Not-So-Comprehensive Health Education: Teacher Attitudes toward Heteronormative Sexuality Education – Abstract

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Drawing upon queer theory, this study investigated health teachers’ interactions with the heteronormative sexuality education curriculum as prescribed by the 1988 South Carolina Comprehensive Health Education Act (SC CHEA). A survey composed of Likert-type and open-ended response items measured three constructs: the amount of preparation to teach health education, self-efficacy in teaching sexuality education, and teachers’ levels of alignment with, or rejection of, heteronormativity. A convenience sample of middle and high-school teachers in SC public schools responsible for teaching health education yielded 181 responses. Descriptive statistics of the respondents precedes non-parametric analyses of correlations between constructs and among constructs and demographic variables. A significant finding is that many educators lack extensive preparation yet feel confident in their abilities to teach students about sexuality education effectively. In addition, attitudes toward heteronormativity are varied and correlate with gender, religion, and sexuality. Overall, findings indicate the heteronormative ideas and attitudes surrounding gender and sexuality are deeply embedded within the South Carolina sexuality education curriculum.