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Résumé de l'article

Contemporary initiatives against anti-LGBTQ bullying in the United States include enumeration policies, which name sexual orientation as an unacceptable basis for bullying. Conservative opposition to these and other initiatives has been swift, taking discursive and specifically narrative form. This article examines how opponents of prevention and intervention use narrative to resist efforts to curb anti-LGBTQ bullying, based on analysis of 22 public statements challenging anti-bullying legislation. They deny anti-LGBTQ bullying's impact and reassign victimizer and victim positions. Achieving justice for anti-LGBTQ bullying victims requires recognition of the stories that uphold heteronormative power.

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NARRATIVE WORKS
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Constructing Victimhood: Storied Opposition to Legislation Protecting LGBTQ Students

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Contemporary initiatives against anti-LGBTQ bullying in the United States include enumeration policies, which name sexual orientation as an unacceptable basis for bullying. Conservative opposition to these and other initiatives has been swift, taking discursive and specifically narrative form. This article examines how opponents of prevention and intervention use narrative to resist efforts to curb anti-LGBTQ bullying, based on analysis of 22 public statements challenging anti-bullying legislation. They deny anti-LGBTQ bullying's impact and reassign victimizer and victim positions. Achieving justice for anti-LGBTQ bullying victims requires recognition of the stories that uphold heteronormative power.

Keywords:
LGBTQ, anti-bullying legislation, conservative opposition, master narratives

Bullying of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) youth in middle and high schools is prevalent and it is harmful. According to the 2015 National School Climate Survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN 2015), 57.6% of American LGBTQ students in grades 6 to 12 reported feeling unsafe in school due to their sexual orientation and 43.3% felt unsafe because of how they expressed their gender (Kosciw et al., 2016). The GLSEN study found that 85.2% of LGBTQ students surveyed reported having been verbally harassed, 27% reported having been physically harassed, and 13% reported having been physically assaulted due to their orientation and/or identity.[1] International research paints a similar picture, with majorities of LGBTQ-identifying students reporting

[1] The report provides as examples of physical harassment being shoved or pushed. Examples of physical assault are being punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon (Kosciw et al., 2016, p. 23).

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being bullied at school in Brazil, Canada, England, Mexico, Thailand, and elsewhere (Baruch-Dominguez et al., 2016; Carrara et al., 2016; Guasp, 2012; Taylor et al. 2011; UNESCO et al., 2014).

Schools' hostile climate has serious mental health consequences for LGBTQ youth. Relative to their straight peers, gay youth report significantly higher levels of depression and anxiety, and lower self-esteem due to bullying and sexual harassment (Gruber & Fineran, 2008). Suicide and suicidal intention are observed consequences as well (Baruch-Dominguez et al., 2016; Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Robinson & Espelage, 2011). Early experiences of anti-LGBTQ bullying may be long-lasting, associated with post-traumatic stress as well as depression in later years (Rivers, 2004).

Policymakers and educators in the U.S. have recently sought to make schools safer for LGBTQ youth through anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies, curricular inclusion of LGBTQ issues, and school-based support groups such as "gay-straight alliances" (Russell, 2011). This paper considers such potential human rights advancement in the context of social problems claims and counter-claims taking narrative form in the United States during the early years of the 21st century. Our central research question is: How have opponents of anti-bullying prevention and intervention storied their opposition to anti-LGBTQ bullying initiatives in the United States?

Education in the United States is largely decentralized, with state and local authorities directing such matters as school curricula and standards. The U.S. Department of Education does, however, enforce federal civil rights laws in educational settings. No federal law in the United States explicitly prohibits bullying on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016; Stopbullying.gov, 2019a). Rather, so-called harassment—on the basis of one's race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion—violates federal civil rights laws under certain conditions, including that it is serious and sustained (stopbullying.gov, 2019b). Nonetheless, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2011), over 120 anti-bullying bills were enacted by states between 1999 –2010. All 50 states in the U.S. have passed some form of anti-bullying legislation.

Notably, only 19 of the states as well as Washington, DC, have included sexual orientation and/or gender identity as "enumerated" characteristics (GLSEN, 2019; Stopbullying.gov, 2019b). Enumeration sends the "unambiguous, norm-enunciative message to children, parents,

and society that antigay bullying is unacceptable" (Connolly, 2012, p. 250) and indeed has proven helpful. One study found that students in American schools under statutes with enumeration were less likely to report victimization based on sexual orientation (20.1% vs. 36.1%) or gender expression (21.5% vs. 34%) than those in schools without them (Kosciw et al., 2016). Additionally, research has found that states with fully enumerated laws are associated with decreased risk for suicide attempts (Meyer et al., 2019). Enumerated bullying statutes are thus recommended by the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2018). Conservative opposition to anti-LGBTQ bullying initiatives has been swift, enumeration one, but by no means the only, target of such opposition. Statutes have been challenged online, on radio programs, and in print media.

We engage theoretical ideas from critical discourse analysis, social constructionism, and narrative criminology to shed light on such opposition to anti-LGBTQ bullying statutes. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) begins with the understanding that language is a key means by which power relations are accomplished and maintained. "CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse)" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 10). In the case of LGBTQ bullying, the culpable discourse, in our view, is that which seeks to legitimize inequalities and harms on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Loseke's (2003) articulation of the social constructionist perspective on social problems provides a rich theoretical vocabulary for clarifying politically charged struggles over stories and their characterizations—stories about what "the" problem of bullying is, who bullies, and so forth. Narrative criminology posits stories as conditioning harm, including both criminal actions and insidious, not necessarily criminalized, social structures (Presser, 2009). Narrative criminologists draw connections between stories, story elements, and genres, and either harm or resistance to harm. We follow research in narrative criminology that scrutinizes the stories of elites that have engendered atrocities, fraud, repression, corporate environmental harm, and punitive state practices (e.g., Barrera, 2017; Keeton, 2015; Presser, 2013; Schally, 2018; Tognato, 2013).

First, we review legislation against anti-LGBTQ bullying in the U.S. Second, we describe the composite theoretical framework for this project. Third, we describe our research methods, including texts analyzed and analytic procedures. Fourth, we report on the storytelling with which opponents of anti-bullying prevention and intervention

(henceforth OPI) negate the bullying problem and reconstruct “the” social problem as one of LGBTQ activism. We close the paper with policy implications, envisioning activism that warns against misconstruals in advance.

Opposition to Initiatives Opposing Anti-LGBTQ Bullying

OPI, mostly identified with right-wing Christians, have criticized and rejected LGBTQ bullying intervention and prevention efforts and particularly enumeration of LGBTQ youth as victims. Their opposition has had a discernible impact on state legislatures, leading to censoring of LGBTQ-inclusive language from anti-bullying statutes and other initiatives. Lawmakers in Missouri and South Dakota have banned enumeration in their anti-bullying statutes (GLSEN, 2019). Such a prohibition prevents LGBTQ and other minority students from getting “special treatment” (Meneses & Grimm, 2012) and in some cases explicitly proscribes mention of LGBTQ in school programs that prevent bullying (Garrison, 2012).

An additional six states—Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas—have, at the time of this writing, “No Promo Homo” laws that explicitly forbid educators from discussing LGBTQ issues, effectively marginalizing and stigmatizing LGBTQ people (GLSEN, 2019; Harlow, 2011; Rodriguez, 2013). For example, Alabama Code–Section 16–40A–2 requires that sex education programs or curricula include “emphasis, in a factual manner and from a public health perspective, that homosexuality is not a lifestyle acceptable to the general public and that homosexual conduct is a criminal offense under the laws of the state.” Taken together, these statutes, championed by OPI, thwart the safety and well-being of LGBTQ students in schools (Meneses & Grimm, 2012).

Broad public acceptance and support of LGBTQ people in the U.S. (GLAAD, 2017) would seem to put OPI in a discursive quandary. Homophobic discourse and attitudes do not have the widespread currency they once did in the West (Charlesworth & Banaji 2019; Loftus, 2001; McCormack & Anderson, 2010). The shift to widespread acceptance has been a quick one (Schmidt, 2019). In addition, the protection of children from harm is widely deemed important; it is a shared cultural value. Further, in the new millennium, the American public has come to view bullying negatively, whoever its victims are. How then could OPI

effectively contest anti-bullying protections for LGBTQ children? We looked to stories for answers.

Discourses, Moral Tales, and Master Narratives

Critical discourse analysts attend to "the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 12). As Luke (2002) notes, the approach is avowedly political: invested in ideology critique, it entails an "orchestrated and recursive analytic movement between text and context" (p. 100). Texts disseminated by elite social actors and contexts of inequality and power abuse are most often taken into view.

Loseke (2003) lays out a social constructionist perspective on social problems—public concerns—with particular attention to effective strategies of claims-making by actors in their everyday lives and for purposes of shaping policy. She asks: How do claim-makers construct the meaning of a social problem and ultimately rally the support of audiences? Her answer, which borrows from Snow and Benford's (1988) framing perspective (which, in turn, borrowed from Goffman, 1974), is that the (re)construction of a social problem "involves persuading audience members that a particular social problem is more important than all other demands on our time, worry, and resources; it involves persuading audience members that a particular set of claims about a particular social problem is more believable and important than other sets of claims constructing that problem" (p. 54). In order to achieve such persuasion, the process of claim-making "involves constructing typifications of conditions *and* people, problems *and* solutions, in ways motivating audience members to think *and* to feel in particular ways" (p. 59). Claim-makers construct a "social problem frame" that constructs images of victims and villains.

Loseke refers to "social problems formula stories" (p. 89) or "moral tales" (p. 90) which set out social problems as being "about how cultural themes are violated, about how injustices are happening to good people" (pp. 90–91). Moral tales shape audience's opinions and rally their support. Their plots construct the serious harm experienced by victims. Events that cause the harm are central while other events are excluded. The characters in social problem formula stories are narrowly defined. Typically, the victim is the central character. They suffer grave injustice for which they are not responsible: they are "morally pure" (p. 90).

Villains in social problem formula stories are constructed as antithetical to victims; they are "purely evil" (p. 90).

Narrative criminologists take heed of such stories and less dramatic ones insofar as they influence harm-doing (Presser, 2009). Whereas moral tales are uniquely good at rallying support for a cause, narratives in general influence action. Stories both legitimize and animate (Presser, 2018). Lived experience is the basis for what we do, and we know lived experience as a temporally ordered series to which we attach meaning. Narrative criminologists thus find that stories are superior to other theorized mechanisms—such as frames, neutralizations, and moral disengagement—for understanding mobilization of action. Whereas critical discourse analysis looks at the "power interests buried in … texts" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 5), a critical narrative criminology analyses *narrative* texts specifically (Presser & Sandberg, 2019).

Critical scholars have drawn our attention to the operation of *hegemonic* (Ewick & Silbey, 1995), *cultural* (Richardson, 1990) or *master narratives* (Lyotard 1979), potentially resisted by so-called subversive or collective or counter narratives (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). Inspired by these conceptualizations, we examined the features of hegemonic, cultural, or master narratives that maintain an unjust status quo. The stories of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender persons are, in most parts of the globe today, at best marginalized—what they are about (e.g., "sick" or "weird") is told *to* them, by other narrators. While we take the point articulated by Bamberg and Andrews (2004) that the relative positioning of master to counter narrative is always dynamic, we note that characters in narratives may get solidified for a spell into their respective positions. We do, however, connect with Bamberg and Andrews' (2004) insight that subordination is discursively achieved rather than settled once and for all.

Methods

Narrative is a particular form of discourse through which claims are made and power is accomplished. We take narratives to be "artefactual representations which emphasize the causal and temporal connectedness of particular things, especially agents" (Currie, 2010, p. 219). Famously, narratives are seen to establish personas and especially personas of self—identities (Bruner, 1990; Somers, 1994)—including the hero, the authority, the villain, and so forth.

Narratives specialize in drawing connections, including causal connections. Narratives relate how experiences evolve and events transpire—what and who is behind them. Thus Herman (2007) calls narrative "a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change" (p. 3). Narrative plots are "ways of relating incidents to one another" (Belknap, 2016, p. 3), which begs the question: Which incidents? Narratives feature those incidents (cf. Squire, 2008) that build to and then resolve some breach (Bruner, 1991), disequilibrium (Herman, 2009), or complicating action (Labov & Waletzky, 1967)—often an incident that provokes a change in circumstances. Cueing the moral aspect of storytelling, the complicating action is generally a "breach between ideal and real, self and society" (Riessman, 1993, p. 3). In narratives that concern a social problem, the problem or its manifestation is the complicating action.

How did we locate narratives of concern to us? We learned about anti-LGBTQ groups and individuals via television networks such as MSNBC, CNN, and FOX News. We subscribed to Facebook pages that post updates on anti-LGBTQ rhetorics: for example, *The Advocate*, Right Wing Watch, *The Huffington Post*, etc. We checked the news feeds of these Facebook pages to obtain the latest OPI rhetorics on a regular basis from the beginning of 2006 to the end of 2014. Through all of these channels we learned of OPI organizations including Focus on the Family, Family Watch International, Traditional Values Coalition, etc. We used Google to locate web references to statements from such groups and spokespersons. Key words used included "conservatives and gay bullying," "pro homophobic bullying," and "critics of antigay bullying prevention."

We arrived at a corpus of 22 self-contained statements made from 2009 to 2014 in which prominent speakers, including politicians and civic leaders, communicated at length against anti-LGBTQ bullying policy. Most of the data were in text form. Those that were not (e.g., radio recordings) were transcribed into Word for analysis. In cases where the data appeared in news articles, we ascertained that the articles appeared in established sources, and cross-checking online led us to multiple mentions of the same data. We also cross-referenced ascribed claims to actual online transcripts, YouTube recordings, and articles made and written by the claim-makers.

Narrative criminologists have tended to focus on one or more of the following in their analyses: (1) elements or parts of narrative; (2) subject and verb choices that represent agency; (3) genres or types of

narrative; (4) narrative coherence and plurivocality; and (5) the storytelling context (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). We delineated the plots of OPI stories—the central, unfolding structure (Brooks, 1984)—and their main characters, or agents and patients of the action. That is, of each statement in the corpus we asked: What stories are being told or assumed, what is its plot, and who are its characters?

Findings

How did OPI rally support to resist anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention efforts without appearing to be pro-bullying? They did so by telling stories vilifying LGBTQ activists and to a lesser extent LGBTQ youth, minimizing harms to those youth, and highlighting alternative threats from anti-bullying legislation itself. The "what" and "who" of OPI stories are direct counters to the moral tale in which bullying of LGBTQ students is damaging and of urgent public concern.

Plot

OPI narrators dismissed anti-LGBTQ bullying as a significant problem. They told a different story with a different focal problem. Loseke (2003) outlines three main criteria to be fulfilled in order for a situation to be diagnosed as a social problem (pp. 6–7): harm, widespread impact, and changeability. That is, it must have adverse effects that are pervasive but amenable to some intervention. OPI undercut all three criteria in the stories they told.

Minimizing Harm and Impact

OPI consistently denied anti-LGBTQ bullying's severity and even its existence as a problem. Anti-LGBTQ bullying evidently had to be diminished before the social problem could be repackaged as something else. In an interview with *ThinkProgess* in 2011, the head of the California Christian Coalition, Robert Newman, said, "I hardly think bullying is a real issue in schools" (Fang, 2011). Hosting a television segment on *Fox & Friends*, Steve Doocy posed the rhetorical question: "Is bullying really a problem in the United States or is there such a focus on bullying that it has now become an exaggerated epidemic?" (Maza, 2012). Linda Harvey of Mission America commented on anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention initiatives this way:

> One of the most recognized methods for radical social change is to just keep making a fuss and keep pitching a fit. Even if your cause is unworthy and your complaints have little merit, the way the media works today, you'll still get publicity and it will seem as though you will need to be taken seriously. (Tashman, 2011a)

Harvey's wording of activist communication implies unjustified, even infantile speech: "just keep making a fuss" and "keep pitching a fit." Harvey assails those claims almost playfully so as not to seem too offensive. She constructs herself as the teacher who sees through the activists' ruse, guiding the less informed. Nonetheless, the effect is that of demeaning bullying claims, excluding them from the realm of social problems (Loseke, 2003); claim-makers do not actually "need to be taken seriously." Stacey Campfield, a Republican member of the Tennessee Senate, likewise positions himself as a privileged knower who sees through deceit. During a press interview he commented that the "bullying thing is the biggest lark out there" (Signorile, 2012). By qualifying bullying as "bullying thing" Campfield gestures at a purported problem as opposed to an actual one; his calling it "the biggest lark out there" makes the same point unsubtly. Matt Barber alleged that "there is no evidence of course against people who are engaged in these behaviors" (Tashman, 2012a). "Of course" here does the work of presupposing what "everyone" knows about bullying of LGBTQ youth—that its incidence is suspect (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Some OPI speakers minimized the magnitude of the bullying problem in terms of victim numbers. Robert Newman argued that anti-LGBTQ bullying does not warrant any concern, as "there's no reason to have a special bill for say three percent of the population" (Fang, 2011). Referring to Congress' consideration of the anti-bullying Safe School Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act in 2011, Linda Harvey commented on her radio talk show, "it looks to me like two minor-age boys' names are all over the national media as they become convenient tools for homosexual activism" (Tashman, 2011a). In Harvey's phrasing, a paltry two victims—"minor-age" at that—are unacceptably at the center of "the national media." Harvey's lexical choices project the idea that LGBTQ victimization is trivial. Harvey also casts the two boys as victims ("convenient tools") of manipulators who assume the guise of advocates. We presently return to the construction of the immoral activist through various means.

Naturalizing Bullying

Along with minimizing the harm and the extent of anti-LGBTQ bullying, OPI denied that it could be changed, depicting it as a natural pattern among youth. In 2006 Michelle Bachmann, then a Republican member of the United States House of Representatives of Minnesota's 6th congressional district, commented at a hearing on legislation that mandated anti-bullying policies in schools:

> I think for all of us our experience in public schools is there have always been bullies, always have been, always will be. I just don't know how we're ever going to get to the point of zero tolerance and what does it mean?" She added, "None of us like inappropriate behavior. None of us like sassy children. But there's just a fact of life that as we grow up, we're kind of little barbarians when we're two and our process as mothers and fathers is to civilize our children" (Bufkin, 2011).

Here, Bachmann describes bullying, which is phrased as trivial ("inappropriate"), as natural and generic. Robert Newman similarly argued that bullying is "part of the maturational process" (Fang, 2011). As such, nothing can be done about it. Bullying makes a poor plot driver; it is a "fact of life." Essential here is omission of the discriminatory nature of the bullying—its context and its impacts. Rather, these commentators speculate on a timeless, universal, and decontextualized phenomenon. She communicates a neoliberal vision of parenting that civilizes children from their natural unruliness, or else fails to do so—hence bullying, as opposed to the notion that anti-LGBTQ bullying is in fact altogether socialized.

Characters

Bachmann, above, disappears bullies and prejudice, leaving only "sassy children." OPI cast the real troublemakers as the people behind the anti-bullying interventions, those who supposedly encourage homosexuality and normalize gender nonconformity. Activists themselves are villains.

Activists Are Bullies

In order to justify discrimination against LGBTQ, OPI cast activists as bullies. Calling LGBTQ advocates and anti-LGBTQ bullying activists "child corruption" groups, Barbara Anderson argued that LGBTQ activism, not homophobia, is behind bullying:

> They are creating an environment where these children that are sexually confused suddenly become affirmed as a homosexual or that they are born that way, and then these kids are locked into a lifestyle with their choices limited, and many times this can be disastrous to them as they get into the behavior which leads to disease and death in some cases. …They are the ones that are contributing to an atmosphere that can even increase bullying as more kids get into this kind of a lifestyle. (Birkey, 2010)

Conjuring anti-bullying activists as instigators of confusion rests on the idea that people can be led to their sexual orientations. Indeed, gay-by-choice logic can be found in nearly every anti-LGBT claim that OPI have made. Referring to enumeration policy, Linda Harvey noted: "They say they are protecting homosexual kids, no they're not, if they're advocating going into this lifestyle, that's not protection" (Tashman, 2012b). Gay-by-choice rhetoric is crucial for positioning advocates and LGBTQ youth themselves as responsible for what happens to them. Even suicide is the result of one's own choices. As Matt Barber states, "kids who are engaging in homosexual behavior often look inward and know that what they are doing is unnatural, is wrong, is immoral, and so they become depressed and the instances of suicide can rise there as well" (Tashman, 2011b).

Campfield used orientational metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) to conjure sympathetic victims who have been led astray, stating that "there are sexually confused children who could be pushed into a lifestyle that I don't think is appropriate" (Signorile, 2012). Pushing has long been associated with nefarious pressure put on youth: think "drug pushing" of the 1980s.

Similarly, the American Family Association (AFA) opposed the annual "Mix It Up" (anti-bullying) day campaign by vilifying its organizer, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). On their website, the AFA wrote in October 2012: "The Southern Poverty Law Center is using this project to bully-push its gay agenda, and at the same time

intimidate and silence students who have a Biblical view of homosexuality." Activism is referred to in terms that imply aggression. Thus, Bryan Fischer criticized SPLC and its Mix It Up program to *ABC News*:

> The problem is pushing the normalization of homosexuality in schools. You see the same thing happening with anti-bullying legislation. It winds up being used as a hammer to silence Christian students who oppose normalization of homosexuality. (Curry, 2012)

The mixed metaphor of hammers silencing is no trouble for OPI claim-makers. The result is a sure image of force.

Activism Unleashes Core Threats

What do OPI claim is so intolerable about anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention efforts? OPI identified four core threats of anti-bullying legislation: disruption of the gender order, violation of rights, endangerment of children, and cultivation of children's sexuality. The degradation of deeply held values is highly arousing (Presser, 2018). Besides threatening these values, anti-LGBTQ bullying activism is a threat to Christian conservativism. The OPI story is ultimately that of persecution of Christians and/or social conservatives, and beneficiaries of their concern such as misguided young people.

Disrupting the Gender Order

Homophobia foundationally concerns traditional gender ideals having been violated. The commonly-understood-as-antigay slur "faggot" or "fag" is not only homophobic; it is strongly gendered (Pascoe, 2007). The slur is often used to insult straight or gay men for being "unmasculine" and does not necessarily refer to sexual orientation. In persuading their audience members about the harm of anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention efforts, OPI's statements reveal a preoccupation with gender conformity.

Several OPI claim-makers spoke of cross-dressing in the same breath as homosexuality. Candi Cushman (2010) interpreted state laws that protect LGBTQ students from discrimination and harassment:

> Specifically, they (homosexual activists) lobby for so-called anti-bullying laws that mandate special protections in schools for homosexual-related categories. Most commonly, these categories are “sexual orientation, “gender identity” and “gender expression,” which can include protection for things like cross-dressing or boys using girls’ bathrooms.

At the 2006 Minnesota Education Committee hearing on legislation that mandated anti-bullying policies in schools, Michelle Bachmann mused about how bullying might be defined, “Will it mean that, what form of behavior will there be, will we be expecting boys to be girls?” (Bufkin, 2011).

Opposing bullying is equated with inviting gender nonconformity. Note that inviting boys to be girls is the specter that Bachmann names. Boys’ gender deviance is apparently more loathed: males who defy gender roles sustain more violent victimization than do females (e.g., Herek & Berrill, 1992). Indeed, OPI’s discourse is mainly about boys failing to match conventional masculine expectations. Men’s failure to strictly adhere to those expectations upsets the gender order.

Violating Rights

OPI storied anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention efforts as infringing upon parents’ rights to raise their children as they see fit, the right to privacy and physical safety in the face of bathroom politics, and the right of free speech.

TrueTolerance.org, a website sponsored by Focus on the Family, designed to teach about the harms of anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention efforts, casts religious anti-LGBTQ bullies, their parents and audience members as victims, who can defend themselves with information gleaned from downloadable documents such as “Parents’ Bill of Rights.” In one such document, Cushman (2010) criticizes anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention programs that include diversity awareness in school curricula: “The policies are also used to undermine parental rights and circumvent traditional marriage laws. These tactics have been documented across the country” (p. 11). “Documented across the country” implies a far-reaching, verifiable menace. Cushman translates state laws protecting LGBTQ students from discrimination as: “State laws and school provisions citing special protections for homosexual characteristics trump parental rights and religious freedom” (p. 11). Here, “homosexual” qualifies

characteristics, not persons; the only implied persons are holders of rights in jeopardy.

Another rights discourse that is summoned generally in OPI literature concerns students' right to physical privacy and safety, allegedly imperiled by the presence of transgender students in bathrooms associated with their gender identity. Here, OPI depict actually bullied youngsters as a potential threat to others. More commonly, activists are demonized insofar as they are constructed as stifling the free speech of those with differing views. Hence, Harvey recounts that "they (activists) will push aside the rights of others as if the constitutional religious or free speech liberties of other people don't matter" (Tashman, 2012b).

The discourse of rights projects the idea that individuals are equal in the eyes of the law. But those in power get to define what rights are and to whom they belong. OPI are just such a privileged group, who not only claim rights but also define all the terms and conditions surrounding those rights. For example, we conjecture that "parental rights" would only refer to the rights of individuals whose parenthood OPI sanction, and not to non-heterosexual parents.

Endangering Children

Also pressing is the endangerment of children, as OPI claim-maker Harvey (2006) highlights: "Homosexual activism is very, very destructive. It is creating—while taking in the moral high ground or trying to and saying it's all about rights and so on—no, they're undermining sanity, morality, security for our kids." "Kids" are a privileged category: "our kids" even more so. Every conceivable preserve in the lives of kids—"sanity, morality, security"—is jeopardized by the enemy, LGBQT activists. Accordingly, Cushman (2010) described a Minnesota diversity training lesson plan this way: "Children find themselves forced to 'create some families with adults of the same gender' and to 'make decisions about whether to label the adults as two mothers.'" Silent on what the training aims to achieve, the unacceptable circumstance is clearly children being "forced."

The child endangerment that OPI warn of includes disease, hence the warning invokes traditional conceptions of homosexuality as a disorder, homosexuals impure. Harvey (2006) cautions parents about the dangers of LGBTQ youth community centers: "What in the world are we doing exposing kids to opportunities to get involved in practices that are spreading an epidemic disease?" She explains: "This summer, a traveling

group of HIV positive young adults called "Hope's Voice" will be visiting these centers all over the country, giving speeches, interacting with local kids, talking about "safe sex" and condom use—and affirming the homosexual lifestyle." An amalgam of evils is allegedly promoted by LGBTQ support programs, including the sexualization of children by contaminated individuals.

Promoting Child Sexuality

OPI depict LGBTQ protections as promoting youth sexuality. They also channel the notion that homosexuality is fundamentally about sex. Harvey (2006) sarcastically impersonated gay activists: "We could all use info on sexy new ways to use condoms and barriers. We'll have open, honest, judgment-free conversations about sex toys, oral sex, bare-backing, mixing sex and drugs, how to keep it safe and advocate for yourself during group sex, anonymous sex, and sex on the go!" Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council, wrote in an October 11, 2010 *Washington Post* editorial: "Homosexual activist groups like GLSEN … are exploiting these tragedies to push their agenda of demanding not only tolerance of homosexual individuals, but active affirmation of homosexual conduct and their efforts to redefine the family" (Steinback, 2010).

These associations between homosexuality and sexual behavior position LGBTQ activists as promoters of the latter. Cushman (2010), for example, referred to anti-LGBTQ bullying efforts as "introducing controversial, sexual topics" to students: "Recognize that bullying and peer abuse is wrong and should be stopped. But this can and should be done without politicizing classrooms and introducing controversial, sexual topics to children." Likewise, Harvey (2006) emphasizes that "misguided youth can adopt this high-risk identity and become sexually involved with peers and/or older homosexuals, all without a parent's or guardian's knowledge or even an objective bystander to watch over them." Harvey invokes the image of pedophilia, a singular moral panic (Cohen, 2011).

Persecuting Christians and Conservatives

The OPI's story broadly posits persecution of persons other than LGBTQ youth. Bryan Fischer stated, "anti-bullying policies become a mechanism for punishing Christian students who believe that homosexual

behavior is not something that should be normalized" (Curry, 2012). TrueTolerance.org casts religious anti-LGBTQ bullies and parents as the victims, warning that bullying prevention efforts would "present negative portrayals of some religions and/or give favorable portrayals of other religious or spiritual beliefs" and "promote school activities that would single out or ostracize religious and/or socially conservative students."

Ostracism refers to banishment or rejection of social outcasts. It is informal punishment typically inflicted by dominant majorities. Historically, LGBTQ individuals have been among such social outcasts. OPI adopted language typically used to describe LGBTQ experiences. Thus, Matt Barber stated that LGBTQ activists use anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention initiatives "to force, to compel nations and individuals and groups and churches that embrace traditional values, relative to sexual behavior, to push them into the closet and say 'no, no, you have to adopt a full affirmation of these perversions'" (Tashman, 2012a). "The closet" is LGBTQ-specific language, here co-opted to piggyback on LGBTQ ostracism. More generally, verbs like "force," "compel," "accuse," "punish," and "push" connote coercion. These verb choices position OPI and their audience members as the ones being oppressed. Whether actual or fabricated, unjust victimization provokes anger when one identifies with the receiver of such victimization (Presser, 2018). By hitting that emotional nerve, the strategy of role-switching intensifies the intolerability of anti-LGBTQ bullying prevention. As Harvey said, "it's time for America to figure out that these folks are out to destroy traditional values, and all that talk about tolerance and respect only goes one way" (Tashman, 2011a). When a group is depicted as having the ability to "destroy traditional values," they are represented as powerful indeed. These value-destroying claims hit an emotional nerve, casting audience members who treasure traditional values as the victims.

Conclusions

We investigated the narrative scaffolding for bullying of LGBTQ students. Narratives construct heroes, antagonists, and victims. They establish which issues and events warrant concern, and why, and which do not. Discursive moves in general communicate, plainly or surreptitiously, ideological understandings of actors and experiences. Our investigation was framed by social constructionism, narrative criminology, and critical discourse analysis. LGBTQ activism has resulted in resources and state legislation to protect LGBTQ youth in

school and to prevent their being bullied. Enumeration policies in particular explicitly declare that physical and mental abuse of LGBTQ youth is a social problem. Opponents reverse that claim, diminishing the harm of anti-LGBTQ bullying, and establish a new story with new character positions. Opponents creatively construct themselves as victims by minimizing the bullying problem and by blaming LGBTQ activists and casting them as persecutors. They alter both the plot and the characters of "the" bullying story.

The switching of narrative roles is a tried-and-true maneuver. Men claim to be oppressed by women; whites declare themselves targets of racism due to affirmative action policies; and economic elites are purportedly put upon by government regulations (Duerringer, 2013; Goldstein & Cowley, 2017; Williams, 1991). These sorts of victimization claims deny and thus sustain social dominance and negate subaltern experiences. Activists should warn the public that harm-doers and their protectors may construct themselves as victims to dangerous effect. In order to prevent anti-LGBTQ bullying, we envision a pedagogy that is vigilant against ahistorical and inaccurate claims that victims are not victimized and that offenders are not offending. This is where we set aside ideology critique for lucid critical communication about the world as it is actually arranged, from the vantage of those who have been heard from the least, but have suffered the most.

As part of this critical pedagogy, it is vital that anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism efforts in schools address the attitudes of teachers and administrators, and not merely students (Birkett et al., 2009). Research indicates that students are less likely to restrict the use of homophobic remarks in the presence of school staff compared to other types of derogatory remarks such as racial slurs, and that when students use homophobic remarks in front of school staff, the students' behavior is largely unchallenged (Kosciw et al., 2016). School employees are often complicit in harassment: Kosciw et al. (2016) found that more than half of LGBTQ students reported hearing anti-gay remarks from school employees, including teachers (see also Pascoe, 2007). Youth *may* be the primary and immediate bullies in school, but the narratives they channel are written or underwritten by older generations.

Narratives are deeply tied to both the sociality of experience and the motivated character of action. Frank (2010) observes: "Stories enjoy an exceptional place in human lives, first, because stories are the means and medium through which humans learn who they are, what their relation is to those around them (who counts as family, as community,

and as enemies), and what sort of actions they are expected to perform under which circumstances" (p. 665). Storytelling, like action, is socially patterned. Social researchers of narrative note "the role of situational (i.e. immediate) context in shaping a story's structure" (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012, p. 35; see also Presser, 2004). Furthermore, power interests are furthered through dominant edicts concerning who may tell a story and what sort of story they may tell (Ewick & Silbey, 1995; Polletta, 2006). We might consider laws that relate patterns of victimization and their likely victims as stories in capsule form—what Sandberg (2016) calls a trope—which LGBTQ people tell on their own terms, against mighty resistance.

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