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"I Came Because I Knew It Was Geared Towards Queer People": A Queer and Trans Youth-Led Workshop on Sexuality Education

Moni Sadri [1] **and Vanessa Oliver** [2,*]

[1] Community Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON N2L 3C5, Canada
[2] Youth and Children's Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON N2L 3C5, Canada
* Correspondence: voliver@wlu.ca

Abstract: This paper details how, in partnership with young people, community workshops centred on queer joy can offer queer and trans youth sexuality education (SE) that is relevant to their experiences, lived realities, and desires. In the data, young people discuss how tailored content, queer pedagogies, youth-centric approaches, and affirming spaces that are responsive to their questions might improve their sexuality knowledge as well as their mental health. A total of 22 youth participants from a mid-size Canadian city, the vast majority of whom identified as queer and/or trans, registered in a weekend workshop to evaluate SE video lessons created by educators enrolled in our partner organization's sexuality education training program. Through this process, young people leaned on both their expertise and experience to critically reflect on the content and pedagogies employed by the educators. Additionally, 14 youth participated in post-workshop interviews where they continued these conversations and reflected on their SE experiences. In contrast to queer and trans young people's more violent experiences in classrooms, public spaces, and political discourses, this community intervention workshop cultivated community, knowledge, power, and solidarity between and among youth participants. As they used and created memes to laugh in the face of structures and situations that attempt to erase their bodies and experiences, young people reached for a vision of sexuality education that not only includes them but centres on their desires and curiosities.

Keywords: youth; queer; transgender; sexual health; equity; interventions; community; sexuality education

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1. Introduction

Young people report that school-based sexuality education (SBSE) is less attentive to the needs of queer and trans communities, places too much focus on biology at the expense of topics like healthy relationships and pleasure, and remains focussed on cisheteronormativity (Sinclair-Palm 2023; Narushima et al. 2020; Hobaica et al. 2019; Bradford et al. 2019). Queer and trans youth are therefore seeking greater access to equitable and affirming sexuality education (SE) outside of their classrooms (Naser et al. 2022; Laverty et al. 2021; Loutzenheiser and Slovin 2018). Community-based and online SE can often be the sole points of SE access that are attentive to the needs of young queer and trans people (Hobaica et al. 2019; McInroy et al. 2019). While community-based SE is an important resource for Canadian youth, the existing research tends to focus more on SE in schools than SE in the community. For these reasons, Laverty et al. (2021) call for future SE research to explore ways to improve non-school-based sources of sexual health and relationship information. This project, The Future of Sex Ed (FoSE), is an innovative community–university partnership that pairs community SE interventions with SE research. Our community partner is

an organization in a mid-size Canadian city that provides sexual and reproductive health services; inclusive, comprehensive sexual health education; and SE resources. As part of this mandate, they piloted a 5-week training program for educators delivering SE inside classrooms and in community organizations through their Sex Educator Bootcamp (SEB) program. As their culminating assignment, SEB trainees were asked to create an SE video lesson on a topic of their choosing. These videos would then be evaluated by a group of young people who were the ages of students that SEB trainees might teach.

The youth evaluation wing became this research project, in which 22 youth participants, the vast majority of whom identified as queer and/or trans, registered in a weekend workshop to evaluate the SE video lessons. The workshop's goals were (1) for youth to evaluate the SEB lessons; (2) for young people to engage in peer-led conversations about what they want and need in SE; and (3) for participants to experience SE as delivered by our community partner. Through this process, young people leaned on both their expertise and experience to critically reflect on the content and pedagogy employed by the trainees in the SEB training program. In so doing, they discussed not only the ways in which SEB trainees were teaching sex ed, but also how they wish all sex educators would teach it. In between evaluation sessions—at the opening and close of days, on breaks, and over lunch—youth would come back together to engage in SE conversations with the professional educators from our partner organization, where they would engage with materials and educational resources provided by our partner. Over the course of two days, the youth participants created memes, discussed the video lessons, shared their own experiences of SE in school, and imparted their visions for the future of sex ed. Though queer joy was not always built into the video lessons they were evaluating, the research team tried to ensure that queer joy was the foundation for all the activities that the youth participated in, in their evaluation sessions, over lunch, and in their interactions with the professional sexuality educators on our team.

1.1. Why Memes?

A meme is "a piece of media that is repurposed to deliver a cultural, social or political expression, mainly through humor" (Benveniste 2022). In most cases, a meme is an image over which text is transposed; however, memes have evolved quickly over time to becoming more loosely defined, often described as signifiers of cultural moments or inside jokes (Miltner 2018). When the research team first came together to discuss how to make the project participatory and fun for youth participants, one of the researchers suggested incorporating memes. Both youth advisors quickly agreed this would be a good way to engage youth, particularly those who were queer and trans. Memes are a highly relevant way to engage 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in the digital age, acting as a cornerstone of queer internet culture (Bhusari 2023; DeCamp 2023). Queer memes build community using language that contains hyper-specific references, trends, and codes that are identifiably queer. While many forms of text or images can be used to engage youth, the research team collectively decided that memes were the right tool to use with queer youth.

This project originally used memes with the intent to creatively elicit reactions to specific SE scenarios. In this case, a range of popular meme images were provided to the participants, and various SE-related prompts were written out by the research team to elicit participants' reactions. For example, the prompt "when they refuse to use 'they' as a pronoun" was written as a textual prompt. Participants then chose the image that best matched how they felt about the prompt (see Figure 1). Many of the youth participants in our project were trans and had lived through that exact scenario in SE classrooms, leading to a variety of unique (and hilarious) reactions.



Figure 1. Examples of youth-generated memes.

Very quickly within the first day, the participants began creating their own meme scenarios or examples for the group to react to as well. Not only were new, relevant prompts created, but participants also started searching for their own meme images on their phones to share with their peers. Meme use throughout the workshop weekend allowed participants to interact and react in ways they wouldn't necessarily feel comfortable doing in other scenarios, such as in their classrooms. For example, some of the memes created by participants might not be considered age-appropriate in their SE curricula, even though they reflected their actual, lived experiences. In this way, participants felt they could come together and have discussions they might not normally have the opportunity to have with and among other youth like them.

The meme activities were carried out throughout the day, including at lunch when the large group came back together, and within each of the video sessions among the smaller groups. The use of memes throughout this project quickly became one of the

most memorable parts of the weekend for both the participants and the research team—a joyous, silly, and queer reminder of what magic can happen when a group of 22 youth come together to imagine a better future for SE.

1.2. Creating Queer Community for SE

A total of 14 youth participated in post-workshop interviews where they continued conversations from the workshops and reflected on their SE experiences. In this paper, we will discuss how, in partnership with young people, community workshops centred on queer joy could offer queer and trans youth SE that works in conjunction with their SBSE. In particular, young people discussed the ways in which tailored content, community-engaged pedagogies, an emphasis on youth leadership, community building, and spaces of fun created a more queer and comfortable space for their questions and conversations.

Following in the trajectory of SE theory and research that forefronts queer joy, this paper focuses on the ways in which fun, laughter, resistance, and love permeated the workshops and the interviews that followed (Wright and Falek 2024; Duran and Coloma 2023; Burkholder and Keehn 2023; Muñoz 2019; Johnson 2001). In contrast to queer and trans young people's more violent experiences in classrooms, public spaces, and political discourses, FoSE cultivated community, knowledge, power, and solidarity between and among participants. As they used and created memes to laugh in the face of structures and situations that attempt to erase their bodies and experiences, the young people in FoSE reached for a vision of sexuality education that not only includes them but centres on their desires and curiosities.

1.3. Contextualizing SE in Ontario

To understand the ways in which young people discuss their school-based sexuality education, it is important to situate this work within our local context. Ontario is Canada's largest and most diverse province. Surveys with over one thousand parents in Ontario demonstrate that 87% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that sexual health education should be provided in schools (The Canadian Press 2018). In Canada, education falls under provincial jurisdiction and the curriculum is developed and overseen by each province. The Ontario Ministry of Education releases the health and physical education curriculum, which includes the curriculum for what is called 'Human Development and Sexual Health' (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training 2019). Publicly funded elementary schools (grades 1–8) are mandated to teach this curriculum, although parents can opt to remove their children from the sections on SE. In this regard, relative to many other jurisdictions around the world, we write from the privileged position of having a standardized SE curriculum to critique in the first place. Throughout this paper, when participants comment on their SBSE experiences, they are speaking about their experiences with this curriculum. While the curriculum is attentive to the existence of queer people, there is not much in the way of further content available to teachers. Gender identity is not introduced until eighth grade, and, even then, it depends on teachers to decide what, exactly, they would like to say about it (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training 2019). The inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity (such as they are) have been politically controversial in Ontario, even causing its Conservative premier to repeal the curriculum after making an election promise to do so. The curriculum was eventually reinstated with some small changes, including moving discussions of sexual orientation to grade 5 and discussions of gender identity to grade 8 (Bialystok et al. 2020).

1.4. Caught in the Classroom

Traditional approaches to the delivery of sexuality education (SE) in schools have framed curriculum as a system to deliver knowledge from teacher to student; however,

policymakers have often failed to consider the multi-directional flows of knowledge that exist between students and teachers, which are often hugely influenced by identities and cultures but are rarely considered in curriculum delivery (Gilbert 2021, 2014; Meherali et al. 2021). SE lessons are often delivered through top-down approaches that position the teacher as expert, desexualize students (and teachers), and focus on SE as science over subjectivity (Loutzenheiser and Slovin 2018; Fields 2008). The very structure of schools, as Foucault (1980) theorized, is determined by hegemonic discourses that are intended to regulate and control, reproducing and rewarding dominant systems of power. Taking a critical approach shifts focus to the structural influences that are produced and reproduced in schools: white supremacy, settler colonialism, cisnormativity, heteronormativity, and ableism (Riggs and Bartholomaeus 2020; Loutzenheiser and Slovin 2018; Roberts et al. 2020). In schools in Ontario, then, SE is often delivered through the discourses of risk and negative outcomes. Within these conditions, Gilbert (2014) imagines schools as "caught within the contested relations between sexuality and education" (p. xii).

A large body of research illustrates the exclusions of queer and trans youth from SE curricula (Gilbert 2014, 2021; Tordoff et al. 2021; Frohard-Dourlent 2018; Naser et al. 2022). The intersections of these identities are often not considered at all or considered in ways that rely on stereotypes and generalizations rather than focusing on the racist and/or colonial systems that structure the experiences of many queer and trans youth (Love et al. 2017). Egale Canada research demonstrates that 48% of racialized youth do not know any teachers or school staff who are supportive of 2SLGBTQIA+ issues and 38% of Indigenous students state that there is very little SE for 2S youth and/or young BIPOC people (Taylor and Peter 2011). Gaps in SE also exist for youth with disabilities, newcomer youth, unhoused youth, and youth in rural and remote areas (Walters and Laverty 2022). Research that is attentive to these intersections and identities while attending to relations of power and systemic inequity in schools is necessary in building new knowledge about SE.

For trans and non-binary youth, especially, the Ontario provincial curriculum understands gender as binary and developmental trajectories as already prescribed, thus alienating, erasing, or ignoring trans bodies. These assumptions often show up in the very architecture of schools: gendered washrooms and changerooms; gym and health classes divided in two. As a result, "queer bodies, bodies that simply do not fit normative narratives, are often talked about and are shaped by knowledge—yet our bodies do not have a place within the discourse" (Valentine 2023, p. 166). The sexuality education and support needs of trans youth are rarely, if ever, discussed in the school communities of which they are a part (Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights 2020; UNESCO 2016). If discussions of trans people do arise in SE classrooms, they are often introduced under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, which can infer that trans young people's needs are largely the same as those of sexually diverse people, conflating sex, sexuality, and gender (Sinclair-Palm 2019; Taylor et al. 2020). Even then, as Loutzenheiser (2018) suggests, "LGB issues are dropped in, focused on just long enough to substantiate a politics of Otherness or a body known only through, and in, its Otherness" (p. 105). Of course, there are exceptional teachers and schools that are active and attentive in supporting and affirming queer and trans students, but, unfortunately, these are much less common, and teachers and staff must fight to maintain and sustain these ways of working (Oliver and Flicker 2024). Many teachers who are passionate about supporting queer students (and who are often queer themselves), say that they could use community-based supports to collaborate on the initiatives they are undertaking in their schools and classrooms (Flicker et al. 2020). Community models, then, could also provide positive partnership potential for teachers who are creating affirming spaces inside their schools.

1.5. Too Hot for Teacher

Though young people in Canada report wanting to receive SE in school, their teachers are often not their preferred sexual health educators (Narushima et al. 2020; Walters and Laverty 2022). One reason for this disconnect is the lack of training available for teachers and pre-service teachers (Oliver and Flicker 2024). Just because queer topics are listed in the curriculum does not mean that they are taught or even understood by teachers (Robinson et al. 2019; Flicker et al. 2020; Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights 2020). Canadian youth and their teachers have identified the ways in which teachers are often not properly equipped to deliver comprehensive SE and suggest that educators receive better support to teach the curriculum more effectively (Riggs and Bartholomaeus 2020; Walters and Laverty 2022; Oliver and Flicker 2024). Many SE teachers have expressed their frustrations with the lack of training and resources available to them, as well as the curriculum's lack of relevance to queer and trans students (Burkholder and Keehn 2023; Flicker et al. 2020; Bialystok 2019). Of course, teachers, too, are bound by the neoliberal and political agendas of governments, school boards, and administrations that may or may not defend their efforts to support queer and trans students.

Caught in this web of school rules and classroom prohibitions, and lacking sufficient or affirming sexuality education, queer and trans youth are also seeking knowledge from sources outside of schools (Naser et al. 2022; Roberts et al. 2020). More spaces that support young people's own agency and experiences are critical necessities in supplementing or providing affirming SE both outside of, and in collaboration with, schools. Community interventions can be one part of the solution to supporting school-based sexuality educators as they can be less bound by the structures and constraints that teachers and students often face in classrooms. Working together, schools and community-based SE providers can grow a wider field of opportunities for students to thrive.

1.6. Community Sexuality Education

As Gilbert (2014) asserts, "There is no single magic bullet that will eradicate homophobia and transphobia in education. No policy, intervention, program, or person is enough" (p. 95). Which is to say, young people need multiple points of entry into affirming and supportive sexuality education. Structural and systemic change is required to provide queer and trans young people the educational cultures and contexts they deserve. Schools are critical sites of SE, providing education that can reach a much larger number of young people, but they need not be the only source of SE for young people. A multifaceted approach to sexuality education moves us closer to the SE that many young people are asking for. To better support queer and trans youth, collaborative partnerships between schools and communities can be built to create the conditions for their thriving, including certification programs for educators who want to specialize in supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ youth (McInroy et al. 2019; Evans et al. 2017).

Relative to SBSE, community SE for queer and trans youth has been far less studied (McInroy et al. 2019; Evans et al. 2017). Research has demonstrated the importance of community settings for meeting the SE needs of young people, in general (Cushman 2015). An even more compelling number of studies have shown that youth, and queer and trans youth in particular, seek out trusted and affirming SE information from community organizations, which they say are effective in decreasing gender dysphoria, enhancing sexual experiences, and improving consent practices (Hobaica et al. 2019; Eisenberg et al. 2018). Likewise, LGBTQIA+ events and programming in the community enhance feelings of acceptance and support while also providing access to health services (McInroy et al. 2019). In Naser and colleagues' (2022) study, all of the LGBTQIA+ students in their focus groups who had engaged in community SE to learn about sexuality and gender gave

positive reports of those interactions, and community centres were listed as their most trusted sources of SE. Given these findings, partnerships between schools and communities have the potential to enhance SE outcomes for queer and trans youth.

Fields (2008) notes that there is a critical link between where students learn SE and what they learn there. This spatial mapping of SE is especially relevant when the terrain of sexuality education becomes more spacious and less constrained by the limitations placed on school-based educators by prescribed curricula, school policy, and the real or perceived threat of surveillance (Flicker et al. 2020). Often given a more comprehensive mandate that is based in reproductive justice, community SE organizations are freer to deliver SE in ways that are responsive to gender fluidity, pleasure, and queerness of all sorts (Naser et al. 2022). Community educators have a large number of pedagogical resources available to them, as well as deep expertise in gender and sexuality, especially when working with queer and trans young people (Loutzenheiser and Slovin 2018). Whereas classroom teachers in Ontario are more likely to be managing the learning of a heterogenous group of students with different needs, identities, and abilities, community SE can provide support by tailoring its lessons and programs to specific identities or communities (Cushman 2015). Taken together, these factors facilitate the asking of questions which students may perceive as too sexy for school or that a school-based educator may not know how (or if) to answer. Broadening our scope and working together allows a generative space for creativity, pleasure, spontaneity, and fun.

1.7. What Is the Future of Sex Education (FoSE)

When Laverty et al. (2021) proposed that, "consideration should be given to the optimal ways of supporting and training the broad range of sexual health educators working within schools and organizations", our partner organization ran a pilot program that sought to deepen educators' knowledges, pedagogies, and abilities in delivering SE to young people. Originally, the organization expected that school-based teachers of SE would be the most likely participants in the Sex Educator Bootcamp (SEB), but due to time considerations and school schedules, the enrollees in the pilot program were mostly people in the community who wanted to learn how they and their organizations could better support their clients' SE needs. From the beginning, FoSE was set up as the youth evaluation wing of the SEB; however, as the 5-week program reached its conclusion, it was clear that many of the final project video lessons mirrored the same problems that youth have long identified as weaknesses in their SE.

With our youth advisory team already in place, we wondered whether to screen the videos with the 22 mostly queer and/or trans young people who had registered in the evaluation workshop. Ultimately, our team decided that the participants would come in understanding that the videos they were evaluating were not ideal or comprehensive SE, but rather a launchpad for them to discuss what works and doesn't work in SE; what they need and don't need in SE; and what a perfect vision of SE might look like to them. Our youth advisors decided to call the project The Future of Sex Ed because they wanted to envision queer and trans futurisms—worlds in which queer and trans joy, not fear and refusal, are the drivers of sexuality education. Unbeknownst to our team, FoSE was already the name of a rather major SE initiative: the first proposed federal standards for comprehensive sexuality education in the United States (O'Quinn and Fields 2020). Though our project is much smaller in scale and scope, we stuck with the name because it represented the world we are all working toward.

In some ways, FoSE is an intervention inside an intervention. While SEB was an intervention proposed to increase the capacities of sexuality educators (the topic of a different paper), the intervention we discuss here is the one that occurred when 22 young

people came together over the course of a weekend; built bonds and a beloved community; created memes and burst out laughing; and fantasized about sex education that is very, very queer.

1.8. Queer Theories and Queer Joy

This project and this paper are framed by queer theories and, in particular, by queer joy. We think about queerness not only as an intersectional identity but also as a lens that subverts normative expectations, growing new possibilities in their place. Queer theories seek to privilege knowledges that have often been marginalized or oppressed in order to interrogate the ways in which dominant discourses act to reinscribe hegemonic positions that uphold oppressive power dynamics through patriarchal heterogender and heterosexuality (Allen and Rasmussen 2015). This necessity is of even greater consequence for queer of color theorists who insist that race and class must intersect with queer theory, which when modelled by white academics largely theorized queerness in discursive terms that ignored the lived realities of racism and classism (Johnson 2001). Queer of color theorists emphasize the need to focus on the systems of power that intersect with sexuality to create oppressive conditions such as racism, classism, nationalism, ablism, transphobia, and homophobia. This analytical framework examines how queer theories must necessarily attend to multiple social identities to understand the ways in which sexuality education, for example, is dependent on these interwoven systems of power and oppression. Political, historical, and economic systems that impede or facilitate access are thereby exposed and examined.

In this way, queer theories are both a frame of analysis and a tool for a radical openness that eschews binaries and creates space for multiplicities (Morland and Willox 2017; Allen and Rasmussen 2015; Drazenovich 2015). In the sphere of education, queer theories expose hidden curricula based in binaries and/or white supremacist heteropatriarchal logics to expand teaching and learning beyond cisgender and heterosexual positions (O'Quinn and Fields 2020; Meyer 2007; Sykes 2011). Queer theories interrogate institutional systems to demonstrate the erasure of queer and trans bodies and to expose the naturalization of the cisgender and heteronormative discourses that often lead to violence and exclusion (Tordoff et al. 2021; Bauer et al. 2009). Queer theories create a space to ask different questions around sexuality and SE, generating the possibility of hopeful solutions and multiple, intersectional ways of knowing and being.

Building on the work of Duran and Coloma (2023) and Burkholder and Keehn (2023), we understand queer joy as an essential emotion, an act of resistance, and a challenge to dominant narratives of queer and trans youth, especially those who are racialized, as always victimized and/or pathologized. We also see the indivisible link between queer joy and queer futurity for young queer and trans racialized people since, as Rodríguez (2011) reminds us, they have "never been given to queers of color, children of color, or other marginalized communities that live under the violence of state and social erasure" (333). Our queer imaginings of SE must grapple with the material concerns young people face in the here and now, while also invoking their desires for queerer futures. Owing to Muñoz's (2019) work, this research hopes to advance an unwavering belief in queer futurity, "a warm illumination of a horizon of potentiality", that is attentive to queer worldmaking steeped in both racial and reproductive justice.

When queer and trans young people are discussed in normative discourses, conversations are often accompanied by statistics on houselessness, negative mental health outcomes, or phobic violence, all of which foreground queer pain and foreclose the possibility of thriving in spite of it all (Wright et al. 2024; O'Quinn and Fields 2020). Leading from a place of queer joy does not diminish or erase the disenfranchisement that queer and

trans people continue to face but rather functions as an intervention to that single story (Muñoz 2019; Johnson 2001; Duran and Coloma 2023; Wright and Falek 2024). The richness of queer and trans lives is the fabric of our communities, and there is much to be learned from how abundant they are. As O'Quinn and Fields (2020) argue, we must simultaneously hold both "the incisive recognition of the present as constraining and violent and, second, the resolute refusal to accept those oppressive conditions as inevitable, immutable, or the limits of our imagination" (p. 183). Queer joy, too, shows us how and what to transform, highlighting queer and trans youth's refusal, desire, and resistance.

In conversation with Indigenous and Black joy (Hansen et al. 2024) and queer of color joy (Tristano 2022), the queer joy we espouse here is positioned in solidarity with, and at the intersections of, movements that envision more liveable futures outside racial capitalism and colonialism (Shuster and Westbrook 2022). Likewise, it is attentive to queeries, like those posed by Stocks (2023), about when and where queer joy becomes contested or coopted, and, equally, about which spaces are deserving of queer joy in the first place. In our project, queer joy existed in the space of our workshops and research team—admittedly, spaces that might rightfully be called trans and homonormative. When we talk about queer joy in this paper, we do so in resonance with Duran and Coloma's (2023) vision of queer joy as "an invitation to rethink research objectives, questions, and methodologies that render LGBTQ individuals as complex vibrant beings, underscore the educational and lived conditions that accept and embrace them, and prioritize our happiness, wellbeing, and the actualization of our full potential" (p. 122).

2. Materials and Methods

Our research project used a participatory, phenomenological approach to explore the SE needs of youth in a mid-size Canadian city. Phenomenology was used alongside participatory research methods in this study to support individuals in sharing their own lived experiences, needs, and hopes. Our project consisted of two parts: (1) a weekend workshop and (2) post-workshop interviews with individual youth. The process started with a hiring call for local youth aged 16–18 who were passionate about inclusive SE and interested in becoming youth advisors. Applicants were encouraged to self-identify as members of marginalized communities often overlooked in SE (if applicable) and were chosen based on lived experience, passion for social justice, and interest in the project. As a result, two youth advisors joined the research team to assist with project direction, recruitment, workshop facilitation, and knowledge mobilization among their peers. The youth advisors were workshop facilitators as well as participants in the follow-up interviews. In all, the research team consisted of five people: two university-based researchers, one sexuality educator from our partner organization, and two youth advisors.

2.1. Participants and Recruitment

Youth were recruited through social media posts, community organizations, snowball sampling (Naderifar et al. 2017), and peer-to-peer by our youth advisors. Posters and physical recruitment materials were placed in areas publicly accessible to youth in the community, such as local businesses or youth centres. All high-school aged youth (i.e., ages 14–18) were eligible to apply, and those with marginalized identities often overlooked in SBSE—members of the 2SLGBTQ+, disabled, and/or racialized communities—were particularly encouraged to apply. A total of 22 youth participants, including our 2 youth advisors, attended the weekend workshop, and 14 of those youth participated in individual post-workshop follow-up interviews.

2.2. Weekend Workshop

The 22 youth participants, the majority of which were queer and/or trans, were tasked with watching eight SE video lessons created by participants in the Sex Educator Bootcamp program over the course of two, six-hour days. Each video lasted approximately 15–30 min. The schedules for both days were primarily made by the youth advisors, with other members of the research team sharing input and ideas. The youth participants were given worksheets co-developed by the research team where they were asked to share their thoughts, feedback, and constructive criticism of each video (Appendix A). The participants were divided into two groups of ten, each led by one of our youth advisors, to ensure there was ample space and time for all participants to share their thoughts. Other members of the research team remained outside of the rooms for support if needed, allowing the youth to be together in a peer-to-peer environment. In the evaluation sessions, the youth advisors facilitated conversations that were guided by the worksheet; however, they also included open-ended questions to allow the participants to express ideas the research team may not have captured in the worksheets. The youth advisors also encouraged the participants to use memes as a method of response. Through these various response options, we hoped to cater to diverse learning styles and methods of participation. Each video evaluation session was audio-recorded with a physical recording device, and the sessions were transcribed for analysis by our youth leaders who were trained in this process. The recordings were approximately one hour per video session, which included watching the video, discussion, meme making, and debrief amongst the youth. Introductions and debrief sessions were held at the beginning and end of each day to share thoughts and feelings as a group and to build rapport among the research team and participants. Throughout each day, participants were also given the opportunity to use memes to express their thoughts or feelings on the video lessons and/or their SE experiences in a creative, fun way that supplemented the evaluation handout. At the end of each of the days, the participants were given a CAD 50 honorarium to compensate them for their time and participation.

2.3. Post-Workshop Interviews

After the weekend workshop was complete, the youth participants were asked to sign up for optional individual interviews to follow-up on their experience. In total, 14 youth participants, including both youth advisors, were interviewed by one of the researchers on the research team (Appendix B). The semi-structured interviews lasted a mean length of 35 min, and the youth participants were asked to reflect on their workshop experience as well as their own SE experiences from school and beyond. The interviews concluded with discussions about what each participant hoped to see changed or improved on for SE in the future. All interviews were recorded with consent and then transcribed by a member of the research team. The participants were compensated with CAD 50 cash or digital gift card at the end of each interview.

2.4. Demographics

This paper includes data from the 14 participants that conducted one-on-one interviews with the research team. Our interview participants came from diverse backgrounds, holding a variety of unique identities, lived experiences, and stories to tell (Table 1). Their ages ranged from 14 to 18, with the majority being 16 years of age and in grade 10 or 11. The majority of our participants (n = 11) identified as transgender, encompassing a variety of identities: trans-binary, non-binary, genderqueer, neoflux, and beyond. Half of our participants identified as queer. Three of our participants also identified as falling somewhere along the asexuality spectrum. About a third of our participants were racialized (n = 4), and most were non-religious or questioning their religion (n = 11). We use the

term "racialized" in this paper to describe those who are considered a racial minority in the Canadian context (i.e., not white), acknowledging that race is a social construct rather than a biological fact (Ahmed 2002). Just under half (n = 5) of our participants identified as having a disability, whether physical, intellectual/developmental, or both. Demographics were collected using an anonymous online questionnaire, and all answers were collected using a short-answer text box, allowing participants to self-identify.

Table 1. Participant demographics.

Demographics	Count (n = 14)	Percentage (%)
Age		
14	3	21%
15	2	14%
16	4	29%
17	3	21%
18	2	14%
Transgender		
Yes	11	79%
No	3	21%
Sexual Orientation		
Queer *	7	50%
Bisexual	1	7%
Lesbian	1	7%
Straight	3	21%
Other	3	21%
Asexual		
Yes	3	21%
No	11	79%
Race		
White/Caucasian	10	71%
Racialized	4	29%
Religion		
None or questioning	10	71%
B'hai	1	8%
Muslim	3	21%
Identify with a Disability		
Yes	5	36%
No	9	64%

* Participants were asked to self-identify in short-answer textboxes for all responses. For this question, some participants identified as queer alongside another identity (i.e., queer and bisexual); therefore, the total number may be greater than n = 14.

2.5. Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by members of the research team, namely our two youth leaders and research assistants. All potentially identifying information was anonymized, and youth participants were only referred to by their chosen pseudonym and/or initial(s) to maintain confidentiality. A data analysis was conducted using dimensional thematic analysis, a collaborative and inductive approach (Caron and Bowers 2000; Schatzman 1991). The data analysis begun by importing the anonymized transcripts into NVivo 20, a qualitative coding software. The data were then inductively coded collaboratively by the research team using the DEPICT method (Flicker and Nixon 2015). Codes were constructed using a combination of deductive and inductive approaches to capture meaning and maintain analytic power (Braun and Clarke 2021). Key themes were identified

collaboratively and then team members used NVivo software to apply and manage the codes. The coded data were then analyzed collaboratively at a retreat. To maintain the integrity of our data, we followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for building trustworthiness in qualitative research. We used member checks, thick description, and a consistent coding framework to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, often engaging in constructive conversation as a research team when discussing our data.

3. Results

The data presented here are drawn from 14 post-workshop interviews in which young people talked about how the FoSE workshops differed from, and improved upon, their previous SE experiences. They reflected on what community-based SE at FoSE meant to them and why this format brought something different to the table than their SE experiences at school. Five key themes emerged: queer content, community-engaged pedagogies, emphasis on youth leadership, community building, and spaces of fun.

3.1. Queer Content

Much like the queer and trans participants in the research cited above, the young people in the FoSE project criticized the lack of queer and trans content they had received in previous SE. Eleven of the fourteen interviewees identify as trans, and all but one identifies under the broadly defined queer umbrella. When asked about SE at the workshops, the participants were clear that sustained conversations about queer and trans bodies and experiences, as opposed to brief or non-existent mentions, were important to their learning at FoSE. When asked about the difference between the SE they experienced at FoSE in comparison to other SE in their lives, one participant said:

> "They weren't straight couples. Literally, they include more things other than straight. You go to like gay events like this, and they actually teach you that stuff" ("A").

The heteronormativity that youth had experienced in other SE spaces was not present at FoSE. This participant highlights the fact that community-led events were their sole source of information on queer bodies. They also refer to FoSE as a "gay event", demonstrating the ways in which spaces that are tailored to queer and trans youth are easily identifiable as places were queer youth can learn about SE that speaks to their needs and desires.

Participants also talked about cisnormativity and the exclusion of trans bodies at school. Several youth mentioned that their SE teachers were still dividing SE classes based on gender binaries:

> "The most I remember from my previous school is this very brief and awkward lesson about consent. It was very gendered as well. They would separate the, and I put this in quotations, you can't see, but "boys" and "girls". So, I never really had any positive experiences with sex ed up until the workshop" ("Ar").

This young trans person's SBSE experiences are deeply cisnormative and exclusionary. Not only do trans kids experience erasure from the provincial curriculum, but they also face subtle and overt forms of erasure in the normative structures and expectations of their school environments. In contrast, the spaces nurtured at FoSE understood, anticipated, and embraced gender fluidity. Young trans and non-binary people could engage with an adult mentor who shared their identities and empathized with their experiences. Likewise, they were surrounded by other trans and non-binary youth who affirmed their identities, shared their frustrations, and created opportunities to share in trans joy.

Participants also experienced multiple points of entry into learning SE at the workshops. They watched and critiqued video lessons, engaged in peer-to-peer learning, chatted with the community-trained sex educators on the project team, and picked up printed educational materials from our partner organization that were placed around the workshop spaces.

> "I got a bunch of booklets from gay events and [community partner] about all this stuff. And I was like, damn, there's so much shit I don't know" ("E").

These opportunities for both passive and active learning catered to different learning styles and personalities. Moreover, as this young person says, the availability of quality and trustworthy SE information can uncover gaps in young people's knowledge, which they can then ask further questions about in the workshop.

Lastly, youth shared their frustrations with SE teachers who fail to learn about or engage with queer and trans SE. Having seen affirming examples modelled at FoSE, participants shared how low their expectations are for SE:

> "I just want the facts from someone who is an ally to the LGBTQ community. And knows about it. At least like a basic understanding. At least they know what the letters mean. I want way more than that, but the bar is fully on the ground" ("kp").

Another participant spoke about the importance of learning from educators who share their identities and experiences. Echoing Bradford et al.'s (2019) findings, young people at FoSE also discussed the importance of what information they receive, but, importantly, about *who* they receive that information from:

> "Especially if you're queer because that's something that people don't understand outside of like your own community. And they just, whenever it comes to queer sex and relationships and stuff, everyone says, "Oh, it's none of my business. Oh, like I'm happy for you. Good. I support you. But also, don't talk to me about it" ("Claire").

This participant speaks to their experience of an SE culture based on inclusion and tolerance rather than affirmation and belonging. Whereas FoSE provided a model for SE that forefronts queer and trans joy, as well as queer and trans educators, education in schools, in this young person's view, tends toward superficial and patronizing approaches that accept the existence of queer and trans youth but cannot attend to their experiences, needs, and questions in the way that community models tailored to queer and trans youth can. Of course, queer and trans teachers also exist in schools, participants in this research had just not had the opportunity to learn SE from them.

3.2. Community-Engaged Pedagogies

Learning in community also provides advantages in terms of how and what is taught to learners. FoSE participants preferred learning in and with community in a relaxed setting with other young people who shared their identities. Community pedagogies lend themselves to fluid conversations and unstructured learning. As one participant says,

> "I feel like this, it was more community based, and you're all kind of sitting at a table. It's not super stressful and it's not like for marks or anything. There's nothing like the feeling of learning as a community because you can kind of realize that everyone has the same questions and it's not embarrassing to have those questions. Having safe and good sex doesn't just come magically natural to everyone. I think learning in like groups, like we did, was really good" ("Y").

Or, more pointedly, as this participant says about their expectations of SE,

> "I thought it would just be like a bunch of adults just screaming. Because that's how it usually is" ("A").

These two quotes speak to young people's experiences of SE. Being tested or quizzed on SE puts pressure on students to memorize facts rather than have organic conversations about their curiosities. The top-down nature of normative SE positions the adult in a position of authority while the young people in the room are required to follow the hegemonic rules and norms dictated to them. The structure of FoSE included time and opportunity to have conversations that unfold based on shared interests. These conversations were often unruly, characterized by excited voices, laughter, and a lack of inhibition in terms of subject matter. Shared and collaborative community guidelines were generated at the outset of the workshop and learners committed to making the safest space possible for one another:

> Well, everyone was really sweet. It was a really safe kind of space. It didn't feel like it was super clinical or anything like that. It was just fun. I think it really felt like more of relaxed, light-hearted experience, rather than, I don't know, like a science experiment ("C.B").

As this participant shares, learning at FoSE was not focused on the science of reproduction or detailed diagrams of human anatomy. Rather, the flexible guidelines meant that topics and questions emerged as they resonated with the conversation at hand. The youth-led experience meant that young people guided the content of the conversations while educators tried to be nimble when new topics materialized.

The community sex educators from our partner organization arrived equipped with their interactive toys, safe sex supplies, and youth-friendly information, which helped make the atmosphere fun and engaging. Their pedagogies included demonstrations and activities that actively involved young people in both teaching and learning.

> "First things first it was a very inclusive space. It was completely different from what I've been used to. There was just so much information in it that I had no idea about previously, but it was also really easy to follow along for. It was a very fun, chill space. It was very informative. There were a lot of resources and supplies that were shared. I remember the little plushies or the dolls of everything. It was just very interactive and a very comforting space" ("T.L").

> "I loved how like excited and happy [the community sexuality educator] seemed to be there. She had her little like vagina plushie which was so fun. I think having something to engage the audience that you're talking to, like the plushie or like a diary, whatever you're doing, could be fun. Also, the way they're delivering it. I feel like makes a big difference between a good and not so good sex educator I feel like if your delivery is confident and, you know, excited to talk about sex ed. I feel like it's a lot different because it takes that shame and uncomfortable feeling from it, which she definitely did" ("Y").

These examples demonstrate the ways in which community educators can explore topics in SE with confidence and clarity. Unlike SE environments that are guided by set curriculum and policies, community spaces have the potential to make SE more engaging and fun. Strength-based pedagogies allow community educators to lead from sex-positive and pleasure-informed approaches that provide a reprieve from tired discourses of risk and shame.

3.3. Youth Leadership

The directions of the larger FoSE project were determined in partnership with two youth advisors who were hired to provide their expertise. Each video evaluation session at the workshops was led by one of the two youth advisors. As such, the conversations

that unfolded in the evaluations were guided by queer and/or trans peers with whom participants felt comfortable. This shift in power dynamics differs greatly from the adult-led SE experiences to which young people are accustomed. As one of the youth leaders shares,

> "It was perfect. The first day it was kind of like people were raising their hands to talk and I was like the teacher. Like saying like "yes, you can talk now" or "you go". But on the second day it was literally just a conversation and it was so great. I loved it" ("kp").

Likewise, participants echoed the benefits of a peer-to-peer model that emphasized the expertise that young people hold on their own experiences, needs, and desires:

> "I really enjoyed having [youth leader] as a leader because he listened a lot and led the conversation to a meaningful and productive place. And everyone felt comfortable to share their opinions. It was very respectful" ("Claire").

Participants felt encouraged to share their expertise, and they had a great deal to say about SE as they evaluated the content of lessons and their delivery:

> "There were the feedback sheets that we had. They were really detailed. There were lots of opportunities to kind of give our opinions on a bunch of different stuff. We could provide constructive criticism, obviously, that was part of it. Things we liked, didn't like. So it was very detailed" ("Ar").

Even when the video lessons replicated some of the same pitfalls youth identified in normative SE, participants homed in on opportunities to talk about shaping a future of sexuality education that resonated with their lives and identities:

> "And [one lesson] was like, "Oh my god. People are about to fall asleep, I swear". So, I think it's seeing the different ways people went about presenting this information also shows kind of like what is lacking and what we are looking for and craving in our sex education. [. . .] We talked about it in a progressive way where we're like, this is what needs to happen to change it. This is what I would like to see. I thought that was my favorite part. Just getting able to being able to talk about what it could be" ("Claire").

Valuing young people as experts in their own experience provided a platform for them to share their concerns, to voice their opinions, and to envision their queer ideals. As this participant says,

> "I'm just going to say I don't really mind contributing because I do have some thoughts about the sex education I've had. And it kind of sucks. So, I'll do anything I can do to contribute to it being better" ("L.I.M").

3.4. Community Building

One the most rewarding parts of FoSE was witnessing the creation of a supportive, affirming, and loving community. Over the course of the weekend, young people traded social media contacts, became friends, and recognized themselves in one another. Intergenerational community was also created between the team's leadership and the participants, providing critical opportunities for mentorship between and among queer and trans folks. Some young people registered for FoSE because they were looking for opportunities to be in community with other queer and trans people:

> "I want to get more into the community, and I thought that would be a really good way to do it. And, also, sex ed is such like a complicated topic. Like a lot of people don't want to talk about it, so I thought this was perfect" ("T.L").

> "We're all queer youth. And that's why I came because I knew that it was geared towards queer people. And I was like, okay, maybe I'll find like a little bit of community here" ("Claire").

Given the current political conditions under which queer and trans youth are living, finding spaces of shared joy and shared frustration can be a kind of balm to the harsh realities of transphobic and homophobic discourses. An escape from those harmful conditions, FoSE was a place to talk about queerness, pleasure, and desire in affirming and generative ways:

> "I wanted to do the weekend because I wanted to meet new people and talk about [sex ed], because I actually have opinions on all that kind of stuff. About how we've learned so little about like the diverse part of sex education. And we don't really learn about the good parts of sex" ("L.I.M").

> "I also think that people there were nice too. And it was nice to have that [queer] community that agree on the same things and want to learn more about them. I would say not having any shame around conversations about sex or pleasure. It would probably be that everyone's encouraged to kind of get to know their bodies and not feel ashamed about asking questions and definitely having, like, open community conversations about sex and not have it be so hush hush" ("C.B").

Building friendships with other queer and trans young people is itself a form of resistance against structural oppression and state violence. To think queerly about the multiplicity of ways to live and love in the world, and to choose family with which to build those worlds, is part of the magic of being queer. As young people grew their connections at FoSE, it was clear that what might previously have been experienced as lacking was instead starting to become richness and complexity:

> "Now the friends that I have are a part of the queer community so the discussion around gay sex and stuff is more open because we're actually people who are going to engage in that and experience it. Everything that I've felt is lacking [at school] kind of revolves around my gender and sexual identity" ("Claire").

3.5. Fun

As is evidenced throughout these data, queer and trans joy permeated everyone's experiences at FoSE. Although at times the topics and conversations were heavy, participants were drawn back to laughter, community, and fun. As one youth leader discusses, one of the experiences that was most fun was being able to talk about sexuality in ways that might not be acceptable in a school setting:

> "I liked presenting to everyone, like being able to talk about sex ed and say things that I wouldn't be able to say at school. That was fun" ("T.L").

Even when participants felt anxiety or trepidation when they registered for FoSE, they quickly realized that this format for SE was different from what they were accustomed to:

> "Honestly, it was just a really fun experience overall. Like, I'd been a little nervous going into it because I wasn't quite sure what I was getting myself into, but it was a really cool thing to go to and I'm really glad that I went" ("Iku").

FoSE fostered an environment where everyone could be unapologetically themselves and in which people were met where they were at without any expectations. This ethic of care was part of what allowed participants to be their full selves and to just have fun.

One of the activities that proved to be the most fun was using memes to comment on, critique, and react to the highs and lows of sexuality education and to the realities, of sex,

gender, and sexuality more broadly. Participants paired memes (images) with text prompts written to elicit their reactions (see Figure 1). Originally, the memes and prompts were provided by the FoSE research team, but as the activity progressed, young people started adding their own memes and co-creating their own prompts. Searching on their phones and thinking up funny or ridiculous, mostly very queer, situations, participants sparked queer joy in their shared experiences and contagious laughter:

> "We had a lot of fun with the memes. They were just really fun to mess around with. They did serve their purpose really well and we had lots of fun. We got a chance to write up our own situations as well. I feel like that was going really well. I almost didn't want that to end" ("Ar").

> "It was fun. It was it's so fun to put your own prompts because honestly some crazy shit happens when you don't have a good sex education and everyone's just flopping around not knowing what to do" ("Y").

> "I thought that was really fun. I had a blast. I thought the way that people were coming up with their own scenarios was really funny. I think that was something that was fun that brought us all together because we were split up into two groups, but we came together at lunch and we just felt like we were there for the same thing and the same reasons. And so it felt good to see everyone interact and mingle and stuff. And I just thought that it was really fun" ("Claire").

As is illustrated in these participants' experiences, playing with memes was both youth-engaged, inciting, and entertaining. In many cases, memes and laughter were used subversively to disrupt the racist, ableist, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic conditions that continue to harm them. Since most of the scenarios created were specific to queer and trans experiences, the connections and synergies people found in their laughter were at once healing, hilarious, subversive, and prolific.

4. Discussion

4.1. Unapologetically Queer

O'Quinn and Fields (2020) pose the question: "What queer models and metaphors of sexuality and sexuality education might we conjure as we engage critically with progressive responses to stratified power in and access to education?" (p. 176). Of course, there is no singular response to this question, but we offer FoSE as one such model of queer conjuring. Providing community-partnered solutions to the challenges presented by SBSE in Ontario adds another option to the resources available to young people. Whether or not it is attended to, queerness is always and already manifest in the spaces of SE. Queerness in SE shows up in ways that are unexpected, unruly, and unpredictable (Burkholder and Keehn 2023; Roberts and Labuski 2023; Gilbert 2014). As Gilbert (2014) maintains, "queerness does not answer in the place where it is called" (p. 95). This was certainly the case in FoSE; however, the flexibility of community-based learning is more agile and responsive to surprises, redirections, and non-sequiturs. With adequate time, community-based SE can better address the myriad ways that queerness and transness appear, at least in the SE questions and conversations of 22 young people. The learning that happened at FoSE was multi-directional, intergenerational, and largely informal. Without a formalized curriculum, queerness and its questions were introduced by participants, researchers, community sexuality educators, media, memes, and our everyday lived experiences. Since the space is already queer by design, young people entered the FoSE workshops with a sense that the boundaries of what could be known and learned were more expansive than they might be in other spaces and places (Loutzenheiser and Slovin 2018).

The stories trans and queer youth hear have an impact on how see themselves and their futures. When the narratives they hear about queer and trans people are defined by risks, deficits, and pathologization, the horizon of what is possible for their lives shrinks (Sinclair-Palm and Gilbert 2018). FoSE's mandate was to become a library for queer and trans narratives and counternarratives—space for young people's own stories and the stories of their elders. In those stories reside the multiplicity of possibilities for joy within the struggle and resistance beyond the repression. Sinclair-Palm and Gilbert (2018) remind us to "stay open to young people's exploration of gender and desire, emergent vocabularies for identity, and the ordinary challenges and pleasures that trans youth experience as part of growing up through adolescence" (p. 323). FoSE takes this openness seriously, and this project certainly taught the older queer and trans people on the team a lot about staying relevant, the evolution of language, and the short shelf-life of memes. We all tried to release the shame and judgement we learn by social osmosis and, instead, focus on stories of pride, desire, and constant becoming.

4.2. Queerly Community

Community building in spaces of learning requires an environment where learners feel heard, seen, and connected to one another (Hooks 1994). For us, that project necessitated the abolition (at least in our space) of normative discourses about development, adolescence, and puberty. For many of the participants in FoSE, their gender identities destabilize hegemonic norms and cultivate transformational alternatives. In this queering of time and trajectory, young people found a community of people who understood the power of undoing the status quo of cisnormative lessons on puberty, reproduction, consent, and desire (O'Quinn and Fields 2020; Halberstam 2005). Perhaps most powerfully, this shared understanding opened up the possibility for trans and non-binary people to just "be" at FoSE (Riggs and Bartholomaeus 2020). No one had to explain or justify their identities, rather they could just relax into these shared understandings, which inspired conversations that begin from completely different places than those at school.

4.3. Queer Youth Leadership

Throughout the workshops and interviews, young people consistently critiqued the hierarchy of expertise and the presumed authority of adults in SE. These power dynamics reinforce the supremacy of adults' unquestioned knowledge and position young people as empty of knowledge or experience of their own bodies and desires (O'Quinn and Fields 2020). On the contrary, young people understand their own sexual subjectivities and are quick to underscore how out of touch most adults are with young people's lived experiences. As one participant says, "they're too far removed from being this age that they completely forget what it was like to be our age" ("Claire"). FoSE's goal was to platform young people as experts on their own bodies and experiences—to understand them as sexual subjects (Tolman 2012). FoSE team members of all ages made conscious efforts to try to level the hierarchies and create equity between and among one another. Peer-to-peer education was a key piece of this effort. Because of the leadership from young people themselves, participants felt more at ease and more like partners in co-creating knowledge. These efforts are responsive to a large body of scholarship in critical youth studies that calls for young people's advocacy and collective action. Young people want to centre their own voices on decisions that are made about their health and education (Native Youth Sexual Health Network 2021; Bradford et al. 2019; Frohard-Dourlent 2018).

4.4. Queer Joy

In FoSE and many other participatory projects with young people, youth lament that, unlike sex itself, SE is rarely fun or pleasurable (Kolenz and Branfman 2019; Allen

2007; Fine and McClelland 2023). The pedagogies of queer joy interrupt this narrative by remaining attentive to the spaces and places in SE where queer joy resides and thrives: "reciprocity, play, and creativity" (Wright and Falek 2024). Using memes as a methodology engendered much laughter and became a game that disrupted pathologizing narratives and turned the gaze back on oppressive systems. Memes also offered an alternative way to participate in the critique and evaluation of SE. Participants who were initially shy to speak up in the group setting felt more comfortable writing prompts or searching for memes on their phones. Topics that are sometimes stigmatized, invisiblized, or made taboo at school became fertile ground for conversations and queeries. Thinking about sex and sexuality using memes was fun, inspired teachable moments, and sparked queer and trans joy. In their work, Kolenz and Branfman (2019) discuss how laughing together models mutual pleasure, reduces power differentials, redirects discomfort, and deconstructs systems of power. They argue that people "who inhabit minority identit[ies] initiate laughter and aim it at the oppressions that structure their identities" (p. 575). As part of a liberation pedagogy agenda, fun and laughter are instrumental in building community and reclaiming power. Queer joy was palpable as queer and trans youth played with puppets, laughed together, cuddled, and shared eyerolls of recognition at tired cliches. Queer joy is pleasure, and in that pleasure, it upends hegemonic assumptions about bodies; developmental logics; and, indeed, the purpose and function of sexuality education. In its original definition, gay is an adjective that means cheerful and carefree (Oxford Dictionary 2024). Though it might be redundant to say at this point, FoSE was super gay.

4.5. Limitations

The youth recruited for this project were largely, though not exclusively, recruited through local high-school GSAs and 2SLGBTQIA+ community organizations. They are a self-selecting group of young people who had the interest and motivation to spend the weekend talking about sexuality education. Most participants already engaged with community providers of SE. FoSE also took place in a mid-sized Canadian city that is home to our community partner organization. Public transportation is reasonably accessible to young people, so travelling to the workshops or to 2SLGBTIA+ community organizations is not as difficult as it would be for young people living in rural or remote areas. For this reason, exploring online workshop options would be beneficial. Young people were also compensated for their participation in FoSE. Without this additional incentive, it is unlikely that the workshops would have been so well attended.

5. Conclusions

The Future of the Future of Sex Ed

After concluding the workshops and interviews, our data show us that the logical next step for this project would be to create and implement a trans and queer youth-affirming SE curriculum that could be used for community-based or school-partnered SE across regions. Although they learned a lot at the workshops, many of the youth were hoping for video lessons that delivered the same tone and information that they were receiving from our community partner at the workshops. There was a clear appetite for more programming that centred queer and trans SE. We would also like to extend these queerly joyful community building opportunities to youth beyond our city. This research in rural and remote places would inevitably look very different.

In the queer future of sexuality education envisioned by FoSE, young people are agentic subjects who are equipped with the knowledge to make the best and most informed choices possible for themselves and their partners. SE is created and adapted in ways that are youth-led and youth-centric, informed not by a curriculum set by policymakers

bound by normative ideas and beholden to political ideologies, but driven instead by the needs and desires of young people themselves. In the future of sexuality education their identities and social locations are considered, and their opportunities are not limited by the systems and structures that now seek to oppress them. Queer and trans joy are infused not just into SE but also into lives lived to their fullest and most fabulous potential. Gender affirming care is not the exception but the standard. Gender and sexual fluidity are built into the fabric of our society. These ideas do not have to be utopian. The future of sex ed can start now.

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Appendix A

The Future of Sex Ed Evaluation Rubric
Your name: Video number:
Use this page for notes, comments, doodles, memes, song lyrics, anything you want!

Content
How familiar were you about this lesson's topic before watching? (circle one)
Not at all *Heard about it* *Learned about it* *Know a little* *Very familiar*
How much did you learn from this lesson? (circle one)
Nothing *A little* *Some* *A lot*
Do you think the content could have done a better job to make you and your peers feel included, yes or no? Why or why not?
Do you feel the content of this lesson is useful for you now in the future (e.g., providing you options, resources, services, programs, skills, etc.), yes or no? Why or why not?
Feelings of Support
Did this lesson make you feel less or more of the following feelings (circle one):
Sex positive: *Way less* *Less* *Same* *More* *Way more*
Seen/understood: *Way less* *Less* *Same* *More* *Way more*

Supported/validated: *Way less* *Less* *Same* *More* *Way more*
Scared: *Way less* *Less* *Same* *More* *Way more*
Embarrassed/ashamed: *Way less* *Less* *Same* *More* *Way more*
Motivated to do something healthier: *Way less* *Less* *Same* *More* *Way more*
Did this lesson impact your worries or anxiety on the topic less or more (circle one): *Way less* *Less* *Same* *More* *Way more*
Why?
Facilitation Skills
How engaging was the teacher?
Not at all *A little bit* *Somewhat* *Very*
What was engaging about the way they taught?

What is one thing they could have improved on?
What was your favourite part of their teaching/teaching style?
Were the visuals helpful and engaging? (i.e., slides, props, body language, hand gestures, etc.)
Did this lesson make you feel empowered to make your own decisions or take action on the topic? Why or why not?

Appendix B

FoSE Interview Guide

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and your previous sex ed experiences.
2. Why did you decide to do the *Future of Sex Ed* workshops?
3. What were some of the highlights you remember from that weekend?
   a. What did you learn?
   b. What did you wish to see more of?
4. What were some of the things that stood out to you from the video lessons you liked?
5. What were some of the things that stood out to you from the lessons you didn't like?
6. The lessons you watched throughout that weekend were the final projects of adults taking the sexual education bootcamp program at [partner organization]. Now that you've watched them, do you think this program did a good job?
7. What did you think of the use of memes throughout the weekend?
8. What is missing in the sex education you've had so far?
9. What would you like to see change about sex ed?
10. What do you think are the three most important topics to include in sex education?
11. What makes a sex educator a good sex educator?
12. What do you think is the most effective way for young people to get good sex education (i.e., online, in the community, at school, from friends, all the above) and why?

13. How can sex ed be more reflective of your everyday curiosities?
14. In your perfect world, what does the future of sex ed look like?
15. Is there anything else you'd like to add or talk about that we haven't already covered?

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