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# **“Patriarchy & Gender Norms: The Case Study of BGLQT Sexuality Education in Greece”**

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*“So, the freedom of the homosexual presupposes an inner freedom that realizes situations way more than external demonstrations and rallies. Certainly, as a conscious member of the society, the homosexual should, with all his strength, try to change the laws that benefit nobody and harm many. He and she should by all means make the necessary and saving extortions at the short-sighted and blind state, because repressed homosexuality is the cause of most of the social calamities”.*

–Yannis Tsarouchis, 1989

*Cover: “Military arresting the spirit”, 1965. Yannis Tsarouchis Foundation*

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## **Abstract**

Patriarchy and the BGLQT sexuality education is studied in this paper, including the case study of the Greek society and education. Heterosexual social norms are deeply consolidated, especially in countries which are particularly patriarchal. Society falsely perpetuates ideologies that want sexuality and gender to be concrete and unfixed, resulting in the exclusion of groups of people who do not relate to marriage and eros between a man and a woman, as homosexual and transgender individuals. At the same time, the idea about manhood and womanhood are also strictly consolidated, a fact that brings confusion and anxiety to individuals who cannot reach the society's standards (e.g. being masculine and strong for men, and being feminine for women). Frequently this creates violence that leads to discrimination and harassment towards people that are different. Education inevitably is the main social institution, after family, which can bring a change, not only by including material including gay issues but also by not providing wrong images about homosexuality. In Europe, even though sex education is widespread, sexuality education regarding emotional and sexual development is considered primitive, by still excluding the BGLQT community in most of the countries. In Greece, the patriarchal social model is strong, while media and church influence significantly the masses. Sexuality education is almost non-existent and sex education is only now slowly included in the curricula, but still based on the heterosexual model. Despite the fact that collectively there is silence concerning sexuality at schools, it is important that individually, educators try to provide on their own information about BGLQT issues and to abolish prejudice. According to the Icelandic model of education, even if there is no sufficient school material on these issues, one of the first steps is to educate young professionals such as teachers via seminars and educational programs about homosexuality and how to equally address all the domains of human sexuality in class.

**Key words:** manhood, womanhood, machismo, patriarchy, BGLQT, sexuality education, gender, problematic masculinity, Greece

## 1. Introduction

There is a debate going on about whether schools should include BGLQT<sup>1</sup> sexuality education<sup>2</sup> in their curricula. While current curricula on sex education fail to address these issues, it is believed, that the inclusion of BGLQT material will provide a better quality of life to BGLQT people and a safer social environment (Rittner, 2012, Sanchez, 2012, McGarry 2013). In Greece particularly, the educational system does not provide information about sex or issues related to homosexuality while the society tends to be rather patriarchal and ‘macho’. A very recent incident in Greece shows that BGLQT sex education could have been a tool to reduce discrimination. Specifically, on February 6, Vaggelis Giakoumakis, a Diary School student in the city of Ioannina in Greece, had disappeared by leaving all his personal stuff in his dormitory of the school where he used to live. One month later, he was found dead after he committed suicide, according to forensic examination. As was discovered, Vaggelis has been a victim of continuous bullying by fellow students, who were “teasing” him for being less “manly” and more feminine. He had been exposed to physical but mainly psychological harassment that hurt him severely. For instance, his fellow students used to put him in a closet and then slip coins inside while they were requesting songs, just like a jukebox. The young student had been repetitively bullied, not because he could be homosexual (no testimonies suggest something like this, even though it is possible) but because he was not as manly as the society was expecting from him (Zikakou, 2015). Even though Greece has made improvements regarding equality and human rights (anti-racism law 2014<sup>3</sup>), incidents of bullying are a very common thing towards every minority, including homosexuals, transgender people and immigrants.<sup>4</sup> The cause for this hatred, the frustration and anger can be found in the hegemonic ideologies that are deeply rooted in the Greek mentality about the world and the society. Men

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<sup>1</sup> The BGLQT abbreviation which stands for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Queer and Transgender has been used in this text in this alphabetical order (instead of LGBTQ) in the content and sense of equality, in case that a community feels that another group is prioritized.

<sup>2</sup> This paper will elaborate on ‘sexuality education’ regarding issues of sexual orientation, relationships and diversity instead of including theory on sexual practices (sex education). “Human sexuality is a natural part of human development through every phase of life and includes physical, psychological and social components” (WHO, 17).

<sup>3</sup> Article 1, law 927/1978, amendment 2014: Any individual with the intention of provoking, urging or stimulating acts that might possibly trigger discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or a group or people based on nationality, color, religion, descent, sexual orientation, gender or disability in a way that threatens the lives, the freedom or the physical integrity of the individuals mentioned above, is punished with the imprisonment of 3 months to 3 years while he or she is required to pay 5.000 to 20.000 euros.

Also see: Pavlou, Miltos. "Racism and Discrimination against Immigrants and Minorities in Greece the State of Play." HLHR-KEMO Annual Report 2007 (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Fotiadi, Ioanna. “Increase of homophobic attacks in the center of Athens”. ‘Kathimerini’ newspaper, Greece 2014

according to these ideologies have to be muscular, manly and dominant while women have to be humble, kind and docile. Men should not behave in a feminine way because this has a correlation with homosexuality which entails submission, passivity and weakness.

Greek education never supported homosexuality or further discussion on gender and the majority of the teachers even today prefer not to talk a lot about these “sensitive” issues. This can also be seen in the material that is selected and approved to be taught which excludes any kind of reference outside the norm. Plato’s *Symposium* is taught for instance, but the part where it becomes obvious that the discussion entails same sex eros is absent: according to Plato, in the primordial state of life, every man was united with his other half - some with a person of the same sex and others with a person of the opposite sex; since then, every man goes through his life by searching for his other half. However, the authors of the school textbook kept completely silent regarding this part in it- thus excluding an essential piece of Plato’s philosophy about human relationships and a different mentality on how humanity functions in general. At Greek schools there is also a famous poet that is taught, Constantine P. Cavafy (1863-1933). Cavafy, despite the conservative Alexandrian society at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, confessed his homosexuality in his poems. His poems can be categorized in the historical ones, the philosophical ones and the sensual ones. In the sensual poems the poet is always in a melancholic manner, he praises same sex love by recalling his memories. Not surprisingly, the sensual poems are the only ones which are not taught at schools.<sup>5</sup>

The examples above show that tolerance is something that can be taught. However, Greek society is still characterized by prudishness and taboos, while patriarchy plays an important role in forming the current social structures that subordinate women and minorities. This paper supposes that there is an important connection between BGLQT sex education, masculinity and discrimination. To what extent can the inclusion of BGLQT sex education in the schools’ curricula be the solution to problems such as homophobia, domestic violence, bullying and sexual abuse in the Greek society? This paper will have the following structure: firstly, it will elaborate on the issues of ‘problematic masculinity’ and machismo by trying to deconstruct patriarchy and the different aspects of masculinity as well as its impacts on society, both positive and negative. Secondly, the theory of ‘performativity of gender’ from Judith Butler will be analyzed in relation to discrimination against BGLQT people. Thirdly, this paper will look at the work of Michel Foucault on ‘History of Sexuality’ and the ‘*repressive hypothesis*’ on examining the history of sex education and the consolidation of hierarchical social norms as we know them today. Following this, will be a discussion of the debate concerning the inclusion of BGLQT sex education at schools in general and then the case study of the Greek education system will be introduced in regards with what is taught concerning BGLQT; the research will also be based on interviews with Greek teachers who

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<sup>5</sup> PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

currently work in the private and public sector. Lastly, there will be recommendations and a conclusion.

## **2. Problematic Masculinity & Machismo: Deconstructing Patriarchy**

The Greek society has been since antiquity fundamentally patriarchal, meaning that the power in both domestic and public sphere is mainly concentrated in the hands of men. While it has been considered functional and benefiting the society, since men can govern while women raise the children, power in the hands of men has been seen to be dangerous mainly due to problems that derive from hypermasculinity. We think of men as the strong gender but if we look deeper, there are many implications that make masculinity problematic, a situation which produces negative outcomes for the society as a whole. To what extent can the expression of masculinity become dangerous in society? Is it possible to weaken patriarchy via education? As will be discussed, many factors contribute to these behaviors, both psychological and biological; nevertheless, as it is expressed by many Western scholars, masculinity should be considered something fixed (Butler, Foucault), a fact that gives space in education to address gender issues and to try to deconstruct, reconstruct and question the notions manhood and womanhood. Patriarchy therefore, as a social model, perpetuates some specific behaviors: problematic (or false) masculinity and machismo are the main notions which can easily lead to a pattern of behaviors as domestic violence, homophobia, sexism and discrimination.

### **2.1 Problematic Masculinity**

Problematic masculinity (or false masculinity) is a theory which explains how society has made a wrong image about how a man should be and behave. Young men feel pressured to live up to a warped perception of what it means to be a man, which entails masculinity (being manly), sexual conquest as well as economic and professional succession (Harding, 2009). Most of the times, the stress felt by men of trying to achieve this high standard of how a perfect man should be in tandem with the physically dominant nature that characterizes them, results in a violent expression towards women and minorities who are not always able to defend themselves, such as homosexuals, mentally ill people and physically small and weak persons (Harding, 2009). According to Warren Farrell, American educator and specialist in men's and women's issues, violence that derive from men, comes from a masculinity that is social constructed; he explains for



instance that western cinematography is all about men killing men (Warren, 16). He characterizes men as the ‘disposable gender’; men kill themselves more frequently than women and they statistically tend to have more chances of committing suicide<sup>6</sup> (Warren, 10, 15). Nevertheless, he is critical about whether we should associate masculinity with power, since according to him ‘violence is almost always the outgrowth of powerlessness’ (Warren, 15). Problematic masculinity helps us understand better the negative side of machismo which will be analyzed in the following section.

## 2.2 Machismo

According to Random House Dictionary, machismo is considered “a strong or exaggerated sense of manliness; an assumptive attitude that virility, courage, strength, and entitlement to dominate are attributes or concomitants of masculinity; a strong or exaggerated sense of power or the right to dominate”. Collins English Dictionary simply refers to machismo as “exaggerated masculine pride”. Machismo vaguely is used to describe a standard manly behavior expressed by men, particularly in the Mexican Culture (Arciniega, Anderson, 19). The term was first used in Latin America by feminists in order to describe the male dominant Latin societies as the Mexican one. Machismo derives from the Spanish word ‘macho’ which means manly; the word macho also comes from the Latin word *masculus* which means dominant. Even though machismo is mainly interpreted in a negative way, there is also a positive aspect less discussed, that entail good manners, respect and protection in regards to masculinity, and that is called *caballerismo*. It is highly important to understand the notion of manhood as something that is socially constructed and historically shifting; this change is not necessarily negative for men because they are not losing something from their masculinity, but rather they just learn how to use their power in a way that they are not harming other members of the society who might be different or ostensibly weaker.

Culturally, society prescribes distinct social roles for men and women respectively and therefore the behaviors for each gender are different (McMillan et al, 546). From a biological perspective, it is argued that male and female brains are functioning in a distinct way. For women, the ‘interpersonal sensitivity’, that is to say the ability to interact more with the environment around you and to sense more deeply exogenous stimuli, is one of the stereotypes that want women to be by nature more peaceable, while men are believed to be physically more powerful, an element which makes them more capable of dominating (Bernieri, 3). Biological reasons are also contributing to men and women having different social roles; for instance, due to pregnancy and childbirth women are putting more effort and time in children, and maternity is one of the domains

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<sup>6</sup> In the middle of the Great Depression (US, 1929) men were 650% more likely to commit suicide than women. Even today unemployed men commit suicide at twice the rate of employed men (Warren, 10-11).

that explain women's sensitivity (Putrevu, 1). As can be seen, high standards set by the society are present for both genders, but these vary significantly. The physique of men and the interpersonal sensitivity women are believed to have, created hegemonic ideologies and a certain social structure that determines roles and behaviors for both genders. Exaggerated masculinity or the so called notion of machismo derives from the high social standards and the predetermined social roles that impose specific social practices and a certain way of life for both men and women. Nevertheless, education is possible to change these hegemonic ideologies and protect the physical and the emotional health of people that receive extensive violence as the BGLQT people who are falling victims to bullying more frequently than others (Meyer, 5).

### **2.3 Negative Aspects of Machismo**

Normally, machismo is associated with the negative characteristics of sexism and hyper masculinity. Many authors and scholars confirm this association and as Arciniega and Anderson indicate in their paper "Toward a Fuller Conception of Machismo": "Writers, such as Imhof (1979), described macho men as violent, rude, womanizing, and prone to alcoholism. Anders (1993) cited authors from various disciplines who typified macho men as incompetent, as domineering through intimidation, and as seducing and controlling women" (Archiniega, et al, 19). Thus, being macho can be understood as the expression of negative domains of manhood, as dominance, violence, oppression, fear. The notion of problematic masculinity, as it was mentioned earlier, explains therefore these domains and how they are enhanced: negative machismo can be understood as the result of the problematic masculinity which brings men at the point of 'breaking out' of the high weight that society puts on them. By feeling powerful and to be able to demonstrate aggression and dominance, men try to confirm their manliness that affects their relationships with others. These characteristics cannot only be found in the relations between men and women but they can be seen in every social aspect in life. Michael S. Kimmel states that manhood is equated with power, over women but also other men and that this 'institutional expression of power' can be seen in the state and the government, national legislatures, in companies and in administrations of schools, universities and hospitals.

Therefore, machismo has impact in both public and private sphere and feminists are acknowledging the fear it creates for minorities, for instance women, homosexuals or even colored men (Kimmel, 217). Kimmel provides the feminist definition of masculinity which states that "feminist women have theorized that masculinity is about the drive for domination, the drive for power, for conquest (Kimmel, 217). As the author indicates, feminists have observed that women in general hold less power than men in the society, while at the same time in both private and public sphere the women feel vulnerable and weak. Remarkably, it is argued that men as individuals feel

powerless even though as a group hold the ultimate power. Kimmel suggests that since men are raised to believe that they are masters of this power, but for various reasons they do not feel it or they lose it, it is no wonder that men are frustrated and angry, a statement that takes us back to the problematic masculinity (Kimmel, 218).

This dominant character of men has concerned many academicians and psychologists who tried to explain the reasons and the roots of this dominant behavior (Arciniega, Anderson, Freud, and Robertson). According to the phallogentric (male-centred) psychoanalysis and Freud, women naturally see their genitals as inferior while the heterosexual sexual practice wants masculine power and feminine passivity, a practice that logically reflects other domains of social life (Barker, 305). In fact, masculinity is believed to reproduce gender inequality since its practices result in subordinating women (Schrock, Schwalbe, 286). In Greece, the relationships between the two sexes are relationships of power that entail subordination, rather than respect and equality; this situation comes to excuse frequently violence against women who, because of lack of solidarity, find difficult to fight against it (GHM, OMCT, 9)<sup>7</sup>. However it is important to distinguish different kind of masculinities since men individually are acting differently.

## **2.4 Impacts: (1) Homophobia, Sexism**

Generally, masculinity is considered as manhood acts that are aiming at distinguishing men from women and femininity and thus helps men to ‘establish their eligibility for gender-based privilege’ (Schrock, Schwalbe, 287). The act of claiming a heterosexual male identity also entails homophobia which as Schrock and Schwalbe argue, reproduces more inequality between men and women by devaluing the latter. This fact shows that hierarchy also exists between men (especially between men and boys) while homophobia can be seen as explicit sexism because of “the implicit insult that a man who wants to have sex with men is like a woman—which is to say, less than a man. Homophobic taunting thus, helps reproduce gender inequality by devaluing women” (Schrock, Schwalbe, 288). Homophobia itself however, does not entail fear of gays but rather fear of being or being perceived as gay. Homophobia is an important phenomenon in understanding certain domains of manhood. Michael Kimmel argues that homophobia can be considered as the fear that other men will unmask us, that they realize we are not real men. This fear, he suggests, leads to silence and this silence presupposes from the perspective of other people, that we as individuals, approve any kind of violence and harassment against women, minorities, homosexuals etc. (Kimmel, 214). At the same time, machismo and manhood acts also entail to a large extent the sexualization of women as a way to claim heterosexuality. Especially in working environments, women are getting sexually

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<sup>7</sup> GHM: Greek Helsinki Monitor  
OMCT: World Organization Against Torture

harassed, both physically and verbally by men, irrespective to the status of the latter. This means that women are not getting harassed only when they have less power and a lower status for instance in a company, but also when they are organizational superiors (Schrock, Schwalbe, 285).

Sexualization of women is also happening by men in order to protect themselves from homophobic abuse by coworkers, by hence claiming strongly their heterosexual identity.

## **2.5 Impacts: (2) Domestic Violence**

As was mentioned earlier, the negative impacts of machismo, concerning mainly violence, can be seen in both private and public sphere. Domestic violence against women and kids is universal phenomenon which is still present and it affects physically and psychologically millions of people. The term domestic violence according to Papagiannopoulou and Gouva actually describes the violent behavior ranging from verbal abuse, physical and sexual assault, to even the possibility of raping or murdering. Not surprisingly, violence is practiced in the majority of cases by men towards women and the kids who mostly keep silent since they do not know from where to ask for help or they are even afraid that the violence will get more intense. Domestic violence against women has been considered a major public health problem with serious consequences for women, affecting their physical but also their emotional integrity in both short and long terms and with a significant social impact (Papagiannopoulou, Gouva, 52). According to an international research, violence against women a problem which is more serious and widespread as it was thought to be. More specifically, a survey in 1999 involving 35 countries around the globe, from all continents, indicated “that between 10% and 52% of women reported being physically abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives, and between 10% and 30% reported they had experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner. Between 10% and 27% of women and girls reported having been sexually abused, either as children or adults” (World Health Organization, 1). In the case of Greece, it has been estimated that 83% of women has received domestic abuse while in 2001, 5278 women had called the Reception Center for Abused Women for help (GHM, OMCT, 9). It is remarkable and disturbing that in the majority Greek women were first reporting to the police domestic abuse after they have received on average 35 incidents of violence, meaning that they were either afraid that their husband will become more violent, or they felt that the state will not provide adequate help and protection (GHM, OMCT, 10).

Masculinity acts can be explicitly violent by resulting in the subordination of minorities, women and so on. The nature of men as the dominators is practiced in both public and personal sphere and we saw that many reasons, both social and biological contribute to that. Nevertheless, since manhood is socially constructed, it changes and varies depending on the place and time while

being a man certainly does not only mean being violent and oppressive. Caballerismo in contrast with machismo involves all these elements that can be found in men that makes manhood a positive concept and a positive stage in a man's life.

## 2.6 Positive Aspects of Machismo: Caballerismo

Caballerismo is understood as the “masculine chivalry” that can be seen in a man; it is the way men can positively contribute to the society in both social and personal life. It entails a sense of responsibility, respect towards others and especially women and not violent behavior in general.<sup>8</sup> In English, caballerismo can be found in someone who is cavalier or a knight while, through time it came to characterize Spanish gentlemen who had an ‘ethical code of chivalry’ and good manners (Archiniega, et al, 20). Caballerismo like machismo is also socially constructed, meaning that the positive elements it entails can be taught and transmitted to children from the family and the school environment. As Blanco (2015) indicates, it has been seen that higher education leads to more advanced levels of caballerismo and a lower level of machismo. He argues that caballerismo is “positively associated with measures of ethnic identity, problem-solving skills, and life satisfaction, whereas traditional machismo has shown positive relations with measures for aggression, antisocial behavior, and alexithymia” (Blanco, 34). The notion of manhood therefore entails complexity and it cannot be described simply as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Children from a very young age are taught what it means to be a man or a woman, and how one should behave properly according to his/her gender. To a large scale the hierarchical notions in our societies are transmitted to the next generations by wanting a clear distinction between men and women, masculinity and femininity.

Despite the fact that men prefer to emphasize this distinction in order to display their masculinity, it has been seen from caballerismo that there is nothing that makes you less of a ‘man’ if you show your feelings or if you respect the diversity in others. The role models that kids have (parents, teachers) are essential in forming their personality and their beliefs. What is lacking mainly from schools, are more elaborate discussions about matters concerning sexuality; due to the fact that kids are not familiar with anything more complex than ‘pink’ and ‘blue’, they tend to become less tolerant adults. One of the debatable theories that will be explained in the next chapter will be the ‘performativity of gender’ from Judith Butler. Despite its complexity as a theory, it can be highly fruitful and used as a ‘food for thought’ when considering sexuality; to be able to

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<sup>8</sup> Caballerismo stems from the original Latin root caballus. Like the English chivalric code, caballerismo developed out of a medieval sociohistorical class system in which people of wealth and status owned horses for transportation and other forms of horsepower. Thus, caballero referred to a land-owning Spanish gentleman of high station who was master of estates and/or ranches. (Archiniega, et al, 2008).

understand the diversity in human beings and that many of the social norms we are used to are socially constructed, is the first step for more liberating thinking. However to what extent is gender socially constructed and how can teacher address this issue in class?

### 3. Gender Performativity & Masculinity

The American philosopher and gender post-structuralist theorist Butler is well known for a term that she created and included in her book *Gender Trouble*<sup>9</sup> which was published in 1990; the term was called 'gender performativity' and it has been one of the most debatable topics in the field of gender studies. But why is this concept important while examining masculinity? To begin with, for Butler, the main and most important core of her study is "agency" meaning the ability of an agent/individual to act in a world, and more specifically in a society (Emirbayer, Mische, 964). Hence she addresses the issue of performative agency as a theatrical act in which gender is understood as a "set of repeated acts". From her point of view, gender is considered an act that has been rehearsed, much like a script, and that people, as actors who perform this script through repeated acts, come to 'perform in the mode of belief'. However there is a distinction between a gender that is performed and a gender that is performative. According to Butler, a gender that is performed is when an agent acts in a specific way by obtaining a specific role. These roles are crucial 'to the gender that we are and the gender we present to the world'. Furthermore, as she argues, when we say that a gender is performative it means that it 'produces a series of effects'. Therefore we act (talk, walk etc.) in ways that we give the impression of being a woman or a man respectively (Butler, 2011). As the author explains:

"In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self [...] Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audiences, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (Butler, 356).

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<sup>9</sup> For the complete work of Judith Butler read "Butler, Judith. "Gender trouble, feminist theory, and psychoanalytic discourse." *Feminism/postmodernism* (1990)

As can be seen, Butler takes gender as something that is not innate, thus something that we are not born with. She sees gender not as something that someone is but rather something that someone does. Continuity is essential since it determines through time specific hegemonic models that come to be considered norms and ergo excluding anything that might be different. Education is important in this case because after family is the main institution to perpetuate heterosexual norms that influence the way children think about their sexuality. As will be discussed on later chapters, Greek educational system for instance, bases human relationships in the content of patriarchy and heterosexuality, by introducing sexuality in children as something concrete and fixed; thus, the information provided creates a narrow-minded vision about sexuality that entails the least of the variety that already exists and it is overtaken.

### 3.1 Opinions Against

Many academicians-philosophers have found Butler's theories problematic (Martha Nussbaum, Rosalyn Diprose, Moya Lloyd). According to Rosalyn Diprose, it is important to understand gender and the body-subject through the interaction with the others; hence, the body-subject is constituted in relation to the others but without conscious intervention (Diprose, 111). For Butler however, there is conscious intervention since up to some point we consciously perform our gender in the way that we want. Diprose argues that a child's body itself, is organized through 'mimesis and transitivity'<sup>10</sup>, and this is "why it can be said that one's lived body is socially constituted: it is built on the invasion of the self by the gestures of others who, by referring to other others, are already social beings" (Diprose 112). Nussbaum agrees up to some extent that the way babies are treated, talked to and even the way their feelings are described, are mainly shaped by the sex the adults believe the baby to have (Nussbaum, 7). Nevertheless, she criticizes Butler's vague way of elaborating on theories and she states that in case Butler argues that babies are coming into the world completely 'inert' and without tendencies, then this statement is less credible and empirically difficult to support (Nussbaum, 7). On the whole, Nussbaum believes that Butlerian theories do not help in any way feminism and the struggle of women. As she states:

"Butler suggests to her readers that this sly send-up of the status quo is the only script for resistance that life offers. Well, no. Besides offering many other ways to be human in one's personal life,

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<sup>10</sup> Transitivity is a psychoanalytic concept suggested by Charlotte Buhler to designate a special kind of identification often observed with small children. With transitivity we identify with the other in a manner that mirrors (that is reversing) our own image. Lacan associated this reversal with the function of what he called "the mirror stage". He argued that transitivity demonstrates the confusion between the I and the other which is a part of imaginary identification (The cultural Reader, 2012).

beyond traditional norms of domination and subservience, life also offers many scripts for resistance that do not focus narcissistically on personal self-presentation. Such scripts involve feminists (and others, of course) in building laws and institutions, without much concern for how a woman displays her own body and its gendered nature: in short, they involve working for others who are suffering.” (Nussbaum, 13).

### **3.2 Agency & BGLQT Community**

Despite the ambiguity of Butler’s arguments, she does achieve to address the problems that the BGLQT community has to face when it comes to discrimination and bullying. Her suggestion is not to stay ‘numb’ to social problems but rather to understand better the deeply diverse society we live in. Butler examines performativity through phenomenology and the feminist theory by trying to approach the nature of women and gender. Both theories have been concerned to distinguish between the various physiological and biological causalities that structure our bodies and the “meanings that embodied existence assumes in the context of lived experience” (Butler 357). Particularly, as Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) argues, ‘woman’ as well as any gender is an ‘historical situation’ rather than a natural fact, meaning it is constructed through time. To the same direction, Butler claims that the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are “renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” (Butler, 359).

Masculinity therefore can also be seen as something not innate which is revised and built up rather than something that always existed. The importance of this realization lies in the fact that as Butler claims the construction of gender is generally based on the so called ‘heterosexual contract’ which may have ‘punitive consequences’ for minorities. Heterosexual contract describes the heterosexual-based system of marriage which requires reproduction between a man and a woman (Butler, 360). Hence, by referring to the ‘normal’ actions posed by the society, Butler indicates that one way in which this system of compulsory heterosexuality is reproduced and concealed is “through the cultivation of bodies into discrete sexes with 'natural' appearances and 'natural' heterosexual dispositions (Butler, 361). According to her, the individual acts are being ‘spawn’ by the hegemonic social conditions meaning that we imitate certain repetitive acts that are given to us as norms. Significant as well is the focus on the feminist theory and gender construction via politics, by arguing that it is primarily political interests which create the social phenomena of gender itself<sup>11</sup>(Butler 361).

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<sup>11</sup> Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions (Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013).



Despite the fact that theatrical performances can meet with political censorship and devastating criticism, gender performances in non-theatrical contexts (as in public) are encountered by more ‘clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions’. The author brings up the issue of the sight of a transvestite on a stage performing by comparing it with the sight of the same person in public and in particular when sitting for example next to us on the bus. As she argues, the latter incident might well trigger the feelings of fear, rage and even generate violence (Butler 363). This statement is confirmed as well in an interview with the gender theorist in 2011 when Butler has been asked about how this notion of gender performativity could possibly change the way we see gender. In her answer she explained how difficult it is for instance for Sissy boys<sup>3</sup> or for Tomboys<sup>4</sup> to ‘function socially without being bullied, without being teased or without even sometimes suffering threats of violence. As well for them to function socially without their parents intervening by saying that you need a psychiatrist or why can’t you be normal?’ (Butler 2011)<sup>12, 13</sup>

By understanding and teaching children about these particular concepts (in a simplified way if it is in a young age since are very complex) what can be achieved is a wider field of alternatives where diversity can flourish and be tolerated<sup>14</sup>. Even though it is still debatable whether gender is socially constructed, the theory of Butler allows us to engage in a more “out of the box” thinking which can be helpful when dealing with gender issues at schools. Especially for transgender people this theory could be helpful in discovering their identity with no taboos, prejudices and guilt. At schools, especially in after the age of 15, educators with the help and guidance of specialists on gender issues could devote some time to explain to children definitions about sexuality and gender that are there but we tend to ignore. Terms as sexuality, sexual orientation, gender norms, transgender, transsexual, gender transition and queer are some important aspects that children have to recognize and be aware of. Additionally, gender performativity, due to its complexity as a theory, can be also addressed in terms of gender fluidity and understanding gender as a continuum; the idea that people regardless their sex, may express their gender in multiple and various ways.

Despite the fact that today the discussion about sex and sexuality regarding gender is happening on a large scale, there is still a prudishness concerning what should be taught to kids, in both parent and school environment. Michel Foucault formulated the *repressive hypothesis* to describe the repressive behavior of the West towards sex between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though he does not agree with the fact that discourse on sex was suppressed, he argues that

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<sup>12</sup> Sissy boy: A boy who is not tough or strong or a boy who is a flat out sissy (Urban Dictionary, 2004)

<sup>13</sup> Tomboy: A girl who dresses and sometimes behaves the way boys are expected to, often into more masculine things like "stronger" sports, computers, or cars. Stereotypically wears jeans, baseball caps, and denim vests/jackets (Urban Dictionary, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Education regarding gender will be discussed later in the chapter about “BGLQT sex education”.

sex became an object of knowledge really fast. However this sex discourse led to categorization of people, to normal and not normal. Most importantly, Foucault suggests that sexuality is definitely not fixed but rather something that can be deconstructed and reconstructed from the beginning; this according to him gives us the opportunity to acknowledge the truth about sex and to weaken the constraining social norms. The next chapter discusses the statements of the author in his book “History of Sexuality” and examines the way that social hegemonic norms came to be consolidated and the way it impacted on how we think about masculinity and femininity.

#### 4. Repressive Hypothesis & Sexuality

The discourse about sex<sup>15</sup> was not always the same as we have come to know it today. Sex in the Western world was considered mainly by the higher social classes an object of taboo and people strictly avoided to discuss about it openly in the public sphere. Michel Foucault, by desiring to describe this repression of sexuality since the seventeenth century, came up with the theory of the *repressive hypothesis*. This theory describes the rise of the bourgeoisie which suppressed the discourse about pleasure, which led to sex being a private domain of someone’s life. Furthermore, sex was restricted in the content of marriage. However, according to Foucault, since the eighteenth century, there has been an intensification and proliferation of the discourse about sex along with a remarkable increased interest for human sexual behavior. Confessions were of high importance, because priests and church came to be the first to discover people’s secret desires and pleasures and thus collect the first data; further, this helped in moving away from the social norm of married couples to other ‘less normal’ categories of people or in cases of sexual prevention, including the homosexuals (Foucault, 30).

As can be seen, repression according to Foucault continued to exist but mainly in terms of suppressing the truth about sexual behavior. The truth, for Foucault was and is the ability to see sexuality as something fluid, something not concrete; is the idea that sexuality can be deconstructed and reconstructed again. As was mentioned earlier regarding the theory of gender performativity, agency is significant for Foucault too as the only way to confront our sexuality. Inevitably, one would suggest that the silence and the prudishness that circulated the notion of sex came as an obstacle in exploring sexuality in all its dimensions, resulting in consolidated hierarchal social norms that still suppress people’s sexuality today.

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<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault in his book “The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge” talks about “sex” but he does not provide a clear definition nor explanation of the nature of the term that he is using. The text allows us to suppose that the author is referring to sexual practices, instead of talking of sex as gender or about sexuality.

The Victorian Age is considered a golden age due to the growth and development that characterized the British society for less than a century when Queen Victoria ruled England from 1837 to 1901. It was an era of questioning everything along with the spread of education and the acceleration of intellectual growth. People questioned religion and the bible and science started to rise, even though with many doubts (Alfred et al, 1). During this period of peace, the Bourgeoisie as a social class rose and flourished, maintaining financial and social power. Foucault argues that the prudishness that characterized this social class had an impact on the discourse about sex: “Repression operated as a sentence to disappear but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence and by implication an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see and nothing to know” (Foucault, 4). The only places that sex could have been discussed openly without the puritanism and the taboos that society had opposed were the brothels and the mental hospitals, by people who were considered unethical and perverted (Foucault, 4-5).

Pedagogical institutions treated sex in the same way. In general, as it happens today, there have been different approaches to the issue of sex, regarding the social relationships; Foucault explains that there were specific areas which ‘were thus established if not of utter silence, at least of tact and discretion: between parents and children for instance or teachers and pupils or masters and domestic servants’ (Foucault, 18). Therefore a compulsory silence has been imposed from schools to children and adolescents regarding sex, by preventing them to engage with this matter and by maintaining a mystery around it (Foucault, 28). Repressive hypothesis did not happen in a way that the society suppressed sexuality; nevertheless, it is important that even though the discourses about sex were proliferated, they carried taboos and prohibitions that ‘in a more fundamental way, ensured the solidification and the implantation of an entire sexual mosaic’ (Foucault, 53). Gender and sexuality were strongly believed to be unfixed. At that point, and especially during the nineteenth century, there was a drive to pathologize sexual behavior (Cole, 91). As was stated above, confessions were important in collecting data about sexuality. However, the sexual domain was no longer examined by deciding only if it’s right or wrong but it was put in the framework of being normal or pathological, and thus meaning that a particular sexual practice could be considered an illness (Foucault, 67).

Probably the most essential part of Foucault’s research in understanding the way that hierarchical norms came to be consolidated in today’s society, is the distinction between the traditions of *Ars erotica* and *Scientia sexualis*. Foucault believed that the Western approach to sexuality was through *scientia sexualis* (distant and scientific, focusing on reproduction) and less through *Ars erotica* (focusing on pleasure), and this appeared to be problematic because of the distance that it was taking from sex. Since population was important for a society to flourish, the main focus was on reproduction and thus using sex for other purposes than pleasure; therefore,

anyone who could not reproduce (as same gender couples) was considered deficient. Certainly, today it is common knowledge that sex is not synonymous to reproduction as the only reason to do it, but rather a way of reproducing (Bishop, 104). However, for a time when sex started to have an intensive discourse, false interpretations of what is wrong and what is right easily passed through and became mentality. The only change came way later in the twentieth century with the ‘sex revolution’ in Europe (1970), when values and norms regarding sexuality began to change and sexual behavior shifted to becoming less of a taboo while discussing it in public started to become accepted (WHO, 13).

Repressive hypothesis entails a false discourse about sex and the distance between us and the truth about sexuality. Silence and suppression especially in the public sphere, resulted in the absence of sex education and the misconception of various sexualities. By not discussing sex, people failed to understand human sexuality because nothing else than the social norms were presented to them. Foucault showed us that in order to reduce or even eliminate discrimination, it is important that people are taught about these matters; by liberating ourselves from the suppression discussed above and by understanding that sexuality is not fixed. Hence, sexuality education can solve problems that relate to violence and bullying only when it includes a more dimensional approach to sexuality. As will be discussed, even though sex education is widespread around Europe, sexuality education is still primitive in the majority of the countries. Talking about sexuality can be sensitive and if it happens, the BGLQT community is excluded. Concerning the latter, there is a current debate in many countries on whether BGLQT sex education should be introduced to the curricula. The next chapter will deal with this debate, the pros and the cons.

## **5. BGLQT & Sexuality Education in Europe**

Education about sex in Europe started in 1942, with Sweden being the first country to introduce material concerning sex in the schools’ curricula (Ekstrand et al, 1). In 1955 it became compulsory but it was limited in educating adolescents and in particular girls, about marriage and how to be well-prepared to start a family. Later on, material regarding sexually transmitted diseases (STD) was introduced and very recently education about gender and sexuality. Many Western European countries followed the same model as Germany in 1968, Austria in 1970 and the Netherlands and Switzerland both during the 1970’s (WHO<sup>16</sup>, 12). In Central and Eastern Europe, sex started to be discussed at schools after the fall of Communism (1989) and as in Sweden in the beginning, the education focused on marriage preparation and how to prevent having sexual encounters before

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<sup>16</sup> WHO: World Health Organization “Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe”, 2010

the wedding (WHO, 12). Because of the sociopolitical situation in the region, sex education started to be part of the curricula in many countries 20 or 30 years after Western Europe. In general, even though today the majority of the subjects taught concern sex education, sexuality education is less discussed or even at all.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, even though important issues of sexual health, protection and STD are addressed when sex education takes place, many schools around Europe lack of education about gender equality, diversity and issues and that results in creating a heterosexual model of education about sex which can lead to discrimination for people who cannot identify (Slater, 2013).

Many scholars and experts on educational matters (Maria Ekstrand 2011, Mike Cole 2006, Robert McGarry 2013, and Robert Bittner 2012) agree that sex and sexuality education has positive results on the health and the psychology of kids and adolescents. Reports from the ‘Advocates for Youth’ organization indicate that comprehensive sex education has been proven effective, since outcomes such an increase of condom and contraceptive use were common. Specifically according to statistical analysis, “40% of those who received sex education, delayed sexual initiation, reduced the number of sexual partners, or increased condom or contraceptive use, 30% reduced the frequency of sex, including a return to abstinence and 60% reduced unprotected sex” (Advocates for Youth, 1). Nevertheless, it is remarkable and frustrating that in the US for instance, the infections from STD to homosexuals and bisexuals have increased; meaning that sex education in a given country might be sometimes insufficient regarding same sex sexual practices (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

When it comes to sexuality education, WHO demonstrates that it contributes in creating a safe and tolerant environment that accepts diversity and that is open to sexuality and different values. Sexuality education teaches children about gender differences, sexual identity and gender roles while it provides knowledge concerning the human body and its functions regarding sexuality. Highly important is that it helps adolescents to express their feelings and to experience sexuality in a nice way, reducing the implications that might occur, as well as helping them to build healthy sexual relationships (WHO, 27). IPPF<sup>18</sup> agrees that sexuality education helps children to become active citizens, “to have pleasure and confidence in their sexuality, and to be able to make their own informed choices” (The Safe Project, 7).

On the other hand, there are many who believe that sex education in particular, is linked with an increase of sexual activity amongst adolescents (Ekstrand et al, 211), even though the

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<sup>17</sup> “Sex” refers to biological characteristics that define humans generally as female or male, although in ordinary language the word is often interpreted as referring to sexual activity.  
“Sexuality” – as a broad concept, “sexuality” is defined in accordance with the WHO working definitions as follows: “Human sexuality is a natural part of human development through every phase of life and includes physical, psychological and social components. (WHO, 17)

<sup>18</sup> IPPF: International Planned Parenthood Federation

Advocate for Youth claims that evidence from empirical statistics show that there is no link between these two, since 13 programs based on sex education showed reductions in the number of sex partners and/or increased monogamy among program participants and ten programs helped sexually active youth to reduce the incidence of unprotected sex (Advocates for Youth, 1-2). In general, it can be seen that sex education is widely accepted in Europe and is taught, in most European countries, despite the debate that is still going on, even though facts show that indeed sex education has positive outcomes on children. At the same time though, sexuality education, as was mentioned above, is still primitive in many countries since it is difficult to move away from anatomy and biology and talk about more abstract concepts about sexuality and relationships which will include BGLQT issues.

In Sweden, one of the countries with the most liberal education system, BGLQT issues are addressed but still not sufficiently. A survey that was held in 2011 and that was conducted at two youth clinic and three student health clinics, had as a goal to investigate the sex education at Swedish schools. According to the results, the participants were requesting more information and discussion about STIs, BGLQT and gender issues, sexual assault, and pornography, and the latter's influence on sexual behavior (Ekstrand et al, 213). Furthermore, it was requested that the education should be more open and focus more on sexual diversity and less on the heterosexual norm while it appeared that teachers were not skilled enough on matters of sexuality and students were requesting people with more knowledge (Ekstrand et al, 213). In many Eastern and Southern Catholic countries, church has played a crucial role in forming sex education at schools. In Poland for instance, the Catholic Church has had a strong influence at schools and therefore the curricula concerning sexuality education use a 'non-scientific' language and reflect a philosophical rather than a biological notion of sexuality while at the same time sexuality education emphasizes more on traditional values and family roles (The Safe Project, 71). Sexuality education in Spain is considered to be inadequate and almost non-existent, especially in rural areas (every community varies significantly in Spain). Elena Cabrera, a Spanish journalist, confirms this via an interview with Raquel Hurtado, sexologist and psychologist in charge of sex education programs in the Federation of Family Planning who stated in 2013 that sex education in Spain is not included in the curricula at all (Cabrera, 2013). Statistics have shown that young people seems to have many stereotypes concerning sexuality even though recently the government has been seen to put more effort on sexuality education (The Safe Project, 77).

## 5.1 The case of Iceland

Certainly, education systems that place greater emphasis on heterosexual behavior are still present in Europe, even in very liberal countries while patriarchal relations are extensively used in schools still. In particularly patriarchal countries such as Greece, BGLQT issues are never addressed because sexuality education is not accepted at all, even if it is based in heterosexual norms. The only European country to have proposed an explicit sexuality education about homosexuality is Iceland and the program was implemented for now only in the Hafnarfjörður Icelandic municipality (Arnarsdóttir, 2015). The program's intention, created with the corporation of the Gay and Lesbian organization *Samtökin '78* and the local municipality, is according to the Icelandic media to include queer issues in education and to abolish prejudice. At the moment, the program is under supervision until it is considered successful.<sup>19</sup> Dóra Guðmundsdóttir, graduate from Master of Law, and currently working for the institute of human rights in Iceland, indicates in her legal report that in primary education the school curricula includes "life skills" which entails focus on emotional and sexual development including gay issues. However, depends significantly on the community, the institution and the individual teacher to what extent they will address these issues since there is no minimum requirements regarding sex education (Guðmundsdóttir, 22). Iceland achieved for the first time to introduce a compulsory BGLQT material but this did not happen in a night. Reports from 1994 and 2004 respectively, show that there have been many actions in the past in order to include gender and gay issues in the schools' curricula. In 2009 for instance, a manual about human rights including gay issues was translated and published from the Ministry of Education. Additionally, it was crucial to educate teachers about these issues too and therefore there was an increase in BGLQT education aiming at professionals (Guðmundsdóttir, 23).

It is understood that is difficult to talk in education about sensitive issues as homosexuality, transsexuality and transgenderism but fighting for BGLQT rights in countries that are still conservative without changing education is like making a hole in the water. While schools are the best environment for self-development they are also the most dangerous because of the anti-gay rhetoric that entails, especially in countries where gay rights are not something that is taken for granted. Many are those who disagree with the introduction of these issues at schools since it would have negative outcomes on the children because homosexuality is considered 'wrong' and thus wrong role models will be given to them (Morrow, 92). Most of the times, parents are the ones who oppose since they believe that it is their job to educate their children about sex based on

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<sup>19</sup> Mbl.is. "Hinseginfræðsla í hafnirfirska skóla". 2015

their own beliefs and religion (Villalva, 2012) while many teachers are afraid to address these issues in the class since their job might be put in jeopardy (Morrow, 93).

Nevertheless, it is a fact that BGLQT people have more chances to become stressed, depressed because of the hostile and non-supportive school environment; what is more, homophobia, wrong discourse on homosexuality expressed from the teachers and bullying from peers may have a negative impact on the performance of the kids resulting in lower grades and skipping classes as well as a negative impact on their well-being as a whole (McGarry, 28). Despite the fact that the connection between absence of sufficient sexuality education and negative impacts on BGLQT is logical, in many patriarchal countries that promote heteronormativity they do not take it in consideration (e.g. Greece). As was mentioned earlier, teachers in general are not trained to teach about sexuality and many of them tend to be homophobic as well. In particular, Mike Cole states:

“Through questionnaire surveys and interviews (USA, 2011) with teachers and classroom observations they conclude that a significant minority of teachers are overtly homophobic. This took the form of complicity in student homophobia such as laughing along at homophobic comments and jokes and the active problematisation of homosexuality through the dissemination of myths and stereotypes or categorical comments. These teachers tended to frame homosexuality as being solely about sexual behaviour and this colludes with its pathologisation and the stigmatisation of LGBT sexualities” (Cole, 127).

## **5.2 A Case Study from the US: Montgomery County Public Schools**

Among others, BGLQT sexuality education helps adolescents who struggle with their sexuality in order to discover themselves without taboos, prudishness or stigma. To a large extent it releases BGLQT people from stress and anxiety and helps them to identify with the rest of the students, since most of the time the patriarchal relations taught, tend to exclude them (Goodman, 2013). BGLQT sexuality also helps to create a safer and tolerant school environment, not only for BGLQT people but for all children who belong to minorities. One great example of a successful BGLQT program implementation is the one of Montgomery County Public Schools where they approved a revised and BGLQT -inclusive sex education curriculum for implementation in 2007 (McGarry, 31). The curriculum entails information about gender and sexualities and it avoids putting concepts as family and relationships only in heterosexual terms. Furthermore it addresses issues of homophobia, harassment and the negative impacts that stereotypes have on people by trying to engage and make students to relate to these kinds of problems in order to gain a better understanding of the consequences of their acts (McGarry, 31). Equally important according to the author, is the way



teachers talk and teach about certain things. Educators should find a balance and address equally heterosexuality and homosexuality, while their vocabulary and language should be more gender neutral; for instance calling ‘partner’ instead of boyfriend or girlfriend. Lastly stereotypes should be prohibited and teachers should intervene when a student expresses them, especially when it is towards a fellow student in the school environment.

Even though sex education has been improved significantly in Europe, sexuality education remains still basic; especially the one that supports sexual diversity and gender issues. Western and Northern Europe have made some initiatives and progress in including BGLQT at schools, as Sweden, Iceland and Germany; however patriarchy in Eastern and Southern Europe holds education back. Greece in particular, has always been a country of antithesis, between the West and East, an element that reflects on the people and the way they think. Talking about sexuality at schools is considered a taboo and the programs and textbooks implemented that focus on these matters are a few and most of them are not even available today. This leaves to educators the responsibility to individually stress these matters but this autonomy entails moral issues and high risk of getting complaints by parents and the board of the school. Despite the fact that collectively people remain silent, individuals try to bring changes in the educational system, since they see the latter as the most essential tool to fight against current social crisis that the Greek society deals with, which entails homophobia, xenophobia, racism and intolerance.

## **6. Greek Society & Sexuality Education**

Vassilis Hatzopoulos, professor at the department of Social Management and Political Science at the Democritus University of Thrace, indicates clearly in his research on homophobia<sup>20</sup> in Greece in 2007:

“This tacit acquiescence to homophobia is nurtured by a number of factors which are peculiar within Greek society. At least six factors may be pointed out: a) the dominant role of the Greek Orthodox Church in Greek society and its openly homophobic stance, b) the macho and/or homophobic discourse of the vast majority of politicians, c) the negative imagery put forward by the media d) the role of the police, e) the absence of sexual education in schools and f) the unwillingness of all the governments to pay attention to substantiated LGBT claims and to legislate in accordance”. (Hatzopoulos, 15)

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<sup>20</sup> Hatzopoulos, Vassilis. “Legal Study on Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation – Greece”, 2007

The Greek society still keeps a traditional character, and traditional values are deeply consolidated in the culture. Even today, despite the influence of post-modern trends coming from the West, marriage is considered a highly important institution that entails sexual duties that have to be fulfilled (Vassilikou, 144). To a certain extent the patriarchal societal model still wants men to be successful, and women to be able to execute their roles as a spouse. Even though this model starts to fade very slowly, the family significantly influences the decisions of an individual, while politics and the media are conforming to the family standards to approach the masses. Therefore, heterosexual norms and secularity leave only a small place for diversity to exist and flourish; for instance, BGLQ rights are limited while there is no legal text referring to transgender people, who are left unprotected to verbal and physical violence. Violent incidents against transgender people have been particularly high lately, especially due to the rise of an extreme right party “Golden Dawn”<sup>21</sup> that is against immigrants, homosexuals and other minorities<sup>22</sup> (Hatzopoulos, 13). The social crisis is inevitably related to the deficient education concerning issues of sexuality and diversity. Patriarchy and marriage are deeply reflected in the material that is taught. In textbooks for instance, childless couples are not mentioned at all; “the couple as the bond of two humans who share intimacy, experiences, emotions of all kinds, as well as financial resources without necessarily reproducing simply does not exist” (Gerouki, 52).

Regarding the structure of the educational system, education in Greece is compulsory until the age of 15. Primary school (Demotiko) starts at the age of 6 until the age of 12; then secondary school (Gymnasio) lasts for three more years until the adolescent goes to high school (Lykeio) which finishes at the age of 18, when students have the PanHellenic examination that will take them to the tertiary education (Papazoglou, 185). Regarding sex education, is not a compulsory subject at Greek schools and anatomical and biological issues are mainly addressed in biology class. However, even in biology and the optional sex education textbooks, the discourse is totally heteronormative and thus the kids are learning only about the relationships and the interactions between a man and a woman. An interesting example of school material that will be examined, is the textbook “Sexuality Education and Relationships between the two Genders” (Seksualiki Agogi kai Diafilikes<sup>23</sup> Sxeseis) that was introduced in 2008 as an optional subject on sexuality matters referring to children from six to eight years old (Askitis, 2008).

The textbook starts with an old Indian story that the man of the family (the father) is narrating to his wife and kids about how men and women came to meet. The text already appears to be problematic in a way that it exclusively addresses heterosexual relationships and for the fact

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<sup>21</sup> Ertel, Manfred. “Sun Sets on Golden Dawn: Greek Party Accused in Killings and Racist Attacks”. Spiegel Online International, 2014

<sup>22</sup> Paraskeva, Lena. “Racist attack on trans woman at a bar in Euboea”. 5 of May, 2015

<sup>23</sup> Askitis. Athanasios. “Sexuality Education and Relationships between the two Genders”. Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, 2008

that the father seems to be in the center of attention. Specifically, the story describes how men and women used to live separately and when they accidentally met they felt a mutual attractiveness. Men describe women as beautiful creatures that take care of their appearance and wear jewelry, while women describe men as tall, strong and hairy (Askitis, 10). Hence, the chapter provides a stereotypical Mediterranean model of men and women that the kids should relate and mime; a model of the 'perfect' femininity and masculinity that wants men to be strong and big and woman sensitive and more passive. What is more, as Mike Cole argues, it is possible that young people can reach the "conclusion that same-sex sexual relationships must be pseudo-heterosexual and involve penetration and the partners in roles which mimic heterosexual gender roles"; this could enhance the stereotypes about gay and lesbian people and affect negatively the perception about homosexuality (Cole, 128). The next chapter of the textbook focuses on the anatomy of the bodies of the boy and the girl of the family and there are separate sections for each one, one in a blue background and one in a pink background. The text explains specific body parts and the genitals and how these will change after adolescence, while it gives tips on how to take care of the body and keep it clean (Askitis, 14-21). As it continues, it addresses issues on how babies come to the world without making references to sex and why it is important for adolescents to express their feelings. On that point, the author demystifies the mentality that wants boys and men to express their feelings less, and never cry, by mentioning that it is normal and positive to show feelings (Askitis, 34)

As can be seen, the textbook is characterized by heteronormativity and thus revealing only a small piece about human sexuality to children. Especially because it refers to a sensitive age from six to eight, which it has been proved that kids can already identify aspects of sexuality and how it relates to adult relationship (Cole, 113). The same can be seen in other textbooks, such as the subject of biology in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of high school (age 18) or the subject of Greek literature in the same grade, that do not make any references to BGLQT even though it could be expected because they refer to children of an older age. In biology, the only reference to homosexuals occurs when HIV is discussed along with the ways that someone can get it. It seems that the author demystifies a stereotype about homosexuals that they are of a higher risk compared to heterosexuals, by stating that HIV is transmitted through sexual practices regardless of gender (Adamantiadou et al, 50).

## 6.1 Interviews

The interviews with four Greek educators (two from a public school and two from a private school) confirm the lack of sexuality education at the Greek school in general and specifically about BGLQT issues. Nevertheless, they reveal a will at a personal level to make a few but important changes. Three of the four teachers, besides the material taught in class, occasionally referred to homosexuality and expressed their positive attitude about it. In one of the cases at the private school, the teacher has been present to discussions about homosexuality in class, and she let both sides be heard, by not prioritizing one sexual orientation over the other. In biology class, when the discussion entailed STD, the teacher referred to both heterosexual and homosexual practices by demonstrating that they both exist and we should treat them equally. Additionally, even outside class, all teachers were ready to intervene when they felt that a student was discriminating against others based on their sexuality, or when students were using homosexuality as an insult. According to the interviews, teaching in primary education can be harder when it comes to addressing issues about homosexuality, because the teachers think that children at this early age cannot fully understand sexuality and thus will not be able to understand sexuality education.

Remarkably, but not surprisingly, transgender issues are neither addressed by the school material taught nor by the teachers, thus excluding a group, which is facing the highest discrimination in Greece, as was stated earlier. As can be seen, agency is not addressed at schools and gender is considered something fixed and predetermined. At the same time though, educators with their individual effort in class, try to deconstruct sexuality and provide children with more options instead of presenting heterosexuality as the one and only norm; also by their personal attitude they demonstrate that someone does not need to be homosexual to care about this issue and that respect concerns all people. Additionally, it is important that teachers deconstruct manhood too, by showing that masculinity is socially constructed, and thus feeling weak (e.g. crying) does not make a man less of a man. All teachers agreed that education about issues such as homosexuality should be included in the schools' curriculum because it will help children with their emotional and sexual development, to understand their sexuality and to get rid of guilt that society had falsely created. Even though one of the teachers believes that it should be included, but only in the secondary education, the majority thinks that sexuality education should start from an early age in primary school.

## **7. Recommendations - Conclusion**

Many aspects of how the Greek society functions seem to be problematic. Patriarchy and the macho attitude, that is accepted by both men and women, significantly slows down any progress regarding BGLQT issues since there is not much space for diversity to exist. Men express their manliness by subordinating minorities and women, a fact that can be seen from the various violence incidents that frequently take place. The social crisis that can be seen in the last years, with the increase of racism, homophobia and general violence, is indeed the outcome of a dysfunctioning patriarchal society that has always overlooked social diversity. To a large extent, the family and the church influence the Greek mentality about sexual and romantic relationships, and education follows only the heterosexual model. Educators, despite the inadequate school material, can weaken the hierarchical social norms and include more aspects of human sexuality by providing a balance and inclusive education.

The Greek educational system certainly keeps a patriarchal and heterosexual model on which all the material is based in both primary and secondary education. BGLQT issues are almost never addressed, and when they are, they entail only gay, lesbian and bisexual people. As it was mentioned, schools as institutions collectively do not make any effort regarding homosexuality and diversity, but it is of high importance that educators can address and elaborate on these issues in class, because it is the only place that children can broaden their horizons and accept different kind of stimuli. Certainly, this requires a good and consolidated knowledge of the teachers regarding sexual diversity, and unfortunately the system does not provide sufficient education on how to address these matters. Nevertheless, until the curricula changes and new laws are introduced, teachers can achieve vital changes via the way they teach.

Firstly, it is significant that in Schools of Education (Paidagogiki Sholi) students that prepare to become teachers are supplied with material and textbooks that cover all aspects of sexuality and gender in order to obtain multidimensional knowledge. Secondly, the individual educator is responsible for educating himself/herself properly and thus it is essential that teacher's associations should organize frequent seminars in which they discuss debatable issues, such as the one of BGLQT. In these seminars various intellectuals and academics can be invited as speakers (from Greece or abroad) in order to address current problems that the Greek society faces, such as domestic violence, xenophobia, and homophobia, and apply it to education and how children can be educated properly, taking into consideration what is happening in the international arena, too

(e.g. Icelandic educational system). Thirdly, teachers can slightly change their vocabulary when they address human relationships in class and make it more neutral by avoiding perpetuating only the hierarchical norms that already exist. For instance, the word partner can sometimes nicely replace words such as boyfriend and girlfriend or husband and wife, if they are used extensively. Furthermore, teachers can use a more inclusive language when they refer to families for example, and mention that a family can also exist with one parent, or with parents of the same sex or even without kids, taking into consideration couples that do not want or cannot have children. Lastly, an individual school after agreement between the teachers and the board can invite specialists in Gender Studies or homosexuals/transgender people themselves to have a constructive discussion with the students and give them the opportunity to pose questions and make them think. What could be also helpful, would be games with diagrams and words, such as mind maps. For instance, a mind-map could have at the center the word *stereotypes* and ask children to connect it with any stereotype they can think (racial, ethnical, and sexual) and then talk about the consequences that these have on others in a way that everyone can relate to. This game could also address concepts such as masculinity and femininity and with the help of the teacher, students could deconstruct them and talk about equality, respect and about people who do not relate to the sex they were born. Definitely, children should not be forced into different mentalities, but should rather be offered the opportunity to explore our nature as human beings in a multidimensional way by learning how to tolerate and accept diversity in society.

## Appendix

**The interview contains ten questions answered by four teachers in the primary and secondary Greek education, regarding diversity and homosexuality at schools. Under each question the different answers can be found together.**

### **1. What subjects are you teaching at school?**

Teacher 1: All basic subjects in primary education (Modern Greek Language, Mathematics, Physics, History, Art and Music)

Teacher 2: I teach Modern Greek language and literature in the 3rd grade of High school, Creative writing at the 3rd grade of High school and the 3rd grade of secondary school. The latter is included in an afternoon group.

Teacher 3: Biology

Teacher 4: Modern Greek Language and Literature in secondary education.

### **2. Regarding these subjects, are there references to sexual diversity? And if yes, what is it mentioned exactly?**

Teacher 1: There is no reference in any of the subjects.

Teacher 2: At the subject of Modern Greek at the 4rd grade of High School there are generally references about diversity in the content of respect and the protection of human rights. Therefore, communities with different sexual orientation are also mentioned, because it is a social group which faces serious discrimination. In the subject of literature, there is reference at the point when the poet (for instant Cavafy) is demonstrating his sexual preferences via his poems. Regarding the subject 'Creative Writing (Secondary school and High school), the number of students who express their homosexuality (boys but mainly girls) through their papers is increasing significantly. This is considered as completely normal and they are no negative reactions.

Teacher 3: No reference in the subject of biology

Teacher 4: There is reference in diversity in general but nothing about sexual diversity.

**3. Is sexual education limited to references about protection and STD or it covers as well topics about sexuality and gender?**

Teacher 1: There is no sexual education.

Teacher 2: As far as I know is not included in the school curricula.

Teacher 3: The only reference to STD is a few pages about HIV, how someone gets it and what the stages are. However, we as educators always try to focus on STD more and dedicate time to inform students about protection and the consequences of unsafe sexual practices.

Teacher 4: As far as I know, children learn about AIDS at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in Biology class.

**4. Is there any reference to the BGLQT community?**

Teacher 1: There is no reference to the BGLQT community

Teacher 2: As far as I know, no.

Teacher 3: Only one sentence where the author of the book explains that is wrong for someone to believe that HIV concerns only homosexuals.

Teacher 4: There is no reference.

**5. Do you believe that the material taught presents heterosexuality as a natural model of sexual preference?**

Teacher 1: Yes, what is presented is the typical heterosexual family with one mom and one dad, with only exception the references to single parents households.

Teacher 2: Homosexuality in no case is presented as a model or a natural sexual orientation, but only as a possible sexual orientation.

Teacher 3: Definitely the material is heterosexual oriented, since there is no other reference about different sexual orientation.



Teacher 4: The school material is exclusively heterosexual. In Modern Greek Language all references to relationships entail a man and a woman, while in literature anything that may refer to homosexuality is excluded (e.g. Cavafy sensual poems).

**6. Do you personally as a teacher touch on issues about homosexuality and diversity in class?**

Teacher 1: There are references generally about diversity in the society without focusing on one domain, especially when it comes to teaching younger children, since the curriculum does not provide any information about sexuality.\

Teacher 2: Yes, of course.

Teacher 3: The material that is taught about biology limits me a lot since there is no direct reference on sex. However I always try to mention all sexual practices (including homosexual) when I refer to STD for students to understand that no matter what is their sexual orientation, safety is important for everyone.

Teacher 4: Only in literature in the case of Cavafy I tend to mention that the poet is homosexual in order to include poems in which he refers to men, even though I never taught a whole sensual poem.

**7. Have you ever been present in argument between two students regarding homosexuality? If yes, what where the arguments and how did you intervene, if so.**

Teacher 1: Kids in elementary school normally do not discuss issues about sexuality. However, there has been an incident when a student was making fun of his classmates because of a ‘feminine’ reaction of his (e.g. he started crying). I intervened right away by saying to him that we should never block anyone from freely expressing himself/herself

Teacher 2: I have faced occasionally strong argumentations regarding homosexuality. As the time goes by, the incidents are decreasing, but when they happen they are particularly intense. Once I had a student who denied following the literature class about Cavafy because the poet was gay; I allowed him to leave the class but in the end he decided to stay and he discovered how great Cavafy is. Generally, in occasions like these, I allow to everyone, regardless their opinion, to express it freely. However, from the beginning they are aware of my belief that homosexuality is something normal. I participate in the discussion-argumentation in both sides until the moment that this leads to attack for example against the “enemies” of homosexuality, arguing that their position derives from the fear of being homosexuals themselves. This is the moment when I stop the discussion and I let the students think of what has been

told. Is remarkable to mention that girls in contrast with the boys, have no problem about homosexuality, while many boys who are supporting homosexuality are not homosexuals themselves.

Teacher 3: It never happened that I was present in an argument like this in the school environment.

Teacher 4: Once two students of mine were arguing whether same sex marriage is normal. The student against was stating that love can only exist between a man and a woman and that since men cannot reproduce with each other there is no reason in creating a family. However I did not intervene.

**8. Has ever been an incident when a student is making fun of another classmate based on sexuality? If yes what was your reaction and how did you handle the situation?**

Teacher 1: Same answer with question 7.

Teacher 2: Regarding the bullying incidents (which are a few), firstly I indicate that this was a bad joke and if the student won't behave and apologize, he has to leave the class for inappropriate behavior. Certainly, during the school trips there are always incidents of homosexual boys who face problems of being accepted to rooms with the rest of the boys. Officially it is stated that they stay in a boys' room but they sleep over at the girls' room.

Teacher 3: Boys in high school tend to call each other names referring to homosexuality in order to make fun of each other. Once it happened that I was present in one of the many incidents, and I just ask the person why he thinks that being gay is something bad. The answer I got was not clear and femininity was one of the apparent reasons. I felt I could explain for hours, but I just said that being gay is totally fine, and he should never hurt anyone because of his sexual orientation.

Teacher 4: Never happened to me.

**9. Do you personally believe that kids should be taught about homosexuality? If yes/no, why?**

Teacher 1: Of course, but I do it when I teach to children in an older age. Based on my experience in elementary school, kids of this age are unable of understanding issues such as sexual education because they have not yet discovered their inner self and their gender.

Teacher 2: Personally I believe that is a necessity for the children to be taught issues regarding homosexuality, especially in adolescence, because is something that they experience with no help and full of guilt, while it should not be like this.

Teacher 3: I definitely believe that issues such as homosexuality and sexual orientation should be taught at schools, especially from a young age for kids to be able to recognize and accept it as something normal.

Teacher 4: I believe that kids should be provided with all the domains of human sexuality, even though the Greek system is still immature in including issues like these.

**10. Do you think that there is a relation between homophobia and sexuality education?**

Teacher 1: The lack of sexual education and the misinformation are related to homophobia and phenomena of racism. Nevertheless, the individual evolves and educates himself/herself in many domains of his/her life and thus shape their personality by having collected information from everywhere.

Teacher 2: The fact that the issue of homosexuality is generally kept in silence, creates a fertile ground where homophobia can flourish, because children adopt certain behaviors from the family or school environment, and from the attitude of the society about homosexuality.

Teacher 3: Unfortunately, lack of education on these issues cause frustration while misinformation enhance the ignorance. Ignorance then leads to prejudice and this to violence. Therefore definitely there is relation between these two and if the system won't change, homophobia will be always present.

Teacher 4: Definitely.

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