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**THE PROFESSION FEMINISM LEFT BEHIND:
HETEROSEXISM IN SCHOOLING AND THE
TEACHING PROFESSION**

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While teaching in the U.S. has often been described as a feminized profession, it is not perceived as having a transnational feminist perspective, and arguably may harbor some of the most firmly rooted notions of heterosexism of any professional group (Heymann & Cassola, 2012). An analysis of the conditions of heterosexist domination in the teaching profession, the unequal gender balance among U.S. teachers, and the socialization of children through the modeling of school setting and curriculum are important considerations in understanding the scope of transnational heterosexism. Stark conflicts exist between *feminized* and *feminist* considerations for both female and male educators who either teach children or are engaged in research about learning. These conflicts have been created by the interrelationship of several strands of traditional roles and assumptions related to public schools and teaching.

Recent research studies in the areas of gender inequity, power and institutional change in schooling indicate a need to examine the deep structures of educational institutions, and the assumptions related to access and achievement for all individuals (Fenstermaker, 2011; Fenstermaker & West, 2002). Similarly, research has linked multicultural feminist perspectives with the broader issues of equitable educational policies, transnational politics and gender dynamics (Mohanty, 2003; Naples & Desai, 2002; Sohat, 1999). For the purposes of this essay, heterosexism is defined as an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and

stigmatises any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community (c.f. Herek, 2000). Using the term *heterosexism* highlights the parallels between antigay sentiment and other forms of prejudice, such as racism, anti-Semitism, and sexism. Like institutional racism and sexism, heterosexism pervades societal customs and institutions, and refers to societal-level ideologies and patterns of institutionalized oppression of non-heterosexual people (Naples & Desai, 2002). The examination of the entire breadth of interpersonal, social, ethnic, institutional and cultural factors at work to affect heterosexist attitudes in schooling are not accomplished in this essay. Rather, the focus is on an intractable set of attitudes and practices that must be addressed to broaden the considerations of sexuality in the field of education.

The goal of this essay is to describe some of the historic institutional causes for the lack of forward momentum in gender understanding taught in U.S. public schools, especially linked to heterosexist perspectives in and of the teaching profession, but also extending into the issues of curriculum and multiple contemporary social concerns in the school setting, such as student bullying and sexual harassment. Such connections are important to identifying the means to overcome heterosexist predomination, not only in schooling, but as it both reflects, and is capable of changing public perceptions.

Heterosexist Assumptions and the Teaching Profession

Normal School History

The history and training of teachers in 19th Century America provides the backdrop for current perspectives of both the teaching profession and public school mores. *Normal Schools* in nomenclature and design were schools-as-laboratories created to train teachers, to provide norms of teacher deportment, to address student development, and to accomplish the hidden curriculum of social sorting (Brophy & Good, 1973a; Corcoran, Evans &

Schwab, 2004). The nomenclature was used worldwide, and is still in use. For instance China's Beijing Normal University, like most U.S. institutions, has been subsumed into comprehensive colleges and state universities, yet retains its original teacher-training referent. Normal Schools may seem an odd or unfortunate choice of terms when considering the current status of public schools and the historic treatment of sexuality in educational settings for children. While *inclusivity* has come to be a major philosophic and operational assumption in schooling, heterosexist views woven into the fabric of the professional and social settings of schools has prohibited true inclusivity, except in some exceptional cases (c.f., McGarry, 2006).

There is no more complex set of gender restrictions than those which have persisted in the profession generated out of normal schools. Teachers are viewed as role models, and often are stereotyped as a profession limited to nurturing child behaviors rather than intellectual goals (Clark, 2000). The public school teaching profession was feminized during the 19th century, relegated in large percentage to single women--commonly referred to as spinsters in documents of the time--or to men who were considered "bookish" or unable to procure a higher teaching assignment in universities (Goodson, 2008, p. 87). Women who taught were forced to give up their jobs permanently if they married. Even after it became acceptable for married women to teach, it was not until the late 1980s that all women teachers were permitted to continue to work during pregnancy (Gabriel & Smithson, 1990). The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 resolved protests of the 1950s and 1960s to prohibit women from working based on the idea that "performance of maternal functions" made women inherently incapable of the same work that men did (Corcoran, Evans & Schwab, 2004, p.180). In the early 1970s, the rights of pregnant schoolteachers were called into question; many were forced to take unpaid maternity leaves early in the pregnancy. This was based on assumptions that it was "potentially dangerous for the mother and child, that the woman

teacher might not be able to focus on teaching, and that students *would be distracted by the visible signs of pregnancy*" (author's emphasis) (Fischman, 2000). Such heterosexist provincialism has often marked attitudes in U.S. schools, reflecting a society that attempted to create a nominally sex-free environment rather than to include sexuality as part of children's instruction.

Central to the image and role socialization of female teachers which evolved in the 19th and early 20th century was the assumption of denied sexuality. Teaching young children was viewed as Madonna-like nurturing, or shrew-like cajoling, rendering unlikely any male participation in that activity (Williams, 1993). An elementary teacher was ideally a virginal woman, who had no other life responsibility than her students' learning. She prescribed to Victorian views which promoted the "Cult of Domesticity" that assigned women a central, if publicly passive role in the family (Brophy & Good, 1973b). Women's identity was wife and mother, keeper of the household, guardian of the moral purity of her family. Schools reflected this central assumption and the prevailing social norms of the time, where solely heterosexist relationships were recognized, and male predominance was assumed (Gabriel & Smithson, 1990).

Women teachers were to prepare children to assume the roles assigned them. These roles were promoted in the content of the curriculum, in gender-proscribed assumptions about their educational aspirations, and in the image they were provided by almost exclusively female instructors. Only exceptionally brave men--or those who had no other alternatives--would apply for the duty of working with young children. Male teachers were employed at higher levels of education, their duty to promote rigor in the disciplines and to direct the educational enterprise (Sargent, 2001). Separate images of male and female teachers persisted, and the disproportionate gender balance of the teacher workforce prevailed through economic and social change which brought about great shifts in almost every other occupational category in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Feminization of Public School Teaching

The roots of a number of issues in education--teachers' earning power, the feminization and subsequent public devaluing of the profession, and heterosexist assumptions--are deep. They can be traced to opinions expressed clearly in an early Massachusetts school policy, which stated: "God seems to have made woman peculiarly suited to guide and develop the infant mind, and it seems...very poor policy to pay a man 20 or 22 dollars a month, for teaching children the ABCs, when a female could do the work more successfully at one third of the price." (Littleton School Committee, Littleton, Massachusetts, 1849, cited in Corcoran et al., 2004, p. 47).

Economic and social conditions created the need for women to enter the profession, then when economic forces were no longer a hindrance, the social system of the school restricted the entry of men into the solidly middle class and feminized profession of elementary teaching (Sargent, 2002). The higher the school grade, the more male-predominant was its teaching staff. In post World War II America, women were discouraged from any job in which men could be employed; they were systematically replaced in teaching upper grades, especially in the science and math disciplines (Skelton, 2003). This movement firmly established women--and teachers-- as low-paid or merely a second wage-earner in the economy. The profession was devalued because teachers didn't receive a competitive post-war wage (Goodson, 2008). Despite the emergence of unions and the successful drive for equitable salaries in all categories, and despite the establishment of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers as powerful lobbies, the teaching profession retained its public persona as a low-paying, and therefore low prestige occupation (Williams, 1995).

Economic and social events over two centuries created a need for women to populate the teaching profession, and there was wide social acceptance for women as ideal nurturers for children in school as they were at home. When economic forces stabilized after each of two world wars, the social system of the school and the conviction that women were the ideal teachers for young children prevented the entry of men into a stable, middle-class profession (Fischman, 2000). By the time social stigmas were somewhat removed from males entering feminized professions, the role socialization for teachers-as-female was so firmly rooted it has not changed in over 90 years (Benton, 2005; Drudy, Martin, Woods, & O'Flynn, 2005). Gradually through mid-20th century, women teachers eventually gained equal pay, pensions and tenure, and became principals and (rarely) superintendents. To the present day, men still dominate administration, despite declining numbers of men in the teaching workforce. Male educators in early 20th century labeled it "The Woman Peril," making dire prophecies about the emasculating effects of women teachers on the school system (Sargent, 2001). It was unclear whether those effects applied to young boys and to the male members of the school staff, but well into the 21st century, lasting effects are reflected in heterosexist public attitudes about teaching (Best & Benton, 2010).

The teaching workforce has maintained both a feminized and heterosexual bias, with an uncomfortably recent history of persecution for those identified as gay in the teaching workforce (Drudy et al., 2005). The assumption about males working with young children, and their motives for entering the profession have been described as, "weird, weak, or wounded" (Best & Benton, 2010). This attitude may be directly linked to previous attitudes about the emasculating of males by females who tried to assume more responsibility and power in schools (Brophy & Good, 1973b). This is a particularly Americanized perspective on gender and teaching. Other post-industrial nations have evolved a more acceptant view of the role of men in children's lives. Indeed, those school systems which are most lauded in the world have balanced

gender participation in teaching, and much more liberal and honorable views of the teaching profession (Sargent, 2001).

It is impossible for children to have a balanced view of learning without the presence of other-gendered individuals in their school lives. Although a unionized teacher workforce and social progress over the last half of the 20th century produced legal inclusion for a wider population with varied gender roles, the representation of those roles in schools has not changed. Men, regardless of sexual orientation, are marginally present in U.S. schools (Sargent, 2001). Statistically, the presence of men interacting with children across the span of public school grades has decreased over the past two decades (Cunningham, & Watson, 2002; Drudy et al., 2005). Elementary teaching is ninety percent female in the U.S., compared to a more even distribution by gender in other countries (Brophy, & Good, 1973b). The balanced representation of genders appears to be a related factor in defining which school systems thrive. Internationally, those countries most often cited as high-achieving have an equal proportion of male and female teachers across age groups, and gender orientation is not cited as problematic in policy or hiring practices (Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

Character Dispositions for Teachers

Another central tenet in the development of the teaching profession reflecting heterosexist assumptions was the judgment of good character. In the early years of the profession, demonstrating appropriate character centered on the willingness to forego marriage, to be virtuous and maintain moral purity, and by association, to promote that in students (Brophy & Good, 1973a). Throughout much of the 20th century, teachers were assumed to be moral examples, and the odd combination of intellectual and moral superiority coupled with their economic and social inferiority created marked contrasts. While teachers were assumed to be

heterosexual, a tacit ignoring of sexuality altogether was preferable to the smooth running of schools. The dispositions toward kindness, sensitivity, "bookishness," and poverty defined the character of teachers (Gaskell & Willinsky, 1995).

Dispositions have recently been formally reintroduced into the measurable qualities a teacher must demonstrate (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Contemporary definitions of teacher dispositions extend to professional modes of conduct, including the way beliefs and attitudes are demonstrated by teacher actions in and out of the classroom. Positive teacher dispositions are those which promote intellectual, social and interpersonal goals for students, that encourage a relationship between the students and teacher as a model, and extend to teachers' attitudes toward maintaining ethical standards of professional teacher societies (Ros-Voseles & Moss, 2007)

Signaling a shift to a more inclusive social climate, Villegas (2007) summarizes some of the personal qualities which relate to teachers' abilities to adapt and learn new attitudes toward both students and learning, notably the effects of race and ethnicity. "The overriding goal of the social justice agenda in teacher education is to prepare teachers who can teach all students well, not just those traditionally well served by schools, so that, as adults, all are able to participate equitably in the economic and political life of the country" (Villegas, 2007, p.372). To extend this assumption, social justice advocates would include the disposition of teachers to accept diversity based on sex and gender identity as an important one to monitor and in which to facilitate growth.

Two relevant dispositional areas are professional conduct and respect for diversity. Professional conduct indicates that teachers show sound judgment and ethical professional behavior while serving as positive role models for students, and being a supportive colleague to other school staff. Teacher respect for diversity means demonstrating sensitivity to individual differences among students, and a positive obligation to promote understanding of

students' *varied cultural traditions* (author's emphasis) and learning strengths and needs (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). These definitions of teacher character point to teachers as exemplars, a commonly ascribed quality for those who work with children. However, throughout the history of schooling, there has been an uneasy acknowledgement of the possibility of improper conduct in the relationship between teacher and students.

Educator sexual misconduct.

No examination of heterosexism related to schooling would be complete without the consideration of the recurring headline-making news related to sexual misconduct by teachers. Historically, very little was said directly about the treatment of sexuality in school, and the prevention of sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct in schooling is a term describing "a range of inappropriate to criminal sexual behaviors and includes verbal, visual, and physical misconduct...some criminal, some not," but all are unacceptable when originating from an adult, school-based authority figure toward a student (Shakeshaft, 2013, p.9).

Recent publications on this topic are aimed at educating school professionals on the unacceptably high incidence of unwanted sexual attention at school, where seven percent of students (approximately 3.5 million per year) report having inappropriate physical contact from an adult (Shakeshaft, 2004). Yet the treatment of this issue is still shrouded in secrecy, rather than presented openly. For instance, the February, 2013 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*, a most honored education journal, quaintly made the cover art of the issue discussing sex in schools a plain brown wrapper. While U.S. society arguably has the most explicit and pervasive media images of sexuality in the world, we have not yet fully focused on appropriate and effective means to educate children about sexuality and gender, nor how to create a setting where such misconduct is swiftly reported and resolved. Because

of traditional biases in public opinion of the school's place in addressing sexuality, there is a reticence to identify and report inappropriate conduct in schools.

Recent studies estimate male teachers are 4.5 times more like to be involved in sexual misconduct than are female teachers (Shakeshaft, 2004). Such a statistic reflects both the disproportionate incidences of the action, but perhaps also the unwillingness for victims to report the incident. Pervasive attitudes toward males who work with young children includes at least a moderate level of suspicion, and some inherent resentment from female educators about their suitability for the job (Benton & Vogtle, 1997). Males are not always considered a threat to children because of the possibility that they will engage in sexual misconduct, but they are very often judged to have inferior skills, dispositions, or efforts in the classroom (Benton & Vogtle, 1997). The combination of public suspicion and assumptions of limited capabilities have created a problematic professional profile for males in early education.

Complicating the issue of addressing children's learning and identity are the sometimes antiquated attitudes toward LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered) individuals. In its recent documentation of the movement toward gay rights, the ACLU includes many instances where teachers and schools were the setting for discriminatory behavior based on sexuality (ACLU, 2012). In the second decade of the 20th century, there are still frequent occasions in which openly gay teachers have been fired. Although ostensibly not fired for being gay, but for some other attitudinal or procedural ruling, the events which were the basis of the firing frequently mention the individual's character, or the moral protection of children as an issue. Still inherent in the social message is the assumption that gay predators would be more pernicious than any other (ACLU, 2012).

In a profession which denied the sexuality of women, and until the 1980s forbade them to appear in a schoolroom when pregnant, is it

surprising that attitudes toward LGBT individuals are slow to exhibit equality? The heterosexist positioning of the schools for two centuries has cemented many attitudes which are now being challenged and changed.

The Content of the Curriculum: Reforming the Heterosexist Status Quo

Many aspects of curriculum and instruction in schools have been examined in the last half-century of movement for equality. Two directions, the way in which teachers act and present information, and the actual content of the curriculum, are important to consider.

In conducting classroom instruction, teachers have been found to engage in *gender blindness* an unconscious favoritism toward males in the classroom, often giving males increased attention, with a direct effect on student performance (Sadker, 1999). According to Staples (2010), many teachers also use language that supports specific gender roles and biases. She viewed teachers as power brokers, who through their words and language choices convey to students the political, social, and interpersonal positioning of individual's sexual and personal identity. Such teacher attention and bias can reinforced the role of women as less in need of advanced education, may convey sexist viewpoints, and may further bias role identification and dominance of males (Staples, 2010). However, while early 21st century gains by girls in academic achievement have been noted, the achievement and participation of males in schooling has declined (AAUW, 2012). Statistics on the number and quality of males succeeding in schooling, graduating from high school and attending college in the 21st century is at an unprecedented low (Froschl & Sprung, 2012).

Eliot (2009) indicated the reported differences in girls' and boys' relative development, especially in language and literacy skills, is exaggerated. This exaggeration has resulted in inaccuracies in gauging the reasons for boy's decline in scores and schooling in the

past decade. However, the decline in percentages and scores in boys' achievement, and particularly in finishing high school and attending college, indicates some problems which must be addressed (Eliot, 2009).

The development of identity for children happens at a very early age, and is strongly linked to the environment. Whether a proponent of biological or social influences being greater in children's development, researchers generally agree that young children most often "learn an identity primarily by observing and then imitating what they see in their environment" (Carinci & Wong, 2009, p. 527). Because children spend a significant portion of their waking hours in school, the images and models presented to them in that setting become critical to their identity development, or at least in their perception of gender roles and adult behavior (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Watson & Woods, 2011). To assure that children find a positive identity, we must look deeper into the research that has evolved in the past decades which indicates a movement from treating girls as second-class educational citizens (Sadker & Sadker, 1994), to having concern that boys are no longer achieving because they are receiving a message that they no longer have to achieve based on biological factors (Gurian & Stevens, 2005).

In the past two decades, the achievement of girls in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects have changed. Sadker (1999) warned that girls were being denied full participation in the burgeoning technology fields because they did not take advanced courses that would lead to achievement in those areas. In 2012, girls were still underrepresented in STEM subjects compared to boys, despite the 40-year progress since Title IX (AAUW, 2012). Recent Advanced Placement (AP) data show representation of the sexes to be about the same, or even higher for girls, in certain courses. Boys dominated computer-science courses, AP physics, and mechanics, and data from National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates continued

achievement gaps between boys and girls in STEM disciplines (AAUW, 2012).

The need to continue to reexamine the relative achievement of children by sex is one of the revealing artifacts of U.S. educational history. If some inherent inequities had not been recognized and perpetuated, what would be the condition of American education today? Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Association of Academic and University Women have operated to support and change biases rooted in sexist and heterosexist assumptions. Perhaps the previous goal of sex-neutral schooling should be replaced by some truly androgynous perspective if we are to make progress without jeopardizing children on the basis of their sexuality.

Teaching about sex.

The long and difficult history of curriculum content for teaching the subject of sex coincides with the stigmas and biases connected with sexuality in society at large. Legislation about what to teach students, and how it should be taught occupy pages of state statutes and even current national policy. U.S. policies on teaching about sex seem as antiquated as the ongoing debate about evolution. Both seem to reflect a peculiar American predilection for interjecting religious judgments in intellectual and practical social decisions.

While most view the controversy over sex education as a recent debate, there were calls by the National Education Association for teacher training programs in sexuality education as early as 1912. In the Progressive Era, and in post-World War II, sex education became a critical health initiative aimed at the preservation and advancement of healthy families (FSEI, 2012). The social revolutions of the 1960s figured largely in the controversy over how to teach about sexuality, and highly charged debates between conservatives and health advocates about the merits and format of sex education in public schools has lasted for decades. Sex

education programs in public schools proliferated, in large part due to evidence that such programs didn't promote sex but in fact helped delay sexual activity and reduce teen pregnancy rates (FSEI, 2012).

Through the 1980s, sex education was taught within the context of more comprehensive health and human development programs which emphasized not only sexual reproduction, but also the importance of self-esteem, responsibility, and decision making to mental health and relationships. The AIDS epidemic irrevocably changed sexuality education when U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop issued a 1986 report calling for comprehensive AIDS and sexuality education in public schools, citing, "There is now no doubt that we need sex education in schools and that it [should] include information on heterosexual and homosexual relationships" (Greytak & Kosciw, 2013, p. 187). The reaction to the 1986 ruling exacerbated the growing unrest with the openness and social recognition of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning) individuals, which continues to the present. Health classes and health teachers are recognized as important arbiters in the change process which will bring about understanding and inclusion for LGBTQ students (McGarry, 2013). However, as our understanding of how to teach biological sexuality has improved, so has our focus on eliminating the non-verbal and inadvertent messages sent in the materials, content, and context of all school subjects.

What children read: Print and visual images in schooling.

In considering textbook and school curriculum content, the prevalence of stereotypes decreased dramatically in the past decades, yet extensive evidence of the effects of gender stereotypes can be seen in children's affective and cognitive development (Peterson, & Lach, 2006). Seminal works on education and gender, and early literature about sexuality and learning are focused on the representation of genders in learning media. The focus of early

research concluded that if girls do not see themselves in the pages of textbooks, and if teachers did not address the omission by supplementing the curriculum, girls' conclusions would be that females had no part in the process of history or the learning disciplines (AAUS, 2010). If teachers added to that conclusion by their own biases or non-inclusive behaviors based on gender or sexuality, the message becomes doubly powerful.

Roles of boys and girls were cemented in the content of the curriculum as well as the conduct of the classroom. Marshall (2004) specifically defined the representations of gender in children's literature, indicating the proscribed and irrevocable future outcomes based on gender. The assumptions were doubly important when additional concepts such as poverty and judgments of beauty were considered. Similarly, Clark & Higonnet (2000) present observations on the social and cultural messages in children's activities, toys and books which extend the representation of gender and sexuality as critical choices reinforced socially. This message regarding visual and textual representation is underscored by recent literature on the purported biological predispositions of children which affect learning (Eliot, 2009; Gurian, 2011). Teachers who traditionally managed classrooms with heterosexist techniques ("girls in this line, boys in that line"), may also gravitate to making simplistic judgments based on limited studies which make sex-dependent assignments.

Critical works on the relationship between perception in print and visual material provided in schools has been widely published in the past decades, and significant changes have come about in school texts and teaching materials (Eliot, 2009; Froschl & Sprung, 2012; Hechtman & Rosenthal, 1991). Hechtman & Rosenthal (1991) made a critical connection between gender and nonverbal behavior and the teaching of gender-stereotyped material. Their work identified the direction for change in teacher preparation related to gender-stereotyping. Most encouragingly, literature is being published that not only acknowledges but helps children in

their gender identification, such as Bornstein's (2013) text, whose goals is to help students find their place on the gender spectrum.

Efforts to balance the curriculum, and the text of instruction were aimed to make the classroom and curriculum more gender-neutral and less heterosexist in expression. The next step was to follow modes used in private schooling which segregated children to recover or establish gender equity (Gurian, Stevens, & Daniels., 2009).

Gender segregation as academic and social solution.

Dating from the 1972 enactment of Title IX, gender issues in public education have increasingly focused on equity in access, achievement and eventual employment (AAUW, 2010 & 2012). One significant curricular arrangement aimed to improve achievement has been the separation of students into classes by gender, which was the norm in private schooling, attempted throughout history in various ways, and now introduced into public schools (Heymann & Cassala, 2012). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 further underscored the issues of gender bias, particularly lack of achievement in STEM subjects, and in 2006, the U.S. Department of Education introduced changes in Title IX regulations, making it legal for public schools to offer single-sex instruction (Gurian et al., 2009). The outcomes for private, single-sex schools indicates much more equal participation by all students in the class, and in positive traits of leadership and initiative for all students. One study found that girls graduating from single-sex schools are six times more likely to major in a STEM subject than are girls from coeducational schools (Cable & Spradlin, 2006).

Although equivocal in most studies, success has been realized in achievement for girls in separate-sex classes in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), and for boys in literature and creativity (Gurian, et al., 2009). Some studies indicate the most dramatic successes for single-sex classrooms has been gained in urban and low-income schools, where alternative

classroom structures provide more supportive approaches to perennial issues of conflict and lack of academic preparation (Prothro, 2009). Findings also point to the social and classroom management benefits for boys and girls who can feel more at ease and able to focus on academics and show interest without fear of opposite-sex peer censure (Rex & Chadwell, 2009). Such success underscores the deeply ingrained social limitations of gender on learning which may more closely resemble emerging nations than first-world educational systems. Rather than hailing this trend as successful, educators must continue to examine the underlying reasons sexual identity may be an obstacle to learning. Educators must consider the expressed concerns of some studies which indicate any segregation sends a message of inferiority or conflict at some level (Gabriel, & Smithson, 1990; Gurian, 2011).

Sexual Harassment and Bullying.

Related to the issues of gender separation in schools is the recent increase in reported bullying and harassment (Hill & Kears, 2011; Rigby, 2007). Bullying may be direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim, or it may be more indirect behavior causing a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion. Whether direct or indirect, the key component of bullying is that the physical or psychological intimidation occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse (Swearer & Doll, 2001). One of the powerful messages emerging from the study of bullying and victimization is the negative ecological phenomenon that emerges in social, physical, institutional and community contexts, as well as the individual characteristics of youth who are bullied and victimized (Rigby, 2007). Schools are the place where children spend the majority of their waking hours, and therefore the institution and community of the school environment become critical factors in how bullying occurs and is mitigated.

School bullying statistics in the United States show that about one in four students in the U.S. are bullied on a regular basis, extending to cyber bullying and bullying at school which extends to after-school hours (Hill & Kearl, 2001). Research also shows teens in sixth through tenth grade are the most likely to be involved in some form of bullying. Most commonly, verbal bullying or verbal abuse applies to about 75 percent of all students being bullied. These types of bullying may also include spreading rumors, yelling obscenities or other derogatory terms based on an individual's race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion (Hill & Kearl, 2011). Fourteen percent of those bullied report a severe or bad reaction to the abuse, and these frequently result in poor self-esteem, depression, anxiety about going to school and even suicidal thoughts (Axelrod & Markow, 2001). As social networking and online social interaction increases in popularity, cyberbullying has become one of the most prevalent types of bullying that occurs between teens. About 80 percent of all high school students have encountered cyberbullying (Hill & Kearl, 2011).

A bullying-prevention website (www.stopbullying.gov), the joint venture of Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, was launched in March, 2012 (USDOE, 2012). The website provides detailed information on state laws and policies, interactive *webisodes* and videos, practical strategies for schools and communities to ensure safe environments, and suggestions on how parents can talk about this sensitive subject with their children. The site also explores the dangers of cyberbullying and steps students and parents can take to fight it. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education has released a two-part training toolkit designed to reduce incidents of bullying for use by classroom teachers and educators (USDOE).

A serious corollary of bullying behaviors in schools is the issue of sexual harassment, which involves sex and gender and warrants separate consideration. Based on recent statistics in a national survey of almost 2,000 high school students, the issue of sexual harassment in schools has increased, with more overt instances in

recent years (Hill & Kearl, 2011). The study reported that almost half of students had experienced verbal harassment (unwelcome sexual comments, jokes or gestures) and sometimes physical harassment; of those instances, nearly one-third of the harassment occurred via electronic media (Hill & Kearl, 2011). Girls were harassed more frequently than boys, and those events were more physically intrusive than boys' experiences. Not surprisingly, based on frequency and intrusiveness, sexual harassment has been established as more emotionally damaging to girls than boys, and can be directly linked to lower achievement and absenteeism from school (Swearer & Doll, 2011).

About one-third of students say they have witnessed sexual harassment, and while observation is not as damaging for students as being a object, it reduces the sense of a safe environment in schools. A further sobering aspect of the negative climate created by harassment is that only one-fourth of students report the experience to anyone, and only about nine percent talk with teachers, guidance counselors or other adults in school. That there is a lack of opportunity or willingness to talk to school personnel is a critical issue for establishing a more equitable, inclusive environment (Hill & Kearl, 2011).

Gender harassment, in which students are targeted for failing to follow norms typical for their gender, is a significant part of the sexual harassment problem in schools (FSEI, 2012). Ironically, peer-to peer harassment is most common, so single-gender settings may promote anti-gay behavior (Hill & Kearl, 2011). It is difficult to establish whether the increase in incidences of harassment reported are due to actual increases or due to improved attitudes and environments acceptant to the events being reported. Because teachers have the responsibility in schools for observing, acknowledging and reporting such behaviors, it becomes critical for them to have a repertoire of responses to respond to students and to become a trusted ally in the school.

Emerging Knowledge on Schooling and Sexuality

Recent research on the effects and representation of genders and sexuality in schools is encouraging on some fronts, and discouraging on others (Shankshaft, 2013). Pardini (2013) outlines the benefits of evolving attitudes toward gay students and schools' efforts to promote allies and provide gay-friendly environments for students while in high school. Similar to the progression of representing women and ethnic minorities in historic context, it has become important to include the issues of LSBT persons in the curriculum of schools. McGarry (2013) indicates LGBTQ students need more than a token mention in sex education classes. Indicators are that "attending a school with an LGBT-inclusive curriculum is related to both a less-hostile school experience for LGBT students, and increased feelings of connectedness to the school community" (McGarry, 2013, p.27).

Encouraging studies have been focused on ways to help school students deal with sexual issues, whether identity or types of bullying or harassment. Rappaport and Minahan (2013) outline specific methods to be used in the school environment to assist students who have some history of trauma. Teacher preparation and school policies need to avoid re-victimizing students who need to learn appropriate behaviors. Increasing and monitoring personal space in schools is important to creating a safe environment, as are supervising more closely situations outside the classroom where harassment often occurs, such as restrooms, bus, and physical education class. Finally, promoting self-monitoring and self-regulation, helping students recognize and receive support for their own issues, and providing a repertoire of responses to situations in appropriate interactions with adults and students is critical.

Rappaport and Minahan (2013) describe both curricular and social interventions that teachers can apply with students who struggle with challenging, sexualized behavior. Such open, clear instructional and behavioral accommodations indicate not only a new acceptance for student's sexuality, but also acknowledgment that treating the whole student is critical. Teacher education

programs, many of which are engaging with social justice perspectives, help teacher develop the dispositions to understand and deal with broader range of behaviors in youth.

Implications and Directions for the Future

Confronting the issues of identity and heterosexist norms in the teaching profession is a complex task. It includes intrapersonal and interpersonal exploration, professional and curricular decisions, student academic achievement and the complicated social issues of public schooling.

Promoting an inclusive non-heterosexist perspective in schools should be aimed at defining what is appropriate or unacceptable, for instance that it is a "big deal" for students who experience harassment. Every effort should be made to offset what the majority of students see as inconsequential events, where some students are target for verbal or physical attacks based on their gender or sex (Hill & Kearn, 2011). Schools should directly address sexual harassment. According to Hill & Kearn's study (2011) student ideas for reducing harassment in schools include:

...designating a person they can talk to (39 percent), providing online resources (22 percent), and holding in-class discussions (31 percent)...Allowing students to anonymously report problems was a top recommendation (57 percent), as was enforcing sexual harassment policies and punishing harassers (51 percent). (p. 43)

The teaching profession evolved as a feminized profession, and with a tradition of predominantly heterosexual perspectives. There has been minimal concern with addressing gender and sexuality in teacher education programs. Improved perspectives of social justice are working their way into the teacher education curriculum, but that knowledge is often segmented into coursework that doesn't intersect with curriculum studies or understandings of how to address LGBT perspectives in learning

goals (FSEI, 2012). Inclusiveness is increasingly practiced in schools, yet gender and sexuality are generally uncomfortable topics for all but the health and physical education teachers. It is necessary for all teachers to be aware, acceptant and confident of their own sexual identity, biases and personal expression of identity to be able to honestly interact with and confront issues of identity for their students. This stands as one of the critical challenges for teacher education institutions--to address heterosexual assumptions as part of addressing teacher dispositions in the pedagogy.

The National Sexuality Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12 (FSEI, 2012) has purposefully provided information to educate educators, and provide recommendations aimed at the development of an LGBT-inclusive sex education curriculum. The standards "were developed to articulate the essential minimum, core content for sexuality education that is developmentally and age-appropriate for students in grades K-12" (FSEI, 2012, p.6). Chief among the core content topics for the curriculum is addressing the concept of identity, helping all students recognize the fundamental aspects of people's understanding of who they are as LGBT or other.

Greytek & Kosciw (2013) provide perhaps the most optimistic and comprehensive responsive classroom curriculum for LGBTQ students. They analyze current practices in sex education which range from invisibility where the LGBTQ student needs and differences are ignored, to the active stigmatizing or demonizing students based on their identity. A positive curriculum includes relevant LGBTQ content and avoids discussing contexts such as family or relationships in heterosexist terms (Greytek & Kosciw, 2013). Further, the curriculum should be designed to explicitly and factually address and promote respect for differences in human sexuality. Such a goal is critically important to reduce a variety of injustices toward LGBTQ students, not the least of which is robbing those students of an environment in which they can learn and thrive intellectually.

Figuring largely in the quest for change in teacher education and content of the curriculum is the need to alter teachers' perspectives about the appropriateness of LGBTQ-aimed learning objectives. What educators do and say as they interact with students and construct learning experiences has much to do with the establishment of safe and inclusive school environments for those students. Greytek & Kosciw (2013) emphasize several methods which teacher preparation programs should promote and practice until they become reliable and automatic responses. Teachers should: refrain from examples or analogies which are exclusively heterosexist; use inclusive language when referring to students or families outside the classroom; use students' preferred names and gender pronouns; use vocabulary like ally, respect, diversity, and inclusiveness; be aware of stereotypes and intervene when anyone uses them (McGarry, 2013, p. 31).

The queering of the curriculum and the teaching profession may seem impossibly complex to unravel. Because schools have a positive obligation to promote the intellectual capacity and mental health of all students, it is imperative that educational programs include LGBTQ sex education in ways that not only avoid stigma or shame, but that promote pride in the achievements and contributions of LGBT individuals.

This essay described some of the gender and sexuality biases created by historic conditions that influenced teachers to think in heterosexist frames. It is imperative that teachers become informed and reflective about the potential influence they have on students in light of that history, and seek to change it. There are positive changes in school conditions related to sexuality to be celebrated, such as the increasing achievement of females in STEM subjects, the possibilities of greater achievement in separate gender classrooms, and the increased emphasis on LGBTQ information in sex education. There are also problems of equity in other areas, such as decreases in boy's overall achievement and educational opportunities, and continued lack of male role models for boys. These issues point to some fundamental concerns of equity, gender

stereotyping, and ignorance against which schools must be the first agent of change, not the last bastion of heterosexist norms and assumptions.

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