**Article Summary: Heterosexism / Homophobia “But I’m Not Gay”. What Straight Teachers need To Know about queer theory**By Elizabeth S. Meyer

What is Queer Theory?

• Questions the assumptions about relationships, identity, gender and sexual orientation

- Debunks/disproves the strict normalizing categories that exist beyond gay/straight, man/woman, masculine/feminine.

• Questioning these categories and assumptions allows for teachers to create a new understanding of the world for their students.

How Gender Works to Limit Students’ Opportunities

• Traditional gender roles contribute to the power dynamics in schools and society.

• Some of the ways parents subtly teach their children to fit within distinct gender roles is in the shows they watch or clothes and toys that parents buy for their children.

• The leadership that parents and society have, allowing them to create gender roles is called *hegemony.*

• Judith Butler believes that gender is a “performance” of identity. Our behaviors show our identity (hair, clothes, mannerisms, body language) externally, and fall under the category of being masculine or feminine. If something does not fit in the traditional view, harassment begins. Kids are aware of the physical features that make someone male/female.

• Because of these set characteristics of each gender, women are targeted if they’re assertive, physically strong or competitive, and boys are targeted if they’re sensitive, creative or cooperative.

The Harmful Effects of Homophobia and Heterosexism

• Educators need to educated about these issues so that they can educate students of the effects of discriminating against others, how to relate to others and what is appropriate school behavior.

• Bullying is a cause of the underlying social pressures and is a form of discrimination in which others are expected to be normalized; favoring mainstream identities and behaviors over marginalized ones.

* Can increase depression, suicide attempts, risk of drug/alcohol abuse and can lower one’s idea of their self worth.

How Ignoring Homophobia Teaches Intolerance

• Schools often censor anything that is positive about homosexuality which reinforces the heterosexual norm.

* Richard Friend believes that systematic inclusion and systematic exclusion in used in schools.
* Systemic inclusion = negative/false idea about homosexuality.
* Systematic exclusion = “where positive role models, messages and images about lesbian, gay and bisexual people are publicly silenced”

• Within schools, students are ironically taught to not show their sexuality but at the same time they affirm heterosexual behaviors.

How Queer Pedagogy Can Transform Schools

• Janna Jackson who examined evolution in research and language of homosexuality and schooling. Her findings:

- Before ‘90 homosexual youths were considered to be victims; gay men being the focus.

- Between ’94- ’96 studies consisted of gender roles and creating identities

- After ’97, studies addressed the hidden school curriculum that encouraged heterosexists ideology to younger generations.

- Shows the dominant heterosexuality ideology that is addressed to students.

In correspondence to her research, “gay and lesbian studies have shifted from studying an imagined, unified experience of being gay in schools to a broader and open understanding of how categories of gender and sexuality are taught and experienced in schools and has clearly documented the effects of the emergence of Queer Theory”.

• Kevin Kumashiro’s writes, “learning is about disruption and opening up to further learning, not closure and satisfaction” and “education involved learning something that disrupts our commonsense view of the world”. Kumashiro believes that to fight oppression in schools, 4 approaches needs to be made:

- “education for the Other, education about the Other, education that is critical of privileging and Othering, and education that changes students and society”

- Not a guaranteed solution to the problem. Educators should try to find their own ways to deconstruct the traditional ways of learning.