

normative language practices, queer absences are highlighted, helping language scholars to recognize and advocate for non-normative spaces and subjectivities.

Queer linguistics is particularly valuable for the study of sex education materials, which may often further the rhetoric of heteronormativity at the expense of marginalized identities (Hobaika and Kwon; McNeill). In this article, I utilize queer linguistics with CDA methods drawn from linguist Michael Halliday to examine three of Utah's State Office of Education's high school and junior high abstinence-based sex education materials from 2016 (before they were removed from the website). Utah is a unique site of study in regard to sex education, since 90% of the state's legislature is part of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), and heteronormative family structures are explicit in LDS values: "God made it pretty clear that families are important when he created Adam and Eve. The Holy Bible calls them 'man and...wife' (Genesis 2:25), and the first commandment God gave them was to have children" (The Church). Though there are other states with a majority of religious lawmakers, Utah is the most religiously homogenous state, with 55% of the people identifying as LDS. Laws are often aligned with religious history or beliefs, from alcohol restrictions to polygamy amendments (Pew). A study of Utah's sex education offers us insights that consider the larger context of religious culture on state policy, and the invisible and pervasive nature of heteronormativity.

Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini discuss Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's argument (Warner coined the word "heteronormativity") in *Love and Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance*: "As Berlant and Warner argue, part of what makes heteronormativity so powerful is that it depends on and works through a set of unconscious assumptions. That is, heterosexuality forms the basic idiom of everyday life" (28). A queering of critical discourse analysis exposes the rhetoric of heteronormativity in the presence and patterns, as well as the *absences*, in language.

In the following analysis, I will use 2016 curriculum from the Utah State Office of Education website, specifically materials which explicate "Human Sexuality Law and Policy." The three documents I analyze are the single introductory PowerPoint for teachers from the required "2015 Online Class" for teachers on "Human Sexuality Education Review," the junior high resource guide (JH) and the high school resource guide (HS) for parents and teachers on teaching human sexuality. The resource guides state that they were revised in 2006; they were possibly unchanged through the spring of 2016. In examining the linguistic formations in these materials, we can understand how sex education in Utah has historically and recently developed in relation to the state's heteronormative ideology.

I demonstrate that heteronormative temporality is built into the language ideology of the sex education materials, a construction that becomes visible through "lexical cohesion," repetitive patterns of words and semantic meaning (Halliday

and Hasan 318-20), and three processes: *iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*. “Heteronormative temporality” (HT) clearly pervades this curriculum, emphasizing family and character development. HT focuses on normative time frames of institutions such as marriage and traditional family structures, with emphasis on the future, longevity, and the maturation of the adolescent into adulthood, denigrating other lifestyles (Halberstam 5-7). People may participate in language ideology when they notice differences in the ways others communicate—they rationalize and justify linguistic differences with ideologies that explain the source and meaning of differences, often relying on stereotypes (Irvine and Gal 35-36).

The act of differentiation often reflects a move to glorify or demean a social group. As seen in the lexical patterns I found in the data, positive language is associated with the language of heteronormative temporality, and negative language is associated with identities outside HT ideology. In interpreting the patterns, I utilize Irvine and Gal’s concepts of *iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*, which aid in ideological recognition or misrecognition of linguistic complexities (403). In *iconization*, the linguistic feature is seen as an essential feature of the social group. *Fractal recursivity* is the repetition of binaries—branching out from the main binary, more binary structures proliferate and often imitate and reiterate the original dichotomy presented in that specific context. Recursions of one main binary multiply in the language of the sex education materials, particularly the dichotomy of “future versus sex,” which will be explained in further detail. Lastly, *erasure* backgrounds or ignores elements that do not fit within the ideology.

In my analysis, I argue that language ideology attaches moral value to heteronormative identity in these documents. Heteronormative language is naturalized and its opposition is demonized; both are recognizable, but identities that exist outside the binary are ignored or backgrounded. This absence is magnified through the lens of queer linguistics. For queer rhetorical studies, researchers may find queer linguistics paired with concrete CDA tools invaluable in foregrounding obscured or erased identities.

History of Abstinence Education in the United States and Utah’s Sex Education

In studying Utah’s sex education materials, we have to understand the context in which they developed. In the 1970s, teenage pregnancy was a concern for American legislators because of the costs associated with birth and prenatal care, and the sense that our country was moving away from traditional values (SIECUS). Concerns over morality fueled the abstinence education movement beginning in 1981. The government established three streams of abstinence funding through the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) in 1981, Title V of the Welfare Reform Act in 1996, and Community Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) in 2000. AFLA was also known as the “chastity law,” and only funded

programs that were abstinence-only; it was sponsored in part by Senator Orrin Hatch (Republican-Utah). AFLA was in response to the funding that was being given to Planned Parenthood and the idea that this supported a national “contraceptive” mentality. But many health and education researchers have conducted studies which support *comprehensive* sex education, including a report from the office of Representative Henry Waxman in 2004 that documented the incorrect information on condom failure, abortion, mental and physical health, and sexually transmitted diseases that was disseminated in two-thirds of abstinence-only programs. Comprehensive sex education is a holistic approach that provides education to help young people develop positive attitudes and critical knowledge about sexual and reproductive health; the seven components of the comprehensive approach are gender, sexual and reproductive health and HIV, sexual rights and sexual citizenship, pleasure, violence, diversity and relationships (Guttmacher “A Definition”). Abstinence education tends to focus on heterosexual family structures and no sex before marriage. Between 1996-2006, abstinence education funding was especially robust, and over \$2 billion has been spent on abstinence-only education to date, despite overwhelming evidence of its ineffectiveness (Boyer).

Critics of abstinence-only sex education contend that the curriculum often emphasizes heteronormativity, especially heterosexual marriage, marginalizing queer relationships (Wilkerson 101-102). Researchers have also presented strong evidence for the ineffectiveness of abstinence education in delaying sexual intercourse, preventing adolescent pregnancy and transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Stanger-Hall and Hall). In 2007, a 10-year study was released that showed strong evidence for the ineffectiveness of abstinence programs for preventing pregnancy and STIS in adolescents, yet the House of Representatives still moved to approve \$27.5 million to fund CBAE that year. In 2010, Congress established the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, created with evidence-based strategies and a comprehensive sex education focus. In light of this research, President Barack Obama eliminated two streams of abstinence funding in 2010.

Almost four decades after the movement began, AFLA and CBAE were defunded in the Obama administration, and Obama eliminated all abstinence funding in the 2017 budget. Though we are seeing a circular shift toward conservative government attitudes towards sex and agency again, discourse has changed quite a bit because of the research against abstinence-only-until-marriage (AOUM) education. Yet, from 2016-2020, President Donald Trump’s administration worked to return to abstinence-based education (Eisenstein). States have adopted AOUM curriculum, which changed to abstinence-plus, and in Utah, to abstinence-based materials. “Abstinence-plus” curriculum stresses abstinence but also teaches safe sex methods. Utah’s curriculum does not teach how to participate in safe sex, though the existence and effectiveness of contraception is discussed.

Utah's sex education policies, in the materials I studied from 2016, reflected abstinence-only attitudes with state mandates that required emphasis on AOUM and fidelity after marriage, information on life skills and family communication, and information on HIV prevention through abstinence (USOE). Sex and HIV education were required to be included, with medically accurate and unbiased information, and parental notice and consent. They did not have to include information on contraception, sexual orientation, negative outcomes of teen sex, and condom use. The curriculum was not prohibited from promoting religion or required to be age appropriate. Historically and currently, Utah is still the only state that does not allow teachers to answer spontaneous questions that conflict with the law (Guttmacher "Sex and HIV").

Though popular opinion and research exists behind comprehensive sex education, abstinence-based education is currently Utah's approach for adolescents in junior high and high school. The mandates from 2016, which will be presented, are still quite similar to the ones in 2020. Updates on Utah sex education law since 2016 include the following: the prohibition of "advocacy for homosexuality" has been eliminated from state health curriculum requirements with the passing of bill SB 196 in 2017; the passing of bill HB 71 in 2019, which allows instructors to provide more information on contraception methods, with the understanding that they cannot advocate for these methods, continuing to stress abstinence first; the addition of "refusal skills" in situations of sexual advances, and instruction on the "harmful effects of pornography" (Utah Code). It is important to note that Utah's Local Education Agencies, or local school boards, may choose not to adopt contraception education; even with recent legislative changes, the curriculum may remain mostly unchanged in classrooms.

Methods of Queer Linguistics and CDA: The Construction of Heteronormative Temporality

In 2016, I first began my research on Utah's sex education materials on the state education website, where I found the junior high and high school resource guides open to the public for download. My interest was personal—not only do I live in Utah, and study language, but my children attend public schools. The language in the materials seemed to emphasize heteronormative ideology; therefore, my hypothesis was that a lexical analysis would reveal heteronormative language patterns. I decided to utilize queer linguistics to parse the texts; the linguistic construction of heterosexuality is of special interest in queer linguistics because a restricted focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) identities assumes heterosexuality as the default and non-discursively constructed norm (Motschenbacher 153). Queer theory researchers have therefore focused on the construction of heteronormative discourse; they found that specific forms of heterosexual relationships are acceptable, influencing males and females to conform to stereotypical careers, hobbies, age relations

and actions that locate them firmly in the gender binary (Motschenbacher 156, 158).

The introductory “Health Sexuality Education Review” PowerPoint (PPT) for teachers is 50 slides, the junior high resource guide is 61 pages, and the high school resource guide is 115 pages. Between these three materials, legislators have created a detailed and elaborate plan for teachers and parents to guide students through abstinence-based education. Abstinence-based language appears often in the texts, but in order to track the moral associations that seemed to appear with this language, I decided to use coding tools from Michael Halliday. “Hallidayan Linguistics” examines the social interactions encoded in language, as well as the context in which these structures are formed (Halliday). Hallidayan Linguistics offers specific tools for examining textual materials like the sex education documents and is one of the springboards for the development of CDA. An important aspect of Hallidayan Linguistics is its emphasis on the relationships between linguistic units, such as co-occurring words and phrases. Therefore, drawing from Halliday, I utilized tools of *lexical cohesion*, repetitive patterns of words and semantic meaning (Halliday and Hasan 318-20). By identifying *repetition* and *collocation*, we can see the coherence of other themes of heteronormativity develop. *Repetition* is the repeated form of the same lexical item, such as “marry,” “married” and “marriage,” which appears in the education materials. *Collocation* is the co-occurrence of words that form associations, such as the negatively connoted lexical patterns around the word “sex,” when “sex” is not associated with abstinence, family, or marriage, which also appears in the materials (Halliday and Hasan 288).

I first studied the “Health Sexuality Education Review” PPT for teachers and analyzed the slides for main themes and the messages that would introduce the junior high and high school materials. The PPT set the boundaries and expectations for what would be taught in the other materials—the repetition of abstinence language occurs again and again, as well as the authoritative mandates of Utah state law on restrictions in teaching about the details of intercourse, “advocating for homosexuality” and “advocating for contraception.” The tone of restriction has a punitive quality, and this continues when I read the text using collocation, or co-occurring words. Co-occurring words that accompany topics of sex or sexuality outside abstinence or marriage are frequently negative.

After analyzing the PPT, I then approached the junior high and high school resource guides with a coding scheme—students do not see the introductory PPT, but the resource guides are shared with them, and therefore have more impact. After coding the guides for repetitive words, I counted the number of repetitions in the junior high guide and the high school guide. Repetitive words were concentrated around the concept of heteronormative time, often co-occurring with positive judgment words. Repetitive words also concentrated

around the concept of sex, though these were almost always co-occurring with negative judgment words.

Through these tools of lexical cohesion, I identified two motifs—heteronormative temporality and the negative depiction of sex. Halberstam writes that:

Respectability, and notions of the normal on which it depends, may be upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality. And so, in Western cultures, we chart the **emergence of the adult** from the **dangerous and unruly period of adolescence** as a desired process of maturation; and we **create longevity** as the most desirable future, applaud the pursuit of a long life (under any circumstances), and **pathologize modes of living that show little or no concern for longevity**. (4) (my emphasis in bold)

Halberstam's quote comments on the dichotomies of thought in Western heteronormative spaces. Adulthood versus adolescence, and longevity versus transience, are both apparent themes in the sex education materials. Time is emphasized again and again in the sex education curriculum, adding a sense of urgency for students, which I will demonstrate in the data analysis. Time figures into heteronormative institutions like marriage and family. Halberstam writes, "because we experience time as some form of natural progression, we fail to realize or notice its construction. Accordingly, we have concepts like 'industrial' time and 'family' time, time of 'progress'... 'austerity' versus 'instant' gratification, 'postponement' versus 'immediacy'" (7). Family time includes family schedules for child-rearing, such as appropriate bedtimes and wake times, normative aspects of heterosexual lifestyles which present themselves as necessary behaviors. To all these different forms of temporality, we assign value and meaning, feeling rewarded by adhering to heteronormative time, or guilty or dissatisfied if we exist outside of it (Halberstam). These heteronormative time frames emerge again and again in the sex education data, with the repetition and co-occurrences of words, along with the associated positive value.

After coding the junior high and high school materials, I then applied Irvine and Gal's three concepts of *iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure* to analyze and organize the codes (403). As I will discuss, a sense of responsibility is attached to heteronormative ideology and the emerging lexical patterns. Accompanying them is a sense of morality, as we see in the two motifs of heteronormative temporality and the negative depiction of sex.

The Introductory PowerPoint: Heteronormative Parameters of Utah's Sex Education Material

The introductory "Health Sexuality Education Review" PowerPoint for teachers was the first document I encountered. For adolescents in Utah public schools,

the PowerPoint establishes the heteronormative parameters of the education materials. Though students are not supposed to see this document, the information restricts the content that instructors may teach. On the first slide of the presentation, abstinence before marriage, or the avoidance of sex before marriage, is emphasized: “Utah State Law Mandates 53A-13-101. (1)(b) That instruction shall stress the importance of abstinence from all sexual activity before marriage and fidelity after marriage as methods for preventing certain communicable diseases” (USOE PPT). “Inappropriate” behaviors should be avoided, like sex before marriage; the consequence suggested is the contraction of a disease. These behaviors are expounded on in further restrictions. On four slides, the topics teachers should avoid are highlighted (I bolded the information on the slides):

**The State Board of Education Rule and Utah State Law Mandates
“The following 4 things may NOT be taught:**

- 1. The intricacies of intercourse, sexual stimulation, or erotic behavior;**
 - **Any questions that ask “how to” do something that relates to intercourse or sexual behavior falls under this category.**
 - **We do not describe any sexual behavior. You may define behaviors such as: oral sex, sexual intercourse, for clarification.**
- 2. The advocacy of homosexuality;**
 - **Teachers can define and discuss homosexuality as it relates to their curriculum.**
- 3. The advocacy or encouragement of contraceptive methods or devices;**
 - **Teachers may teach about contraception, rates of effectiveness, where to purchase them, which need a prescription, etc. if it is part of their curriculum.**
 - **Parental consent is always needed.**
- 4. The advocacy of sexual activity outside of marriage;” (USOE PPT)**

This string of restrictions and explanations presents a logic of mathematical transitivity. The first slide suggests that since state law mandates emphasis on abstinence, sex before marriage may be unlawful, or at the very least, inappropriate. If the advocacy of contraception and “homosexuality” fall into the same category as advocacy of sex outside marriage, these behaviors also seem inappropriate, or unlawful. These parameters define the heteronormative scope of Utah’s sexuality education, excluding people who are queer and unmarried sexually active people. The limits on the discussion of contraception also suggest that it is either not appropriate to use or it is not appropriate to discuss, along with sexual behavior in general. To acknowledge the existence but deny the details of contraception and sex teaches students the state-approved boundaries of appropriate discourse about sex. This heteronormative discourse maintains a continuing theme of absence throughout the documents: absence of sex before

marriage, absence of homosexuality, absence of contraceptive use, and absence of what sexual behavior consists of.

The PowerPoint presentation also notes the necessity of parental consent, as shown in Figure 1.

The curriculum for this course includes instructions and/or discussions about the topics <u>checked</u> in this box:	
Teacher Use Only	
<input type="checkbox"/> reproductive anatomy and health	<input type="checkbox"/> contraception, including condoms*
<input type="checkbox"/> human reproduction	<input type="checkbox"/> HIV and AIDS (including modes of transmission)
<input type="checkbox"/> information on self-exams	<input type="checkbox"/> sexually transmitted diseases
<input type="checkbox"/> date rape	(terms of a sensitive/explicit nature may be defined)
*Factual, unbiased information about contraception and condoms may be presented as part of this course (only if the box above is checked). Demonstrations on how to use condoms or any contraceptive means, methods, or devices are prohibited and are NOT authorized.	

Name of Student: _____

OPTIONS: Please read and check only one of the following:

Option 1

_____ I GRANT permission for my child to participate in the scheduled activities/discussions as described above.

Option 2

_____ I GRANT permission for my child to participate in the scheduled activities/discussions as described above, *with the exception of* _____. I understand that my child will receive an alternative assignment of equal value and will not attend the regularly scheduled class on the day of this instruction.

Figure 1: Parental consent form

Parents are allowed to exclude their child from any curriculum about reproductive health, reproduction, self-exams, date rape, contraception, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The optional nature of these topics suggests that students do not need education in these areas. Most of these topics are also attached to areas of sexuality with negative connotations, such as breast/testicular cancer (self-exams), date rape, STDs and HIV/AIDS. These optional topics are in direct contrast with required education on “abstinence before marriage and fidelity after marriage” (USOE PPT). This suggests that if students stay within the heteronormative realm of abstinence education, they will receive all necessary knowledge, excluding unnecessary and avoidable knowledge of “bad” sex effects/acts/conditions.

The materials emphasize absence and abstinence again in the section titled “Tough Commonly Asked Questions.” The questions and italicized responses follow (I bolded the information on the slides):

1. How do gay people have sex?

This is a how-to question, but like with heterosexual couples, intimate behavior shared by homosexual couples is personal information which need not be discussed.

2. Is masturbation dangerous or bad?

There is no scientific evidence that masturbation is dangerous. In segments of some communities and with some families, masturbation often becomes a moral issue where it is labeled as "bad". What might be right or acceptable for one person isn't necessarily right or acceptable for another.

3. What is the best way to put on a condom?

Instructions for condom use are clearly indicated on the condom packaging label.

4. Can you get pregnant from having oral sex?

No. The only way you can become pregnant is through vaginal intercourse. You may transmit or receive sexually transmitted diseases from oral sex however.

5. I hear less and less about AIDS. Is there an AIDS vaccination to protect people?

No. Although drugs have been developed to manage the disease and ensure a longer life for those having it, AIDS creates many complications and is still a death sentence for those contracting it. There is no cure.

6. What is the best form of birth control?

Abstinence from sexual behavior is the only 100% method of birth control. All other methods fail to some extent.

7. Did you have sex before you were married?

I'm sorry, but as I indicated in the ground rules, I do not answer questions about my personal experiences.

8. Can girls get pregnant if they do it standing up?

Girls can become pregnant regardless of the position they are in when they have sexual intercourse.

9. Can you lose your virginity by using a tampon?

People define virginity in different ways, but most define a virgin as one who has never had sexual intercourse. Using this definition, you cannot lose your virginity by using a tampon.

10. Will using a condom prevent a sexually transmitted disease?

Abstinence is the only 100% sure method of preventing STDs. The CDC has indicated that condoms do offer some protection against the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

These questions are representative of the student discourse in sex education, and though they are directed at the instructor, they also once again mark the boundaries of appropriate discussion with students. Many of the answers require the instructor either to refuse to answer ("I do not answer questions about my

personal experiences”), answer vaguely (“What might be right or acceptable for one person isn’t necessarily right or acceptable for another”), or answer advocating abstinence (“Abstinence from sexual behavior is the only 100% method of birth control. All other methods fail to some extent”). Students are redirected again and again to a realm absent of sexuality where abstinence provides safety, birth control does not need to be discussed, and virginity is a prized characteristic for those who menstruate (“Can you lose your virginity by using a tampon?”). The idea of AIDS bolsters the boundary by becoming an elusive monster existing outside the walls of abstinence, retaining the fearful rhetoric of the 1980s AIDS epidemic with the phrase “death sentence,” with HIV ignored as a treatable medical condition. J. Blake Scott discusses the rhetoric of contamination in *Risky Rhetoric: AIDS and the Cultural Practices of HIV Testing*, where HIV is conflated with its carriers, particularly gay men, who are depicted as inherently promiscuous, deviant, and risky. From this perspective, queerness itself becomes dangerous (41). Scott’s work exposes the vilifying rhetoric of “homosexuality,” but this rhetoric creates the same binary and essentializing effect as the rhetoric of heteronormativity in the sex education materials—the heteronormative world of abstinence becomes safer, cleaner, and inherently filled with potential, the more the queer world of sex is polluted with risk, fear and inherently paired with death.

The Utah sex education materials emphasize a world devoid of sex and therefore devoid of dangerous sexual effects and conditions of sexual bodies. As we will see from the junior high and high school materials, two motifs emerge with the reappearance of word patterns: “future” versus “sex.” Heteronormative temporality becomes evident as lexical cohesion makes these themes prominent. Abstinence operates to further heteronormativity and a “healthy” future, whereas sex outside marriage is associated with negative language, and the lack of a future.

Junior High (JH) and High School (HS) Resource Guides: Heteronormativity vs. “Bad Sex”

As discussed previously, repetition and collocation are the lexical tools I use to prove coherence of the two motifs of 1) heteronormative temporality and 2) the negative depiction of sex throughout the junior high and high school resource guides. The first motif that becomes apparent is heteronormative temporality. Each resource guide begins with:

“A resource guide for parents and teachers on teaching human sexuality:

- To **prepare** students for **lives as responsible adults** and for their **potential** role as **parents**.
- To enhance the ability of students to be productive, effective, communicating **members of their present and future families**.

- To foster the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills that **build and nurture healthy relationships**' (USOE JH 1, emphasis added)

Not only are the parameters established for heteronormativity in the presentation, but the materials immediately define the same scope for the resource guides. The words I bolded in the excerpt highlight the beginning of a heteronormative temporal motif with implications of the future, such as “prepare” and “potential.” Paired with these markers of future time are heteronormative lexical items such as “family,” “responsible adults” and “healthy relationships.” Since teachers are restricted from advocating for “homosexuality”, we understand these to be heterosexual families and heterosexual relationships.

The following chart maps out the continued thread of heteronormative temporality (use of bolding below calls attention to these moves):

<i>Number of repetitions</i>	<i>Examples of collocation and repetition</i>
Abstinence, abstain JH: 27 HS: 23	Identify the benefits of premarital sexual abstinence (21) Stress the importance of respect, responsibility, caring, trust, honesty, and abstinence (31)
Decision-making, decisions JH: 84 HS: 102	The consequences of their decisions affect the rest of their lives. (25) What decisions protect my future? (viii)
Development, develop JH: 90 HS: 76	Developing values concerning sexuality is a lifetime process (21) Develop and apply decision-making and refusal skills. (29)
Family, families JH: 69 HS: 90	Emphasize for students the importance of strong family relationships (1) Discuss how fidelity builds trust and strengthens family and other relationships (24)
Goals JH: 20	The goal of this guide is to promote abstinence (viii)

<p>HS: 53</p>	<p>May cause individuals to be diverted from their hopes, commitments, and goals for the future if they act on the visual images and fantasies that are created by pornography. (49)</p>
<p>Long-term JH: 11 HS: 15</p>	<p>Do I sacrifice immediate pleasure for long-term benefits? (ix) long-term benefits of strong families and fidelity. (21)</p>
<p>Marry, marriage, married JH: 36 HS: 67</p>	<p>Abstain from sexual intercourse until they are ready to establish a mutually monogamous relationship within the context of marriage. (x)</p> <p>Discuss that even though a person has been sexually active before marriage, he/she can decide to abstain from further sexual intimacies until marriage. (24)</p>
<p>Parents, parent, parenting, parenthood JH: 42 HS: 154</p>	<p>Prepare students for life as responsible adults and for their potential role as parents (1)</p> <p>As young people begin to gain independence, parents and families can continue to provide valuable input (26)</p>
<p>Relationship JH: 50 HS: 56</p>	<p>Foster in students the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills that build and nurture healthy relationships. (vii)</p> <p>As people mature and marry, sexual intimacies contribute to a healthy relationship. (21)</p>
<p>Responsible JH: 41 HS: 71</p>	<p>Adolescents need to understand the responsibilities associated with parenthood and the emotional, psychological, ethical/moral/spiritual, and physical demands it makes. (41)</p> <p>The purpose of this guide is to develop within students responsible sexual behavior both in the context of</p>

	abstinence before marriage and fidelity after marriage. (8)
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Table 1: *Positive connotations and lexical cohesion of heteronormative temporality motif*

The bolded words show themes of family, abstinence, and the future. “What decisions protect my future?” encapsulates the main message of both junior high and high school resource guides. The number of times each word appears in the document is noted in the “Number of Repetitions” column; the repetition and collocation of these words construct heteronormative temporal spaces which are aligned with positive evaluative words, like in the sentence: “As people **mature and marry**, sexual intimacies contribute to a **healthy relationship**.” “Mature and marry” operate as a parallel for “healthy relationship” in this sentence, making the two phrases synonymous. Mature marriage is framed as “healthy,” a positive evaluation. Another sentence emphasizes abstinence: “Identify the **benefits** of premarital sexual **abstinence**.” “Benefits” is paired with “abstinence,” a link that happens often in both resource guides—again, positively connoted words accompany the themes of abstinence and marriage. Male and female, woman and man, girl and boy, are the only gender categories presented, reinforcing the heteronormative gender binary in the texts. We also begin to see the binary of adolescence versus adulthood, with sentences such as “**Adolescents** need to understand the **responsibilities associated with parenthood**” and “As **young people** begin to gain independence, **parents** and **families** can continue to provide **valuable** input.” Both examples suggest that adolescents and young people do not understand how to navigate decisions that accompany independence, which is knowledge that only parents, adults, possess. As we will see in the next table, adolescents are framed as lacking the wisdom to navigate decisions that belong in the future, belong with their mature selves. When not related to the concepts of abstinence, family, marriage, or heterosexuality, sexual violence and negative effects are emphasized in the resource guides, which is the second motif that appears.

<i>Repetition of words</i>	<i>Examples of collocation (words that evaluate sex act/effect or contextualize sex act/effect)</i>
Abuse JH: 74 HS: 77	Students should understand that any touching, sexual activity , or experience that makes them feel confused, threatened, scared, or uncomfortable should be discussed with or reported to someone they can trust to help. If students feel that the first person they tell is not listening or

	<p>will not help, they should report the abuse to someone else. (43) Sexual abuse can include both non-touching offenses (exhibitionism, peeping tom, obscene phone calls, sexually suggestive talk, jokes, etc.) and touching offenses (fondling, intercourse [vaginal, anal, and oral]). (43)</p>
<p>Children JH: 31 HS: 52</p>	<p>Children under the age of 6 months have been objects of rape but the majority of victims are 5 years of age or older. (32)</p> <p>Recognize the impact teen pregnancies have on quality of life, incidence of child abuse, and changes of lifestyle. (55)</p>
<p>Consequences JH: 16 HS: 17</p>	<p>Unlawful sex-related acts (rape, pornography, incest, abuse) are made to appear common and without consequence. (27)</p> <p>Discuss the consequences that may occur when adolescents are sexually intimate before marriage:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Premature demands on the physical, emotional, ethical/moral/spiritual, and social development of maturing adolescents. 2. A loss of self-esteem and self-respect, including feelings of guilt. 3. Social isolation; i.e., peer rejection. 4. Interrupted or forfeited educational opportunities. 5. Contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection and AIDS. 6. Pregnancy 7. Responsibility for financial support of a child and/or family. 8. Responsibility for emotional and physical support of a child and/or family.

	9. Stress on extended families (HS 3)
Disease JH: 15 HS: 18	These advantages [abstinence] include: Preventing sexually transmitted diseases , including HIV infection (AIDS). (21) Abstinence effectiveness: Pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases are 100% avoided. (Appendix 11)
Homosexual JH: 10 HS: 12	Close, warm friendships are normal and do not indicate a sexual lifestyle. In addition, homosexuality is not determined or indicated by one's physical appearance, style of dress, hobbies, or interests. Each of us may come in contact with homosexual individuals without ever being aware of it. (13) The following may not be taught : the advocacy of homosexuality . (xi)
Influence: JH:13 HS:10	Adolescents from environments with negative family influences sometimes choose sexual activity to meet their needs for acceptance, companionship, love, warmth, or caring without considering long-term consequences (12). Media, including television, radio, motion pictures, and printed advertisements can have a positive or negative influence on our behavior. Public service advertisements warn us of the dangers of early, frequent, and unprotected sexual practices . (13)
Pornography JH: 11 HS:18	Discuss the legal, social, and emotional implications associated with pornography, sexual abuse, incest, rape, and sexual harassment . (43) Society may provide sexually arousing input in the form of suggestive advertising, media, jokes, and pornographic materials. We have the freedom not to act or dwell on

	<p>these thoughts and to use our energies in responsible and productive ways. [Pornography] May be linked to sex crimes, sexual abuse, and anti-social behavior. (49)</p>
<p>Pregnancy JH: 38 HS: 34</p>	<p>Most teens are not psychologically prepared for pregnancy or parenthood. (41) The extended family is burdened by untimely pregnancies. (42)</p>
<p>Rape JH: 43 HS: 59</p>	<p>Rape is an act of violence and generally has little to do with sexual desire. (47) Date rape is forced, tricked, or manipulated sexual intercourse by someone the victim has dated or a boy/ girlfriend. (48)</p>

Table 2. *Collocation and repetition of negative connotations of sex*

Though characteristics of rape and sexual abuse are important to discuss with students, collocation in the above table shows us that much of the sex education language surrounding the concept of sex, whether it is the act of intercourse or an effect of it, is negative: “Discuss the **consequences** that may occur when **adolescents are sexually intimate before marriage.**” “Consequence” carries a much different connotation than “result” or “effect”; it has the weight of irresponsibility attached. Throughout the documents, sex is at times paired with abstinence and in a few sentences, paired with marriage. In the heteronormative motif, sex is associated with positive evaluative words, depicted as an absence in the present: “Positive, responsible sexual behavior will be presented in the context of abstinence before marriage and fidelity after marriage” (USOE PPT). Abstinence means no sex until marriage, and marriage is defined as an adult decision in the future, not for adolescents: “Teen marriages are generally not stable and frequently end in divorce” (USOE HS 56). Therefore, sex in the present is the rival of a successful future. When sex is not paired with marriage or abstinence, it is either defined as an act without agency, such as rape or harassment, or as adolescent premarital sex, and paired with consequences: “Recognize the impact **teen pregnancies** have on quality of life, incidence of **child abuse**, and changes of lifestyle” (USOE JH 41). Sex as act and effects is prominently displayed as negative, again and again in the education materials, opposing the sexless domain of heteronormative temporality.

The resource guides also highlight the impossibility of being a teen parent, showing that they do not fit in heteronormative temporality, or the vision of a

successful future: “Teenage women have a high probability of raising children alone—they often do not marry at all” (USOE JH 42). Teenage mothers may not be able to access marriage; they have been displaced from the traditional heterosexual time frame of marrying after adolescence and having children after marriage. Another example discusses their intellectual future: “When young teens become parents, they find it is much more difficult for them to continue their education” (USOE HS 15). A middle-class notion appears of establishing an education and then marriage, with the assumption that students have access to continued education. Many middle-class ideals are presented in the documents, such as the assumption that these adolescents do not have STIs, HIV, or children. Also, especially in the high school guide, case studies or hypothetical situations are presented for students to imagine, such as a “self-esteem thinking exercise” where students rate themselves from 1-10 on achievement and effort. In this exercise, the situations that students should envision are things like: “Playing the piano,” “using computers,” and “being happy/smiling” (USOE HS 22). Many of these activities are privileged ones, indicating the creators’ assumptions about the student demographic. In the sex education documents, heteronormative temporality is built on “middle-class logic,” as Halberstam discusses, defining its realm in opposition to a realm of adolescent sex and working-class teen parents who cannot achieve financial stability. A clear binary is established through the lexical cohesion of heteronormative temporality versus sex. Middle-class logic furthers the rhetoric of heteronormativity, which queer linguistics and CDA tools help reveal as the perceived “moral” side of the binary, opposed to the apparently depraved realm of sex outside marriage, erasing everything external to this dichotomy.

Binaries: Fractal Recursivity and Erasure

Throughout the junior high and high school documents, binaries become more and more explicit as themes emerge from *lexical cohesion*. *Repetition* and *collocation* make the language ideology become visible, revealing *fractal recursions* and *erasure*, along with *iconization*. Fractal recursions organize binaries and are complex and change in different contexts; they are “relative: dependent for part of their referential meaning on the interactional context in which they are used” (Gal as cited in Andrus 596). Ideological nuances within the layers of this binary structure are often collapsed, hidden, and ignored (Andrus 596). Gal discusses how the binary structure can be projected onto activities, spaces, identities, and any other social “objects” to further split them in two, and with further recursions, split those binaries into more and more parts (81). “Fractal thinking” can allow certain distinctions to disappear, reiterating the main binary (Gal 82). In application to the sex education materials, fractal recursions divide the material into heteronormative temporal themes that fall under “future,” and negatively connoted themes that create the category of “sex” (See Figure 2 below). The motif of heteronormativity in the data finds itself in opposition to the motif of sex; these two concepts work towards being mutually exclusive. Any distinction that may blur the separation of the two categories is de-emphasized.

For example, sex within marriage contests the main binary, so it is mentioned only twice in each resource guide.

Outside the main binary of “future” versus “sex” in the curriculum, queer identities and BIPOC and working-class populations are backgrounded, ignored. Erasure occurs “in the totalizing vision of linguistic ideology—elements that don’t fit have to be ignored or transformed” (Irvine and Gal 404). Erasure also occurs when one side of the binary is emphasized—the heteronormative category is clearly the focus in the sex education materials, relegating importance to the language and identity that forms in the curriculum, and dismissing the relevance of the other category. Irvine and Gal discuss iconization as “if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence” (403). In the sex education curriculum for Utah, heteronormative language is ascribed moral importance, and this language is iconized as an essential feature of the social group who identifies with it. Therefore, the language ideology of these documents assigns heteronormative social groups moral superiority, at the expense of marginalized identities.

Future vs. Sex

The binary of future versus sex becomes clear if we diagram the fractal recursions that spin out of the lexical patterns. Since recursions map the binaries created by discourse, this organization allows us to see the polarizing effect of heteronormative temporal visions of sex. The words in quotations are indicative examples reinforcing the binary headings, and the binary of “consensual versus date rape” is implied in the material, though lexical items do not necessarily support that category.



Figure 2: Heteronormative temporality fractal recursions

The main binary is created by the heteronormative emphasis on the absence of sex in the present to establish a future. We can see that the main binary has competing lexical phrases, such as “decision-making” versus “immediate gratification.” In the binary that spins out of “Future,” the categories of “long-term decisions” versus “short-term decisions” reiterates the main binary, repeating the same competing themes such as “responsible,” associated with long-term

decisions, versus “irresponsible,” associated with short-term decisions. The same pattern occurs in the binary that spins out of “sex.” “Consensual” versus “rape (date)” repeats the main characteristics of the main binary, with marriage and control associated with consensual sex, and unmarried sex without agency associated with rape. The implications that arise from this structure are that heteronormative timelines, such as the future, are planned, embrace longevity, and most importantly, are moral, absent of present sex. These oppose timelines of the present, which do involve premarital sex, which are unplanned, transient, and most importantly, immoral.

<u>Future</u>	vs.	<u>Sex</u>
“family”		“teen parent”
“decision-making”		“immediate gratification”
“abstinence”		“premarital sex”
“responsible”		“irresponsible”
“mature love”		“infatuation”
(planned)		(unplanned)
(longevity)		(transience)
(moral)		(immoral)

Figure 3: *Competing implications of binary structure*

Two realms are created in these three sex education materials. One realm encompasses family, heterosexuality, abstinence-until-marriage, fidelity within marriage, adulthood, and the middle-class. The other realm encompasses “homosexuality,” teen parents, immediate gratification, rape, pornography, the working class, and adolescence. Anything that exists outside these realms is backgrounded, erased, and the two realms are reduced to a simplistic battle of good versus evil. Queer identities, BIPOC, and working-class populations are erased. “Safe” sex, even safe heterosexual sex, is erased as well. Since no sex exists in the “future” side of the binary, and sex exists only as a dangerous or violent act/effect in the “sex” side, safe sex is ignored completely.

One sentence describes the act of intercourse in the materials—this is found in the high school resource guide, which emphasizes that the “biological purpose” of sex is reproduction: “the penis is inserted into the female vagina. During this act, the glans of the penis is stimulated which causes the discharge of semen at the time of ejaculation” (USOE HS 42). For students who are not familiar with medical terminology, “glans” may hold no meaning, as well as “stimulated,” which is not explained. Other than this, there is no description for intercourse that involves contraception.

The future, as emphasized by these documents, can only be built in the absence of sex in the present, so premarital sex exists in this curriculum in partnership with fear, disease and unhappiness. The naturalized nature and harmful effects of heteronormative rhetoric are revealed in these documents; in utilizing queer linguistics paired with CDA tools for this analysis, we can begin to understand the

timelines and expectations accompanying white, married, middle-class lifestyles, which cast a shadow of deficiency on non-normative actions and related identities. To understand the rhetoric of heteronormativity, we have to understand the rhetoric of absence, which queer linguistics helps us recognize as the obscured presence of marginalized people.

Conclusion

The language ideology in these three abstinence-based education documents iconizes heteronormativity as the morally “good” identity, at the expense of marginalized social groups. Denaturalizing the language and bringing attention to the way heteronormativity is constructed in these documents helps us to parse the accepted notion of heteronormativity as natural and normal. The main binary of “future versus sex” erases identities that exist outside its margins, but because the emphasis is on the morally respectable nature of heteronormative timelines, the identities that exist within the category of “sex” are also marginalized. This binary model denigrates teen parents, queer people, adolescents, rape victims, pornography users and anyone engaging in premarital sex. Aside from this, the implication is that a successful future, a successful citizen, can only be built on a sexless present. To be sexless in the present means to delay and suppress desire.

Students are encouraged to use principle-centered decision-making or “universal principles” such as honesty, responsibility, and respect: “As it relates to sexuality, principle-centered decision making reflects a future orientation versus immediate gratification” (USOE HS 63). Premarital adolescent sex is therefore a direct contradiction to principles of respect, honesty, responsibility, caring, fairness, and integrity in this education system (USOE HS10). This discourse also suggests that “homosexuality” is a direct contradiction to these principles, and that “homosexuality” is an expression of irrepressible desire. This may be the ultimate concern that underlies the emphasis on heteronormative timelines. Desire must be controlled until it can be expressed in adult marriage; any indication that it exists in the present must be relegated to a deficient social identity. For advocates of abstinence-based education, without control of desire, definitions of universal principles would be overturned, and the heteronormative world would lose its moral code.

Queer rhetorical examinations of texts that further heteronormativity are necessary, particularly when these texts are under the normative guise of morality-infused practices, such as abstinence education. As Leap discusses, in agreement with Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*, “If sexuality is a pervasive element in human experience, any form of social analysis—including linguistic inquiry—is immediately rendered defective if it overlooks the sexual dimensions of social practice” (662). Sexuality is an inescapable aspect of any rhetorical situation, but it is the pervasive and obvious *omission* of sexuality that

underlies the sex education materials, which also permeates social practice. At the intersection of queer linguistics and critical discourse analysis, we have the necessary tools to recognize the invisible, subversive, and ubiquitous nature of heteronormative rhetoric, particularly how it operates through the exclusion of non-normative and marginalized identities.

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