Boners and Twats: Sexual Discourse and Political Pedagogy in a Sex Education Classroom
a senior thesis in anthropology

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Acknowledgements

During the past year, I have often questioned my decision to come to a school where each student wrote a thesis to graduate; what seemed like a romantic notion of academic undergraduate work became hard and tear inducing work that consumed my life during my senior year. I had dreams that I would fail my thesis- no reason given- and was expelled from college. I envied my friends at other colleges that had no final work to conclude their college careers. I even drew up plans for a college that had students writing their theses their junior year so that they could enjoy their senior year. And through all this, I began to love my thesis. I have never created something of such length or invested so much of my time into one project. When I graduate, I will be able to hold my thesis and answer anyone’s question of what I did in college; if nothing else, I wrote a thesis.

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Introduction

With my fieldwork complete, I find myself struggling with my thoughts on sex education and its trajectory through American history. While I was observing, I was driven by the teacher’s lesson and the students’ questions. Now, I find myself simply perplexed by the fact that we have sex education classes at all. What many regard as an intensely private aspect of life is codified and taught in schools. Yet, sex and personal sexual choices are seen as having immense power in our culture. President George W. Bush feels strongly that American law be involved in love and define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Those who support him feel that deviance from this accepted model weakens the holy structure of the American family. With this tension placed on sexual choices, it is clear why certain accepted sexual choices would be lauded in the educational system.

Since its first edition in 1978, Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* has shaped how scholars have looked at discourse on sexuality. In focusing on others who examine sex and sexuality discourse, he also ponders “why… sexuality been so widely discussed” and seeks to discover “what has been said about it” (11). Even when “silence became the rule” (3) and “verbal decency sanitized one’s speech” (3), the discourse that existed deserved examination. In this vein, Foucault and I both strive to discover the importance of sex and in my case, the education that surrounds it.

This prominent discourse that both Foucault and I grapple with is a location of construction of sexuality. Sexual speech is not passive; whether sex education strives to incite students to repress their sexuality or explore it, there is an explicit agenda to be carried out through the act of teaching and speaking about sex. Within sex education,
there exists numerous discourses which have different goals. That which is dominant justifies particular types of sexuality as the norm and all others as deviant. Schools function as institutions of cultural and social reproduction. Sex education classes and their particular political slants are not passive either; these stances are represented through the sexual discourse relayed to students through methodology and content.

Borrowing from Foucault and the importance he places on the examination of discourse, I examine the sex education classroom as a particular site of discourse. My experience in sex education, as viewed through the theories of Sue Lees and John Dewey, illuminates the existing academic scholarship and the present state of sex education in America.

**Critical Framework**

Not all sex education is equal. Perhaps more than other subjects taught in school, the content of sex education classrooms is a site of contention. Teaching sex education is not a politically benign act. Reproduction of particular social mores concerning sex and its appropriateness are institutionalized and transmitted through sex education classrooms. Sex education researcher See Lees examines different political stances taken with regards to sex education.

The conservative political stance on education has the longest history. Lees describes it as a “view that stresses that sex education should be concerned with the preservation of the family and the preparation of young men and women to fulfill their roles” (Lees 1993: 216). From the early years of sex education continuing through
many present day sex education programs, the monogamous, co-resident, nuclear family is placed on a pedestal. Any sexual acts outside of this marriage challenge the primacy of the nuclear family and are taught as evil dangers that were the downfall of society. This view of sexual deviance as an assault to married life continues in sex education classrooms. As Lees notes, “teaching is predominantly concerned with the suppression of sex outside of marriage, with the physical aspects of reproduction within marriage, and what has been defined as abnormal, which in males takes the form of VD” (216).

By contrast, “the liberal approach to sex education is concerned mainly in providing children with information so they are able to make informed choices” (Lees: 217). It focuses on the agency of children to make decisions in their life, and educators operating under the liberal approach strive to provide ample information. However, Lees finds that a liberal approach “is too often centered on the preparation for the traditional family” (217). Most of the information provided is similar to that given in a conservative framework: biology of human puberty and reproduction, the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases, and the formation of relationships, with sexual relationships placed in the context of marriage. Though the liberal stance on sex education does take into account children’s personal choices in life, its goal is similar to the conservative position: to support and sustain the existence of the traditional family.

The “feminist stance [is]… potentially the most progressive, as it seeks to question social norms and common sense assumptions, particularly in matters of sex-gender inequality” (Kehily 2002: 170). Differing from conservative and liberal in both method and content, feminist sex education teaching practices “focus on the moral
dilemmas of living, the importance of relationships, and equal responsibility in relationships” (Lees: 218). Constructed by Lees as a new approach (217) and possible reform, feminist teaching practices in sex education require students to question current gender roles in society and its implications in arenas of the workplace, school, and the bedroom.

Though Lees sets up the three political stances as separate from each other, my experience conducting fieldwork in an all-boys school gave me another perspective. The teacher taught with all three of these seemingly irreconcilable teaching ideologies. I will explore how these three political stances were reflected in the instructor’s teaching practices and discuss how their implications for his students’ constructions of sexuality.

When dealing with discourse in the classroom, how a teacher talks must be studied along with what he talks about. I observed sex education classes; the teacher, who I will refer to as Mr. W, talked about sex. This is true, but much more than sex is included in a sex education classroom. Beyond the male and female reproductive system, the sex education classes at Goat Crossing School covered relationships and how they change during puberty, healthy communication, and sexuality. Where discussions of human biology are often seen as non-threatening (though this hasn’t always been the case), subjective areas of sexuality come into the arena of discussion, debates flare up about how to deal with them. Each teacher has to tackle this issue in his or her own way. Mr. W chooses to follow John Dewey’s lead and call upon students’ past experience.

As a founding father of educational philosophy, Dewey’s main focus in the study of education revolved around the experience of the student (1938). He espoused the
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Theorem that “everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had” (1938: 27, emphasis original). By Dewey’s standards, any reform of education that is to succeed must work to reform that experience. Aside from reform, teachers need to be occupied with the students’ experience and consider it at all times, especially when conducting a class on new material. Dewey says that it is

“essential that the new objects and events are related intellectually to those of earlier experiences, and this means that there be some advance made in conscious articulation of facts and ideas. It thus becomes the office of the educator to select those things within the range of existing experience that have the promise and potentially of presenting new problems, which by stimulating new ways of observation and judgment, will expand the area of further experience.” (75)

If they want to have an effective lesson, teachers need to draw upon students’ previous experiences when teaching new material. In this vein, Mr. W refers to popular culture (television shows, movies) and sports to connect the touchy subject of human relationships during puberty and beyond to the reality of students’ lives.

Research Setting and Methodology

The Goat Crossing School is a small independent private school located in the affluent suburbs of Philadelphia. Founded in 1884, the school has remained single sex from its inception, instructing boys from Junior Kindergarten through 12th grade. Like Haverford College, Goat Crossing School operates need-blind admissions, meaning that financial need does not affect admission and financial aid and loans are available to families who need help with tuition payments. Even with these aids present, I assume that most students at Goat Crossing School aren’t on financial aid by virtue of the wealthy suburban area the school is located in. Also, admissions information stresses
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following the financial aid timetable and the limited funds available for aid, all leading me
to conclude that most students do not receive aid.

As set out in its statement of mission and vision, Goat Crossing School strives to
“foster a commitment to community and to high achievement in academics, athletics,
and the arts”, in addition to promoting “integrity, leadership, friendship, and school
spirit.” In addition to these lofty goals, Goat Crossing School makes the case that boys’
schools offer young men “a safe atmosphere in which to explore sensitive gender and
When I first read this, I almost laughed out loud; after
spending a considerable amount of time at Goat Crossing School over four months, I
would have never categorized Goat Crossing School that way. While students often
discuss sport games with fervor and gusto, academic achievements do not seem to be
highlighted in any significant way. Everyone in the classroom joins in what can be seen
as good natured ribbing, but what can also been seen as biting sarcasm. And I don’t
think the faculty views it that way, either. For example, during an interview, the head of
the physical education department told me that while it is more comfortable to have sex
education without girls, it would be better to have them present because at the moment,
without them, there is a missing female perspective (Mr. K, personal interview, 7 Jan
2004).

For my field research, I spent four months observing two different classes, taught
by the same teacher: introductory sex education with eighth graders and sexually
transmitted disease classes with tenth graders. The vast majority of my observation
time was spent with the eighth grade. At the Goat Crossing School, sex education is
first taught in the eighth grade. Over the course of the class, Mr. W covers the male reproductive system, the female reproductive system, physical, emotional, and mental changes during puberty and adolescence, changing status and different types of relationships, especially those amongst peers, and a discussion of homosexuality. The class met twelve times from early December through mid-February, with the class periods ranging from forty-five minutes to an hour and ten minutes. I was able to go to every class, including both test periods. The difference in class period length is because Goat Crossing School operates on block scheduling. The eighth grade worked with a textbook and completed three chapters. After their last sex education class, the students had two classes in CPR before they returned the physical education class that was normally held during their sex education class period.

I also spent time with the tenth grade class. Able to attend only three classes because of my own classes and work obligations, my knowledge of the material covered in the tenth grade is less complete than the eighth grade class. From the three classes that I attended and with talking to Mr. W, the tenth grade covered the subject of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), first considering issues of transmission and then going into detail with respect to the most common STDs. Classes started in late January and ended in late February. A guest lecturer taught the last class which was on AIDS and I was not able to attend. Again, class durations varied. After the AIDS class, the tenth grade spent six class periods becoming certified in CPR before returning to playing sports during their physical education period. Like the eighth grade class, sex education was taught during class periods that were normally scheduled for physical education. Because I spent the vast majority of my observation time with the
introductory level sex education class, most of my work is based on my reflections on those particular notes.

In both the eighth and tenth grade classes, I was solely an observer. In an effort to make my appeal to Goat Crossing School as attractive as possible, I limited my involvement in the classroom. As I was a young woman at an all boys’ school, I felt that my presence in the classroom would affect student and teacher behavior; the presence of an outsider in any classroom does this, especially obvious outsiders. In an effort to minimize this and any discomfort the administration might have had, I told everyone (administration, teacher, students) that I would simply observe from the back of the classroom and not participate in the lesson. So, I arrived each day as class started and sat in the back of the classroom near the door. The boys and I never talked, with the exception of when I was introducing myself and before test periods. Once we were in the classroom, they rarely looked at me and as time went on, I felt almost completely ignored.

My emphasis on observation shaped the focus of my thesis. Sitting in the back of the classroom with my notebook, I occupied the same special arena as the students. At certain times I left this space; when I introduced myself, I stood in front of all the students, and during other periods of class, Mr. W would call me to the front of the class while the students were busy with writing tasks. But aside from these times, I sat in a student’s desk in the main area of the room. From this vantage point, I found myself naturally focusing on what the other students focused on: the teacher. The students were interesting and my early notes do contain more notes on students’ behavior. But
as my observations continued, I found myself focusing more on Mr. W and his interactions with the class than on interactions between the students.

As I focus my history of sex education on educators and their effects on students, I also focus my observations on the educator in my classroom. While most educational research occupies itself with students’ experiences (and this is to be expected), the role of the teacher in shaping the classroom shall not be underestimated. As a major agent of change and stability in the classroom, Mr. W controls the atmosphere in his sex education classroom.
History of Sex Education in the United States

The Early Years

The history of sex education in the United States is tied to the general history of education. As a young nation, only particular towns in the North East were required to provide schools by order of town meetings; in the other states, schooling was neither public nor free (Mondale and Patton 2001: 20). Depending on the wealth of local families throughout the colonies, small schools were populated by those pupils that families thought worth educating: rich, white boys. Though Thomas Jefferson championed educational reform in 1778 that sought to secure three years of schooling for all children, minorities and women were not invited into the classroom. However, with expansion out west, the face of education began to change. Settlers remembered the schools on the East Coast and clamored for similar institutions. Especially under the influence of Catharine Beecher, female teachers began to travel out west as a “civilizing force” (Mondale and Patton 2001: 49) and small schools popped up on the American Frontier.

The subject matter of these early American schools varied. Students were educated in dame schools where small groups of children were taught basics of reading and good behavior in a home setting. Other students learned specialized skills in vocational schools, and literature and philosophy was subjects matter for those boys lucky enough to afford it. Any discussion of sex and sexuality was relegated to the private sphere of the home. “On the subject of sex, silence [was] the rule” (Foucault 1978: 3) until the end of the 19th century. According to historian Bryan Strong, a “dominant sexual ideology of sex as restraint” (1972: 129) was reproduced from
generation to generation until the end of the 19th century, when it met with the revolutionary idea that the pleasure associated with sex was as much of a goal as procreation.

While the idea of pleasurable sex did exist before the end of the 19th century, the widespread rebellion against old sexual mores presented a challenge. When faced with this new idea of sex, moral reformers and educators did not quietly give up their ideal of repressed sexuality. Included in this group of sex education reformers were: G. Stanley Hall, a psychologist and author, doctors Samuel August Tissot and Thomas Nichols, who were both concerned with sperm as a vital bodily fluid and the loss of semen through ejaculation, Lucinda Chandler, sex activist against masturbation, and many others (Moran 2000: 1-11). Like many current sex educators, “their primary aim was not to encourage sexual adjustment but to sustain an old morality that demanded the repression of all sexual activities except those designed for procreation. (Strong: 136). Silence around sex would no longer work as an effective way to guarantee restraint and sex educators feared that left to their own devices, children would learn of sex from their peers, who proselytized repugnant theories, such as the “doctrine of sexual necessity”. This theory “maintained that chastity was dangerous to a man’s health since chastity caused his sexual organs to atrophy and his mind to become unbalanced” (Strong: 135). While children’s language was not this sophisticated, the general idea of “use it or lose it” spread amongst children. To combat this, scientific claims that praised chastity emerged. Popular amongst these claims was the anti-thesis of the doctrine of sexual necessity- the idea that unexpended semen, when reabsorbed into a young man’s body, not only allowed young men to develop into their adult masculine bodies, but also
fueled creative and innovative thought. “This explanation, however much disguised as
science, in reality reflected the dominant morality since its actual function was to offer
positive rewards for sexual repression” (Strong: 130). As is true with many cases in
social history, these two theories concerning semen did not come head to head in direct
debate; they existed as colloquial knowledge.

While this claim offered “positive rewards for sexual repression”, other early
curricula of sex education focused on negative repercussions of any kind of expressed
sexual feelings or desires, including discussions of fantasies or physical actions.
Starting with the first formal sex education programs in the United States Military in
1917, the effects of venereal diseases were highlighted in an educational program that
historian Julian Carter describes as “the knowledge of contagion” (2001: 219).
Prostitutes were compared to traitors and spies through pamphlets and soldiers were
provided with explicit information on the ravages of common sexually transmitted
diseases, such as syphilis and gonorrhea. According to Carter’s historical research,
emphasis was placed on how one’s personal philandering would negatively affect “the
innocent”- those who had not themselves engaged in acts of venery- be they comrades
or women and children (220).

While education for soldiers employed specific details on the medical costs of
philandering, educators worried that too much knowledge of explicit sexual acts or
situations might entice students to explore these very acts for themselves.

Opposition to sex education in public schools focused on the possibility
that knowledge about sexual physiology, reproduction, and disease would
corrupt the morals of youth, either directly or by arousing curiosity and
encouraging experimentation. (Carter: 224)
Other opponents to sex education were not against the content of sex education, but the place. Opponents believed that discussion of sex in schools with peers would degrade any discussion to whispering and laughter and not taking the subject matter seriously. Therefore, they felt that any discussion of sex should be between parents and children at home. But in the end, schools won as the place to talk about sex, or, more correctly, to talk around sex. Though parents were still responsible for their children, classes in school took the place of primary sex education. Early sex education was different from sex education in the military because of lack of frank sexual talk. Sex educators stressed the ills of venereal diseases and their attacks on the personal sphere of family and home. Breakdowns of marriages and sickly children were cited as the outcome of promiscuity and sexually transmitted diseases. In both the armed forces and in schools, students were forced to see the repercussions of their sexual actions as affecting innocent loved ones.

The knowledge of contagion method of sex education worked perhaps too well. “It was apparently not unusual for sex-hygiene lecturers, determined to impress the seriousness of venereal disease… to distress pupils to the point that they threw up or fainted” (Carter: 227) during class. This extreme reaction to sex education was not what educators wanted. Their goal was to continue the ideology that marriage and the American family were sacred and that anything that threatens that needs to eliminated. From this standpoint, venereal disease is a major culprit in harming families and marriages. But what educators did not expect was how this negative propaganda would affect the state of relations between young men and women. Scare tactics were employed in sex education; simple facts of contraction were not. Manuals of the time
were so vague in their descriptions of how exactly one acquired these horrible diseases, that students believed that any contact whatsoever would end with both parties afflicted with horrible diseases. Afraid that these students, afraid to touch or talk to each other, would be unable to form lasting and meaningful partnerships in monogamous marriages (the goal of sex educators), a new school of thought, “the knowledge of development” (Carter: 232), emerged on the sex education scene.

The knowledge of development was upbeat and positive. Rooted in the belief that “children and adolescents had no active feelings or desires but simply curiosity about reproductive processes” (Strong: 137-138), sexual educators believed that they could teach this unbalanced view of sex and ignore any discussion about the sexual act. In this way, both schools failed to discuss in any helpful or educating detail the physical processes of sex. Sexual educators were afraid that any explicit or frank discussion of sexual practice would encourage children to explore their sexuality physically. Therefore, curricula in both the school of contagion and development were deliberately vague. Again, the focus of this early sex education was on the sanctity and primacy of the monogamous marriage and resulting family, but much more explicitly than before. “The knowledge of development interpreted sex primarily as the process of procreation and the foundation of the family” (Carter: 233) and skirted any discussions of the sex act itself.

The knowledge of development curriculum is the sex education program that provided popular American culture with the phrase “the birds and the bees.” Through study of the animal world and different levels of complexity of reproduction, students were taught not so much the specifics of human reproduction, but the ideal
characteristics of the human family. Starting with the question asked by young children-
“where do I come from?”- proponents of this school would provide simple answers-
“from the love of your parents, momma’s body, etc.” (Carter: 241) Mothers were
expected to answer this question before schooling, and were instructed in manuals,
such as those by sex educator Winfield Scott Hall, that simple answers that alluded to
the perfection of human reproduction would so move their children that there would be
“no place for the noisome weeds of vulgarity and obscenity to germinate and grow”
(Carter: 242). In this way, parents would prepare their children for the family-centered
curriculum of sex education.

In the classroom, knowledge of development sex education found its place in a
class titled biology, but in actuality, was little more than teaching Americanized morals
on family. “Modern society has attempted to reduce sexuality to the couple- the
heterosexual and… legitimate couple” (Foucault: 45) and sex education clearly supports
the primacy of married life over all. Young children would begin to learn of reproduction
through the study of flowers and the process of pollination, with the feminized flower
and the masculinized pollen and/or bee. From this evolutionary level, children would
move to more complex organisms, such as fishes, frogs, and birds. “Evolutionary
development from simple animals to complex ones was depicted as the progressive
development of care for offspring” (Carter: 243). Fish parents did not look after their
eggs or young, but frogs did. Frogs did not have a family life, however, but birds did.
All of these animals were studied in comparison to the structure of the nuclear family.
And in this guise of comparative biology, sex educators were able to educate on the
topic of sex without explicitly talking about the sex act itself.
While classrooms of grade school children appeared to be appeased with learning about idealized family structure, older students were more insistent in their sexual curiosity. In high schools, pupils were interested in frank details of sex, and when they asked questions, were often flatly refused on the basis that they were not at the life stage at which such information was necessary. One science teacher explained that “he would be willing to discuss intercourse with them [his students] after they had gotten engaged” (Carter: 245). Only after they had crossed this threshold in their lives would they need any knowledge of the actual act of sex; why would they need it any sooner? The goal of sex education was to preserve and reproduce monogamous marriages; sex did not need to exist outside of that realm.

Just as with any form of education, not all students were taught equally. With respect to different types of subject matter, educational reformers battled over how and what to teach young boys and girls. Ultimately, popular decision declared that “girls should be shielded from too specific knowledge of the abnormal side for fear of…arrests in normal development”, while “boys should have the side of disease painted truthfully” (Carter: 229). Within the knowledge of development school, both young girls and boys were taught the benign subject matter of “comparative” biology, where there was no danger to the weak constitution of girls. Social roles of women being the caretaker of the house and men, the provider, were reinforced with examples from the animal world, alluding to women’s weaker position in the realm of family.

Pedagogical debates were not the source of all the controversy in the early sex education movement. Once the subject matter was decided upon, the vocabulary that was used to teach the subject had to be determined as well. This proved to be difficult,
as early sex educators were those who had previously relied on a program of silence to repress sexual behavior. When faced with the decision of type of language, early sex educators uniformly picked scientific language versus romantic or vulgar language—“to have sexual intercourse” compared to “to make love” or “to fuck” (Strong: 148). By carefully selecting language that grounds human reproduction in biological reproduction, sex education grounds human sexuality in a scientific framework. This language functions in the same way as the ‘scientific doctrine’ that reabsorbed semen helps men grow; sex education reformers used the power of science to back their moral agenda.

Across both schools of sex education, two basic principles existed: the goal to “teach sexual morality… [and] to instruct students in the principles of sex hygiene” (Strong: 141). The emphasis of early sex education was on keeping children clean—of thoughts and of body. In both schools of knowledge, any explicit descriptions of sex were forbidden, and while the knowledge of contagion focused on the negative aspects of sex hygiene, the knowledge of development highlighted the stereotypical family as the zenith of the sexual progress.

Sex education until the 1960s occupied itself with the concerns of both the school of contagion and the school of development. While talking around explicit matters of sex acts, sexual educators worked to enforce idealized notions of family through demonizing premarital sex and all its vices. With a change in the entire American culture in the 1960s, sex education became a site of intense and heated debate.
The Battles Over Sex Education

While sex education has never been an uncontested issue, the radical cultural shift of the 1960s placed sex education in the spotlight of national debate. With notions of “free love” and the sexual revolution becoming rampantly popular amongst adolescents and young adults, sexual educators felt that sex education needed to step up and make young people informed consumers of their own sexuality. At the forefront of this was Dr. Mary Calderone. As medical director of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America since 1953 (Moran 2000: 161), Calderone’s emphasis on sex education championed science as the ideal way to educate children. Fearing silence on the matter of sex education would only create ignorance, Calderone founded the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) in 1964. Though small, SIECUS’s members gave it immediate creditability: Wallace Fulton, a past president of the National Council on Family Relations; William Genné, director of the Family Life Department at the National Council of Churches; and Clark Vincent, chief of the Professional Training Division of the National Institute of Mental Health (Moran: 161). But it was Calderone’s leadership and her ideas on sex and sexuality that put SIECUS on the sex education map.

“Had SIECUS been founded in the nineteenth century, it would not have been revolutionary. As it was, its birth in 1964 was simply another dimension of the sexual liberalism of the times” (Irvine 2002: 22). Though SIECUS did not stand alone on the platform of liberal sex education, it held a major place in the battle over sex education. And while it called for reforms to old fashioned silence oriented sex education, SIECUS also championed equally conservative views on sex and sexuality. Like sex educators
during the early twentieth century, Calderone was a doctor, and “the SIECUS ideology expressed… that scientific information would ease cultural anxiety and individual guilt about sex” (Irvine: 25). “Scientific medicine easily masquerades as objective and value-free” (Irvine: 27), but all science, especially that concerning sex, is highly politicized. The difference between SIECUS and more conservative sex educators and opponents was SIECUS’s positive focus. With the aim to educate children so that they could make well informed and safe sexual decisions, Calderone and SIECUS sought to erase guilt from the subject of sex and take away the concept of “the ‘no’ values” and instead focus on “the ‘yes’ values” (Irvine: 27). The ‘no’ values that Calderone talked of refer to the negative emphasis put on scaring children away from sex with excessive talk of disease. She proposed that sexuality should be constructed as part of one’s health and that implicit in having a healthy sexuality is being informed.

Though she called for reform in the content and availability of sex education, Calderone remained conservative on some main points of sex education. While she emphasized sexual pleasure, she consistently placed that “pleasure within the context of marriage” (Irvine: 24). And while she was against religious guilt associated with premarital sex, she often voiced her personal disapproval.

By contrast, the New York League for Sexual Freedom, also founded in 1964, demanded decriminalization of oral and anal intercourse, interracial marriage, and bestiality and called for reformation of a range of restrictive laws against censorship, public nudity, divorce, contraception, abortion and statutory rape laws. (Irvine: 24)

Comparatively, SIECUS seemed fairly tame. For this reason, it makes sense that “SIECUS received hundreds of requests for help from schools nationwide” (Irvine: 37). Due to the “rise of a nationwide panic about the sexual revolution” (Moran: 165), SIECUS and Calderone were called upon to help revitalize schools’ sex education
programs. In its early years, SIECUS was a beacon for many worried educators and parents. But starting with the major sex education battles of 1968 and 1968, the newly formed Christian Right would attack SIECUS and draw loud, if not large, localized community support.

“Sex education was one of a range of single-issue battles fought by this emerging political coalition in the late sixties” (Irvine: 35). The same cultural change that incited Calderone and her liberal peers to form organizations like SIECUS also created a fear that drove conservatives to form their own powerful groups. Of these groups, two of them joined forces when attacking sex education: “Reverend Billy James Hargis’s Christian Crusade and the John Birch Society” (Irvine: 44). Through their collaboration, the Birchers and Christian Crusaders sought to tear apart SIECUS’s nationwide work in sex education classrooms.

The background of both these radically conservative groups resides in anti-communist fear of the Cold War. Combined with “the late sixties lingering cultural concern about the red menace” (Irvine: 50), Birchers and Christian Crusaders (amongst other conservative groups) were able to garnish small but loud groups of local supporters by claiming that SIECUS and the type of sex education it spread hurt the very fabric of America society: the traditional nuclear family. Believing that sexual speech was an enticement to sexual acts, “numerous anti-sex education activists were simply motivated by the conviction that sexuality should be veiled” (Irvine: 48). Though many sex education programs across the country had already departed from a knowledge of development take on sexuality, supporters of the Christian Right were calling for a return to a culture of silence around sex.
In order to attack the changes that organizations like SIECUS had already implemented by the late sixties, opponents of sex education manipulated a fear of sexuality depravity. Common rumors included stories that “a sex education teacher had intercourse in for of the class as a pedagogical strategy” and that another “sex education teacher got carried away and disrobed in front of her class” (Irvine: 54-55). Spread quickly throughout communities, the stories hit “deeper cultural anxieties, in this case about childhood sexuality” (Irvine: 54). Supporters of sex education had a hard time refuting these claims because to do so would seem to say that they agreed with them, when in actually, most pro-sex education people would be greatly appalled if any of these rumors were true.

Critics of sex education were able to work at a local level, inciting changes in their school districts. Overall, it is impossible to say who won this battle over sex education. While the Christian Right did stir up controversy amongst multiple communities, which resulted in sex education programs being dismantled or changed and teachers losing their jobs, they did not eradicate sex education entirely from American schools. “Quantification is difficult, but by the end of this period, controversies had divided communities in close to forty states” (Irvine: 60). They didn’t even secede in wiping out all forms of progressive sex education. But while critics of sex education tried to silence sexually explicit talk, “the controversies themselves proliferated public sexual speech” (Irvine: 61). This spate of sexual speech did not end with the sixties; debates over the acceptability of sex education continued in the next decade.

“In 1972, the U.S. Commission on Population Growth and the American Future released its report which included strong recommendations for sex education and
teacher training” (Scales 1981: 558). These recommendations and report where rejected by then-President Nixon but the report showed that despite the controversies of the late sixties, groups across the nation still wanted sex education programs in schools. As in the past, sex education was supported because of fear. Reports of rising numbers of sexually active teenagers and teenage pregnancies alarmed America at large, in particular parents and sex educators. With a growing threatening vice that undermines traditional monogamous families and marriage, sex education focused on “the problem of adolescent pregnancy and the interest in preventing it” (Zelnik and Kantner 1978 in Scales: 559).

Though the content of sex education courses did not receive reform- still focused on evils that threaten family- the numbers of students in sex education rose throughout the 1970s. The critics of the previous decade had not disappeared; local battles over the inclusion of sex education programs still existed. But the problem of teenage pregnancy trumped many concerns, and even prompted the federal government to action. “With the appointment of the House Select Committee on Population and the passage of legislation that created a federal Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs” (Scales: 559), teenage pregnancy gained and held center stage as the major ill affecting adolescents, “with sex education and its possible impact” (Scales: 559) considered as a potential fix.

With an added focus on teenage pregnancy, the standard content of sex education remained unchanged. “Information on the menstrual cycle, venereal diseases, and reproductive anatomy” was what most students were taught about, not “contraception, homosexuality, abortion, masturbation, decision-making and
communication skills, self-esteem, and discussion of personal values and emotions” (Scales: 559-560). Just the basics of sex education incited plenty of debate from conservatives; these other touchier subjects dealing with sexuality remained, for the most part, on the sidelines. So while sex education in the 1970s seemed to show that conservatives had won, “in 1980, SIECUS, one of the pioneering organizations that had been most frequently attacked for supporting sex education in the [1960s and 1970s], was awarded a major private grant to conduct prototype sex education programs for parents” (Scales: 561). Though not as radical as other sex education support organizations, SIECUS’s drive to talk openly and guilt free about sex makes it radically different from sex educators from the early years and from conservative critics.

With government committees meeting on the epidemic of teenage pregnancy, the problem of AIDS loomed on the horizon. “Although teenagers in 1987 made up only 1 percent of all AIDS cases, the congressional Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families that year declared that AIDS was a potential ‘time bomb’ for American adolescents” (Moran: 206). Sex education became focused once again on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, though the stakes were admittedly now much higher. “Until a vaccine or cure is found and becomes available, education is the only tool we have to prevent the spread of this deadly disease” (Moran: 207). However, AIDS education takes into consideration that adolescents are sexually active, a possibility that conservatives do not want to entertain. Despite this, “the government was waging an expensive war against AIDS” (Moran: 208), pouring millions of dollars into educational programs targeted to adolescents.
The terror that resulted from the spread of AIDS profoundly shaped sex education overall. With the focus moved to the prevention of contracting a deadly disease, sex education in many areas was replaced, not supplemented, by AIDS prevention education. And even with this takeover, AIDS education brought with it some of the liberal tactics sex education supporters had been campaigning in favor of for years. “Since the founding of SIECUS, many sex educators had strongly supported including information about the proper use of condoms [and] the risk factors involved with various sex acts” (Moran: 209) and with the necessity of AIDS education, not talking about safe sex methods was tantamount to a death sentence for an entire generation of sexually active students.

With the epidemic of AIDS inescapable, conservatives changed their argument from whether or not there should be sex education in schools to what kind should be offered. Conservative, and often Christian, groups began formulating their own versions of sex education to compete with those offered by SIECUS and like-minded organizations. Programs like Sex Respect and Teen-Aid portray all sexually active people as married and focused on corny slogans- “‘pet your dog, not your date!’ ‘don’t be a louse, wait for your spouse!’ ‘do the right thing, wait for the ring!’” (Moran: 213)- to enforce their abstinence only agenda (Blake 1997).

Overall, the history of sex education has been a constant tug of war between two groups. Socially conservative critics believe strongly in the negative efficacy of sexual speech. Liberal minded sex educators work to create open and trusting environments for students to question sex and construct their own sexuality. While these two groups have opposing goals, they share a belief in the performativity of sexual speech. In
1994, Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders was fired “for suggesting that it might be beneficial to discuss masturbation in sex education programs” (Irvine 2000). For her, that particular sexual speech act had a very direct real world consequence; she was out of a job. But what is more astonishing is that “after two years of outspokenness on controversial topics like abortion, welfare, and drug legalization, the surgeon general was fired for speaking of sex education” (Irvine 2000). She was fired for saying something, not doing something. But what she said scared conservative critics of sex education.

When dealing with sex and sex education, talking about safe sex and contraception isn’t idle talk; it has an effect on students. Depending on their political slant, each group sees the ability of sexual speech to provoke behavior either positively or negatively. A long held fear of sex education critics is that “discussion… could lead to promiscuity, confusion, or outright damage” (Irvine 2002: 48). Therefore, if teachers can get away with teaching sex without explicit sexual speech or not teaching sex at all, children will remain sexless beings until their marriage day.

On the other hand, sex educators of the liberal bent see sex education and sexual speech as a way to actively change the attitudes and behavior of young students. This reasoning is behind their push for open and informative dialogue between teachers and students about more than the basics of sex education. Talking about contraceptive use leads to students having safer sex. Critically questioning sex and gender roles in society engages students in a dialogue that has them question their own world. Speech in a sex education class does something; conservative critics aren’t entirely wrong. Their fantastic claims of teachers teaching children about bestiality are
false; conservatives fear the wrong consequence of sexual talk. The performativity of sex education discussions does not result in students having sex, but, if done correctly, can manifest itself in a generation of adolescents with healthy, well developed and thoroughly explored sexualities.
**Analysis of Fieldwork**

**Biography of Mr. W**

In early December 2003, I started observing classes at the Goat Crossing School, in Mr. W’s 8th grade sex education classroom. At twenty six, Mr. W is a young single male black teacher in a predominantly white school. Mr. W’s relationship with Goat Crossing School began in 1984 when he entered kindergarten. Graduating from high school at the Goat Crossing School in 1996, Mr. W went on to Trinity College, a small liberal arts institution in Connecticut, where he studied Sociology and Education. Upon his graduation from Trinity in 2000, Mr. W found himself back at the Goat Crossing School, teaching sex education and working as the indoor track coach. He has now been teaching there for four years.

Since Mr. W has been at Goat Crossing since he was five, he can provide an account of the sex education program in recent history. From his memory, Goat Crossing acquired a formal sex education program some time in the four years that he spent away at college. When he was in middle school in 1989, he remembers the entire middle school was gathered in an assembly in order to watch a movie entitled *Am I Normal?*. In this film, a young boy is walking around a zoo and sees animals having sex. The zookeeper explains puberty to him, and Mr. W remembers being disturbed by the final shot of the young boy walking into a bathroom stall and locking the door. Videos were again used as sex education when, in 7th grade, Mr. W’s class was shown *The Miracle of Life* video. Mr. W used the same copy when he showed his class in this film in December 2003. Other than these two videos and a teacher accidentally showing the
beginning of Basic Instinct on an eighth grade ski trip, Mr. W says that he graduated from Goat Crossing School with no formal sex education.

Mr. W’s experiences in teaching began at Goat Crossing School. Though he studied education at Trinity College, the first class he taught was on his first day back at Goat Crossing. Though he studied education at an undergraduate level, Mr. W never had any real world experience as a teacher as part of his coursework. Thrown into a challenging situation, Mr. W did all that he could to train himself to teach at Goat Crossing. For his first two years of teaching, Mr. W also took classes in kinesiology- the study of anatomy, physiology, and the mechanics of body movement- at a local community college and West Chester University. As the only member of the physical education department without his Masters in Physical Education, Mr. W focused on gaining the necessary credentials to be certified in his field of study. He would go the classes before the school day began, go to teach a full day at Goat Crossing, and then often go back to school as a student. However, when Goat Crossing switched to block scheduling one year ago, Mr. W was not able to take classes and continue teaching. Currently, Mr. W is just teaching at the Goat Crossing School.

Outside of the classroom, the students know Mr. W best as the track coach, either because they are on the team or by virtue of Goat Crossing being a small school. Mr. W also had a number of his advisees in his class, a group of students who he mentors throughout middle school. He used these personal connections to his advantage. Often during class and in talks with me, he has commented on how he strives to create an open and trusting atmosphere in the classroom so that the students feel comfortable asking any questions on their minds. As a means to this end, his
presence in the classroom was similar to that of a coach. He combined sharing factual information with joking around and disciplined through a number of techniques (yelling, sending students out of the room, silent treatment) that seemed to me more proactive than more traditional teachers. Even his apparel spoke of his sports background: he wore mainly tracksuits and sport tee-shirts. By acting like a non-traditional teacher, Mr. W set himself up as more of an advisor on sexual information and puberty than a rigid teacher or authority figure.

According to sex researcher Gillian Hilton, Mr. W exhibited most of the characteristics that boys consider ideal for a sex education teacher to boys. Based on a survey of young English boys, Hilton found particular teacher characteristics that students consider the most valuable and important. “The most important quality that a teacher most possess… is the ability to encourage trust in the pupils” (Hilton 2003: 39). Mr. W put the concern of trust between students and teacher at the forefront of his teaching. Hilton also writes that the boys said, “it was immensely important… that a teacher dealing with sex education did not appear embarrassed by any topic discussed or comment made” (39). Again, Mr. W strived to create an open environment in the classroom, and an integral part of that is taking all questions seriously. However, Mr. W is also lacking according to the standards set by Hilton’s subjects. “There was a general belief [amongst students surveyed] that teachers should be specially trained in this area of the curriculum” (Hilton 2003: 39). Mr. W makes no show of hiding his lack of specific educational training, either in general or specifically in the area of sex education. But when it comes down to it, boys value personal qualities over years of teaching (Hilton: 42) Whether personal qualities are refined over years in the classroom
or intrinsic in a person could be debated, but as far as Mr. W is concerned, his performance in the classroom and the resulting atmosphere are what matter to his students.

Outside of his performance in the classroom, Mr. W shared with me some of his personal goals for sex education at Goat Crossing School and beyond. During his first year of teaching at Goat Crossing School, Mr. W attempted to start an after school coeducational sex education program. Aiming at older high school students, Mr. W was interested in “preparing them for college” (Mr. W, Personal Interview, 26 March 2004) by covering not only sex, but also drugs and alcohol. The class would meet on Wednesday nights for two hours and would be composed of twenty high schoolers, ten from Goat Crossing School and ten from local all girl high schools. In an effort to keep the class serious, students would write an application essay explaining their interest. In this way, Mr. W wanted to expose serious students to the benefits of coeducational sex education. However, with the burden of his classes and teaching load, he was never able to get his plans off the ground. This is something that he is still considering doing at some point.

Conservative, Liberal, and Feminist Teaching Practices

Sue Lees’ three political stances regarding sex education—conservative, liberal, and feminist—relate directly to teaching practices. Their differences manifest not only in the subject matter included, but also in the methods used by the teacher. Examining one of Mr. W’s lessons, I will show how he uses each of the three political teaching
methods to teach conservative views of homosexuality, while challenging homophobia in society.

Concerned with preservation of the traditional family and socially acceptable gender roles, the conservative stance does not lead to radical teaching methods. In the example of Mr. W’s class on sexuality, which began in the middle of a class period, he started the section by defining sexuality as “how you feel about yourself, your physical desire for physical closeness and thoughts on sexual intimacy” (Fieldnotes 2 Feb 2004). Mr. W further simplified this statement: “when we are talking about sexuality, we are pretty much talking about sex” (2 Feb 2004). Right from the beginning, Mr. W reduced personal sexuality down to the sex act, which is more easily regulated than preferences or intimate desires. Constructing a conservative teaching structure even further, Mr. W immediately told his students, “you don’t need to have sex!” (2 Feb 2004). Though I do agree that it is wise to advise eighth graders to wait to have sex, a strict proclamation before any discussion of sexuality does not set the tone for an informed or flexible discussion on sexuality.

Despite the strict and immediate warning, the students took it in stride, with one even joking, “why let a good thing wait?” (2 Feb 2004). Mr. W then talked about the consequences of teenage sex and engaged the students in a discussion on teenage pregnancy. In a point that I will address further in my chapter on media and sports in the classroom, Mr. W and the class discussed the movie American Pie and the main characters’ quest to have sex on prom night. While some students adamantly argued that having sex in high school is entirely normal, Mr. W made a strong case for waiting.
Once Mr. W had stated that everyone should wait until “they are more mature and can handle it”, a student asked him “what about oral sex? Can you lose your virginity?” (2 Feb 2004). After thinking about it briefly, Mr. W answered that oral sex doesn’t count as sex. He did not outline any sort of decision that is proper, as he did with strict intercourse. When another student brought up the question of anal sex as counting as losing virginity, Mr. W again thought about it, decided that it must count as sex, and though he does not say it again, this places anal sex under the same strict order to wait as vaginal intercourse. At this point in the class, Mr. W’s lesson plan turned to the formation of sexuality. He said that heterosexuality, bisexuality, and homosexuality are determined by your attraction to others- contradicting his previous statement about sexuality being about sex. Though he did revise his statement about what sexuality is about, Mr. W continued to function in a conservative teaching mode, not adhering to a liberal teaching model that focuses on providing students with the information to make informed decisions.

During the next part of the lesson, Mr. W began his transition from the conservative teaching style to a more liberal one. Working off the premise that “homosexuality is determined by biology and environment” (2 Feb 2004), Mr. W invited students to brainstorm different ways outside factors influence ones sexuality, in particular homosexuality. In so far as this part of the class is liberal for discussing homosexuality, it is conservative for not discussing constructions of heterosexuality. Seen as the sexual norm, it doesn’t need to be explored. Though it is different from the conservative part of class, this part of class is liberal in that it still works within a traditional framework, with the nuclear family still central to the discussion. However,
Mr. W worked to provide information for students to make informed decisions regarding their behavior.

Mr. W said up that there are three major factors that influence not only one’s sexuality, but also may give gays reason to stay in the closet. Family is the most important of the three. As our first support, “families are how we understand emotional bonds and if you talk openly about sexuality in your family, you will have a better understanding of your own” (2 Feb 2004). Parents’ and families’ attitudes toward gay people will influence your level of ease of coming out of the closet: “if people disagree with who you are, you hide it” (2 Feb 2004).

Second in importance in the formation and revelation of sexuality are friends. As most of their friends are in their class, Mr. W used this as a chance to gain real world opinions on why young gay men would hide their sexuality. He asked the class, “why would I not want to tell my friends if I am gay?” (2 Feb 2004). A number of students answered: “because at this school, we are with boys all the time and you’ll get scapegoated”, “it is different from what we are used to”, “there are lots of straight kids. Why hit on them?” (2 Feb 2004). Not reaching the desired answer, Mr. W asked a more pointed version: “What’s the language you use everyday to put people down?” Students from all over the room shouted out, “fag, gay, faggot” (2 Feb 2004). Mr. W ended their laundry list of insults, saying “the language you guys use makes feel uncomfortable” (2 Feb 2004). By connecting their demeaning speech directly to creating unease for gay students, Mr. W alerted his students to their agency in creating a comfortable environment for gay classmates and gay people in general. He was providing them with information to make informed decisions.
The final influence is media. Mr. W began to talk about how media has recently been changing to be more representative of alternate lifestyles. He described popular media from the 1950s, when couples slept in different beds and how there were never any interracial couples on television or in movies. While he was trying to engage the students in a discussion as to what they see in media that could both support or detract someone from coming out, the class began to get rowdy. So rowdy, in fact, that Mr. W had them spend the last fifteen minutes in class in a silent writing exercise that covered the material they just went over: the three influences on a person’s sexuality and how each of them may either help or hinder someone from coming out of the closet. As each student grumbled over the activity, Mr. W explained that he was tired of talking over them. Though this exercise did not engage the entire class in a lively discussion, it did help reinforce Mr. W’s liberal teaching techniques. By going over the material they had just learned, the students were enforcing the concepts of personal agency in their role as a family member and friend. Mr. W had provided this information, but it supported the primacy of the nuclear family and accepted gender roles. Thus, his teaching practices in this section of the class were better than conservative but not as progressive as feminist; they were liberal.

For the next class period, Mr. W immediately asked all the students to take out a piece of paper and answer two questions: “Explain how racism may be wrong or right, how it came to be and what it is about” (4 Feb 2004). The class was actually silent, which shocked me, but I assumed they learned their lesson from the last class. After a few minutes, Mr. W asked the same question, but this time with reference to anti-Semitism. Again, the class fell into silence for a few minutes, until one student asked
“how did we jump from homosexuality to this?” (4 Feb 2004). Two students answered him before Mr. W could, one saying “they are very closely related” and another replying, “they want us to make the connection” (4 Feb 2004). Even before the class began their dialogue on racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, students were making the connections themselves. They were ready to handle feminist teaching practices that will have them questioning their own culture, families, friends, and themselves.

Mr. W confirmed their answers about the connections between racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia. He asked students to read their paragraphs out loud while he wrote their main points on the board. From these lists, Mr. W asked students to make a similar list for homophobia. The lists that they came up are included in the appendix. From these lists, the students were asked to see how cultural movements such as racism and anti-Semitism were related to homophobia. Throughout the lesson, Mr. W made connections between religious bias and homophobia as both being unreasonable motives to not be someone’s friend. He attacked the issue of lesbians not being as threatening as gay men. He cited media as an indicator of change; once Ellen DeGeneres came out on her hit show “Ellen”, the ratings plummeted and her show was cancelled. Recently, shows like “Will and Grace” and “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy” are very popular. By connecting the conversation to media (a topic I will explore in more depth in my next chapter), Mr. W drew students into the conversation with their experienced reality.

Towards the end of the lesson, Mr. W made a point to say “I’m not here to tell you your opinion. You may believe in what your family says. I’m here to educate” (4 Feb 2004). His main aim is to get students to question a “sex-gender inequality” (Kehily
2002: 170) as it exists in our culture. Opposed to earlier in his lesson when Mr. W was directly trying to control students’ sexual choices (“you don’t need to have sex”), he was now inviting students to critically examine and question an existing problem in society. Though this may not seem incredibly groundbreaking or particularly feminist, Mr. W was acknowledging that homophobia may even exist in students’ homes and be supported by their parents and families. By challenging a strong belief that could possibly exist in students’ homes, Mr. W put feminist teaching into practice.

While Mr. W did tell his students that he is not there to enforce his own opinion, students asked him what he believes. Mr. W said that he has gay friends, both men and women, and that he is comfortable hanging out with them. He explained that there is an understanding that they are different and that is ok. To ease their fears, he even said that both he and his brother “have been hit on by gay men and that it is ok, you just tell them that you are straight” (4 Feb 2004). At this point, the class period was over and Mr. W ended the class saying, “if you are against homosexuality, you are against a lot” (4 Feb 2004). A student sarcastically shot back, “oh that is so deep!” (4 Feb 2004) and while I understand the students could have thought his closing statement was a tad corny, his message was not. As he set up a forum for students to question homophobia, he used his own experience in the classroom as an example of the outcome of challenging homophobia.

Even after class, the students continued to discuss homophobia and dealt with it much better than I thought eighth grade boys would. One student said, “If my best friend came out, that would be ok” (4 Feb 2004). Another group of students discussed when people who be “against homosexuals”, with one student postulating that it “is
because people are afraid they are going to rape them, and they aren’t” (4 Feb 2004).
A student answered, calmly saying, “that’s not why I’m against them” (4 Feb 2004).
Unfortunately, they walked out of the classroom and took the conversation with them.
Even though I was not able to hear their entire conversation, the very tone of the entire
conversation was heartening. Using the skills they learned from their class with Mr. W,
students were not only challenging notions of homophobia in society, but also in each
other. And their fellow students were responding, not out of rashness, but in hopes of
proving their point.

Though Mr. W runs the gamut of political stances regarding the teaching of sex
education, the bulk of his teaching is fairly common. “If the subject of homosexuality is
to be taught, it is most likely to be taught in high school health classes” (Telljohann,
Price, Poureslami, and Easton 1995). While this does make sense- sex education is
the place in school to critically examine sexuality- “87 percent [of educators who do
teach homosexuality] teach for less than one class period to two class periods” (Telljohann et al). A true feminist position on sex education would tackle issues such as
homophobia and sexism more in-depth and over a longer period of time. But this is not
to undermine Mr. W’s feminism in the classroom in anyway. During the second class
period devoted to homosexuality, I was genuinely and pleasantly surprised to see Mr. W
engage the students in a critical look at themselves and our society. That this quick
feminist moment did not categorize his entire teaching style should not dampen any
hopes. If sex education reform in sex education is going to happen, baby steps must
first be taken. Mr. W’s lesson on homosexuality is one such step.
What is Already Known: Sports and Media in the Classroom

In almost every single class that I visited, Mr. W or the students made some reference to media in order to either ask a question or clarify a point. When I discuss media, I am referring to mass communication, and for most adolescents, the mass communication they are most exposed to is the entertainment industry. When media was brought up in class, it was used in a number of different ways. Most often, students and Mr. W would draw specific examples from television and movies in order to support or further explain their point. In a few other cases, famous actors or musicians would be used as examples when ordinary, everyday people would have sufficed, but in an effort to entertain and hold students’ attention, Mr. W relied on their star power.

Media was mostly referred to in discussions on relationships and personal decisions regarding sexuality, and more often than not, negatively. In a discussion about intimacy in a romantic relationship, Mr. W said, “some people use sexual intimacy to gain emotional intimacy” (Fieldnotes 11 Feb 2004). Almost immediately, a student raised his hand and said, “just like in that movie Swimfam! she goes crazy on him!” (11 Feb 2004). Other students laughed, but Mr. W agreed and told him that he is perfectly right and that was a good example of how people manipulate sexual intimacy to gain emotional closeness. Included in this discussion on sexual emotional intimacy were the dangers of casual sex. Mr. W asked students to remember what was currently the big issue on “Real World: San Diego”, a very popular reality television show. From numerous replies from the class, Mr. W pieced together the story of Robin and Randy, who had cuddled in his bed, but Robin was upset because Randy was not interested in
her. In both of these instances, examples from the media showed the negative side affects of bad sexual choices.

Sex education does frequently focus on the negative side affects of exploring childhood sexuality, and therefore, most of the examples Mr. W and his students used reinforced and highlighted negative choices. But Mr. W’s sex education class did not only focus on the negative consequences. In his lesson on homosexuality, Mr. W named media as one of three factors that determine homosexuality and level of conformability for gay people to come out of the closet. He included historical media in his lecture. While not explicitly known by the students, they could still understand the weight of the media from the 1950s because they are under the influence of the current media. From their own bank of cultural knowledge, Mr. W referred to different television shows as gay friendly and this effect on young gay men. Something that I saw lacking from this discussion of homosexuality and media was any discussion of AIDS. When AIDS first became a noticeable medical epidemic, popular and news media slandered homosexuals, saying they were being punished for their deviant sexual acts with a disease from God. Through the work of sex education and medical science, the popular view of AIDS has changed to a realistic notion of AIDS as a disease that anyone can contract. However, there is a blemish on American media for the defamation of gay people and Mr. W failed to cover it. Despite this, Mr. W did paint a positive picture of change in the media regarding homosexuals.

By tying media into sex education, Mr. W highlighted the public nature of puberty and the formation of sexuality. An agonizing time, adolescence is partly so hard because it can’t be hidden. Voices crack, boys have spontaneous erections, and wet
dreams soil their sheets. The media is not only a place of commonality for students, but also a salve to heal their wounds of growing up. Negative images of poor sexual choices proliferate and serve as examples of what to avoid. Positive attitudes towards different expressions of sexuality foster a greater tolerance. Mr. W worked with previous experiences of known media to incorporate positive ideas about sexuality.

With the popularity of professional sports, athletics are another form of media. However, unlike popular actors, famous athletes share more in common with young boys: sports. At the Goat Crossing School, all students participate in physical education and most play after school sports as well. In discussions before, during, and after class, sports dominate as the most popular topic. The sex education classes for both the eighth and tenth grade met in a classroom in the athletic complex, one of a few main buildings on campus. Sex education classes were held during school periods that were usually dedicated to physical education, and for this reason, were in the athletic complex. Two walls of the classroom are windows, creating a fishbowl-like feeling. Often, teachers and other students walked by, looked in, and tried to contact both the teacher and students in the classroom. The classroom was located in a high traffic area near lockers and coaches’ offices, contributing to a sense of being on display while in sex education class.

Sports were used in class much like media: to create a personal tie with the material by connecting it to previous experience. Engaging students in material by connecting it to their experience is the hallmark of a good teacher; Mr. W was able to excite students to learn and link different parts of their lives together. But in the case of the classroom, each student was not treated as an individual. Sports metaphors and
analogies were used in general discussion to explain concepts for the entire class. If a student was not heavily interested or involved in sports, he would be losing out in Mr. W's class.

Through his use of sports in teaching his class, Mr. W perpetuated an ideal of heterosexual masculinity that centered on physical activity and athletics. And for most of the students in the classroom, this was relevant. Many of the boys in the classroom not only played sports for Goat Crossing, but also closely followed professional sports (Fieldnotes 5 Jan 2004, 3 Feb 2004, 6 Feb 2004). They talked to Mr. W about both school and professional sports and even had to put up with distractions from other schoolmates coming into the classroom to tell Mr. W that they could not make practice (12 Jan 2004). Actions like these reinforced Mr. W's place in the classroom not only as a teacher, but as a coach. As a prominent member of the coaching staff, it would be logical that Mr. W would inculcate sex and masculinity together in sex education.

As for those few students who do not strongly associate with sports, they did not often speak up about this strong relationship, but let their silence speak for them. In a rare occasion of resistance, however, they voiced their concerns. Right before handing out their first test, Mr. W asked his class if they would like to have any bonus extra credit question. Immediately, students cried out from across the room: “who scored all the Eagles points?” “who was the man last night?” “ask something about the Colts game?” (12 Jan 2004). From a quiet corner of the class, I heard one student pipe up and ask, “can it be something non-sports related?” (12 Jan 2004). In the end, Mr. W decided to not give them an extra credit question because of their raucous behavior. But this lone voice in the classroom did finally make a point that sexuality does not need to be tied to
sex. The special value given to sports knowledge in Mr. W’s sex education classroom was a value that most students could cash in on, but for those who were not sports oriented, the sports slant of Mr. W’s classroom was a drawback.

Incidentally, the extra credit question that Mr. W was planning on giving his students was on the score of the Eagles-Packers game from the previous weekend. All of the students got the right answer, negating its purpose as an extra credit question but supporting my point of his connections between sex and sports. On a thirty five question test, thirty four asked students to show an understanding of male and female reproductive anatomy. The thrifty fifth tested their ability to either watch the game or pay attention during the first five minutes of class when the game was at the center of discussion. I have often had teachers give random and easy extra credit questions, but in conjunction with other classroom references to sports, Mr. W’s inclusion of this extra credit question tied sports and sex even closer.

**Current Sex Education: Completing the History**

My study of Mr. W’s sex education class completes my history of sex education. By focusing intensely on my observations at the Goat Crossing School, I illuminate the current phase of sex education with personal accounts of a sex education reality. This last chapter of my analysis reflects how sex education teaching practices have and have not changed in the United States. Mr. W and his class are snapshots of current education, providing a perfect opportunity to give texture and life to this discourse.
The content of sex education has remained largely unchanged since the beginning of the twentieth century. With a focus on reproductive anatomy and prevention of STDs, early and current sex education both work under schools of contagion and development (Carter 2001). This information is not to be excluded or taken for granted; how a human body works and diseases that plague it are important things to know. But when these aspects of sexuality are held up above all else, sex is reduced to the mechanics of reproduction and fear of contracting diseases. However, sex educators of the past and present believe that “it is better to be safe than sorry; and it is better to be scared that syphilitic” (Carter: 231).

Though sex education has had the same focus through time, additional aspects of sexuality are examined in Mr. W’s classroom. Discussions regarding romantic, friendly, and familial relationships, homosexuality, masturbation and safe sex all enrich current sex education. Whereas sex education in the past avoided mentioning the sex act in any way, shape or form, Mr. W drew out these particularly delicate issues. He realized that students had questions about them and his sex education class was about more than reproduction but also occupied with students’ concerns about their budding sexuality.

This focus on students’ concerns places Mr. W inline with SIECUS’s liberal educational philosophy. While still concerned with the traditional family and acceptable displays of sexuality, both SIECUS and Mr. W created sex education programs that allow for questioning and discussion surrounding sexuality. Mr. W did not try to hide this fact from his students; he forced them to let their guard down by asking them to acknowledge slang words such as sack, nuts, boner, dick, cock, fag, and gay in the
classroom (Fieldnotes 2 Dec 2003, 9 Dec 2004, 2 Feb 2004). He took all questions seriously, even those that incited some students to laugh— for example, “does it hurt the girl the first time she has sex?” (9 Dec 2003) and “is phone sex real sex?” (11 Feb 2004). This classroom was part lecture hall, part therapy session, and part sex column. For each element, Mr. W functioned as a different person, but together, students were given the opportunity to safely explore sexual questions, doubts, and desires.

Mr. W was able to create this open classroom because of his belief in the efficacy and performativity of sexual speech. Like all sex education critics and supporters, Mr. W understood the power of words in sexual discourse. He agrees with conservative critics that sexual speech will drive students to explore their sexuality, but he did not view this as a drawback but a boon of an explicitly sexual discourse. Though still centered in a quasi-liberal, semi-conservative view of sexuality, Mr. W did encourage his students to ask any and all questions they had about sex and sexuality during the class. In conjunction with this open discussion were strictures and warnings of the danger of premarital sex. Therefore, students were able to ask questions with the understanding that Mr. W would answer them honestly but they did not escape an abstinence based curriculum.

Though Mr. W’s overall pedagogy reflects elements of a conservative past, his mixture of political teaching stances provide hope for future sex education. Sex education reformer Neil Davidson calls for “putting communication at the center of the learning process” (1990: 6, emphasis original). Mr. W did just that, inviting questions and comments from his students in every class. Also, by focusing on more than “the facts of life”, Mr. W reflected a changed sex education that recognizes the importance of
“desires, feelings, behaviors, and opinions which constitute the way we experience our sexuality” (Davidson: 6, emphasis original). Despite the drawbacks of a heavily sports centered classroom, Mr. W was able to construct a safe site of sexual exploration for his students.
My Work in Academia

“Since the classical age, there has been a constant optimization and an increasing valorization of the discourse of sex” (Foucault 1978: 23). I am not the first to tackle this subject. Nor am I the first to involve education in the discussion. With John Dewey’s groundbreaking educational philosophy of the early twentieth century, educational practice has come under the scrutiny of educational philosophers. Dewey paved the way with his treatises on experience in the classroom, and since his time, the study of education has enjoyed the fruits of many theorists’ and researchers’ labors and now, mine. Though my subject of sex in education has been researched and discussed since the classical age, I do feel comfortable stating that my area of research— all boys school— and consequential analysis— educator focused— are particular areas that are lacking in the general academic discourse of anthropology and education.

What We Learn From a Comparison

Anthropology is classically structured as the study of other cultures in an effort to better understand the universality of the human experience. Though anthropologists have turned their critical eye to American culture in the recent past, the bulk of anthropological material still focuses on non-American and non-Western countries and societies. Though my thesis focuses intensely on an American history of sex education, comparative work from other cultures helps to highlight the particular Anglo European method of sex education to be found in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia.
Students in America learn a great deal about sex from sources outside of the classroom (Szirom 1998: 86-87), yet formal sex education programs are a hallmark of Western education. Research-based academic collections such as *The Woman in the Body* (Martin 1987) and *Power, Reproduction, and Gender* (Harcourt 1997) look at the reproduction of sexual knowledge outside of an institutional setting (i.e. school). With chapter entitled “Cross-generational Knowledge Transfer on Reproductive Health Among Women in Ghana” (Greenstreet and Banibensu in Harcourt: 58-71) and “Codes of Honor: Reproductive Life Histories of Domestic Workers in Rio de Janeiro” (Pitanguy and de Mello e Souza in Harcourt: 72-97, collections as these and others examine less formal ways of education. While they offer insight to cultural practices, my only interactions with Mr. W and his students took place inside of the classroom.

Yet, even those works that focus on the experience of education inside of the classroom do no speak directly to my experience or thesis. With the spread of feminist scholarship, studies of sex education primarily focus on the experience of young girls and women in the classroom (Buston and Wight 2002; Langille, Marshall, and Graham 2001; Lees 1993; Fine 1998; Weekes 2002) or the experience of students in mixed-sex classrooms (Thorne 1994; Winn 1995). Though the majority of literature and focus is on women, the recent surge of scholarship focused on men and masculinity has researchers looking at boys in the classroom (Francis and Skelton 2001; Hilton 2003; Kehily 2002). Even in this area, more work is being done in England and Australia than in the United States, so specific issues dealing with laws and history do not relate directly to my thesis.
In much of the studies of sex education in schools, researchers tend to not focus on what they see as the obvious: sex education classrooms and other sites of explicit teaching of sex. Instead, they tend to focus on what happens in the hallways, other classrooms and in the school in general as way of exploring non-institutionalized ways of teaching sexual knowledge (Francis and Skelton 2001; Fraser 1972; Shapiro 2001). Like the case of research of sex education in different cultures, these studies focus on important but less formal ways of education. This thesis examines a particular classroom; I did not spend any time with the students outside of their classroom. My experience is limited to what happened in those particular periods I attended, not their time between classes or in after school programs. Research on informal methods of sexual knowledge transmission, while they interest me, does not directly apply to my work here.

Besides my focus in an all male setting, I am concentrating on the teacher in the classroom opposed to the students. Logically, most research on education concerns itself with the students in the classroom; students are the main focus of curriculum, the teacher, other students, administrators, etc. By looking at teachers, I’m hoping to not only dissect how we teach sex education, but also to supplement what little scholarship there is that directly addresses the role of the teacher in the classroom (Bibbings 1996; Epstein and Johnson 1998, Kehily 2002; Mac an Ghaill 1994).

Outside of strict academic scholarship, there is a great deal of literature that addresses the concerns of teachers (Allen 1987; Bradley, Jarchow and Robinson 1999; U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Public Health Service, Health Services Administration, Bureau of Community Health Services 1979 and 1980) and
parents (Feldman and Rosenthal 2002; Roffman 2000) with respect to sex education. Though this literature is not specifically academic, it represents the real world applications of each of the three methods of teaching sex education I’ve described: conservative, liberal, and feminist (Lees 1993: 215-220).

During my reading of anthropological and sex education literature, comparisons crept up between my experiences in the Goat Crossing School and sex education in other countries. Though vastly different in venue (from family, friends, social structures versus teachers in the classroom), sex education the world round focuses on the same primary goals: to normalize and support the formation of the traditional family. Those who deviate from a traditional family—prostitutes, gays and lesbians, promiscuous hooligans—are ethically lose; the evil vices that attack the family (sexually transmitted diseases, pre-marital sex) are immoral acts. Blatantly present in the early years of sex education in the western culture (Carter 2001; Lees 1993) and equally as clear in other societies (Calabrini and Vaccaro in Harcourt: 139-167; Roemer and Paxman 1985), the family as a locus of concern transcends culture as an important focus of education on reproduction.
Appendix

The following are the lists that Mr. W wrote on the board during their lesson on homosexuality on 4 February 2004. An analysis of this class is in Conservative, Liberal, and Feminist Teaching Practices.

**Racism**
- Racial separation
- Murder/tortured
- Separate but equal
- Inferior- dangerous
- Skin color
- Great person, shouldn’t matter
- Reason: Different, taking jobs

**Anti- Semitism**
- Past writings
- Condemned to the past
- Murder
- Inferior- threat?
- Religion
- Beliefs are different
- Reason: Blame

**Homophobia**
- God’s disease to kill of homosexuality
- (AIDS)
- Homosexual activity in Ancient Greece
- Bible
- People think that gays are different.
Annotated Bibliography


As with other books in my research, Bibbings’ fieldwork and information are British in origin and therefore, I could take no direct examples of how the law affects sex education. Despite this, in her more general discussion of sex education, she further elaborates on the feminist stance of teaching sex education. She focuses on sex education that is primarily in the school, and not the education students receive from their parents or the media.


At the advice of my advisor, I picked up Susan Bordo late in the thesis game. As a feminist scholar, I was attracted to Bordo’s assessment of popular culture in the formation of sexuality, specifically young female sexuality. However, I found that her concentration on media did not fit as well with my thesis as Dewey’s focus on students’ previous experience in the educational setting. Since I would have used her theory to analyze the same notes that I am looking at through Dewey, I didn’t want to be
redundant. In addition, reading Bordo did give me a taste of how other feminist scholars have used Foucault’s theories on sexuality to inform their own work.


Focusing on the 1900-1940, Carter examines curriculum, manuals, and popular literature to describe the early sex education movement. She connects different methods of teaching to the common goal of purity of marriage. I model my explanation of early sex education after her separation into two different schools, those of the knowledge of contagion and development, because they can be discussed separately from each other while sharing the same goal. I set my history to see how they connect to each other temporally.


As a manual for educators working with adolescent boys in sex education, Neil Davidson’s book takes the feminist political stance and puts into workable teaching practice. He briefly considers the tempestuous history of sex education and how it has failed boys. He aims to correct this failing and the majority of his book focuses on teaching teachers how to educate young boys in more than just the biology of reproduction. I focused most of my attention in the beginning of the book which concerns itself with broader questions of sex education for boys but the rest of the book
testifies to the fact that there are those who are looking to reform sex education with a feminist political stance.


Considered to be the father of educational theory, Dewey’s theories of experience in the classroom and educational settings shaped, and continue to shape, the formation of progressive classrooms. While not the easiest read in the world, Dewey presents a case for more interactive education that allows children to draw upon their own lived experience in contrast to learning about others’ experiences. In learning through their own experiences, students will gain a richer and more fulfilling education, compared to the rote memorization of lecture-based curricula. The integral role of students’ experience in the efficacy of education must play a role in a successful teacher’s pedagogical choices. By relying on students’ previous experiences to introduce new and sensitive material, teachers are able to connect abstract material to the reality of students’ lives.

Fieldnotes 2, 9, 11, 18 December 2003; 5, 12, 14, 22 January 2004; 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 17 February 2004.

It is my fieldnotes that provide me with my thesis. Without them, this would just be an interesting research paper, relatively flat with respect to personal experience and real texture.

Daunted by his wordy sentence structure and how often he is referred to, I hesitated to pick up Foucault’s major work on sexuality. However, once I did, I found him much easier to comprehend then I had originally dreaded. Perhaps this is because I read *The History of Sexuality* out loud and engaged more of my senses, but reading Foucault clarified not only my own thoughts on my fieldwork, but shed light on the foundation that other theorists have used. More than anything, I have used Foucault as a justification for exploring issues of discourse in the classroom. Like Bordo and Wagener before me, I am able to utilize Foucault to give my research and thoughts credence.


A look into sex education in England, Francis and Skelton look at an area that is often studied: the construction of gender and sexuality in the classroom. However, unlike others, the train their focus to the educators’ role in students’ personal gender construction. Training on sex educators’ role, they explore the direct impact on the students. Their work again gives credence to my own work and focus on the educator as a powerful force in the classroom.

This is the main website for the school where I observed classes. It has basic information for all three sections of the school- Lower, Middle, and Upper- as well as addresses from all the Heads of the Schools, the school’s mission statement, and brief history. The web address that I provided is not the correct one, but in order to maintain the school’s privacy that I take into account in my thesis, I had to provide an acronym for the school’s website as well.


Again, I look to England for the specific focus on sex education and young men. In this particular article, Hilton, who has done extensive work in sex education and young men, focuses not on what is taught, but whom students prefer to be taught by and how they convey the sensitive material of sex education. She discovers that personality traits- “ability to generate trust, empathetic, non-judgmental, etc.” (p. 33) are more important than the gender of the teacher. I include this information to show that Mr. W is a close to ideal sex education teacher from the ever-important viewpoint of male students.


Sex education researcher Hilton again writes on the experience of boys in sex education. In this article, she addresses deficiencies that currently exist in England that are damaging to the experience for young men. She calls not only for reform in sex
education for male students, but also for revising education in general so that the general attitude boys have to education changes.


Irvine examines the fear and the reverence that sex education critics and supporters have concerning the performativity of sexual speech. She looks at different instances where both critics and supporters critique sex education pedagogy and legislature change, based on how efficacious sexual speech is in changing the attitudes and behavior of students.


Irvine focuses particularly on large cultural battles that happen in America that center around sex education. While it is a history of sex education, her focus on the big issues draws out important material. However, a drawback is that she doesn’t provide the historical backdrop for all of the battles; for example, how the battle over sex education in the late sixties mirrors debates from the early twentieth century. Overall, an excellent resource, as the background information can be obtained from a number of other sources and authors.

Though Kehily bases all of her fieldwork in the UK, *Sexuality, Gender, and Schooling* directly addresses many of the issues I want to develop in my thesis. One of her chapters is even based in an all boys secondary school. She employs other authors’ theoretical frameworks to explain and present her own data, and through this book, Kehily introduced me to new ways of organizing my thoughts: Michelle Fine’s “three discourses…[of] sexuality as violence, sexuality as victimization, and sexuality as individual morality” (97) and Sue Lees’ “three political stances in relation to the teaching of sex education: conservative, liberal, and feminist.” (169). Though I do not use Fine’s theories on discourse, I do form one large part of my analysis of my fieldwork on Lees’ political stances in teaching.


In this chapter in her book on the construction of sexuality of young girls, Lees looks to the sex education classroom as an explicit site of inequality for young girls. Though the majority of her book and this chapter focuses on young women in single sex and mixed sex situations, Lees provides a concrete and straightforward way of looking at different ways of teaching sex education. She claims that teaching “sex education is not politically neutral” (215) and that there are three distinct political stances: conservative, liberal and feminist. I took to Lees’ analysis of teaching, as I saw each of these three stances reflected in Mr. W’s teaching. Using her as a theoretical framework for
analyzing Mr. W’s teaching, in particular his lesson on homosexuality, I work within a trusted scholarship on sex education; Kehily also refers to Lees in her study of sex education.


A companion to the PBS series of the same name, School gives a brief overview of the history of public education in the United States from 1770-2000. Because it covers such a large time period, the book lacks specific detail on the issue of sex education, but provides a critical foundation for the understanding of the track of education in America in general.

Mr. K., Personal Interview. 7 January 2004.

As the head of the physical education department in the middle school, Mr. K also heads the sex education department. We talked casually about his thoughts on the sex education program- its strengths and weaknesses, what he would change and why.

Mr. W., Personal Interview, 7 January 2004.

This first interview, I asked Mr. W the same questions I did of Mr. K- his basic thoughts on the sex education program and its strengths and weaknesses. I also talked to him about how the students know him primarily and how he is seen in the school.
Mr. W., Personal Interview, 26 March 2004.

In this second interview, Mr. W and I talked more about his particular history with sex education at Goat Crossing School, which for him covers both his history as a student and teacher. We talked about how he would change the program, how he has prepared himself for teaching the classes, and went over his lesson plans. These two interviews with Mr. W were in addition to time spent after almost every class, talking about what went on during the class period.


A comprehensive history of teaching of sex in America, Moran’s Teaching Sex focuses on the construction of an idea of adolescence as the pivotal moment of sex education in America. He focuses on sex education in public schools, a logical connection from his main interest of shaping of sexuality. What I found to be a bit lacking was that he did consider outside influences, such as media, in the construction of an adolescent sexuality. Other research I’ve read has always made a point of stressing the importance of not only what happens inside of the classroom, but also the daily reality of students’ lives. Aside from this point, Moran constructs a lucid history that is quoted by other researchers (Carter 2001: 213).
In a pithy article aimed at both parents and teachers, Sagrase and Giannetti call attention to the different messages about sex we are teaching to our children. “We teach our daughters to say ‘no’, and we discreetly urge the use of condoms for our sons” (34). They agree that the discourse on sex for young men needs to change and they set out particular points in changing this discourse. However, they also are quick to add that talk on “sex education does not give young people permission to have sex. It does give them permission to talk with their parents about their desires and feelings, and gives them help in practicing to make sound decisions” (35, emphasis original). In a way similar to Mr. W in part of his homosexuality lecture (see Conservative, Liberal, and Feminist Teaching Practices), Sagrase and Giannetti call for a reform from the conservative political stance, but only to a liberal teaching method that preaches abstinence.

Scales, Peter. “Sex Education in the ‘70s and ‘80s: Accomplishments, Obstacles and Emerging Issues” Family Relations October 1981: 557-566.

A review of the major events of sex education in the 1970s in the United States, Scales’ article not only covers the debate over sex education but also foresees the major trends of sex education for the 1980s. He adequately covers an entire decade of sex education legislature and foresees the problems advocates of sex education will have in
the 1980s. Scales give an accurate picture of a view of sex education from the 1970s, written as current news and not history.


Like Carter, Strong focuses on the early 20th century to create a foundation for the history sex education in the United States. Carter discusses three particular goals and to what level they were fulfilled by early sex education. Overall, Carter is a wealth of information on early 20th century sex education, but I find it difficult to take his entire article seriously when he draws a comparison between women’s ability to orgasm and negative attitudes toward sex. I do realize that negative social values on women’s sexuality can certainly affect women’s ability to express themselves sexually, but I feel that Strong takes this sentiment to an extreme when he uses “incidence of orgasm as a standard for judging sexual responsiveness.” The full passage is included below.

‘It is impossible to determine for me the degree to which these new attitudes toward sexuality affected the degree of pleasure and satisfaction that they experience in sexual relations. A negative orientation toward sex does not usually render a man impotent… For women, however, negative attitudes toward sex frequently make them incapable of experiencing orgasm, which suggests that the incidence of orgasm is a fairly reliable standard for judging sexual responsiveness’ (p. 134)


The danger with using information from 1988 is to forget that it is not current. Rather than discussing current sex education, Szirom paints a picture of the discussion that surrounded sex education in the mid to late 1980’s and in particular, in Australia.
Though the information is from another country and another time, Szirom shows not only the commonalities of sex education in many countries (she uses information from studies in the UK and US to support herself), but also the continuity over time of sex education. As it was in 1988 in Australia, it is in 2004 in Pennsylvania: “sex education as it is currently taught, rather than being a radical subject which challenges the status quo, in fact maintains the established order” (56).


Unlike most of my other research, Telljohann, Price, Poureslami, and Easton provided hard figures concerning sex education. Sending out surveys to four hundred schools in eight different states, Telljohann et al. looked for answers to the following questions:

1) Do secondary health teachers teach about homosexuality and, if they do, what do they teach and how much time do they spend on the topic? 2) Where have they received most of their information on homosexuality? 3) How comfortable and competent do they think they are in teaching about homosexuality? 4) What are the perceptions of secondary health teachers regarding adolescent homosexuality? 5) Do the perceptions of secondary health teachers vary by age, education, or number of years as a teacher?

While all of these questions interest me, I had access to only enough information to answer the first one and that is what I relate to my experience with Mr. W.

From all of my research, Wagener’s work mirrors my thesis the most. She uses Foucault’s work in *The History of Sexuality* to frame her look at the history of sex education in Milwaukee, WI. Looking at the politics and pedagogies of sex education, Wagener traces the larger trends I wrote about in my History of Sex Education, particularly the Early Years, specifically to this Wisconsin town. She proves to me that my work is not entirely off base, scholarship wise.


Written, directed and produced by medical reporter Jeanne Blake, *What Works* aims to portray all the different standardized sexuality educations being taught in the United States. Compared to sex education, which covers basic biological reproductive matters, sexuality education concerns itself with the social aspects of sex, including relationships and the expression of sexuality. Though not an unbiased view of sexuality education—you can quickly tell what type of education she thinks is better—*What Works* offers the viewpoints of not only educators and theorists on sex education, but also includes interviews from teachers, students, and teachers and includes footage from classrooms across the country and from town meetings that are debating the issue of abstinence-focused education. Also, it was a nice change from the barrage of written material on
sex education, though Jeanne Blake did rely heavily on Power Point-esque slides to convey information about different sexuality education programs.

**Works Cited in My Work in Academia**

The following works highlight the breadth of the literature on sex education, both formal and informal, in western Anglo American cultures and other as well


U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Public Health Service, Health Services Administration, Bureau of Community Health Services. A Decision-

