Sexing the Teacher
Sexuality Studies Series

This series focuses on original, provocative, scholarly research examining from a range of perspectives the complexity of human sexual practice, identity, community, and desire. Books in the series explore how sexuality interacts with other aspects of society, such as law, education, feminism, racial diversity, the family, policing, sport, government, religion, mass media, medicine, and employment. The series provides a broad public venue for nurturing debate, cultivating talent, and expanding knowledge of human sexual expression, past and present.

Members of the editorial board are:
Barry Adam, Sociology and Anthropology, University of Windsor
Blye Frank, Medical Education, Dalhousie University
Didi Khayatt, Education, York University
Philinda Masters, Resources for Feminist Research, OISE/University of Toronto
Janice Ristock, Women’s Studies, University of Manitoba
Becki Ross, Sociology and Anthropology, University of British Columbia
Gamal Abdel-Shehid, Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta
Tom Waugh, Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, Concordia University

Other volumes in the series are:
Masculinities without Men? Female Masculinity in Twentieth-Century Fictions, by Jean Bobby Noble
Every Inch a Woman: Phallic Possession, Femininity, and the Text, by Carellin Brooks
Queer Youth in the Province of the “Severely Normal,” by Gloria Filax
The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada, by Christopher Dummitt
Contents

Acknowledgments / vii

1 Introduction: Queer Pedagogy and Sex Scandals in Education / 3

2 Teacher’s Pet: Mary Kay Letourneau and Her Fall from Grace in White America / 29

3 Upsetting Desires in the Classroom: Annie Markson and the Queer Pedagogy of the Femme Fatale / 68

4 Sexing the Teacher: Voyeuristic Pleasure in the Amy Gehring Sex Panic / 107

5 Erotic Discipline: Eros, Aggression, and Maternal Pedagogies in the Heather Ingram Case / 132

6 Sex in the Lesbian Teacher’s Closet: The Hybrid Proliferation of Queers in the Jean Robertson Scandal / 164

7 Conclusion: Troubling Methodological Memoirs and Queer Pedagogies of Pederasty / 192

Notes / 204

References / 211

Index / 223
Acknowledgments

This book is informed by conversations, inspirations, and support given by many people. I would first like to thank Jean Wilson at UBC Press for her support, care, and attention to the book. I would also like to thank Robert Lewis for a careful and hard-working copy edit. Ann Macklem was the production editor and offered her expertise throughout the publication process. Although the UBC Press reviewers remain anonymous, each gave insightful and supportive criticism in the spirit of the book, and I wish to give them my special thanks. Their reviews of the manuscript were inspiring and affirming. I also wish to acknowledge the Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme for a grant in aid of publication and the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities and Research Council of Canada, which made the writing of this book possible through Standard Research Grant No. 410-2000-0357.

I also extend my thanks to friends and colleagues who listened to conference presentations (of the various chapters) and to those who, in various ways, shaped my analysis of the female teacher school sex panics: Bernadette Baker, Deborah Britzman, Kari Dehli, Emma Donoghue, Angela Failer, Helen Fielding, Dina Georgis, Helen Harper, Beth Jackson, Jan Jagodzinski, Michael Kehler, R.M. Kennedy, Frances Latchford, Leanne McCormack, James Miller, Andie Noack, Chantal Phillips, Mary Lou Rasmussen, Eric Rofes, Sharon Rosenberg, Chris Roulston, Katarzyna Rukszto, Trish Salah, Rinaldo Walcott, Harry Smaller, Lochlan Story, Mariana Valverde, Arja Vanio-Matilla, Leah Vosko, Jane Walsh, and Lorna Weir. While some of you offered casual thoughts during informal conversations and others offered close readings and scholarly criticism, you have all in different, yet important, ways made the book possible. I would also like to thank my research assistants, who exhaustively followed the news coverage of the female teacher sex scandals and in numerous other ways made the book possible: Erin Bentley, Diana Gibaldi, Vicki Hallett, Habiba Nosheen, and Marc Sinclair. Marc Sinclair, in particular, devoted countless
hours to the bibliographic portion of the project and went well beyond the call of duty to enable me to make the publication date.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to thank my partner Heather Sykes, who offered support, affirmation, and encouragement throughout the writing of this book. She is more loving, generous, and inspiring than words can say. I dedicate my first book to you.
Sexing the Teacher
Introduction: Queer Pedagogy and Sex Scandals in Education

We are drawn to scandal by our desire to trip up the cultural censors, by a dream of escaping culture or transforming it ... Let me assume, then, that what draws us to scandal is the energy and promise of scandal itself ... It's the offense that matters, that holds out promise, gives us hope. (Kincaid 1998, 26)

Transgression becomes a kind of reverse or counter-sublimation, undoing the discursive hierarchies and stratifications of bodies and cultures which bourgeois society has produced as the mechanism of its symbolic dominance. (Stallybrass and White 1986, 200-1)

In 1997, Mary Kay Letourneau shocked Middle America by having sex with a twelve-year-old boy-student. The press coverage was, by all accounts, titillating and sensational. Readers could not get enough of the story. People wanted to know why the all-American teacher – beautiful, blond, daughter of a wealthy and politically influential father – would jeopardize her relationship with a husband and children to have sex with a twelve-year-old Samoan American boy. Not only did she have an illegal affair with the pre-teen, but she mothered two of his children and, upon her release from prison seven years later, married her former student and left her more socially legitimate family in the lurch. The affair upset the public as it basked in the horrific image of the white female teacher seducing (or being seduced by) a boy of the Samoan Islands who seemed to be wise and experienced beyond his years.

The reverberations of the panic were keenly felt in Canada and throughout the Western world. In the wake of the Mary Kay Letourneau sex panic, a number of other high-profile cases hit the mainstream press. Since 1997, concerned readers have learned about sex scandals involving Mariama Buchanan (2005), Elizabeth Ann Carter (2002), Heidi Franziska Coleman (2001), Amy Gehring (2002), Victoria Harris (1995), Heather Ingram (2000), Jocelyn Jaster (2001), Debra Lafave (2005), Annie Markson (2001), Paola Queen (2007), Laura Sclater (2000), Katherine Tew (2005), Pamela Joan Turner (2005), and Allenna Williams (2007). A host of other white female teachers have also found themselves subject to sensational press coverage for sexual improprieties with boy-students. From 1997 to the present, more female teachers have faced criminal charges, professional censure, and public
scorn in the United States, Canada, and England than in all earlier generations put together.

From public schooling’s founding in the mid-1800s in Canada until the late 1990s, no more than a handful of female teachers had been accused of sexual improprieties involving male or female students. The number of female teachers now accused of indecent assault involving minors has increased exponentially. This is not to say that female teachers are now more likely to commit sexual infractions or that they are as likely to sexually assault students as are male teachers. According to reports issued by the Ontario College of Teachers and the British Columbia College of Teachers, the vast majority of discipline cases involving sexual harassment and sexual assault against students are perpetrated by male teachers. All studies and reports on the gender of sexual perpetrators in schools reviewed for this book show that male teachers are far more likely than female teachers to sexually harm students in Canada, the United States, and England (Freel 2003; Gallagher 2000; Hendrie and Drummond 1998; Jennings and Tharp 2003; Shaikhs and Cohen 1994), but the moral panic doesn’t recognize this statistic.¹

There is little evidence to suggest that female teachers are now, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, committing sexual infractions at a higher rate than before the late 1990s. People are, however, more likely to file complaints against female teachers now than in earlier years, and these reports are more likely to lead to professional reprimands along with criminal investigations. The media now reports on the sexual improprieties of female teachers with a sensational flare and exuberance never before seen in the coverage of male teachers. One needs only to read the newspaper, to listen to daytime talk shows, to watch the evening news, or to purchase a national tabloid to witness the anxious concern and excited commentary about the lascivious and predatory sexualities of white female teachers. Everyone has something to say about the infamous Mary Kay Letourneau, about the sexual charisma of Debra Lafave – an American teacher who posed in a bikini for a motorcycle manufacturer and had oral sex with a teenaged boy-student² – and about the indiscretions of other Canadian-born female teachers caught up in flirtations or sexual relations with underage male or female students. The numerous media reports are written with both a foreboding tone and a sensational flare usually reserved for pop stars or serial killers.

Female students have been sexually assaulted and harassed by male teachers throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, but this reality does not seem to warrant the same degree of media commentary. The lascivious white female teacher is another story. She makes headline news. The media sensation must not, however, be taken as evidence that female teachers are committing more sexual violations than in the past. There has been a change in our definition and understanding of
sexual abuse in the educational milieu (Gallop 1997), a change that provides an important context for this book’s examination of sex scandals involving female teachers. For example, it was not uncommon for male teachers to marry their female students following graduation in the early to mid-twentieth century. Male-teacher seductions leading to matrimony were seen as “natural” and “wholesome.” Romance between male teachers and older female students was not only part of school life but well represented in mainstream film and popular fiction in North America and Britain. Flirtations between male teachers and older female students were not unusual, nor did they generate public and professional uproar. Today, we are scandalized when teachers act on or feel desire for their students – particularly when they are female. We wonder about what led up to the pedagogical romance and about how the classrooms of today have become settings for licentious behaviour. As I argue in Chapter 3, an erotic gesture or flirtation once seen as innocent or benign is now deemed unprofessional and subject to criminal investigations. The crushes between female teachers and older boy-students depicted in educational folklore, fiction, and movie classics are not only professionally inappropriate, but also border on the criminal by present-day standards.

Sexual assault and harassment of female students by male teachers in school cultures has also been commonplace in Canada, the United States, and England. In each of these countries, there has been sensational media coverage and professional uproar about the sexual transgressions of today’s female teachers, and in subsequent chapters, I will focus on these three national contexts. In none of these countries has there been an outcry about the sexual improprieties of male teachers (unless they involve boy-students) comparable to what we now see in response to the sexual improprieties of female teachers. Until the 1980s, the education profession in Canada, for example, had not been politically galvanized by sexual assaults by male teachers against female students. Teachers’ professional organizations, school administrators, and others involved in school life did not react with horror, nor was there a scandal of comparable proportions to what we now see shadowing female teachers today. If a male teacher was caught abusing a female student and parents complained, he was quietly moved to another school, where, in many instances, he repeated the offence with another student. Few cases of teachers’ sexual misconduct came to court, and the public did not clamour for justice. Since the 1980s, there have been more public-education campaigns and policies developed for the identification and prevention of childhood sexual abuse, which accounts, in part, for the change that we see today. This does not, however, explain why female teachers, who commit significantly fewer sexual misdemeanours than male teachers, are the topic of heightened public debate, curiosity, professional discipline, and media sensationalism.
There is something queer or, at the very least, curious going on. How can we account for the school sex panics occasioned by lascivious female teachers in the past decade? We first need to consider the professional and media-driven uproar within the context of educational historiography. White female teachers in North American and British schools enjoyed a unique cultural representation in education until the 1990s – one that is strikingly distinct from representations of white male teachers (and female teachers of colour). For the first half of the twentieth century and well into the 1950s, the white female teacher was forbidden to marry, to have children and a family of her own (Cavanagh 2006a, 2006b; Danylewycz 1987; Oram 1983; Reynolds 1983; Vicinus 1985). Sex out of wedlock would cause a scandal, and so female teachers were expected to remain celibate. While most educational historians view the marriage bans as sexist and legislating against dual-income families, the bans were also about sexual and moral regulation. School board administrators, parents, ratepayers, and professional teachers’ groups that developed over the course of the twentieth century were concerned about the gender identities and sexualities of white female teachers. This worry was framed as a concern about child welfare; people thought that “normal” adolescent student gender identity development would be compromised in schools taught by married (and/or sexually independent/masculine) women. Female teachers had to curtail their independent and undomesticated sexualities for fear of igniting controversy and, ultimately, dismissal. Virtues based on an ascetic ideal modelled on orthodox Christian teaching and doctrine were professionally mandated in most school districts. Self-denial, deprivation, and personal discipline were ethical imperatives for most North American and British white women in education until the 1960s.

Extreme professional prohibitions did, however, have some queer and unintended effects. For example, celibacy and the strict moral codes applied to female pedagogues enabled women to live in all-female households and to pursue professional ambitions often denied other women. Lillian Faderman (1991) argues that the emergence of all-female occupations, like in education, led to the emergence of lesbian communities. The moral restrictions applied to love, marriage, and (hetero)sexuality enabled women to enter into what we now call lesbian relationships and to be financially independent of men, thereby opting out of heterosexual family units. Professional success also enabled women to be self-assured and independent in ways leading to a gender identification based on what we might now call female masculinity as conceived by Judith Halberstam (1998) and as I have written about it in the context of education administration (2006b). There is also a growing body of literature about how the early-twentieth-century school teacher opted out of heteronormative family structures and conventional sex/gender systems by choice or necessity.
Queer Pedagogy and Sex Scandals in Education

and was read, in various ways, as “queer” or generically odd by school communities in Canada, the United States, and Britain (Blount 2000; Cavanagh 2005a, 2006b; Oram 1989; Vicinus 1985).

Not until the postwar period did psychoanalysts, sexologists, mental hygienists, pro-natalists, psychologists, and champions of heterosexuality, marriage, and motherhood begin to write extensively about the genders and sexualities of spinster-teachers. As the spinster designation came to signify “sexual abnormality” (lesbianism as opposed to mere abstinence), people began to wonder about the influence of unmarried women on school-aged children. Shortly thereafter, the career teacher was called upon to be attractive to men and open to marriage and motherhood, and a teacher’s pregnancy was no longer something to hide. The white female teacher shifted from virginal to marriageable in less than a decade (Cavanagh 2004) – from innocent to heterosexual in the name of wholesome (i.e., white) family values. As I argue elsewhere (2004, 2006a and b), the white female teacher was subject to public and professional anxieties for most of the twentieth century. Marriage bans, prohibitions against pregnancy, and outlandish moral codes of conduct regulating dress, smoking, dating, and fornication – to cite a few examples – all speak volumes about heterosexual worries governing female teachers’ genders and sexualities in the North American and British contexts.

Because the same prohibitions were not placed on male teachers, questions must be asked about how the public and the profession are particularly anxious about female teacher genders and sexualities. Although “marriage bans” have long since been dropped, there is an intensification of public debate about child sexual abuse involving female teachers that cannot be legitimated through recourse to statistics. I suggest that the earlier panic about female teacher gender and sexuality has transformed itself into a present-day panic about female teacher pedophilia. In essence, post-war worries about non-marital female teacher sexualities have transmogrified into current panics about female pedophilia in North American and British schools. Contemporary sex panics about “predatory” female teacher sexualities are modern manifestations of older, more deeply entrenched anxieties about unmarried and, hence, undomesticated female sexualities. The present-day fear is that the sexuality of the white female teacher has attached itself to the student. But the fear is not really about child welfare so much as it is about the threat posed by the female teacher to the institution of heterosexuality and normative sex/gender systems. This is, of course, not to say that children are not (or cannot be) sexually harmed by female teachers but that the legitimate worry about child welfare is being used in the service of sexual and moral regulation.

This book is driven by my curiosity about how the modern-day sex panic about lascivious and predatory female teacher sexualities is driven by what Gayle Rubin (1984) calls an “excess of signification” (279). Inspired by
French philosopher Michel Foucault’s (1978) writing on the history of sexuality, Rubin wonders if sexual acts mean more than they should, and if this excess of signification is about the regulation of queer or, in other ways, non-normative sexualities in the service of heteronormativity. Foucault and Rubin are both, in different ways, concerned about how pedophilic panics (and the associated idea of childhood sexual innocence) function to legitimize the place of the courts in the domain of human sexuality. As Linda Martin Alcoff (1996) contends in her critical evaluation of Foucault’s position on the policing of the pedophilic subject, by making sexuality the “business of the law,” Foucault is concerned that we are, also, consenting to new and potentially more harmful systems of power, subjectification, and regulation than pre-modern institutions afforded. There is, in other words, a way in which a “widespread and officially sanctioned heterosexism and homophobia” (Alcoff 1996, 102-3) gets solidified through the coupling of homosexuality with pedophilia. Both occupy the conceptual terrain of deviant, dangerous, and threatening to normative heterosexuality. To arrest a pedophile is not just to “save a child” but to win a battle in the fight to salvage heterosexuality from a dangerous cloud of deviance hovering over the white nuclear family. But it is not just the slippage between homosexuality and pedophilia that is problematic and of concern to queer and radical sex theorists in the present-day. It is the use and management of the child in the name of protection that is, also, dangerously misleading.

Before I continue, I wish to underscore that the school is, unfortunately, a place where children – male and female – have been harmed by teachers, administrators, older students, and by those who have taken sexual liberties that we might correctly identify to be abusive. People are justified in claiming that boy-students, like girl-students, can be sexually assaulted and that the abuser is not always male. Female teachers can sexually assault and harm boys and girls, and we may decide (in opposition to Foucault) that we do need the law to intervene in gross instances of sexual abuse. The arguments made in this book should not be taken to suggest that female teachers cannot sexually harm their students (although I do wish to point out that this is, in the current moment, exceedingly rare). Female teachers – like all adult women – are capable of sexually assaulting and harassing male and female students alike, and the gendering of such abuse is in need of critical feminist and gay-positive scholarly and professional inquiry.

My intention in this book is not to trouble what are often legitimate and important child protectionist policies and interventions but to question the duplicitous use of the child in the service of something more than protectionism. There is, as I argue in the chapters that follow, a problem with a double-edged appeal to protect and silence underage youth. Too often the very people who want to save and protect those designated
underage from adult predators are, also, unwilling to listen to youth, particularly when they offer narrative testimony that runs counter to the master narrative of child sexual abuse. This is where things get tricky. The paternalism driving the impulse to protect children (or underage teens) is often associated with a refusal to validate youthful claims to sexual self-determination. If an underage teen says he or she wanted (or even sought out) a sexual encounter with an adult, the testimony is not given legitimacy. Frequently, youth who make such claims are ignored, told they have been brainwashed by a manipulative adult sexual predator, or sent for psychological counselling. As Alcoff explains in her discussion about a panel in which Foucault took issue with the governmentality of the so-called “pedophile”:

A key aspect of this paternalism involves the refusal to accept the possibility that a child may authentically consent to sex with adults. The panelists point to the fact that children may not have the ability to articulate what they are feeling or wanting, and when they are unable to formulate their own desires the courts unfailingly presume to speak for them. Foucault characterizes this as the imposition of hegemonic discourses on the subjugated discourse of the child. Demanding that the child be able to articulate her or his consent involves bringing sex “into discourse,” which will entail bringing it into the dominant discourse and subjecting it to the dominant discourse’s codes of normality. (1996, 103)

Not only do the courts “presume to speak for the child” but, as I will discuss in more detail in subsequent chapters, even when the so-called “child” can speak eloquently about his (or her) desires, wants, and experiences of sexuality, the courts are unwilling to accept this testimony as credible evidence. The presumption that it is impossible for those under the legal age to consent to sex negates youthful claims to sexual citizenship. Foucault advocates listening to youth without presuming to know a core or essential truth about that child or teen in matters pertaining to sexuality (Alcoff 1996, 103). The female teacher sex scandals discussed in this book reveal outlandish instances where student testimonies were not only seen to be irrelevant but symptomatic of abuse. In other words, anything said by the student contra to the master narrative of childhood sexual abuse became itself an indicator of abuse. Within the master narrative of child sexual abuse, no healthy, normal teen could ever consent to adult sexual touching or flirtation.

Of course, I am not suggesting that we should take the words children and teenagers use to describe a given sexual encounter at face value. Social consent is not always transparent and intelligible, particularly when it concerns those designated underage. There is always a gap between what youth
may want (or not want) and the words available to ask for (or to refuse) an overture in the domain of sexual relations. This is also true of adults. Following Freud and Lacan (see Miller 1998), I agree that desire and jouissance does not lend itself to figurative representation, let alone clear and transparent meaning in the domain of language. I am not suggesting that narrative testimony (and consent) is unimportant but that we must understand that there is more going on in the modern-day sex panics than meets the eye. It is always difficult to articulate a sexual desire or wish that is non-normative or rendered illegitimate in the public eye. We lack words to express much of what we want (and do) in the domain of the sexual, and the law steps in to fill the discursive gap. In an effort to understand the paternal and colonizing manoeuvres of legal and child protectionist discourse, I argue that female teacher sex panics are not just about child protectionism; they are about normalizing regimes and unacknowledged worries about the status of heteronormativity in the profession and the public at large.

I am, again, concerned about the “excess of signification” in the modern-day female teacher sex panics. The teacher sex scandals are driven by something more than child welfare because the public and the profession is disproportionately worried about the sexual proclivities of female teachers (who rarely commit the sexual misdemeanors of concern) as opposed to male teachers (who are most often found to have transgressed actual sexual boundaries instated to protect the underaged). There is something more at stake than the manifest complaint about harm to minors suggests. This book is about that something else. To begin, I first ask the question: What has so galvanized and upset the public and the profession about female teacher sexual transgressions?

By focusing in Chapters 2 through 5 on four sex scandals involving the conduct of female teachers with boy-students, I show that, according to all available reports, the boys initiated or were equally enthusiastic participants in what later came to be called a sexual infraction. In the sex scandal involving a lesbian teacher that I discuss in Chapter 6, I show that at the time of the affair, the teenaged female student thought that she was in love and chose to move in with her teacher. The case studies do not show that the underage male and female students were harmed by their sexual liaisons with their female teachers. All insisted that they weren’t victimized or in any way harmed by their relationships with the accused teachers at the time of the affairs. In one instance, a teenager who had participated in a lesbian affair with her teacher saw herself as abused twenty years after the fact, and in another instance, a group of boys – under parental duress – told the courts (amid giggles) that they were harmed. Curiously, none of these students tried to take distance from the accused teacher at the time of the affair or exhibited what are now recognized as telltale signs of abuse (e.g., depression, anxiety, socially withdrawn behaviour,
falling grades, and suicidal or delinquent behaviour). In some instances, the relationships lasted for several years, and while others were short, they were not marked by one sexual episode but by a longer, mutually sought-out flirtation. However, the students did become disturbed and upset by the media coverage, the parental and administrative intervention, and the insistence of child protectionists that they were – despite teen appeals to the contrary – victims.

**Queer Times in School:**

*Queer Pedagogies and Reproductive Futurity*

In this book I use feminist film theory and queer, postcolonial, and psychoanalytic theories to understand the social and psychic dimensions of the sex panics occasioned by the conduct of female teachers. I argue that the panic about white female teachers’ sexualities is not about child protectionism but about efforts to protect both an investment in heteronormativity and the bifurcations of masculinity and femininity that this normativity engenders.

In the chapters that follow, I draw on a range of cultural narratives to contextualize the stories about female teachers’ sexual improprieties. I use film noir and the character of the legendary femme fatale to better understand the portrayal of white female teachers as sexual aggressors who are dangerous and threatening to so-called good white family folk. The cultural mythology of *Lolita* (a movie and book based on the seduction of a schoolgirl by an adult male) is used as a template through which to understand school-based pedophilic panics and how, in the cases to be explored, these panics attach themselves to white female teachers. I also use Freud’s (1997) analytic of love and hate as a phenomenon that manifests itself in childhood beating fantasies to understand the function of Eros in educational pedagogy. As educational theorist Jan Jagodzinski (2002) explains through his Lacanian framework, a love-hate dynamic permeates the pedagogical encounter. The dialectics of love and hate are, among other things, about the breakdown of sexual difference (xxix), the inability of the feminine subject as *sexual subject* to exist in the Symbolic order, and the difficulties we have adhering to normative heterosexualities. The refusal to recognize hate in maternal pedagogies of love, employed primarily by white female teachers, parallels the trouble that many have understanding maternal or pedagogical love as erotic. Both love and hate are crucial to understanding what happens between teacher and student in the erotic pedagogical dynamic.

Perhaps no cultural narrative is as pervasive and deeply entrenched as the master narrative of child sexual abuse, which engulfs even the most benign gestures of love and desire between teacher and student. The master narrative is premised on the idea that children are innocent and
asexual. Thus it cannot account for intergenerational love, desire, and transgressions that were – at least in part – incited and enacted by the younger party. I focus on the failures of this narrative to account for intergenerational desire in the educational encounter. I also suggest that it is used in the service of heteronormativity as opposed to child welfare in the case studies to be examined in the following chapters.

As I explain below, because the lascivious white female teacher is read as queer, panics erupt about her sexuality in much the same way as they do in response to the sexualities of homosexual and lesbian teachers. This is because there is an intimate cultural association between homosexuality and pedophilia (Sears 1998) that spills over to the lascivious white female teacher. The feminine subject in pursuit of what Lacan called “jouissance” (erotic agency and orgasmic disintegration of and in the Symbolic order) is seen as perverse in much the same way as the homosexual is so identified (Miller 1998). Both subjects fall out of the heterosexual Symbolic and threaten the family. Because the family has a patriarchal investment in the next generation, it sees nonprocreative (pleasure-seeking) sexualities as a threat. As Jan Jagodzinski (2002, xxi) explains, the presence of the queer voice or of the gender variant in education is “especially dangerous or unnerving since they throw the structural logistics of the pedagogical family romance into disarray. [They expose] the suppressed eroticism that already circulates within those boundaries, for surely the fantasy is that gay and lesbian teachers are wildly promiscuous and will ‘infect’ students with their erotic lifestyle.”

I contend that the lascivious, transgressive white female teacher performs the same queer pedagogical disruption as the lesbian or gay teacher. As I argue in Chapter 6, people worry about heterosexuality dying out and about the proliferation of queers in the school. The lascivious white female teacher is seen as a threat to heteronormativity and its reproduction because her desire is not contained within a nuclear-family structure. Her undomesticated sexuality is dangerous because it upsets how we think about adult female sexuality, about teenage and childhood sexualities, and about intergenerational prohibitions on love, desire, and sex in the service of the white heteronormative family. Intergenerational desire, talk of childhood sexualities, and lascivious white female teachers all spark public and professional debate and upset.

Many people do not want to think about how, when breached, these taboos affect our understandings of sexuality, gender, and other normalizing structures. Champions of heterosexual cultures and other normalizing ideals default to the childhood sexual abuse thesis and refuse to acknowledge the symbolic and social consequences that sex scandals involving female teachers have for our ideas about intergenerational desire. The childhood sexual abuse narrative is colonizing, making it difficult – perhaps
impossible – to articulate or to remember an intergenerational flirtation, affair, or relationship in terms other than those offered up in the master narrative of sexual abuse.

Through an exposé of the messy underside of the abuse narrative, this book is also engaged with the problem of queer developmental time. Here, the term “queer” refers to an effect that upsets the dominant, normalizing regime of heterosexuality. As Deborah Britzman (1995, 152) argues, queer pedagogies interrogate the “conceptual geography of normalization.” Queer theory invites us to “stop reading straight” (151) so that we may cease reproducing a set of heteronormative identifications that depend on the erasure or exclusion of those who are uncomfortable or at odds with its normalizing agenda. In this context, “queer” does not refer exclusively to those who have same-sex desires but includes all who do not live, express, or feel their genders and sexualities in a manner compatible with normative heterosexuality and with the developmental timelines on which it depends.

Queer theorists are deeply concerned about mandatory gender and sexual binaries and about what is considered normal and deviant in Western cultures. Queer theorists, pedagogues, and activists challenge normalcy in ways that are upsetting to those who cannot tolerate incoherence or ambiguity when it comes to gender and sexuality. “Queer activism seeks to break down the traditional notions of ‘normal’ and ‘deviant,’ by showing the ‘queer’ in what is thought of as normal, and the ‘normal’ in the queer” (Tierney and Dilley 1998, 60). In this book, I identify the queer in sexual relations between female teachers and male or female students and seek to understand the panic to which it gives rise. The teachers and students caught up in the scandals stand in as queer subjects because they upset the intergenerational barriers put in place to ensure reproductive heterosexuality. By challenging the idea that youth are necessarily harmed by intergenerational sex, I show how the scandals are not so much about whether the sex act occurred as about what the invocation of sex between female teachers and their students does to the institution of heterosexuality and its developmental timelines.

To speak of queer time is to draw attention to what we might call a developmental arrest in heterosexual growth. Time is a curious thing. It marks the process by which adolescent gender-identity developments and their asymmetries, sex, and love morph into evidence of abuse, and it recasts teachers into villains in the play of school life. In her discussion of queer time and culture, Judith Halberstam (2003, 328) argues that for queers the “separation between youth and adulthood quite simply does not hold, and queer adolescence can extend far beyond one’s twenties.” I contend that the reverse is also true: the queer adult can revisit childhood in much the same way as an under age youth can enter into adulthood. In queer
time, the adult may be more like a child and the child more like an adult. Those contemptuous of teacher-student sex are panicked not so much by the intergenerational dynamic of the exchange as by its challenge to heterosexual time. Heterosexual time is consistent with developmental growth and life stages that lead to marriage and to human reproduction. Intergenerational desire interrupts heterosexual time and its reproductive, futuristic agenda. As Lee Edelman (2004, 31) writes: “What is queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us is this willingness to ... insist that the future stop here.”

Queers upset narratives of chronological development and show us how life stages are incongruent with psychic life. An adult can have a desire that fits into a teenage flirtation ritual, and a more mature preteen or teenager can love and seduce in ways that our culture reserves for those whom we see as adult. This is the case not only because queers neither fit into nor grow into (nor necessarily grow out of) normative, heterosexual developmental stages, but also because the logic of reproductive heterosexuality (with its chronological and marital divisions) does not apply to the queer. What Halberstam (2005, 314) calls “conventional forward moving narratives of birth, marriage, reproduction and death” do not apply. As Kathryn Bond Stockton (2004) explains, queer youth grow sideways. By this, she means that they refuse to grow up and instead stretch the boundaries of any given developmental stage so that it swells into a queerly defined life moment. The queer child is queer not only because he or she has same-sex desires, but also because chronologies of heterosexual development are transgressed or interrupted. A child who has a crush on his or her teacher may be seen to have a queer desire because the crush breaches normative chronological templates governing taboos on intergenerational desire. A female teacher who flirts with or has sex with a student may also be seen to exhibit a queer desire because she perverts developmental and intergenerational taboos regarding love, desire, and sexuality that the maternal pedagogue is meant to uphold. She also queers maternal pedagogies by exhibiting a desire inhospitable to children’s educational or heterosexual development.

As Lee Edelman (1998) argues, the child is hailed as the anti-queer. It is for the good of the child that we censor discussions about the body and its sexual capacities in school. Members of the Christian right campaign against sex education, homosexuality, and premarital sex for the good of the child and of the family in which it necessarily needs to live. The child is an empty space onto which adults project their desires for the future, and all in the name of innocence. Nobody is pitted against the queer with as much rigour as is the innocent child (who is most often imagined to be white). What Edelman (2004) calls reproductive futurism – the mission of the heteronormative family – is accomplished partly through an
appeal to the child. The “future is figured by the ubiquitous icon of the innocent child and ... this child is often invoked as a symbol of family” (Bruhm and Hurley 2004, xiii). But the prototype of the student as son or daughter and of the teacher as future (or now) wife and mother conceals the queer composition of the dyad. Such a queer dyad necessarily involves the role of Eros and the potential for intergenerational desire in the pedagogical encounter. As the sex scandals involving female teachers reveal, there is more going on in maternal pedagogies of love than meets the eye. Both parties in the scandals to be discussed throughout this book are ambivalent or in some way resistant to what Judith Butler (1990b) calls the heterosexual matrix.

Butler (151) defines the heterosexual matrix as a “grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized.” She is committed to theorizing about what Adrienne Rich (1980) called compulsory heterosexuality and does so by analyzing how gender is used to regulate and manage bodies in the service of heterosexuality. Butler claims that the belief in “opposite” sex bodies (male or female) is accomplished through the repetition and recitation of gender norms (normative masculinity or femininity) over time. When one performs femininity successfully and reliably over time, ideas about the body of the performer, her skin, her genitals, her physique, her sexuality, become real in ways that produce a truth about the sex of the body. The same is true for masculine subjects. Gender is, as Butler (140) argues, “a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions – and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction ‘compels’ our belief in its necessity and naturalness.” The idea of sex is consolidated through gender performativity. Heterosexuality, for Butler, is dependent on gender performativity and is thus fragile and vulnerable to subversion. Without two oppositional sexed bodies, normative heterosexuality cannot sustain itself.

The sex scandals involving female teachers thwart reproductive futurism and the heterosexual matrix. The school has been seen as a second home, as a place where boys and girls learn to be gendered masculine or feminine, to adopt a normative heterosexual orientation with age-appropriate love interests. Both are essential for the reproduction of the white nuclear family. Nations depend on “good citizens,” which are produced through the regulation of sexuality, gender, family, kinship, race, citizenship, and desire. The school sex scandals are driven by a panic about normative gender identifications and their role in consolidating heterosexual cultures in schools. I consider how ideas about childhood sexual innocence, reproductive futurism, maternal pedagogies, developmental narratives central to hegemonic heterosexualities, and postcolonial investments in racial purity,
cultural demarcation, and citizenship are all upset by the revelation of sexual transgressions between teacher and student. Female teachers are supposed to be virtuous and maternal, not lascivious and diabolic. Boys are supposed to pursue girls their own age and to take the lead in such pursuits. They are not supposed to desire and seek out older female teachers charged with maternal care and educational guardianship. Intergenerational desire in school cultures is as taboo as incest is in the family. Both clandestine desires ignite worries of epic proportions in those who cannot tolerate hankerings for something other than white, reproductive, familial, and age-appropriate heterosexuality. Ideas about childhood sexual innocence seem to be upset beyond repair. Female teachers, like mothers, are not supposed to have desires, let alone act on yearnings for underage boys, who are designated innocent.

The scandals remind us of desires and experiences unwelcome in or at odds with heterosexual cultures. They speak to permutations of desire unacknowledged or castigated in the heteronormative mainstream. While some high school students do have sex with teachers and others may want to, there is little room to narrate these wishes or to fit them into the stories that we tell about who we are. Queer desires are not often discussed, and we draw on the more socially legitimate desires when recounting boy- or girlhood school tales. The queer school tales that are told tend to be about gay teen suicide, homosexual teachers and priests recruiting young boys, and pornographers and pedophiles infiltrating the schools. They are unhappy, to say the least.

The stories our culture tells about childhood sexualities (innocent and otherwise) shape and give rise to normative and formulaic accounts of masculinity and femininity and of heterosexuality. The sex scandals as narrated by the mainstream media, likewise, authorize and render legitimate certain ways of being heterosexual (coming-of-age narratives are a favourite) and constitute other ways of being sexually dangerous, deviant, and/or criminal. Given the dominant cultural narratives that constitute intergenerational sex as de facto abuse, it is difficult, perhaps in some instances impossible, to narrate or render intelligible an amorous pedagogical encounter that was not harmful or abusive. Through narrative we constitute and work to solidify our genders and sexualities. But master narratives of abuse make it difficult to tell stories that trouble heterosexual genres. Genders and sexualities are seen to be less than stable and transparent in queer tales. The sex scandal stories told in this book are queer tales not because they involve lesbian teachers or gay students but because they run counter to the mainstream heterosexual genre. As I explain in the chapters that follow, female teacher sex scandal stories signal a developmental arrest in the otherwise seamless narrative of
heterosexuality. Consequently, there is a push to recast the female teacher (otherwise the object of student desire) into a dangerous character who perpetuates abuse against innocent children. The master cultural narrative of abuse leaves almost no room to remember an erotic pull (acted upon or not) between a student and teacher in terms other than abuse.

Deborah Britzman (1995, 164) argues that there are "no innocent, normal, or unmediated readings and that the representations drawn upon to maintain a narrative or a self as normal, as deviant, as thinkable, are social effects of how discourses of normalization are lived and refused." Reading practices are central to identity formations, sexualities, and structures of normalization governing school cultures. Sex scandals involving female teachers must be read through a queer lens if we are to unlock structures of normalization employed in the service of heterosexuality. I am in agreement with Britzman, who claims that queer theory must be engaged in the study of ignorance – understood not as a lack of knowledge or as a learning deficit but as an organization of knowledge that prohibits ways of thinking that challenge structures of normalization sustained by the institution of heterosexuality. Queer pedagogies call on us to grapple with ignorance, particularly with our refusals to know about clandestine genders, desires, and expressions of love and hate such as those unmasked by sex scandals involving female teachers. In so doing, we might be able to remember a time when our own genders and sexualities were more ambiguous and less likely to be straitjacketed by the colonizing agendas of normality.

The school sex scandals discussed here are as troubling as they are exciting. The attentions given to the professional transgressions analyzed in this book signal repressed wishes to escape the ordinary and to challenge what we take to be normal. The scandals provide a forum to talk about queer sexualities, desires, genders, and pleasures in school life even as they are couched within moralistic frameworks. As Michel Foucault (1978) reminds us, queer sexualities have not been repressed so much as subsumed into normalizing professional, institutional, and pathological discourses. Intergenerational desires in the school are especially prone to being subsumed into narratives of child sexual abuse. For this reason, queers often choose not to talk openly about crushes on, affairs with, and flirtations with teachers. Queer folk do not want their stories misunderstood or their love objects tarnished (or jailed) by the taint of abuse. Nor do people want their memories to be subsumed into master narratives of abuse or perversion. As a result, school sex stories tend to be confined to whispers and gossip, particularly when they are queer and intergenerational. Consequently, the media-based outing of these stories was scandalous, as it ran what Britzman (1998) calls interference and ignited curiosities.
Sex Scandals in Education and the Mythology of the Innocent Child

According to James Kincaid (2004, 13), the early meaning of the word “scandal” was to “cause perplexity of conscience, to hinder the reception of faith or obedience to Divine Law, to present a stumbling block.” In present-day usage, it is associated with a moral wrongdoing and also with the “rage, rumour, or gossip arising from this” (Oxford English Dictionary). In other words, a scandal is not just about an objectionable behaviour but about the intensity of public response to it. The catalyst for any given sex panic is less than obvious. Because female teachers do not really pose a threat to students that is proportionate to the associated press coverage, we must turn our attention to how the alleged transgressions camouflage and thus distract us from the real issue at hand. To properly understand the catalyst for school sex panics, it is necessary to focus on the panic as opposed to the transgressive act per se. Public and professional response to allegations of sexual abuse by white female teachers, sensational media coverage of such allegations, and professional censure and discipline of the involved teachers needs explanation because they are out of proportion to the infractions against which they are mobilized. The sexual misdemeanours are red herrings. The real show is to be seen in the narration of the taboo, in the moralistic responses uttered by those whom we might call champions of the innocent child, and the teaching profession.

Using psychoanalysis as a methodology, I endeavour to uncover what drives the panic. I am interested less in what actually happened than in what we think and how we worry about what happened. I am concerned with the panic itself as a scholarly topic of investigation. This book offers an explanation for how professional administrators in education, the public, parents, child-welfare advocates, and others came to be so concerned about the sexual transgressions of female teachers. Scandals are always more interesting and significant than the clandestine activities themselves. Psychic anxieties about the sexualities of white female teachers are the focus of my investigation, and using psychoanalysis, I endeavour to understand their impact on the genealogy of school-based sex panics.

Scandal is the “enemy of cultural hegemony,” and “we are drawn to scandal by a hope to trip up the cultural censors, by a dream of escaping culture or transforming it” (Kincaid 2004, 13). There is something about genders and sexualities, particularly the illicit sexualities of white female teachers, that is scandalously exciting, and we wish to hear more about them. This is why so many newspapers featuring stories of sex between female teachers and their students are sold. We care very much about the desires that we are not supposed to have, about the gender identifications that we are supposed to disavow, and about the intergenerational desires that are not supposed to exist. At the same time, many are driven to punish
and ostracize those who dare to transgress societal taboos. Those who are excited and those who insist on punishment are often the same people. In Chapter 3, I consider how this dialectic operates at the level of the unconscious. Segments of the population seek to punish individual teachers, and moralists worry about a whole generation of female teachers tempted by the sexual availability of teenaged boys (and girls). The sexualities of white female teachers in Canada, the United States, and England are now regarded with a new sense of alarm. No longer seen as asexual, the white female teacher is thought to be capable of sexual depravity, impurity, and vice in the pedagogical encounter.

Because the sex scandals involving female teachers reveal gender identifications that are not hospitable to normative heterosexualities, they must be quashed. The panic is not really about the sexual violation of school boys and girls but about the multiple ways that boy- and girl-students and white female teachers are already gendered and sexualized subjects. The panic is also about a moment in which the white female teacher is seen to have failed in her task as a guide or agent in the management of normative heterosexuality. It is no coincidence that use of the white female teacher’s body in education is evident when she departs from an ascetic or heteronormative mandate – that is, when she commits a sexually transgressive act involving a student. When she becomes a scandal and is pitted against the innocence of the child and all that is good and white about heterosexuality, the nation, and its commitment to reproductive futurism, she becomes a sensation in the Western world: “The Child ... marks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity: an erotically charged investment in the rigid sameness of identity that is central to the compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism” (Edelman 2004, 21). In other words, reproductive futurism is about a dream of the future, an investment in white heteronormativity that has its roots in colonial societies, human reproduction for racial and national betterment, and nuclear-family structures. The white boy-child occupies a pivotal role in this dream, and violation of his innocence shatters the dream along with the configurations of nation to which it adheres. This explains why white female teachers who violate the dream by having sex with or flirting with a teenaged boy-student, otherwise suited for marriage, paternity, and white reproductive futurism, is received with such scorn. She is to prepare and educate the child who stands in as the future generation, not harness him for her own unproductive pleasures.

But the futuristic agenda cannot have it both ways. The child cannot be heterosexual and innocent. He (or she) cannot be a budding heterosexual without sexual desire of his (or her) own. A curious doublespeak emerges in the print media. The child seduced by his predatory teacher is framed as “no longer innocent,” but he is also framed as having his heterosexual development thrown off course. In the first moment, the child is innocent,
and in the second, he or she is a heterosexual in the making. Normative, masculine gender-identity development is interrupted, so his heterosexuality is also perceived to be under threat. Developmental stages are said to have been interrupted even as the adolescent and teenaged boys are also said to have been pure, virginal, and untouched by adult desires. The doublespeak is even more absurd when we consider that a flirtation between a boy and a girl at school is seen as a normal expression of desire, whereas a similar gesture between a student and a same-sex peer, an adult, or an older child robs the student of sexual innocence – that which was not supposed to be there in the first place. The oxymoronic constitution of the child as asexual and as heterosexual at the same time should alert us to more than a problem of logic. The slippage enables the child to be used in the service of something else, namely the heteronormative, white, and reproductive family. Here, we see a dual usage of the teacher and the student. There is a curious coupling between the student and the white female teacher in how the thesis of childhood sexual innocence is strung together. Both are expected to be devoid of desire in the service of heterosexuality. As such, both are eroticized, as I claim in Chapter 2, but this eroticization remained largely underground until the outbreak of the media-generated sex scandals involving female teachers.

The place of the school, and the role of the white female teacher more specifically, in the management of heterosexuality has not been adequately considered or acknowledged in queer theory or in critical pedagogical studies of the hidden curriculum. Queer pedagogy is a field in curriculum studies that has made important contributions to the study of heterosexuality and its normalizing regimes (Britzman 1995; Cavanagh 2005b; Gallop 1992, 1995, 1997; Pinar 1998). The school is charged with the reproduction of normative heterosexualities, and the sex scandals involving female teachers are seen as violations of this national responsibility. It is important to note that this heterosexuality does not operate in a vacuum. Normative heterosexuality forges dangerous liaisons with postmodern eugenic discourses, as I show in the following chapter. The production of queer racializations provokes panic as well. Developmental psychologies, reliant on normative gender and age templates, render queers, racialized peoples, and transgendered peoples out of time and place. In other words, queer or trans folk who do not grow up to become reproductive citizens – that is, clearly masculine or feminine in ways sanctioned by white heteronormative culture – but who live in opposition (by choice or necessity) to the developmental psychologies that saturate the school are seen as either anachronistic, foreign, or in some way alien to the futuristic agenda. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals, queers, transgendered peoples, transsexuals, racialized peoples, and gender-queers all fall outside of heteronormative templates and, like lascivious female teachers, are the stuff of which scandals are