QUEER ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

A 2009 CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF EDUCATION (CSSE) PRE-CONFERENCE

Friday, May 22, 2009
9:00 AM – 4:30 PM
Congress 2009, Carleton University, Ottawa

André P. Grace
Sarah J. Flynn
Pre-Conference Organizers and Editors of the Proceedings

Hosted by the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
7-104 Education North Bldg., Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5 • telephone: 780.492.0772 • www.ismss.ualberta.ca
Welcome!

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS), an interdisciplinary institute in the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta is pleased to host and welcome you to the inaugural CSSE Pre-Conference on Queer Issues in the Study of Education and Culture. In organizing this pre-conference, iSMSS hopes to create a dynamic, communicative space for scholars and students across disciplines, activists, educators, artists, and others to share research and other work on queer issues in education and culture. We had a wonderful response to the Call for Papers for this year’s pre-conference. Papers included in this proceedings indicate a synergy between queer research and practice in Canadian and global education and culture. The present momentum of Canadian academics, graduate students, and community and cultural workers who engage in queer work is phenomenal. It indicates that sexual minorities across differences in sexual orientation and gender identity and expression are becoming a more visible, vocal, recognized, and accommodated part of the Canadian sociocultural mosaic. However, as my paper in our proceedings indicates, we still have much work to do. Everyday culture and society has not caught up to Canadian legislation and the law in respecting and including sexual minorities. However, there is a substantial queer mass in this country collectively driving social and culture change for equity, justice, and inclusion. Let’s make this pre-conference an opportunity to network with one another and bolster the efforts of queers in arms across our great nation.

Thanks to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the laws and legislation it has engendered, sexual minorities are well on our way to attaining the rights and privileges of full citizenship and personhood in Canada. As we gather at this pre-conference, let’s gratefully remember the relentless efforts of Pierre Elliott Trudeau who worked to create a Just Society that makes space and place for sexual minorities. As Minister of Justice in the Liberal Government of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, Mr. Trudeau spearheaded the decriminalization of homosexuality (1969). And, of course, as Prime Minister he was instrumental in entrenching the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (adopted in 1982) in the Constitution of Canada.

It takes all our efforts combined to create such a fine proceedings so we can share our work with one another. I would like to say a special “Thank you!” to Sarah J. Flynn for her assistance in producing this record of our inaugural meeting together. Enjoy the pre-conference and your time at Congress at Carleton University in our great nation’s capital.

André P. Grace, Ph. D.
McCalla Professor & Director, Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
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Call For Papers

QUEER ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
A 2009 CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF EDUCATION (CSSE) PRE-CONFERENCE

http://www.csse.ca

Pre-Conference Location: Carleton University, Ottawa

Friday, May 22, 2009
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Pre-conference Organizers:

André P. Grace (andre.grace@ualberta.ca)
Sarah J. Flynn (sjflynn@ualberta.ca)

PRE-CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPERS
(Due Date for Proposals: Friday, January 23, 2009)

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS), an interdisciplinary institute in the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta is pleased to host the inaugural CSSE Pre-Conference on Queer Issues in the Study of Education and Culture at Carleton University, Ottawa, on Friday, May 22, 2009. In this Call for Papers, we invite submissions from scholars and students across disciplines, activists, educators, artists, and others who work on or research queer issues in the study of education and culture. We encourage submissions from the wide-ranging topics presently constituting queer research and practice in education and culture from cross-cultural, historical, policy, comparative, international, and other perspectives. The intention is to cover a diversity of topics, inviting stances and reflections from a variety of temporal, geographical, and interdisciplinary perspectives. We also encourage a variety of type of submissions, including academic papers from across disciplines, workshops, creative submissions, performances, storytelling, visual arts, and other alternative formats. Conference presenters will have an opportunity to have their work published in the pre-conference proceedings.

Details regarding location and other pertinent information will follow closer to the pre-conference date. The submission deadline for proposals is Friday, January 23, 2009 at 11:59 pm. Proposals are to be sent by email (ismss@ualberta.ca) to Sarah J. Flynn, iSMSS’s Administrative Professional Officer.

To submit a proposal, please include the following information:

• A 100-word abstract of your proposal.
• A title for your proposal.
• Your proposal summary document (750-1000 words) (A list of references may be added and will not be included in the proposal summary word count.)

You must be a current member of CSSE to present at this pre-conference. A pre-conference fee of $10.00 Canadian will be collected at registration at the opening of the pre-conference.

If you have questions, please contact the Organizing Committee at ismss@ualberta.ca.

PRE-CONFERENCE FORMAT:
(1) Presentations (selected from proposals)
(2) Guest speaker (TBA)
(3) Open dialogue session
PAPER PRESENTATIONS / ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:

- Depending on the number of proposals accepted, each presenter will have up to thirty minutes (30 min.) to present on the day of the pre-conference.
- In addition to presentation proposals prepared as described above, please include the following in the body of the email to which your proposal is attached: Name of author(s)/presenter(s); Affiliation(s); Mailing address(es); Email address(es); Phone number(s); Title of presentation; AV requests; and don’t forget to attach your proposal.
- The deadline for submission of proposals for the pre-conference is Friday, January 23, 2009.
- A committee invited by the Organizing Committee will review all proposals.
- Accepted authors will be notified by Friday, February 13, 2009.
- Criteria for judging proposals will include quality of the submission and the significance of the topic to expanding our conceptualizations of queer studies in education.
- Please send proposals by email, in MicroSoft WORD to:
  - Sarah J. Flynn at sjflynn@ualberta.ca
- Accepted authors must submit (by email to Sarah J. Flynn) a written paper from three to six pages in length including references, single-spaced, and following APA guidelines, by Friday, March 27, 2009. The paper will be included in the Proceedings to be distributed at the Pre-conference.
- Guidelines for writing papers for the proceedings will accompany letters of acceptance of proposals.
- Cost of attending the pre-Conference is $10.00 (Canadian), payable on site.
# Program Schedule

## QUEER ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

A 2009 CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF EDUCATION (CSSE) PRE-CONFERENCE

Carleton University, Ottawa
Friday, May 22, 2009, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Room 180/182 Unicentre

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:45 AM</td>
<td>Registration opens, refreshments and continental breakfast provided</td>
<td>180 Unicentre, Carleton</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>&quot;Still Much Work to Do: The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta.&quot;</td>
<td>180 Unicentre, Carleton</td>
<td>Dr. Andre P Grace, Welcome &amp; Plenary:</td>
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### MORNING SESSIONS

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<td>9:15 AM</td>
<td>Virginia Stead</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
<td>Sarah Flynn</td>
<td>A Queer Shaped Portal? Visioning Admissions Policy that is Gender Inclusive</td>
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<td>9:45 AM</td>
<td>Tony Callaghan</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
<td>Kristopher Wells</td>
<td>Critically Queer as Praxis: An Emancipatory Paradigm for Freeing Sexual Minorities from Heterosexist Oppression in School Settings</td>
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<td>10:15 AM</td>
<td>Sarah Flynn &amp; Marshall Watson</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
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<td>Reframing: Intersex Youth and the Challenge of Gendered Schools</td>
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<td>10:45-11:00 AM</td>
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<td>BREAK (refreshments provided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
<td>James McNinch &amp; Krista Baliko</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
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<td>Broken Borders, Broken Binaries: Two Spirit Youth in Saskatchewan in the Twenty-First Century.</td>
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<td>11:30 AM</td>
<td>Catherine Taylor &amp; Kevin Schachte</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
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<td>Making the Case for Inclusive Safe-Schools Policy: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools</td>
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### AFTERNOON SESSIONS

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<tr>
<td>1:30 PM</td>
<td>Lisa Passante</td>
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<td>Queering Manitoba’s Ivory Towers - Student Activism is a Critical Component in Advancing Educational Equity in Social Work Education</td>
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<td>2:00 PM</td>
<td>Karleen Pendleton &amp; Isabel Killoran</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
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<td>“Unleashing the Unpopular”: Bodies, Stories and Queer Classrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:30 PM</td>
<td>Lisa Louzenheiser</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
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<td>When theory and practice collide: The case for building civic capacity for change</td>
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<td>3:00-3:15 PM</td>
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<td>BREAK (refreshments and snack provided)</td>
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<td>3:15 PM</td>
<td>Line Chamberland &amp; Gabrielle Richard</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
<td>Gabrielle Richard</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning Students: Their Perception of School Climate in CEGEP</td>
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<td>3:45 PM</td>
<td>Jenny Bourne</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
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<td>South Korean lesbians and heteronormativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:15 PM</td>
<td>Dr. Andre P Grace</td>
<td>180 Unicentre</td>
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<td>Closing Remarks - 180 Unicentre, Carleton</td>
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Please Note: All sessions are 30 minutes, which includes time for Q&A
Presentations

Plenary Session

Still Much Work to Do: The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta

André P. Grace
University of Alberta

Abstract: In this brief paper I begin by positioning sexual minorities as a complex and diverse group of individuals. I then consider the social and political locatedness of sexual minorities in Canadian education and culture. Using this positional, contextual, and relational overview, I discuss why an entity like the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta is still needed today even though sexual-minority Canadians have greater legal and legislative protections. Here I emphasize the sociocultural reality that we continue to mediate life and learning in spaces and situations where there are still struggles for us to be, become, and belong as persons and citizens.

I live in Alberta, a province where the forces of social and political conservatism have been relentless in targeting sexual minorities. Who are we? Sexual minorities are those individuals whose sexual orientations and gender identities fall outside heteronormative categorizations of sex, sexuality, and gender as well as outside the dichotomies of the male/female and heterosexual/homosexual binaries (Grace, 2007, 2008). In our collective complexity and diversity across differences, we include such positionalities as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, intersexual, two-spirited, and queer. As social and cultural outsiders and castaways throughout history, sexual minorities have struggled incessantly to live with the torment and fragility that mark our existence in the intersection of the moral and the political. For us, everyday living has involved mediation of the stereotypes, presumptions, rumours, hostilities, and exclusions that mark us as unwanted and unwelcome in heteronormative society and heterosexualizing culture. Sexual minorities have been perennial victims of symbolic and physical violence that variously leave so many of us emotionally and psychologically damaged, injured, maimed, or dead (Janoff, 2005). Today many of us now refuse the constrictions of living in the intersection of the moral and the political where, ostensibly, caring institutions like religion and medicine still largely fail to accept and accommodate us in the fullness of our humanity (Grace, 2008). As a spectrum of disenfranchised groups, sexual minorities now seek to transgress life in this intersection as we confront the complexities of change, institutional and community cultures, and civil society in order to learn and live in contemporary times. Here the efforts of determined and resilient sexual-minority youth who have made their sexual and gender presences felt in many social and cultural settings have been spectacular (Grace & Wells, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009).

That resilient sexual-minority youth exist and thrive is a miracle. These youth have been perennially and variously unsafe in family, school, and community environments (Grace & Wells 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009). Their nemeses have included conservative governments and churches who give them little status as persons, citizens, Christians (or other faith designators), and human beings. Most recently in my home province, this has been made clear in the debacle surrounding efforts of Alberta’s governing Conservatives to make Bill 44 law. Bill 44 is intended to amend the provincial human rights legislation to formalize sexual orientation as an articulated inclusion in Alberta’s laws protecting humans rights. However, as Simons (2009) summarizes, the Bill “would also allow parents to pull their children out of any classes dealing with religion, sex education, or sexual orientation, and to receive advance notice of any classroom material dealing with such topics” (p. 2). In other words, Bill 44 would create endless possible scenarios for the strangulation of public education as an ethical and inclusive practice.

Why is this happening? Simon asserts that social conservatives are engaging in “fearmongering, plain and simple” (p. 2). In her estimation, socially conservative politicians and religious leaders can be perceived as bullies in this engagement as they interfere in the democratic process by which Bill 44 should recognize, once and for all, that sexual-minority Albertans are persons and citizens, too. Certainly, Bill 44 is not a threat to religious freedom, as social conservatives who apparently are not Charter savvy have conjectured. By now, it should be crystal clear based on Supreme Court of Canada pronouncements
that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms unequivocally protects religious freedom in our country (Grace & Wells, 2005). Indeed religious conservatives are free to pontificate from pulpits that homosexuality is a sin as they wait for Jesus, the Palestinian prophet and Jew, to return to welcome them into heaven. Let’s hope for their sakes that their heaven is the heteronormative paradise they envision so they won’t have to waste the afterlife practicing discrimination. This shouldn’t be a worry though. For those longing for a heterosexist ether, all the queers will be very far away burning in hell. Or so priests in flowing, floor length vestments say.

The socially conservative gay bashing tied to Bill 44 is an exercise in ignorant malignment and manipulation. It brazenly downplays the fact that sexual-minority Canadians have had equality rights since the 1998 Supreme Court decision in Vriend v. Alberta (Grace, 2007). In the wake of this decision and the many culminating changes in federal and provincial/territorial laws and legislation, all that sexual minorities want to do now “is to stamp out the kind of toxic, pervasive homophobia [and transphobia] that make the lives of some Alberta kids [and adults] a living hell” (Simons, 2009, p. 2). However, social conservatives would rather brand us as despicable world homo-dominators. They do not want to be accepting or accommodating of our personhood or our rights as Canadian citizens to be free from prejudice and discrimination and safe and secure in our life, learning, work, and worship spaces. For socially conservative politicians and priests, any effort “to affirm the equal worth of gay and lesbian [and other sexual-minority] Albertans as citizens and human beings, will be abhorrent” (p. 2). And as long as these rightists proceed with their anti-gay agenda, social and educational spaces like the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services are still needed, so needed. There remains much work for us to do.

The Status of Sexual Minorities in Canada

In 2005 Canadians celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the implementation of equality provisions enshrined in Section 15 protecting individual rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In 1995 in Egan v. Canada, the Supreme Court of Canada declared sexual orientation to be a character of person analogous to other characteristics listed in Section 15. This section protects individuals against discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other characters of person. Building on this move forward, in 1998 the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed equality rights for gay and lesbian citizens in Vriend v. Alberta. Furthermore, the Government of Canada legalized same-sex marriage in 2005, making Canada only the fourth country in the world to do so. These pivotal decisions, along with many other legal and legislative advances, have brought Canada to the forefront in terms of movement to ensure civil equity and human rights for sexual-minority persons (Grace, 2007). This progressive change represents a move toward a more just and inclusive society for sexual-minority Canadians, a move that must be reflected in Canadian higher education and other educational sectors. Since education is a central sociocultural institution for transmitting knowledge and values, this move is vital because Canadian culture and society still lag behind our Courts and Legislatures in accepting and accommodating sexual-minority Canadians who remain at-risk in many social and cultural spaces in our everyday lives (Janoff, 2005). For example, in Edmonton and elsewhere in Alberta, many sexual-minority individuals still experience obvious and pervasive discrimination. In 2003, the Edmonton Police Service’s Hate and Bias Crimes Unit reported that the sexual-minority community was the most frequently targeted group for hate-motivated incidents and crimes in the city (Camp & Huggins, 2004). This trend persists, with the sexual-minority community always making the list of most frequent victims of violence in Edmonton. Sadly, hate-motivated incidents victimizing sexual-minority individuals as well as anti-gay public communication via emails and graffiti have also been pervasive on my campus at the University of Alberta.

Indeed homophobic and transphobic violence persists across sectors of Canadian education. For example, in Canadian public schooling, stories of the risks, stereotyping, and marginalization that sexual-minority students and educators have faced are well documented (Grace, 2006; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006; Quinlivan & Town, 1999; Ryan & Futterman, 1998; Tonkin, Murphy, Lees, Saewyc, & the McCreary Centre Society, 2005). In particular, stories of the symbolic and physical violence that sexual-minority students have endured are recorded in narratives about confusion, depression, substance abuse, alienation, poor attendance, dropping out, gay bashing, and suicide (Grace, 2007; Grace & Wells, 2009). Increasingly though, we hear inspirational stories of resilience involving sexual-minority students and
educators as social activists, cultural workers, and survivors (Grace & Wells 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009).
Beyond the concerns, fears, and even moral apprehensions that culture, society, and various educational
interest groups may have, it is becoming quite clear that queer or gay is not going to go away, and that
Canadian education has to become more responsive and responsible in meeting the needs of sexual-
minority students and educators. There is an urgent need for more and better educational policies and
practices that attend to sex, sexual, and gender differences as a vital focus in inclusive education that is
synchronized to the tide of positive legal and legislative changes recognizing, respecting, and
accommodating the rights of sexual minorities in Canada (Grace, 2007).

The Work of the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) works to help fulfill this need.
Located in the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, iSMSS is an interdisciplinary “hub” for
scholarly and community work in sexual-minority studies and university and community service and
outreach. More specifically, its mission is to help enhance possibilities for groundbreaking research,
policy development, education, and service provision focused on sexual minorities and our issues and
concerns. The Institute plays a central role in coordinating research focused on contemporary needs in
educational policy and practice and, through its interdisciplinary framework, contemporary needs that
intersect with the broader individual, social, and cultural concerns of sexual minorities. Institute research
logically focuses on social, cultural, civic, legal, legislative, ethical, and political issues. It engages
faculty and undergraduate and graduate students as researchers in processes of discovery to enhance
learning about sexual minorities and our rights and privileges in terms of citizenship and personhood.
While there are provisions in the Criminal Code of Canada to address hate incidents and hate crimes
perpetrated against us, the Institute draws attention to systemic issues and long-term solutions via
research and public education. It focuses on helping sexual-minority persons to develop as resilient
individuals who can confront social prejudice, harassment, and other barriers to inclusion.

Since most Canadian universities engaged in sexual-minority work tend to separate studies
functions (teaching and research) from community service and outreach functions, iSMSS represents a
unique and holistic Canadian model placing sexual-minority studies and services in a dynamic,
interdependent relationship. By housing research, teaching, and institutional and community service and
outreach under one umbrella within our university setting, the Institute combines its studies and services
functions within a reciprocity that fosters innovative intellectual work and sustained service and outreach.
A major studies function of the Institute is to conduct research on sexual-minority differences in
education, culture, and society (see http://www.iSMSS.ualberta.ca). A major service function of the
Institute is to support the needs and concerns of sexual-minority students at the University of Alberta as
well as sexual-minority youth in the larger community. In this regard, iSMSS runs Camp fYrefly, which
is the Institute’s key award-winning community service project (http://www.fyrefly.ualberta.ca). Camp
fYrefly is a personal, social, and cultural learning retreat for sexual-minority youth. It uses an arts-
informed, community-based educational approach to help youth focus on building and nurturing their
personal resiliency and leadership potential within an environment that fosters individual development
and socialization. The goal of the camp is to help youth learn how to make significant contributions to
their own lives and to their schools, home/group-home environments, and communities. During summer
2009, there will be camps in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services is proving to be instrumental in
developing and maintaining a more coordinated approach to efforts designed to encourage full and
 equitable inclusion in the University and beyond. Speaking specifically to the participation of sexual-
minority undergraduate and graduate students in the larger University community, this focus on inclusion
and participation of sexual minority students aligns neatly with the University’s vision stated in Dare to
Discover (2006): “to inspire the human spirit through outstanding achievements in learning, discovery,
and citizenship in a creative community” (p. 1). In living out this vision, the Institute emulates principles
articulated in this document, emphasizing core values including “excellence in teaching that promotes
learning,” “outstanding research and creative activity that fuel discovery and advance knowledge,” “the
centrality of our students and our responsibility to provide an intellectually superior educational
environment,” and “a diverse, yet inclusive, dynamic collegial community that welcomes change and
seizes opportunity with passion and creativity” (p. 1). The Institute incorporates the values of Dare to Discover as principles that reflect the integrity of the University of Alberta and its constituency. Moreover, through its studies and service functions, it helps to advance the kind of transformative and Just Society guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Membership in this society is the right of sexual-minority Canadians so we can live freely and safely in the ways intended by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and other visionary Canadians who worked to make equity and social justice cornerstones in our country’s sociocultural mosaic.

References


Race, Space, and This Two Spirit Place

Krista Baliko & James McNinch
University of Regina

Abstract: Our presentation gives voice to Indigenous Saskatchewan youth who self-identify as Two Spirit. Their voices both belie and affirm the binaries we have come to live by in contemporary Saskatchewan: Indigenous/non-Indigenous, male/female, masculine/feminine, queer/straight, urban/rural, city/reserve, rich/poor, educated/non-educated. Moving beyond these binaries is a challenge for us all in twenty-first century Saskatchewan.

The geography of Saskatchewan is deceptively simple: “bald” prairie in the south and “thick” bush in the north. Similarly, the “history” of the province is a “straight”-forward narrative: an empty space was “settled” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by more than fifty ethnic groups from northern Europe. Such a simplistic view of diversity belies many things, including the very existence of Indigenous peoples. How then might we begin to inscribe the complicated issues of sexual and gender identities of Indigenous peoples into such a flat and uncomplicated story? How might such a location of struggle serve to queer such simplicity? Even more - how might two queer, but non-Aboriginal, authors survey such a history and presume to know it? What might such “knowing” and “queering” entail? How might we begin to understand the realities of contemporary Two Spirit youth caught, but very much alive, in this web of history and culture? Research about Two Spirit people is scant; what does exist, has tended to use an anthropological lens on the “other” (Gilley 2006, Roscoe 1991, Williams 1986) and ignores Canadian Two Spirit people. Other ground-breaking work (including Cannon, 1998), needs to be updated. Only very recently have Two Spirit people themselves begun to explore their fractured sexual identities (Taylor, 2008).

We are attempting to mind and bridge the gap between what we don’t know, what we don’t want to know, and what we might need to know about the spaces we occupy in this flat prairie and thick bush. As two white queer and privileged writers we do not “pretend” to “know the other”, but we attempt to push back the margins for sexual, racial and class positions that have been unacknowledged, underestimated, and under-valued. Saskatchewan is a volatile, contradictory and complicated space. Starting by more clearly positioning ourselves as we give voice to Two Spirit youth themselves, this paper suggests that the complex and emerging identities of Two Spirit youth in this province, who are struggling to find out who they “really are”, serve as a metaphor for a province that does not yet know how to come to terms with its own sense of otherness, uniqueness and difference.

Our “informants” were five Aboriginal youth – three females and two males. The interviewees were willing participants ranging in age from 16 to 22 and they all self-identified as Two Spirit, in combination with words such as queer, gay or lesbian.

Miss Anthropy: I feel that there are two sides of me....I’m really girly, I’ve always been really girly and I enjoy being really girly, but there are some days when I’m the total opposite of that....some days I only wear guys’ clothes.... Some days I just feel like a guy... Two Spirited is the closest I’ve ever been able to come to identifying what that is....whatever that is.

Rabbit: When I had learned what a Two Spirit person was, which actually wasn’t even two years ago, it made so many connections in my life...it made perfect sense....

People who identify as Two Spirit have various understandings of what the term and identity means. Two Spirit itself was coined in Winnipeg, in 1990, at the Third Annual First Nations/Native American Gay and Lesbian Conference (now called the International Two Spirit Gathering), because queer Indigenous people wanted a word to identify with and that incorporated historical, traditional and contemporary understandings. Here is a typical iteration of such understanding:

Two Spirit People played an integral role in most First Nations....and it encompasses Aboriginal Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexed People. Two Spirit is much more than just sexual orientation, it goes deeper into spirituality, roles and gender. Two Spirits traditionally were Medicine People, Healers, Teacher[s], Seers, Artists, Spiritual Guides and Mediators. There was great respect and honor for Two Spirits... [they] are the balance between man and
And yet, even if we indulge in the construction of an idealized Two Spirit “uber-essence” as a kind of merger of many selves beyond the binaries, our conversations with these young Two Spirit youth confirm that they remain by and large alien and alienated from themselves, from their families, from the dominant culture, from their own histories and contemporary cultures, and disconnected from what might be romanticized as a natural and “free” Two Spirit world.

The practices of Two Spirit people, pre-contact, did not conform to European heteronormative understandings of sex/gender roles or sexuality. Thus, the reversal of gender roles and same-sex intercourse were met with hostility and resistance by the colonizers. This homophobia, as we understand it today, was passed on, perhaps forced upon, Indigenous Peoples as part of the assimilation process. As our participants attested, homophobia is now firmly rooted in contemporary First Nations cultures, and often runs rampant in First Nations communities, both on Reserves and in urban environments, leaving few spaces where they feel safe.

**James:** Where do you feel the least safe?

**Rabbit:** The least safe, it’s kind of ironic, but it’s in the core hood area, where Native people are.

**J:** Why do you say it’s quite ironic?

**Rabbit:** Because those are my people I’m fearing. Those are the people of my ancestry I’m fearing, who might hurt me, because of the way they live their lives, the way they portray themselves....

Rabbit’s sentiments were articulated by all the participants. What then, of other, safer-spaces? Such spaces include the gay-bar scene, specifically intended for queer bodies, the Two Spirit Gatherings and Two Spirit Societies, cyberspace, and the space defined by contemporary Aboriginal Art. All of these spaces have something to offer Aboriginal youth, and yet they all have deficiencies. These spaces are meant for some bodies but not for others, and can be exclusive, unavailable or out of bounds for various reasons, including a lack of knowledge, risks to personal safety and access to money or education. These deficits all work to widen the gap between Indigenous youth and their sexuality regardless of their orientation. Yet, with knowledge and accessibility, some of these gaps can be narrowed.

We all have much to learn from Indigenous ways of knowing, including ideas of “healthy” sexuality. Michelle McGeough (2008) notes that historically the acceptance and celebration of sexual minority and gender variance in Indigenous culture was a sign of an understanding of transformation, of change, of subtlety, and of ambiguity, all aspects of individuals, Peoples, and of Nature itself. Our school system has created and widened the gap between this reality and the reality of Indigenous youth. This is another example of what we all, as Treaty People, might learn from our Indigenous Ancestors. Gender and sexual difference (Two Spiritedness if you like) is an integral part of the dignity of Indigenous peoples and part of what will close the gaps and heal the wounds. As Daniel Justice (2008) says “to ignore sex and embodied pleasure in the cause of Indigenous liberation is …to deny us one of our most precious gifts. Every orgasm can be an act of decolonization” (p. 106).

What we learned from our research participants is that they have an impulse to be and do “the right thing”, whatever that might mean; not in opposition to or against anything particular in their history, culture or family, but simply to be able to express and define their own conflicted non-binary identity. This is not to argue that “Two Spirit” is its own definition. But to understand the complexity of this abstraction and its implications is to begin to understand the gap in which Two Spirit youth live contentious, political, un-realized lives. How do we begin to understand “a truth in self”, as Terri Goldie asks (2008, p. 218), much less how this truth might be constructed in and through others?

One conclusion must be that the construction of identity cannot be coherent, and that (in)coherence is part of an appreciation of being “Two Spirit”. Being “Two Spirit” is not then just about being “a gay or lesbian Aboriginal”; it certainly has more to do with being “queer” if we use this epithet as meaning “odd”, ill-fitting, and prone to falling through the cracks of complex colonized and racialized social realities. This research project allowed a few Two Spirit youth to ask themselves who they thought they were, who others thought they were, and what it all might mean in some undefined bigger context. We suggest this bigger context in which they find themselves is best understood as a gap – a gap of experience, a gap of understanding, and a gap reinforced by various instruments of power such as history, schooling, and the family. We need to offer this codicil: From our research participants we get a relatively
narrow view of how big this gap really is. Our participants were by their, our, and society’s understanding relatively “middle-class”, stable, and supported. We were not talking to people who had been dismissed or went missing. These young people were “willing participants” who came to us with stories to tell. We insist on honouring them for that and respect their strength inherent in being able to reach to us across so many gaps. It is these qualities we wish to affix to the construct “Two Spirit”.

All the youth interviewed said they wanted to learn more about Indigenous sexuality, to speak with Two Spirit people, and have (easy) access to information. When we asked what they were thinking about for their futures, most responded with a strong desire to be teachers. Not school teachers, but teachers and activists in their communities. They desire to pass on their knowledge to other queer (Aboriginal) youth through counselling, mentoring, starting Two Spirit groups, as well as by creating accessible media about Indigenous culture about Two Spirit people and the traditional roles they have held. These youth want to make a difference in the lives of others, to offer help and support in ways they said they wished they had been helped and supported, and in the ways that they are and have been supported.

*Morale:* We need to realize that these [Two Spirit] people can help the community grow and that... they're part of the heart, like the women are part of the heart and the men, and Two spirit people are part of the heart and help the community grow as a whole, and heal too.

**References**


A Provocative Invitation to Teacher Educators to Practice Queer-Care: “Doing the Least Harm”

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Abstract: Within my concept of queer-care, I argue that queer students have particular care needs that must be addressed by teacher educators in their classrooms. This paper provides a better understanding of the intricacy of those needs, and ways to respond to them that are beneficial and less potentially harmful.

Background

This paper reports on the particular care needs of queer students that were revealed in a study (Benson, 2009) that inquired into how nine teacher educators (queer and straight from across disciplines) cared for queer students (pre-service teachers) in the community of their classrooms. Notwithstanding the relatively small number of teacher educators who participated in the study, their stories of such care provided much needed insight into the necessity for teacher educators to respond to the particular care needs of their queer students in ways that are necessarily different to how they might care for heterosexual students. The teacher educators’ stories hitherto provided inaccessible direction and information about the phenomenon of queer-care in university classrooms, and the challenges and difficulties they experienced in enacting that care. That led this author to undertake a necessary expansion to Noddings’ “ethic of care” (1987, 1992) by developing a concept of what I named “queer-care”.

Provision for queer students

Teacher education programs place a premium on preparing student teachers to embrace inclusion, and make their future classrooms spaces that are welcoming for multiple identities in which individuals can be free to be themselves without fear or constraint (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006). The reality for many queer student teachers however, is that their university classrooms feel anything but welcoming and caring spaces. I am certain that the majority of my colleagues, who consider themselves caring teachers toward all their students, would be surprised by this sentiment. This is borne out by Thayer-Bacon, Arnold and Stoots (1998) who report, “Most teachers would say they are caring, if asked. Many say that is why they chose a career in education, because they care for students and want to make a difference in their lives” (p. 5). I am less sure that my colleagues give much thought or credence to the idea that queer students might, due to their life experiences, warrant a different sort of care in response to the particular array of needs such experiences give rise to. Homophobia blights the lives of many queer students. Their resultant need for care must be steered by this knowledge, and by the awareness that many queer students make the choice and effort to remain hidden during their time in our university classrooms (Renn, 2000; Sears, 2002).

Queer students have particular needs that often go unacknowledged and ignored, and that includes their need to experience a sense of emotional and mental wellbeing that is markedly different to that of their straight counterparts. As a queer McGill student teacher recently revealed to me, “I just feel the personal risks are too great – I am seriously thinking about not coming back next year, but then what will I do? I always thought I would be a teacher” (Benson, 2009, p.251). Clearly, provision must be made for our queer students to ensure their own professional and emotional survival in an environment that is often hostile to the full expression of their identities. Their straight allies also need opportunities to process positions that they are still working through.

Particular Needs of Queer Students

Caring is a multidimensional and complex process. Its essence however, according to Rogers and Webb (1991), is “responsiveness” which is contingent on understanding people in context. We care for individuals in response to needs that they either make clear to us, we intuit, or seek information about. However, most queer students do not make their care needs evident to teachers in the context of their university classrooms and programs of study. Although quite a bit is known about the feelings of many queer youth, such as isolation, poor self-image, shame, confusion, and fear that stem from their life experiences of encountering pervasive homophobia, this is highly nuanced information that has not
resulted in very much information about the resultant and particular care needs of the queer students who sit in our university classrooms. In addition, working as we do largely without benefit of collegial support, and relying on existing care models that might serve other populations well, without paying heed to the particularity and sensitivity of queer needs, risks making our attempts at queer-care perhaps more harmful than beneficial. And as my study revealed (Benson, 2009), despite our life experiences, our first and second hand knowledge about queer issues, our range of insight and repertoire of care responses, we all question, to some degree or another, if we are doing enough and ‘doing it right’ when it comes to our queer-care actions. The words of one of the teacher educator’s in my study reflect this concern when he says, “I am still learning about how to broach certain topics and how to do the least harm to queer students who might already be in serious discomfort” (Benson, 2009, p.123).

While it is not surprising that there were no startlingly new categories of care that emerged from my research data (given that teachers are generally caring), what has emerged is how my participants enacted Noddings’ categories of care when it came to their queer students in ways that pointed to the inadequacies of Noddings’ model and allowed me to identify the following particular needs of queer students. There is no hierarchy to the particular queer-care needs that are discussed below, nor do they work in isolation one from the other.

The Need for Unwavering Discretion
This asks teachers of queer students to honour their trust and guard their integrity. It asks that teachers keep queer students’ confidences, including the biggest one of all, their queer identity if they wish that to remain hidden. The response to the need for unwavering discretion also asks that teachers avoid drawing unwarranted attention to queer students in class, whilst making them feel included and valued.

I never associate a gay issue in class with a particular student in the class, even if they are visible – and I think that reduces a lot of fear in the gay students. Being made visible in that way is just too fearsome for most gay students. (Sophie, Interview 2) (Benson, 2009, appendices)

The Need for Absolute Safety
This is the need that queer students have to feel safe in their classrooms under their teacher’s stewardship. It is their need as well for classrooms that are completely free from any vestige of homophobia. Queer students’ sense of absolute safety is enhanced by their certainty that their teacher is a knowledgeable ally who can be relied upon for wise and informed counsel.

I tell them that as much as I would like to see the day when gays can be open about their lives, we’re not there yet. I tell them that they do have to be careful, they’re in a job where there are constraints and potential negative repercussions. (Ian, Interview 2). (Benson, 2009, appendices)

The Need for Unstinting Succour
Perhaps the most draining of the particular needs to which to respond; this entails being there for queer students when they are in need of teacherly love (Goldstein, 1997), comfort, and the companionship of a caring adult. It asks that teachers make themselves available outside class time and try, as much as possible, to be prepared to welcome and respond comfortably and knowledgeably when they are sought out by a queer student.

I know that I get really caught up by their narratives – and I can’t hide this. They let a lot of sadness and frustration and bitterness out. And we talk about the truth of what they share with me. (Linda, Interview 2) (Benson, 2009, appendices)

The Need for Full Social Membership
This particular need asks that teachers make queer students feel welcome in their classes, in whatever way they wish to identify as queer – and in ways that don’t marginalize or exclude aspects of their lives that they might want to bring into class with them.

I create this environment where [they] can participate in whatever way they are most comfortable, and where their lives are embraced and taken seriously… (Sophie, Interview 2) (Benson, 2009, appendices)

The recognition and naming of these queer-care needs led me to undertake a necessary expansion of Noddings’ model of care in order to make it inclusive and of caring benefit to queer students.
Findings show that each of my participants was making a positive difference through their queer-care actions to the wellbeing and happiness of the queer students in their classrooms, and in some cases to other queer students who sought them out as the only teacher that they felt comfortable and safe approaching. Their use of care responses in their practice of queer-care was highly nuanced by their awareness of homophobia. They exercised extreme caution and sensitivity in protecting the safety and privacy of queer students whilst taking their pain and fragility into account. All my participants struggled to create a balance of support and encouragement tempered with loving caution. All spoke of their desire to do more for their queer students; and their concerns that they weren’t doing enough, or doing what they did do in their queer-care efforts well enough. Even though they talked about the demands that enacting queer-care placed on them physically and mentally, they went out of their way to be accessible to their queer students, finding time to spend one-on-one time with these students. They each worked to build a sense of community among all their students by insisting upon and modeling, respect for all, while encouraging a fair and critical exchange of ideas and positions. They shared a common disappointment that they appeared to be the only academic to their knowledge to be building these sorts of supportive relations with queer students.

Findings also revealed that queer-care enactments are as individual as the practitioners behind them. But common to us all is a strong moral compulsion to ensure that our classrooms are safe sanctuaries for queer students. We share a common belief that we must, as teachers, play a role in enabling our queer students to feel proud of who they are, to see themselves as lovable and complete human beings with endless potential, and as deserving of wholly equal status as that of heterosexuals. The desire and ability to care effectively is not gender specific – men and women care and care mightily; nor is queer-care sexual-identity specific. Queer and straight teacher educators are committed to queer-care. Visible queer teacher educators aren’t any more adroit necessarily than their straight counterparts – although, queer students might afford them greater legitimacy to understand where they are coming from.

Although the concept of queer-care is a significant contribution to the scholarship on care and teacher education, it is not meant to denote a finite number of needs, nor are these needs meant to be prescriptive. As has been shown in my research (Benson, 2009), queer needs are responded to in a myriad of ways. As more narratives of queer-care become known and the practice of queer-care spreads, it will be exciting to see the recognition and naming of queer care needs grow, and the strategies of queer-care responses increase alongside them.

**Challenges to the Practice of Queer-Care**

The challenges around understanding and responding to the particular care needs of queer students, as evidenced in my research (Benson, 2009), are many and complex. For the purpose of this paper I shall briefly highlight certain of those challenges, and locate them in two domains – those challenges that the teacher educator participants located within themselves and their practice; and those challenges they indicated as coming from exterior sources.

**Challenges Within**

- **inadequacy.** Most of the participants in my study worried that they weren’t knowledgeable enough about queer issues, while others had concerns that they didn’t have the necessary skill to help students in need of guidance and comfort. They all questioned the efficacy of their efforts.
The participants in my study all felt very alone and unsupported in their queer-care efforts. They spoke movingly and at length about their feelings of longing and need for the intellectual nourishment and collegial camaraderie of engaging with their colleagues.

Practicing queer-care is demanding, and at times, deeply emotional work. Several of the participants in my study talked seriously about reducing their queer-care efforts, which in turn caused them additional distress. The cycle of exhaustion is very real and imperils both the health of the practitioner and potential benefit to their queer students.

Challenges Without disdain. The participants in my study were met with varying levels of disdain from their colleagues. There exists an aura of skepticism and academic suspicion that affective care is less worthy than intellectual pursuit (Lyman, 2000).

Educators are often reluctant to examine their own attitudes toward queer topics and individuals, and work to become comfortable talking about queer issues and with their queer students about issues in their lives. Cochran-Smith (2003) cautions, “Particularly for a group of teacher education faculty members, some of whom are tenured and some not, engaging in inquiry as a way of educating one’s self and each other is somewhat risky” (p. 17). Compounded with the fact that assumptions will be made that anyone displaying interest in queer issues must be queer themselves or supportive of queer identity (Chasnoff & Cohen, 1996; D’Augelli, 1994) – is it any wonder that engendering support and commitment to queer-care continues to be an uphill battle. In addition, these sorts of endeavours take time and commitment. Educators who might be open to such engagement are already stretched well beyond their limits.

Despite these challenges to the practice of queer-care, I am certain that more academics and teacher educators are practicing queer-care than the lack of such evidence in the literature suggests. The opportunity my research provided my participants to discuss this dimension of their practice with me, and the affirmation this process afforded them, energized and motivated them in their queer-care efforts. Opportunities to talk further about queer-care afforded by such rare and welcome initiatives as this pre-conference, will encourage more queer-care effort. As knowledge is built and shared, more narratives will emerge to enrich the data. Rather like the ripple effect of a stone being thrown onto a pond, as teachers develop their understanding and practice of queer-care, they will be more vocal and motivate others, and so the ranks of queer-care practitioners will swell. As Fullan (1993) says, “Especially in moral occupations like teaching, the more one takes the risk to express personal purpose, the more kindred spirits one will find” (p. 14).

References
Korean Lesbians and Heteronormativity: From the experiences of six South Korean lesbians

Jenny Bourne

Abstract: The aim of this research was to use queer theory as the basis to answer the question ‘does heterosexism have any effect on how Korean lesbians self-identify, and how they live their lives?’ Research was conducted through face-to-face interviews with six self-identified Korean lesbian volunteer participants in Seoul, South Korea.

Background

Cultural Background: Discourses of Korean Confucianism, marriage, hetero-normativity, and the importance of family lineage

In Western culture, “The heterosexual institution is the strongest arm and most powerful manifestation of patriarchy” (Overall, 1990, p. 264). Along with others, I argue that in South Korean culture, national identity is premised on the heterosexual institution as embodied in the overtly patriarchal mores of Confucianism that not only define traditional Korean culture and identity historically, but also permeate modern Korean consciousness. Park (2003) defines Korean society as much more “anti-individual” than Western culture and that the “family is the primary model of the state.” This is most obviously noted through Korea’s Confucian traditions that affect the institutions of family and marriage. According to Mi Jeong Lee (1998), the question for young Korean womyn does not seem to be whether to marry, but rather when to marry. With such public pressure pushing young womyn into heterosexual unions, it leaves very little opportunity for dissenting ideals and goals. Therefore, for Korean lesbians, there is enormous familial and societal pressure to marry. Many Koreans without a partner rely on blind-dates, arranged meetings, and even professional match-makers to introduce them to their life partner when they, their parents, or society decide they are at the right age to marry. In fact, almost all Korean womyn, regardless of their sexuality, marry by the age of 35 (Lee, 1998).

Contemporary Lives of Korean Lesbians

Although the Korean government now supports a number of centres focusing on womyn’s issues, there is presently no governmental support for lesbians. According to Huso Yi (2003, Part 2), homosexuality and lesbianism are not officially banned in Korea because they are not recognised as existing at all. Further, homosexuality and lesbianism are psycho-pathologized through classifications within Korean psychiatry as behavioural disorders. Websites dedicated to lesbian and gay issues are designated by the government as obscene and as being potentially harmful to teenagers (Yi, “Part 3”, 2004).

Data Analysis

Personal History

All six of the research participants were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-one at the time of their interview. All hold at least a four-year bachelors degree in various majors, in the Arts and Humanities and the Social Sciences. Of the six participants, five were gainfully employed in full time career related jobs, ranging from NGO work, to work in the arts, to office work. Also, although three of the participants had grown up outside of the capital city, Seoul, all participants resided in Seoul at the time of the interviews and considered Seoul ‘home’.

Family Background

In answer to the question, do you consider your family and/or upbringing as traditional, conservative, modern, progressive, or other? All six of the respondents answered that they were from conservative and/or traditional families.

The journey of self-identification: Do you identify yourself as lesbian, bisexual, other, or no label?

Although the Letter of Recruitment for Participants for this study called for self-identified Korean lesbians, only one of the research participants readily answered ‘lesbian’ to the above question. All other participants elaborated on their answers, discussing their process of self-identification at length. With only six womyn answering the question, I heard six greatly differing answers. These include one strong “lesbian”; one “I don’t label myself”; one “I think I am a lesbian,” tempered by “I prefer a large choice”; and one “bisexual, I think I am bisexual.” If this is an indication of the larger lesbian community,
it would be easy to assume that it is an extremely diverse society. These responses support the deconstructing impetus within queer theory by refusing or problematizing identity categories that are too narrow.

Coming Out: Have you ever told any of your heterosexual family members or friends that you are lesbian? If so, how did you feel afterwards?

For many people who identify as non-heterosexual, the issue of “coming out,” is often one of the most sensitive to deal with. According to the responses of my six participants to the above questions, it seems to be no different for South Korean lesbians. Of the six participants in the study, not one had come out to their parents or extended family. Furthermore, they all voiced the opinion that they have no intention of ever telling their parents. Outside of family members, all six respondents were also cautious when coming out to other people in their lives. Those who majored in and work in the arts or for non-governmental organizations found their work and study environments more open and welcome than the others. In fact, the two participants working in Korean offices were the most concerned about keeping their identities camouflaged in this study, for fear of being outed at work.

Social Pressure to Marry and Have Children

The theme that was most recurring during all six interviews, and in response to varying questions, was the social pressure to engage in the institution of heterosexual marriage. In Korea, it is very common for parents to arrange “sun” for their children when they are deemed to be old enough to consider marriage. “Sun” is fundamentally a blind date, with the possibility of marriage. Five of the six research participants had been on blind dates with males, arranged by both family and friends. One subject, made no mention of having been on a blind date. However, she had had long-term heterosexual relationships in the past. However, it seemed from the responses of all five subjects who had been on blind-dates that they did so simply to assuage the pressure from family and acquaintances to actively look for a husband. Three of the participants also spoke of the fantastical ideal of heterosexual marriage that they believe would make their lives easier.

Discussion

Foucault (1978) challenged the notion that a common understanding or experience of sexuality is an intrinsic aspect of the human body, and instead revealed sexuality to be something, “constructed though institutional discourses which come to constitute ‘regimes of truth” (in Plummer and Stein, 1994, p. 183). If there is no ‘true’ understanding of gender [sexuality], then the body becomes a “variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler, 1990, p. 177). After closely examining the interview transcripts from the six interviews I conducted, the interplay of the socio-political and personal elements in each of these womyns’ lives, as they identify themselves and their own sexual beings, becomes apparent. Foucault stated that there is no one all-encompassing form of power relations that will be applicable to all facets and manifestations of sex (Foucault, 1978, p. 103). This idea is revealed by the fact that the question of how heterosexism affects Korean lesbians cannot be answered by looking at each of these womyn’s attraction to females alone.

To Butler (1993), the very idea of people ascribing to one specific identification category to describe themselves is problematic, and reveals the regulatory ways that gender discourse becomes internalised as an identity (p. 307). The varying answers and experiences of the six participants show us that although they share some similarities, their differences also aid in the social construction of their identities. The region in which they grew up, their familial relationships, their relationship to feminist organising, the subjects they studied in school, and their current occupation all played large roles in the answers they provided and the opinions they expressed. Although they all consider themselves under the large umbrella of “Korean lesbian,” this shared characteristic alone does not a community or shared identity make.

Judith Butler states “gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original” (1993, p. 313). For Butler, gender is a ‘cultural fiction’, and every gender label we wear is merely a representation of this fiction. In fact, according to Butler, there is no common element linking all lesbians; and claiming to be lesbian is to “come out only to produce a new and different ‘closet’” (1993, p. 309). Therefore, although my subjects share many of the same opinions and experiences, we cannot say that these alone...
define who they are as lesbians and as Koreans. The participants seemed very self-aware of this. When they were asked, *do you think your experiences are common for other lesbians in Korea?* In response, only one womyn said yes.

We can say that it is apparent from the interviews that all of the subjects recognise a collective cultural expectancy to participate in the institution of heterosexual marriage. It is also apparent that this pressure comes not only from parents and family members, but also from society at large. In turn, this force has an impact on participants and likely most other South Korean lesbians' work and other social relationships. For two participants, self-identification as lesbian became possible when they moved to Seoul. All subjects felt obliged to attend blind dates to appease their parents. Some subjects expressed envy of heterosexual couples for the advantages they perceive them having in Korean society. But, not one subject expressed any real desire to be in a heterosexual marriage. However, it cannot be said that the subjects self-identified as being oppressed, or overwhelmingly victimised. Although all subjects shared the same social pressures of hetero-normativity, they also treated these interviews as an opportunity to network and socialise. To identify as lesbian and network with other self-identified lesbians, in a culture that they described as “conservative,” “Confucian,” and pressuring them to marry and have children, is political and subversive act on its own.

**Conclusion**

The six research participants who participated in qualitative interviews regarding their experiences of living as sexual minorities in South Korea provided a series of rich dialogues, excavating what is termed by Foucault as *subjugated knowledge* (Foucault, 1984). While these interviews and my analysis cannot represent an entire minority group of a country, they can be said to represent themselves. As a Canadian womyn doing this research in Korea, I could not assume to fully understand and represent the life and experience of the Korean lesbian individuals or communities. What I had accomplished was the provision of a forum for six Korean lesbians to share their personal lives, opinions, and experiences living within a Confucian, patriarchal, hetero-normative culture. Butler tells us that “identity categories tend to be instruments of regulating regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberating contestation of that very oppression” (1993, p. 308). I am happy and proud to be able to represent the liberating stories that are embedded in daily actions of hetero-normative oppression that these six subjects revealed to me.

**References**


Critically Queer as Praxis: An Emancipatory Paradigm for Redressing Heterosexism in School Settings

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Abstract: Scholars examining school-based heterosexism often gravitate towards queer theory. However, queer theory’s disavowal of the subject poses methodological and empirical problems for studies investigating the lived experiences of actual subjects. Accordingly, this paper proposes a theoretical paradigm that draws upon the common emancipatory goals of both queer and critical theories.

The Critically Queer Emancipatory Paradigm

My research examines the institutionalization of homophobia in Canadian Catholic schools. Since this topic has to do with uncovering the oppression of sexual minority groups, queer theory seems to be the most obvious theoretical lens for understanding and explaining the social reality of non-heterosexuals in Canadian Catholic schools. However, queer theory’s disavowal of the subject or “the self” (Green, 2007, p. 26-27) poses methodological and empirical problems for a study focused on the lived experiences of specific subject positions, notably lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (lgbtq) individuals. Nevertheless, there is a critical element of queer theory that positions it within the critical theory tradition, an outlook that is particularly useful for the emancipatory goals of my research. I advocate a “critically queer as praxis” paradigm focused on putting theory into practice by devising ways to resist heterosexism. Specifically, I turn to the revolutionary aspects of “queer” that emphasize the transformative power of action. Ultimately, to be “critically queer” is to recognize the potential of human agency to emancipate the human subject by transforming oppressive regimes into productive systems that thrive on diversity and difference.

Critical Theory, Education & Emancipation

One way to begin to emancipate the subject from the oppression that occurs in public school settings is to closely examine the inequalities and injustices that regularly take place within the enterprise of education itself. Critical theorists of education are known for tracing injustices to their source by revealing the institutional structures and processes that perpetuate inequality in educational practice. Not content to merely observe and describe discriminatory practices within education, critical theorists seek to revolutionalize the process of education by proposing recommendations to make it more egalitarian (Gibson, 1986). A critical theory of education has resistance as its central motif, and is neo-Marxist in its broadening of social inequality to include status and power in traditional Marxist analysis. Well-known critical educational theorists Apple (1979) and Giroux (1981) have fashioned an encompassing critical theory of education, with resistance to all forms of domination as its central concept (Gibson, 1986).

Heterosexist Oppression in Educational Settings

The specific form of oppression experienced by lgbtq individuals in educational contexts has been well documented by critical scholars. Late twentieth century educational research demonstrates that heterosexism and homophobia reinforce particular forms of power and privilege that define and regulate an atmosphere of “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich, 1986, p. 41) in public schooling (Britzman, 1995; Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992; Khayatt, 1998; Pinar, 1998). This atmosphere of compulsory heterosexuality often forces non-heterosexual teachers, students, and support staff to be closeted about their lgbtq identity. Twenty-first century educational research turns its lens on the development of anti-homophobia education in public schooling contexts to redress the atmosphere of compulsory heterosexuality (Clarksean & Pelton, 2002; Goldstein, Russell & Daley, 2007; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Khayatt, 2000; Kumashiro, 2002; Lugg, 2003; McCaskell, 2005). These studies can be classified as anti-oppressive or anti-homophobia educational research, and are aligned with the critical tradition of rectifying institutional discrimination in the name of social justice.

Queer as Resistance

Social justice is at the heart of queer theory. Michael Warner, an early queer theorist, positions queer as a “thorough resistance to regimes of the normal” (Warner, 1993, p. xxvi). On the active role of
queering, Warner asserts: “...people want to make theory queer, not just to have a theory about queers. For both academics and activists, ‘queer’ gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual, and normal includes normal business of the academy” (1993, xxvi). According to Judith Butler, another original queer theorist associated with analyzing the powerful effects of “regimes of the normal” on gender and sexuality, something can be regarded as queered once it is twisted and redeployed from a prior usage in “the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes” (1993, p. 228). Ultimately, to queer is to resist.

Resistance is a key concept in queer theory, critical pedagogy, and critical theory. Queer theory draws heavily on the work of Michel Foucault whose radical reworking of the concept of power yielded the notion “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Henry Giroux, one of the leading theorists of resistance in education, is aligned with Frankfurt School ideologies in his studies that show how educational policy and practice serve the interests of dominant groups but also simultaneously make room for the possibility of emancipation through the element of human agency and resistance (Gibson, 1986).

Critically Queer Praxis in Qualitative Research

Dilley (1999) taps into the power of human agency in his approach to research about sexual diversity in education, which he describes as “Queer theory as praxis.” It can be regarded as a “revolutionary call” because of its affinities with critical pedagogy in its move to transform theory into action. The philosophical term “praxis” emphasizes the transformative nature of action and the priority of action over thought (Goldstein, 2007). Its orientation is Marxist in that it recalls Marx’s insistence, in his 1845 text Theses on Feuerbach, that the point is not merely to interpret the world, but to change it (Seidman, 2008). According to Dilley (1999) the primary goal of “queer praxis” is to resist the dominant culture’s stronghold on what constitutes normality and deviance, or, if this is not possible, then at the very least expose dominant ideology as hegemonic and repressive. This questioning of the status quo has an undercurrent of empowerment running through it that connects it to the emancipatory projects of critical pedagogy and critical theory. The wider concern of anti-oppressive and anti-homophobia research that employs a “queer theory as praxis” approach is to instill hope in eventual emancipation from heterosexist discrimination through the power of human agency and resistance. In this way, queer theory, especially when expressed as “queer theory as praxis,” is connected to the emancipatory and revolutionary values of critical theory.

Concluding Remarks – Critically Queer as Praxis

Although at first glance critical theory and queer theory may seem to be at odds with one another, there are some commonalities between the two traditions that can give rise to what I call a “critically queer” theoretical orientation. The two theories chiefly differ on the concept of the subject. While queer theory might be cast as a “subjectless critique” that eschews “any positing of a proper subject of or object for the field” (Eng, Halberstam, & Munoz, 2005, p. 3, emphasis in the original), critical theory is decidedly interested in the human subject and its release from oppressive social forces that reduce human potential, restrict individual freedom, and reinforce social domination. Where the two theories come together is in the notion of critique. Critical theory submits the “givenness” of the social world (its familiar “truths” and established “facts”) to critical consideration and close scrutiny, while queer theory critiques “regimes of the normal” by positing other forms of normal and advocating a politics of transgression aimed at transforming oppressive social systems.

A critically queer as praxis approach is suitable to the field of education, and anti-homophobia and anti-oppressive education in particular, because of its focus on human engagement rooted in people’s life experience. Critically queer as praxis is a form of action-oriented self-understanding that invites individuals to become aware of the contradictions in their belief systems and social practices and hopefully become inspired to change those practices and beliefs in order to create a more rational and equitable social system. In the critically queer as praxis theoretical orientation, the subject is of immanent importance for, without a solid subject, without human agency, there can be no effective social change.

References


Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning Students: Their Perception of School Climate in CEGEP

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Abstract: This paper aims at better understanding lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning (LGBQ) students’ perception of their CEGEP environment and its openness to sexual diversity. Based on the results of a questionnaire on school climate and homophobia (n=104 LGBQ students) and focus groups with 20 youths from 5 Quebec cities, the authors suggest key factors involved in students’ reading of their school’s tolerance towards homosexuality.

Introduction

If studies in school climate have long considered the preeminence of violence to be an important indicator, only recently have they taken an interest in homophobic violence. In the United States, the biannual National School Climate Survey produced by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network has documented both the presence of homophobic bullying and its impacts on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender high school youth since 2000.

In Quebec, school climate in regard to homophobia has been the object of scrutiny for community organizations such as GRIS Montréal and GRIS Québec. These volunteer-based associations aim at demystifying gay and lesbian realities in Quebec high schools by having students attend personal testimonies of gay men and lesbian women. These organizations have published reports that have gone a long way in documenting students’ perception of homosexuality as well as their declared level of comfort at knowing and having to work with a gay or a lesbian individual. However, due to the nature and specificity of these organizations’ missions, the school climate in CEGEP had yet to be documented.

Established in 1967 following the rapport Parent recommendations, the CEGEP (or Collège d’enseignement général et professionnel) is specific of the Quebec school system. In 2005-2006, 189 101 students were registered in one of the 48 CEGEPs that cover all regions of Quebec. Registered students can choose between a two-year long pre-university program and a three-year long professional course. In any case, the CEGEP environment is one of transitions: either between high school and university, or between high school and the workplace.

Several authors have qualified homophobia as being frequent and confronting (Kosciw, 2004; Thurlow, 2001; Epstein, 1994) in secondary schools, while on the other hand, the relative liberalism of university campuses has been underscored by a number of gay, lesbian and bisexual students (Schellenberg, Hirt & Sears, 1999; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994; Herek & Glunt, 1993; D’Augelli, 1992). However, very little is known about the CEGEP environment. How do LGBQ students qualify the school climate in their CEGEP, and how does it compare to what they have been through or witnessed in high schools? According to them, how present and virulent are homophobic manifestations in their current school environments? What place is given to homosexuality as a topic of discussion in class? How would they qualify their CEGEP’s openness to sexual diversity?

Methodology

This presentation relies on the results of a questionnaire on school climate and homophobia in CEGEP, as well as focus groups with 20 LGBQ youth from 5 Quebec cities. 1,844 17 to 20 year-old students from 26 CEGEPs around the province were invited to fill out the questionnaire during a core course (usually French or Philosophy). The 18-page questionnaire included questions on whether different types of violent acts had occurred at their CEGEP and whether the person targeted was or was thought to be gay or lesbian. The participants were presented with acts ranging from teasing or mocking to physically or sexually assaulting someone, and were asked whether they had witnessed or heard about, been a victim of or perpetrated these acts. Other questions included whether respondents knew of an openly gay or lesbian student or teacher at their CEGEP; and whether homosexuality or sexual diversity had been discussed in class or had any visibility (i.e. posters, resource leaflets, etc.) at school. Participants were also asked about their sexual orientation. Data gathering took place from February to April 2008.
Focus groups were organized in winter 2007 and took place in Montreal, Quebec, Sherbrooke, St-Félicien and Rouyn-Noranda. Participants were recruited through LGBT youth associations and student services. Participation criteria included being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, questioning or having a gay parent; currently attending a CEGEP or having recently attended it; and having witnessed or been a victim of homophobia in CEGEP. Because homophobia in CEGEP had not been the subject of a lot of attention, the focus groups were set up in an explorative manner, in order to address a variety of topics, including the homophobic episodes participants had been a victim or a witness of; relationships with teachers and peers; involvement with LGBT students associations; and feelings of comfort at being visible as a sexual minority student in school.

Results

Students’ sexual orientation was measured by three variables: sexual desire, sexual behavior and sexual identity. Students were asked to report whether their desires and behavior targeted only men, mostly men but also women, women as much as men, mostly women but also men, or only women. As for sexual identity, respondents were given a choice between answers ranging from “I consider myself heterosexual” to “I’m questioning/I don’t know how to define myself”. 7.6% of male and 10.3% of female respondents reported some form of sexual desire towards a person of the same sex, while 8.9% of male and 14.6% of female declared having taken part in a type of sexual behavior with the like. Overall, one hundred and four (104) students reported identifying as non-heterosexual, which corresponds to 6.6% of men and 5.0% of women. It is these students’ perception of school climate in CEGEP that this article aims to document.

Data analysis of this school survey allows us to document the fact that homophobic violence does not only target gay, lesbian or bisexual students. In fact, among the 82 students who declared having been the victim of a homophobic episode (4.5%), a majority (64.6%) declared being heterosexual. It is nonetheless possible to affirm that, proportionally speaking, LGBQ students are 8 times more likely than their heterosexual peers (24.4% vs. 3.1%) to be the victim of such violence. It is worth mentioning that this statistically significant difference has already been documented (Saewyc, 2007).

Results show that LGBQ students are more likely than heterosexual students to report hearing remarks such as “that’s gay” in their CEGEP (51.3% vs. 30.6%) and to declare having witnessed or heard of an homophobic episode (55.0% vs. 44.7%). It should be specified that these homophobic episodes cover a wide range of behaviours, from teasing to sexual and physical abuse. The most frequent types of episodes participants reported include being excluded and rejected and being the subject of gossip or rumours that aim to harm one’s reputation. These results show a statistically significant difference between LGBQ and non-LGBQ students, in terms of their degree of awareness of negative CEGEP climate in regard to homophobia.

LGBQ students’ awareness can also be seen when it comes to discussions in class involving homosexuality. Indeed, LGBQ students are more likely than heterosexual students (78.2% vs. 66.0%) to declare having heard teachers mention homosexuality in class, whether it be in a positive, neutral or negative manner. A proportionally greater number of LGBQ students declare having attended a class where the teacher had organized a discussion or debate in class on a subject related to sexual diversity, whether it be gay marriage, gay pride, etc., than non-LGBQ students of the same schools (36.0% vs. 24.6%).

It is also worth mentioning that what could be considered as an acute attentiveness to homosexual issues can also be played out outside the classroom environment. Indeed, non-heterosexual teenagers have consistently been more numerous in declaring that their CEGEP had organized some type of outreach activity regarding homosexuality, such as a personal testimony by a gay or lesbian person, or a play on the subject (22.9% vs. 9.8%). Alike, and perhaps less surprisingly, these students are more likely than heterosexuals to be aware of the presence of a LGBQ support group at their school (49.2% vs. 35.0%). It is therefore possible to recognize that sexual minority students show greater awareness to both the existence and the quality of discussions regarding sexual diversity issues at their CEGEP. These results help document the fact that the school environment is a major actor in influencing the school climate in regards to homophobia.
Discussion

The results presented above support the premise that students’ sexual orientation has an impact on their schooling experience at their CEGEP. More specifically, lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning students seem to carefully inspect their CEGEP environment for any clue suggesting tolerance or intolerance towards manifestations of sexual diversity. When questioned about the reasons for this extreme carefulness, participants in the focus groups are quick to attribute it to their years of high school, in reference to which some of them used belligerent metaphors, ranging from referring to school as a “war front”, or to themselves as “a hit-me machine”. In this regard, the CEGEP presents itself as an “in-between” world, between the “jungle” that is high school and the possibility of a new life.

When I came to CEGEP, it was really a second chance for me, there being not many people from high school (...). High school is cruel, you have no idea. Now, I have the best life in CEGEP. (Eddy, 19 year-old participant identifying as gay, Montreal)

Most of the participants agreed that CEGEP was a more welcoming environment and attributed this fact to two main factors: the age and growing maturity of students, and the relative anonymity that the CEGEP allowed. Nonetheless, many interviewed gay and lesbian students noticed either a lack of discussion regarding sexual diversity issues at their CEGEP, or a lack of inclusion of the topic in general curriculum. One participant compared the issue of homosexuality to a “hot potato” for CEGEP teachers: even when such a discussion arose in class, neither teachers nor school staff would want to be responsible for handling it, according to him.

Is high school more homophobic than CEGEP? It’s more nuanced in CEGEP because there is a place for a variety of opinions, a certain acknowledgment of difference. In CEGEP though, school staff won’t take the risk of talking about it. Yes, it’s okay, you can be gay, but that is it. We don’t talk about it. (Tiesta, 17 year-old participant identifying as bisexual, Montreal)

Although most agree the issue is silenced in some way, this fact doesn’t appear problematic to all students. Following the “homophobic trauma” that is high school, some participants seemed to appreciate the fact that homosexuality seems to be a non-issue in CEGEP:

I think this issue is still too fresh in our minds, in CEGEP. Students are not ready [to talk about homosexuality], because high school has been so rough. (...) I really admire people who can talk about that in CEGEP, I admire them incredibly. (Eric, a 23 year-old participant identifying as gay, Sherbrooke)

Sexual minority students appear to act strategically in their CEGEP environment: they pay a lot of attention to signs of tolerance and openness to homosexuality in a school environment that tends to silence this same topic. “We put up posters [about the gay and lesbian association] and some of them were torn apart. When I see that, I know I don’t want to say publicly that I’m gay”, explains Max, a 19 year-old Montreal participant identifying as gay. Still, we have yet to document the extent with which this observation can be made. Do high school students identifying as LGBQ report paying as much attention to the clues that their school environment is tolerant to sexual diversity? Is it more accurate to presume that this special awareness, this school gay-dar, is acquired through time and part of the experience students build through their high school years? The answers to these questions have yet to be documented, as school climate and intimidation at school becomes the object of more and more scrutiny in Quebec.

References


Queer Issues in the Study of Education and Culture

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Refocusing: Intersex Youth and the Challenge of Gendered Schools

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Abstract: This paper uses the corporeal existence of intersex bodies within North American educational institutions as a site of resistance, to trouble the gendered architecture and infrastructure of schools and educational system, practices and policies. Our research will raise questions around the changing role of educators; articulate implications regarding pedagogical frameworks informed by gender binaries; and then, set forth the goal of becoming an ethical subject within education institutions. By denaturalizing implicit and explicit gender norms, and highlighting the ways in which they circulate in contemporary schooling, we will inject educational and institutional interventions into the changing relationship between gender and youth, and charge educators and administrators to create an educational anti-oppressive pedagogy informed by the paradigm shift within medical policies and practices.

Male/female, masculine/feminine, XX/XY, are a few amongst many of our medical and cultural demarcations that establish difference and distinction between the sexes and genders. They are the fundamental organizing categories in our cultural systems. As such, each of these sexual dichotomies is underscored by an assumption that the available categories are absolute; that universally, in every child conceived, the binary will proceed along a developmental pathway to one of two successful ends. The birth, then, of a gender-variant or intersex child, someone who does not genetically, biologically, hormonally, or behaviorally fall into either of these groups, who cross-sects the boundaries or falls between the conceptually distinct bell-shaped curves of sexual dimorphism, prompts a myriad of medical and social interventions (Blackless, Charuvastra, & Derryck, et al., 2000). The simple act of surviving to term in the face of this dimorphic absolute necessitates medical and social actions to ‘solve’ and ‘improve’ perceived abnormality. Beyond science, historical discourses, art/architectural constrictions, and material/consumer authority have functioned to reinforce surveillance of ‘sex’ and ultimately have become a means, in the face of lived experiences, of designating that there are only two categories of legitimate states of being.

In 2006, recognizing the interplay of personal, professional, and institutional silences that were perpetuating poor treatment and stigmatization of intersex individuals in the medical establishment - despite recent advances in research, psychosocial, and surgical intervention - a consortium of physicians, medical societies, intersex individuals, and non-profit social and medical societies produced the Consensus Statement on Management of Intersex Disorders (herein Consensus Statement). In addition to recommendations on medical practices, policies, and ethnographic studies, the document outlined a patient-focused management framework in which surgical intervention is pursued only at the express desire of the Intersex individual and their guardian(s) (Hughes, Houk, & Ahmed, et al., 2006). This framework is premised on the integrity and autonomy of intersex children and the recognition that gender/sex are characteristics of person that play an integral role in the ways that individuals recognize themselves in our society. Self-identification of gender by the intersex child or young adult is now recognized as the primary factor in surgical assignment of biological sex. Further, intervention – whether psychosocial, psychiatric, hormonal, or surgical – is not initiated until the intersex child and their parent/guardian(s) declare themselves ready.

The immediate implication of policy changes outlined in the Consensus Statement to institutions outside the medical profession - such as education and governmental social services - is that hormonal therapy and sex-assignment surgeries may not take place until adolescence, if they ever occur at all. In fact, there is now the distinct possibility that intersex children will be entering schools as “intersex”, not as “male” or “female”. This paper engages poststructuralist perspectives to consider the complex interplay of oppression and possibility when addressing gender non-conforming behaviour, intersexuality, and gender-variance in teaching and learning environments.

Society has attempted to maintain the ideal of gender dimorphism even though research and experience show a significant percentage of children are chromosomally, physiologically, and hormonally various. Persistent social norms and discourses maintain the arbitrariness and falsity of gender differences.
as a ‘natural’ prerequisite for human development (Butler, 2004). These mores are (re)produced by the various administrative, managerial and on-the-ground policies and practices in our schools. For example, daily schools engage in the reinforcement of policies such as mandatory sex-based dress codes; class lists that include gender along side name and school ID; and physical education classes that are divided by sex and engage in gender appropriate activities (boys play football outside, while girls play volleyball inside). Further, GSA’s exist but gender non-conforming kids have struggled and will continue to struggle to find a place within the provisions of the group, since gender identity has yet to be recognized within Canadian law as a characteristic of person and is still recognized as a disordered identity within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Finally, in schools that facilitate and support students, staff, and administrators who wish to transition genders – such as charter schools in Alberta where the Teacher’s Association amended its code of professional conduct to include gender identity in 2002, and several school districts within Vancouver, British Columbia - there are still only two gender boxes on school application and enrollment forms.

Throughout her work, theorist Judith Butler reiterates that transsexual, intersex, gender-variant, and gender non-conforming people “have been in existence for a long time, but they have not been admitted into the terms that govern reality.” (2004, p. 31) But what is now becoming a burgeoning medical standardization of non-assignment is forcing not only the terminology around, but also intersex people themselves, into visible reality. More than ever before, intersex bodies exist as intersex bodies and their existence is a form of resistance.

Through recourse to norms, the sphere of human intelligibility is circumscribed, and this circumscription is consequential for any ethics and any conception of social transformation. We might try to claim that we must first know the fundamentals of the human in order to preserve and promote human life as we know it. But what if the very categories of the human have excluded those who should be described and sheltered within its terms? (Butler, 2004, p. 36)

It is now a question of developing within law, education, psychiatry, social and literary theory and even sport “a new legitimating lexicon for the gender complexity that we have been living for a long time” (Butler, 2004, p. 31).

The personal and institutional pedagogical void around accommodating, protecting and fostering the learning environment for intersex and gender-variant youth can no longer continue unaddressed. The relative lack of agency, the devaluing of personal autonomy, and the negative imaging experienced by intersex, gender variant, gender non-conforming, and trans children and young adults is heightened in institutional and authoritative social spaces such as schools. While the multiplicity and complexity of gender performance, as fluid and indefinable in adults as it is in children, is imposed and policed within rigid binaries on the younger cohorts of our society. As adults we have integrated, elaborated, and normalised the established gender stereotypes, which we then may knowingly or unknowingly, subtly or not so subtly, access referentially in our child-rearing practices.

It is inevitable that envisioning the education process outside dimorphic sex designations will surprise and challenge both educators and students to consider ways of knowing outside what we currently understand. This will not be a simple knowing based on a familiarity and acceptance of an ‘Other’, because this type of conception precludes opportunities for relationships and dialogue; it becomes a simple reframing of a social ‘object’. Rather, an ethical encounter with an ‘other’, “requires an epistemic lack” (a suspension of the descriptive regime) on the part of the addressee” (Di Paolantonio, 2000, p. 164). In this way, the project of addressing intersex, gender variant and gender non-conforming youth in our pedagogical philosophy and educational practices will go beyond political calls for inclusive language, inclusive structures, and representation, to a re-envisioning of the framework of schooling that risks arriving somewhere that cannot be known in advance (Walcott, 2000).

Returning to the work of Judith Butler, in Giving An Account of Oneself she frames this process of pedagogical, ethical, and responsible risk-taking in terms of an opening of oneself the precariousness of the ethical responsibility to Others:

Perhaps most importantly, we must recognize that ethics requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness, when what forms us diverges from what lies before us, when our willingness to become undone in relation to others constituted our chance of becoming human. To be undone by another is a primary necessity. An anguish to be sure, but also a chance, - to be
addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me, but also to be moved, to be prompted to act, to address myself elsewhere, and so to vacate the self-sufficient “I” as a kind of possession. If we speak and try to give an account from this place, we will not be irresponsible, or, if we are, we will surely be forgiven (2005, p. 136).

From this excerpt we understand that it is only from accepting a place of precariousness that educators can truly come to explore and understand their own relationship to the reinscription of normative definitions of sex and gender, and to the maintenance of the male/female, masculine/feminine binaries. It is only through exposing and risking to others their personal definitions of sex and gender that they can truly recognize alternative possibilities and inclusive pedagogical strategies that attest to and attempt to rectify the ways in which social inequalities are perpetuated in our educational spaces.

The necessity is no longer to just “imagine a world in which individuals with mixed genital attributes might be accepted and loved without having to transform them into a more socially coherent or normative version of gender” (Butler, 2004, p. 65). The boundaries, vocabularies, and policies must transcend the framework of abnormal or supernormal for there is no longer a “normal” from which to compare them, but rather a series of realities that have always existed but are now becoming visible. These bodies are a reality. They are entering the classroom and negotiating school washrooms and locker rooms and enrollment forms.

Importantly, the ability to act and/or knowledge on how to act in response to this ethical call plays very little part in the ethics of the response. Rather, it is the act of responding, of announcing oneself as implicated in the process, and committing to the consequences of such an endeavor that begins the “project of becoming an ethical subject in relation to other ethical subjects” (Britzman, 2000, p. 37). In this encounter, the notion that ‘I’ or ‘we’ can be discussed as a collective ideal that must be forgiven to imagination. Our educational communities are riddled with difference, fragmented along categories and intersections of identity, and necessarily imperfect (Di Paolantonio, 2000).

To move forward towards inclusive, ethical pedagogies we must learn to accept vulnerability and to acknowledge anxiety over teaching and learning in incoherent, unfamiliar personal and spatial environments (Britzman & Pitt, 2003). The practices and strategies we develop must begin to address the system as the problem, not the non-conforming child. It is in fact, “the system, schools policy, practice and architecture [that] need to change (sic)” (Walcott, 2000, p. 149). In this model, the health, safety and social needs of the youth are prioritized. The relationships between youth, adults, and student-teachers are framed within an ethics of the self, with attention to the integrity and autonomy of each individual as a valued and valuable member of the learning community.

References
Are you Prepared to Cross the Line?

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Abstract: Should instructor or student self disclosure be used in the classroom? Remembering that only part of what we teach is content, the other part involves acting as role models and giving students more effective tools to interact in a diverse world; the question of ‘out’ or ‘not’ begs an answer.

There has been a limited amount of material written about lesbian teachers, and what has been written is contradictory and lacking in Canadian context. Works like Talburt’s (2000) would lead one to believe that a person cannot be both a successful teacher/academic and be an ‘out’ lesbian; “all it would do is make [students] uncomfortable” (p. 103). On the other hand, Khayatt (1997, 1999) speaks of disclosing in an indirect way, “I depend on those who want to know my sexual orientation to understand and pick up on the innumerable cues present throughout my teaching” (1997, p. 127). She also suggests that, especially as a feminist, to not be publicly out is a contraction of feminism and the adage ‘the personal is political’. Yet, her writings speak to the fact that she is not all ‘out’. Similarly, Chevillot, Manning, & Nesbitt (2002) articulate the need to find one’s own personal voice, and to declare him/herself. Thereby encouraging our marginalized students to also find their voice.

Manning goes on in the article to say, “first voice promotes praxis in the classroom [and] theoretical analysis is connected to the everyday life experience of self and others” (p. 194).

Clearly, being closeted takes a toll on a person. Jackson (2007) put it well saying that she had become “worn out” (p. 3) from hiding her sexual orientation and “splitting herself in two” (p. 3) in the classroom. Bryson (2002) discussed her experiences of coming out in her faculty as going from the “young and promising new kid on the block [to] a political ass who wouldn’t get tenure anywhere” (p. 373). For Callaghan (2007), a completely closeted teacher in a Catholic High School, it took the suicide of a student from homophobic bullying for her to come ‘out’ in school. Who knows how many others commit suicide, drop out, or otherwise fail in school while their teachers remain closeted for fear of job loss or lack of acceptance?

In Canada, a country where gay and lesbian marriage is legal and same sex couples can adopt, some provinces lag behind. Alberta is one of those provinces that has had difficulty accepting equal rights for homosexuals. At the same time the Alberta Teacher’s Association and the Alberta College of Social Workers were ahead of similar associations across Canada to explicitly write in sexual orientation as a protected right, thereby disallowing discrimination based on sexual orientation. Recently some Colleges and Universities in Canada have gone from treating sexual orientation as “don’t ask, don’t tell” to including minors in lesbian and gay studies, but this has not happen in smaller, more conservative, or more rural/northern institutions. This is where we, the authors of this paper, work and live.

We both teach at a small rural College in Northern Alberta where over 40% of our students are First Nations or Métis. Our College offers upgrading programs for those without a high school diploma, as well as programs in the areas of trades, pre hospital care, nursing, social work, business and other human service certifications and diplomas. We have just begun to move into partnerships with universities to offer full degrees in our communities. In many cases, our students are not the same students who you would find at a large city University or College. Many have never lived or travelled away from their small rural communities before. Many have long entrenched biases towards certain populations; this is especially true towards those who are not heterosexual. Since most instructors and students live in these small communities together, self-disclosure is risky and may lead to unpredictable and potentially volatile situations.

So, if there are andragogical merits to being ‘out’ as an instructor or supporting our students to be ‘out’ in the classroom are they worth the risk of self-disclosure given the possible repercussions? Although the concept of andragogy has been around for awhile, the term is often attributed to Knowles (1984) who describes the adult learner as moving from a dependent personality to self direction and an internal motivation to learn. The adult student grows by gaining experience through learning that helps him/her make increasing more complex decisions quickly about their learning and their social roles.
Thus, adult learners, unlike children and adolescents, are ready to learn new knowledge that they can immediately apply and/or utilize to further learn new concepts. By choosing to self-disclose in a College classroom, we as adult educators provide students, who have the “readiness [and motivation] to learn” (Knowles, 1984, p. 12), an environment that values the “experiences” (p. 12) of both the instructor and students. So the authors of this paper would argue that there are andragogical merits to self-disclosure in the adult education classroom.

As two, otherwise ‘out’ middle-aged lesbian educators we have grappled with whether to be ‘out’ in the classroom. We have struggled with it as it relates to our location (rural institutions), our family situation (single, married, or common-law; parenting young vs. adult children), our multiple roles in our institution and community (for example an academic and a board chairperson in community, or an academic and a member of a local non-profit), and our other factors that should not, but do, influence our decision as educator as to whether to self-disclose. These factors challenge us as adult educators to further question the andragogical merits of self-disclosure in our teaching situation; that had we lived and worked in a large metropolitan city, we might never have questioned.

Further to this discussion is the issue of self-disclosure on social networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn, and through blogging and twittering. A quick glance at a number of our ‘friends’ on Facebook who are professionals, reveals that that many provide a large amount of personal information, often including the name of their same sex spouse and posting revealing pictures of themselves and others on their page. One might argue that only their ‘friends’ can see this information. And while it is true that most social networking sites allow the user to control who is able to access their personal information, the user has no control of how their ‘friends’ use or display this information. A ‘friend’ might have their Facebook open and someone else, a student for instance, is able to view this personal information. Is this then self-disclosure to our students?

Another issue with social Internet utilities is that you are required to accept or agree to the site’s ‘Terms of Use’ prior to utilizing the site. While the conditions of these ‘Terms of Use’ vary from site to site, at a minimum these terms grant the service provider a license to reproduce any of the information posted for any purpose. Some of these Internet networking sites state that any information posted to the site is actually not owned by you once you post it. These conditions allow Facebook and other social networking sites use of this personal information, and sharing it with others. Individuals also do not have control over pictures someone might take of them in a compromising situation, nor do they have control over what someone who is, or is not a ‘friend’ says about them on a social networking site. This too might result in disclosure of sexual orientation to an educator’s students. Self-disclosure outside the classroom, but on social networking sites, is still self-disclosure. If we have chosen to limit the personal information we share in the classroom, are we not sabotaging these efforts by being ‘out’ in other venues.

In the end, self-disclosure really is a relative term since we are all ‘out’ at least a little bit in our small rural Northern Alberta community. The question really is to what extent are we ‘out’ deliberately in the classroom and/or to our students. As adult educators we must remember that only part of what we teach is our content, the other part involves acting as role models and giving students more effective tools to interact in a diverse world. For this reason, and others, the question of ‘out’ or not still begs an answer.

References


Queer Issues in the Study of Education and Culture
"Unleashing the Unpopular": Bodies, Stories and Queer Classrooms

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Abstract: Drawing upon the anthology “Unleashing the Unpopular,” we investigate how individuals, human rights policies, and queer (il)literacies influence the ability of hesitant or unwilling teacher candidates, teachers, administrators and professors to incorporate social justice education into their classrooms and schools.

In 2005, we decided to co-edit an anthology about LGBT issues in education, which later became “Unleashing the Unpopular”: Talking about Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity in Education (2007). As educators committed to equity and social justice, we had found a vacuum in support and discourse related to sexual orientation, gender diversity, and education; a paralysis associated with this topic. While literature, curriculum, and strategies were (and continue to be) readily available in print and on many Internet sites, there has been a gap between the access to information and the comfort and/or ability of educators to introduce and support LGBT issues in the classroom. We were aware of many of the barriers facing educators in providing LGBT support and instruction, such as a lack of activism, invisibility, or hyper-visibility of LGBT issues and people; a neglected anti-discrimination policy (or lack thereof); inexperience with other equity issues; and fear of parental reaction (McCaskell & Russell, 2000). But, we wanted to investigate further how to combat these barriers and effectively intervene. We asked authors to submit narratives and research that could inform and potentially transform fearful, hesitant, and unwilling educators. We learned from both the writings they submitted, and the process of collecting and publishing them. In this paper, we draw upon three chapters from Unleashing the Unpopular, in addition to our editing anecdotes, which reveal strategic practices and institutional locations for queer innovation.

Teaching queerly demands we explore taken-for-granted assumptions about diversity, identities, childhood, and prejudice. (Sears, 1999, p. 5)

Our call for submissions was an invitation for text, a request for words to articulate the damage as well as the resistance. There was an assumption, or faith, in language to repair and communicate. If the right words could be found and offered, perhaps our audience of teacher candidates, teachers, administrators and professors might reconsider conscious and unconscious practices of heterosexism and homophobia. Instead, we confronted readings of our bodies, while our words were tossed aside. In fact, the readings of our bodies were the justification to refuse the words.

In Surviving the Pain and Widening the Circle, John J. Guiney Yallop recounts the response of his principal to a request from his grade five class to celebrate lesbian and gay pride week: “It has to be good for students. It’s not good enough that it’s good for you; it has to be good for students” (2007, p. 112). The principal could not hear John’s request, as an “out” gay man, to allow his students to heal from a homophobic incident on campus. It was assumed that LGBT curriculum could only be for the benefit of his gay body, thus his words lost legitimacy. His story is not unusual, and you may have predicted the outcome; gay bodies are after all perceived to be the very source of the problem, the queer spectacle of Pride parades, the origin of the forbidden desire. It is a trap; queers are the only ones expected to talk about LGBT issues, because of their bodies, because there is no choice, and for the same reasons, such intimate motivation is perceived as a corruptive bias, and the justification to discredit them.

Drawing upon queer theory to “locate and exploit the incoherencies in [sex, gender, and desire] which stabilize heterosexuality” (Jagose, 1996, p. 3), one possible response is to place queer words in heterosexual bodies. Our decision to create an anthology, a collaboration between queer and heterosexual editors and authors, was based in part on our desire to disrupt the notion that homophobia is only a topic that queer educators would care about. We also knew that heterosexual educators might feel “safer” to bring up this topic in classrooms (Chasnoff, 1996). Heterosexual educators, while still discussing LGBT issues that might provoke homophobic responses, do not have the additional vulnerability of possessing
LGBT bodies as targets (Pendleton Jimenez, 2002). Finally, we wanted to convince our predominantly heterosexual teacher candidates that it was their job as well to provide LGBT support and curriculum in their classrooms. Instead, co-editor Isabel Killoran, who does not identify as queer, has been told on several occasions that this is not “her” issue and she “has no business” writing about it. She does not possess a queer body and is therefore viewed as not qualified to discuss such topics. As the slogan goes ‘silence = death,’ and if neither queers nor heterosexuals are permitted to teach against homophobia, then nobody is left to speak.

These critiques of our bodies and work fit into a broader theme of apathy toward individual needs, experiences and knowledge. Individuals are asked to change who they are, and/or put aside their troubles as a solution to homophobia in the schools; in this way, teachers and administrators might avoid doing the work of social justice education in school environments. A couple of initial responses by teachers to one transgender youth (MtF) who wished to wear dresses to school was, “Isn’t there a special program he can go to? Doesn’t it make more sense for him to wait until the end of the school year when he has left Northern” (Callender, 2007, p. 42). It is an impulse to remove the queer individual, or the queer markers on one’s body, in order to attend to the comfort of the broader community.

In Guiney Yallop’s narrative discussed above, requests for the LGBT curriculum he had planned were first denied and later accepted based on the administrators’ sense of “discomfort” and then “comfort” in relation to LGBT issues (p. 112-114). The presence of queers endangers or incites fragile heterosexual sensibilities. As Cook (2007) notes, Jamie Nabozny, a gay student facing constant homophobic harassment and violence at school, was informed by his principal that “‘boys will be boys’ and told Nabozny that if he was ‘going to be so openly gay’ he should ‘expect’ such behavior from his fellow students” (p. 8). Asking for the silence or invisibility of the queer individual for the benefit of heterosexuals is not only a cowardly approach on the part of the school leadership, but can have devastating consequences.

In addition, attempting to change individuals who display homophobia through personalized punishment, seems to have little effect on stopping such behavior. In three different cases of homophobic harassment in schools, documented by Hilary Cook (2007), individual punishment of perpetrators did little to stop the violence.

The courts, recognizing the failure of individual responses to promote safer institutions, changed their approach:

Judges are holding schools boards, schools, and their employees responsible for ensuring the safety of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. Initially judges held schools responsible for dealing with individual incidents. Increasingly, however, courts are asking for more from schools. They are asking that schools ensure that the environment, the school culture, deals with issues of anti-LGBT discrimination and harassment at a preventive level, so as to stem a never ending flow of ‘separate incidents’ before they can start. (Cook, 2007, p. 7)

The judges now ask for larger programs and policies to protect LGBT individuals. In our classrooms and in the writing of this text, we draw on such human rights policies. We concur with Cook when she observes that, “compassion does not seem to be enough motivation” (2007, p. 14) to convince teachers and administrators to protect LGBT students. When beginning to work on this book, it was important for us that human rights served as a foundation for thinking about whose voices would be heard, how this information would be shared, and who would be the intended audience. For us, the importance of collaboration between all educators in identifying queer issues as part of the human rights framework could not be underestimated. Even as the editors of the book, one identifying as queer, the other not, we have experienced resistance to our work in many ways. This only reinforces the importance of getting the message out there that this is ‘everyone’s issue,’ because it is a human rights issue.

As an educator who works mostly in the area of inclusive education, with disability as her area of specialty, Isabel has spent years trying to find the best way to prepare her teacher candidates for including all students with exceptionalities into the general education classroom.
What has worked best is focusing on shifting the attitudes of the educators. The majority of class time is not spent on the minute details of “how to do it” but rather “why” they must do it, with a focus on universal design and differentiation. This is connected with an attempt to “humanize” the issue for the teacher candidates by having students with disabilities, parents, and administrators talk to them about their experiences with schools and the exclusion they faced or the difficulties they struggled with when they tried to disrupt the school culture by insisting on a shift to inclusivity. Her research with these classes has shown statistically significant shifts in their attitudes towards inclusion, students with exceptionalities and the educators’ role in making inclusion happen.

In each of the three chapters that we cite, we found a similar theme: the protection of queer individuals was made possible through an appeal to equity policy or broader human rights legislation. Queer intervention followed from an individual’s ability to access legal documents at all levels (though not before experiencing substantial pain and loss). In the case of the transgender youth, Jade, s/he and her school social worker, Dale Callender, pushed beyond the fear and hesitation of the school community through an unwavering embrace of the board of education’s policies and equity foundation statement guidelines, “that students have the right to learn and work in an environment free of restricting biases” (Callender, 2007, p. 41). The school district’s response to John Guiney Yallop’s request for a Lesbian and Gay Pride Week curriculum/celebration was granted only after he filed a grievance and received a settlement addressing student needs as well as training for staff and administration (2007, p. 113). Finally, all three legal cases discussed in Hilary Cook’s (2007) article involved students who successfully argued before the courts that they deserved to learn in schools that protected both their bodies and their human rights.

These queer interventions overcome one of the barriers mentioned at the opening of this article, anti-discrimination policies disconnected from the very individuals they are intended to protect and educate. They are policies without life or story, inaccessible/unintelligible to their community members. We have also shown how these individuals, without explicit ties to human rights policies, remain unheard and illegitimate. In response to our call for narratives to help us understand and eradicate the gap between LGBT educational discourse and action, these authors highlight the relationships and readings of individuals and policies. Ultimately, they reveal the prominence of what might be called queer (il)literacies in the struggle to implement social justice education.

References


When theory and practice collide: The case for building civic capacity for change

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Abstract: Often in education schools are referred to as spaces that simultaneously might foster social change, as well as fortify the social, economic, political and cultural status quo (Apple, 1995; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Within contemporary educational discourses the inclusion of curricula labeled as “multicultural” or “social justice” oriented is advocated, but often not implemented outside of neo-liberal constructs of individual prejudice reduction and/or a food and festivals approach of exposure to the Other. Within this multiculturalism, silences remain when teaching and learning encounter gender identities and sexualities. Work within these areas demand thoroughgoing and complicated analyses for which many schools, teachers and even students are under-prepared. However, without such analyses, there is a risk of the continuation and promotion of gender and sexuality based stereotypes (Crocco, 2001; McCready, 2004). One could argue that stereotyping, fear and heteronormativity promote school cultures where harassment of those perceived to be the sexual or gender Other is the norm, rather than the exception. One answer to reform has been the development of safe schools programs. The project upon which this paper is based is a policy analysis of safe schools programs and policies in Canada and the United States, with a particular interest in bridging policy and theory.

Why Safe Schools

Much of the contemporary safe schools policies and programs were developed in reaction to a 1993 State of Massachusetts study that reported high numbers of youth, perceived to be gay or lesbian, who were experiencing a hostile school environment (Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993). This hostile environment negatively impacted the achievement of gay and lesbian youth. The State School Board voted to recommend the development and support of Safe Schools programs within Massachusetts’ schools, which included: develop policies that protect gay and lesbian students from harassment, violence, and discrimination; develop training for school personnel in violence prevention and suicide prevention; offer school-based support groups for gay, lesbian, and heterosexual students; and provide school-based counseling for family members of gay and lesbian students. The safe schools movement is also the result of court cases that challenge school systems adherence to the law. In 1980, Aaron Fricke, a Rhode Island teenager used the First and Fourteenth Amendment to defend his rights to bring his boyfriend to a school dance. This was the first case where a youth sued to gain rights that he or she perceived were available to peers but denied to them on the basis of sexual orientation. I am arguing that those who develop and implement safe schools programs would benefit from interrogating the assumptions behind the goals and objectives of such programs, and the types of often individualistic and assimilationist discourses around which the programs are organized. I am suggesting, safer schools, which require the interrogation of privilege and normativity across and amongst identity constructions and educational systems.

Discourses imbedded in safe schools programs

Even as I look at the origins of safe schools, it is important to underscore that the concept of safe schools has multiple meanings in relation to epistemologies, policies and curricula. In the North American context, it has evolved into a catch phrase to encompass all of the policy intended to create diverse climates within schools, encourage inclusive environments (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, 2006), recognize the potential for violent incidence (Day & Golench, 1997; J. G. Dwyer, 1998) and limit bullying, harassment and intimidation within the school environment (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007). In the U.S. context specifically, school safety is a often thought of synonymous to reactions to school shootings and apparent increased violence (K. Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998). Walton (2004) argues that there is a “conspicuous absence of homophobic bullying from safe schools agendas” (p. 25), nor does research on bullying acknowledge sexual orientation or gender identity (Poteat & Espelage, 2005). I am suggesting that homophobia, heteronormativity and gender normativity are conspicuously absent from curricula and reform, as well as, silently regulatory. That is, safe schools programs are able to construct bullying curricula in such a manner as to fold anti-homophobia into it and...
negate an explicit requirement for direct action to alter school climate and/or limit discussion or pedagogies that address heterosexist or homophobic harassment. Safe schools discourse focuses on individual behaviours, subsequent consequences for individuals (Walton, 2004), and individual change in the form of students involved with GSAs and charismatic teachers or administrators.

Anti-bullying programs are at the core of many safe schools programs and offer an useful example of individualism. Such curriculum looks at specific individuals and their tendency to be violent. The programs label the bully as perpetrator and those bullied as victim (never both), rather than focusing on the systemic problems that contribute to development of bully and the assumed superiority of the bully, which often relates to privilege and power. However, homophobic bullying is not the same as all other types of bullying. It is based on perceived deviance from gender/sexual norms, and the perceived superiority of heterosexuality. Folding homophobic and heterosexist bullying into the larger bullying curricula, fosters an erasure of the systemic causes of violence, the systemic perpetuation of privilege, and heteronormativity. Instead, bullying is an individualized concern with individualized solutions. Goldstein, et al (2007) note that “...by individualizing the harassment of queer youth, schools abdicate their responsibility for challenging power structures and culture that privilege heterosexuality over homosexuality” (Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007,185). Further, the focus on the individual perpetuates the notion that problems within schools result from those individuals who do not conform to societal norms, rather than the oppressive dominance of such systemic norms on the construction of the individuals.

Further, the lack of direct discussion and action on homophobia mark the issue as shameful and, thereby render it invisible. While all bullying is painful, the pressures of discrimination, and systemic tolerance of homophobia that LGBTTIQ students face, means that the reason for bullying – that there is something wrong or different about them --is reinforced by teacher silence, media representations and possible community or familial judgment.

The idea of individualism in safe schools policies is not only focused on individual problem youth, be they bullies or bullied. Many safe schools programs and policies also rely on individual educational leaders to develop and implement programs on the school and classroom level. While charismatic leaders are able to accomplish many programmatic changes, what happens when there is no one on site with the desire to develop a program? Or to refute the claim of a paucity of queer students within their schools that, it is argued, renders the programming unnecessary? The lack of specific school board, state or provincial guidelines has the advantage of adaptability to local contexts; however, much is left to individual administrators and the program dies when that administrator moves to her next assignment. When change is left to one or two individuals the possibility of fostering capacity and creating coalitions across communities is lessened.

Gay-Straight Alliances are another component of safe schools relying on individual teachers and students for change. Indeed, GSAs have much to offer students. However, they rely on change in the school to be focused on individual youth which places the responsibility for altering the system and school culture squarely on those who are already in non-dominant positions as well as remove the responsibility for change from the shoulders of school leaders and teachers (MacIntosh, 2007). GSAs are more likely to focus on anti-homophobia (rather than heteronormativity) and receive support as window dressing rather than administratively supported substantive change in school cultures, curricula or pedagogy.

As noted above, safe schools and anti-bullying rhetoric has also become an avenue to introduce anti-homophobia curricula into the schools without naming it as such. The pedagogy of safe schools programs includes prejudice reduction, tolerance, and conflict resolution. The extension of policies that discuss school safety is that the expectation of safety where students can learn and teachers can teach, means a lack of challenge or discomfort. Within this there is an assumption that all conflict is negative. Within this, there is a sense of the utopic that requires an assimilationist, ‘can’t we all just get along discourse’ that rewards similarity and punishes difference and dissent. This assimilative drive filters into pedagogical practices and teacher inculcation where young teachers believe that they should be neutral and conflict in the classroom quashed. Critical discussions of gender norms, the rights of those who are sexual minorities, the systemic reinforcement of heteronormativity will engender discomfort that can be beneficial in altering school/classroom climate and developing thinking young learners.

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Moving forward

The notion of safer schools, for which I argue, is contingent upon on critical interrogations of the spaces where individual action and responsibility intertwine with normativity and systemic change. A first step in this is to acknowledge that individual conflict reduction, violence prevention and generic anti-bullying programs do not address the issues at the multiple levels where homophobia and heteronormativity function. In order to build safer schools, the system would benefit from reading school culture critically, as well as ongoing discussions and analysis of power/privilege by teachers, students and the community as a way to build change across myriad intersecting levels and actors.

Reading school culture critically entails offering teachers, administrators and students and community member multiple entry points and numerous opportunities to analyze school culture, curricula, and pedagogy. This plan takes as its starting point critical and deconstructive readings of individual action, risk and responsibility in relation to gender and sexuality, as well as the interrelations of these characteristics with the systemic of the surrounding communities, and governments. As capacity is built, teaching and learning would spread to classrooms, seminars, assemblies, teacher and administrator meetings, and by example on playgrounds, teacher staff rooms, cafeterias and school quads. By recognizing that change is not linear nor does it look the same for all people, schools or communities, will foster an acknowledgment of difference that may open up of space without prescribed outcomes. By creating scaffolded learning, educators and students can “practice” critical discussions and inquiry.

Another prong of this capacity building plan is ongoing curricular discussions of the role of power/privilege in school culture, pedagogies and curricula both within classrooms, teacher development and community meetings. Normativity relies on the status quo, and ways for local schools to work within its own context may open up avenues to discuss differences in such a way that disagreement can occur, as well as an acceptance of difference. Study groups and opportunities to engage with the issues in a systemic manner foster curriculum development and pedagogical change. Towards this, building relationships between university teacher educators, community leaders and school faculties, as well as the time to engage in such work are key.

The move to the language of safer schools acknowledges that there is no utopic community within which all students will be free of fear and harassment at all times or that each member of the larger civic community agrees what that community ought look, or take as its goals. It is the drive to build a particular set of arenas where discussions occur, programs and policies are fluid, and where students and teachers who exceed the prevailing gender and sexual norms are not in danger. That is, a place where the position of dominancy moves and is reshaped to decentre those whose privilege goes unmarked. This may mean discarding the language of zero tolerance, which often leads to a particular type of silence in the classroom but prevalent harassment when outside earshot of school personnel. Difficult interrogations of dominance and normalcy relies on students and faculty to have the tools, support and desire to address the harassment and heterosexism each time it comes up.

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Doing and Feeling Research in Public: Queer Organizing for Public Education and Justice

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Abstract: Archiving activism for queer educational justice, this article explores three sites of organizing in the United States, and explores the role of public and private feelings in the neoliberal privatization of the public sphere.

We—two queer teacher educators in Chicago—participated in discussions and resistances addressing pressing political issues for educators and communities in the United States. Starting in 2005, we challenged the implementation of military, Department of Defense-run public schools in the Chicago Public Schools System; in 2006, we organized our colleagues to fight the largest national teacher-education accreditation agency’s removal of sexual orientation and social justice from its accreditation standards; and in 2007, we protested our state’s decision to hold a public meeting for teacher educators at a private Christian college, here called Evangelical, that “condemns” homosexuality. While theorizing our participation in these movements for educational justice, an interesting contraction emerged: In the United States, public education is being re-formed through appeals to “private choice” and at the same time select public issues, especially those that address the invisibility and rejection of queers and our lives within education, are devalued by being called private.

The effects on queers of the recasting of institutions and issues as public or private cannot be understood in isolation from struggles for justice and equity by other communities. Framing issues as private is a political act that aims to remove women, people of color, and the disabled - and the bodies and labor of these groups - from economic and political contexts. For example, childcare is considered a private issue, as are maternity benefits, domestic violence, and in-home personal assistance for disabled people. “Personal responsibility” has been offered by everyone from Booker T. Washington to Bill Clinton as the answer to problems - from poverty to illness - experienced by low income Americans of color. While particular lives and experiences are erased as private, other issues are labeled public, but tied to sensibilities and discourses - the free market, in particular - that mask social effects and culpabilities; an example of this is the move to “choice” in public education. Reframing the public sphere through personal responsibility and an imagined private world is a hallmark of contemporary neoliberalism. A “vision of competition, inequality, market ‘discipline,’ public austerity, and ‘law and order’” (Duggan, 2003, p. x), that has particular ramifications for queers and others on the margins. In this shift, queer lives and rights are produced as “confrontational and threatening…and [yet, also] too ridiculous, trivial and inappropriate for [addressing within] public institutions” (Duggan, 2003, p. 40). Acts like touching and kissing, when embodied and enacted by queers in public educational spaces, are construed as wildly disruptive: “flaunting it” as one of us was told by our Associate Dean. Yet, while present in public realms - schools, for example - queer lives are always cast as private. Therefore, public and private form a binary through which queers are erased and oppression is reinforced.

This paper, grounded in activism, documents our participatory research, a research methodology with connections to social justice movements and popular education through which “ordinary” people aim to understand what affects their lives (Park, 2006, p. 83; Lewis, 2006). Through this model, which prioritizes linking our professional work to our quotidian selves, we hope to encourage other scholars to act without waiting for “expertise” or institutional permission. Toward that goal, throughout this paper we archive original texts—letters, flyers, emails, petitions and pledges—that offer evidence of our varied work for change.

An archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity (Halberstam, 2005, 170). In crafting responses to the situations we record here, we devised tactics on the fly, looking for opportunities of the moment. This, de Certeau (1984) suggests, is the defining characteristic of a tactic; it “makes use of the cracks” (37). But these emergent and opportunistic ploys are evanescent. Thus, archiving and sharing the evidence of our tactics of resistance is vital, as it can support the coalescing of an acting public.
Our archiving documents that the privatization of the public sphere requires the production of specific identities. We argue that queer identities and corresponding feelings and affect (externally expressed emotion) are often central to support the privatization of schools. For example, Department of Defense military schools need unruly youth of color to turn into soldiers and they need queers as the reviled and shaming contrast against which those soldiers will be created. “Almost every day of my junior year,” one former JROTC cadet officer candidate reported about his experience with the program in high school, “I was made to do push-ups…I cleaned the commandant’s office, I drank chili pepper-infused water, I ate lunch underneath a table, I had to wear a dress, and I was regularly called ‘stupid,’ ‘maggot,’ ‘faggot’ – all the happy, daily indignities that one had to suffer for the sake of ‘military discipline’” (Wily Filipino, 2003). The establishment of Department of Defense-run public choice schools is an issue for queers, we argue, not because “don’t ask don’t tell” policies restrict the access of queers to full participation in the military, but because these schools require the systematic disparagement of queerness and queer lives, along with damaging conceptions of others, including youth of color. Homonormativity works through produced identities and feelings of shame and fear to remap queer resistance from a focus on social justice to gaining access for select—normal—queers to participate in militarism as patriotism, the free market, domesticity and other forms of a diminished public sphere (Duggan, 2003).

Our work also starts from politically engaging and researching affect, and naming feelings as public and pervasive, rather than private and local. As Feel Tank Chicago points out, politics (including within professions) is a “world of orchestrated feeling” (2008, p. 3). For example, when accused of being unprofessional in a number of contexts, we felt embarrassed and paralyzed, except for a fleeting but panicky urge to prove we were professional. Aiming at “emotional epistemology” (Feel Tank Chicago, 2008, p. 2), or, knowing through (attending to) feelings in this way - thinking of them contextually, as meaningful in social ways - has been a useful focus of our participatory research. These feelings demonstrate how affect is used to regulate not just our field’s definitions of professional and scholarly activities, but many institutions.

In particular we center on the role of shame to regulate the profession. In education, covering is mandated by the norms and “dispositions” circulating around the profession (Yoshino, 2006), but maintained through shame. Shame has two aspects, “painful individuation” and “uncontrollable relationality” (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 37). It isolates the person who has misbehaved, but at the same time pulls observers into an uncomfortable identification with her. Shame acts as a through-line, linking private and public. It isolates, yet also requires a social environment, and the ground of connection is the body. At Evangelical, our public queerness made it harder for the hoping-to-be-invisible queers in the room to stay unacknowledged. Shaming is what is happening when the cadet is called “faggot” (his peers are the unnoted audience). The possibility of shame is what keeps professionals in line, our colleagues judge our “fit” to the profession. Yet, through the lens of queer theory, the experience of shame is useful. It highlights bodies, behaviors, affects and cultures that are non-normative and might otherwise be overlooked or avoided.

Understanding feelings as produced and as productive has been an important analytic strategy for our participatory research. In particular, it has helped us reframe shame—ours and others’—as a political and privatizing tool, marking it as something that happens in and yet is corrosive to the public. An insight from disability studies is useful here: Linton (1998) points out that disability theorizing is not intended to offer “a parable for the forgotten and downtrodden” but rather, it is a “problematizing agent” that points to the need for something different (p. 185). Similarly, our call for a focus on feelings in research is not to encourage a sympathetic response. Instead, attending to feelings can help us see and challenge norms, including of professions and institutions that claim dispassion even as they produce feelings to achieve ends. Further, our feelings indicate openings, if we are paying attention. In this way, feelings can be tactic-triggers.

Archiving and attending to feelings as aspects of participatory research are important ways to generate a public for movement. We have no clear-edged successes to brag about, yet we continue to mobilize ourselves and colleagues; we are in these movements for the long haul. And while there are no recipes for readers, archiving courses invites readers to imagine and innovate other actions. Similarly,
pushing back against the privatizing of feelings by framing them as information in and for a public helps to make the coalescing space that social movements need.

Not only is the messy work of participation what is needed now in education, but chronicling this public work, and the feelings that fuel and can guide it, is research. We invite you to try other tactics that seize on the “crosscuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits in the framework of a system” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 38). We ask that you archive and share this work, as we have done here, to expose the fissures in power that make institutions vulnerable, and build communities of resistance along the way.

References
Gender, bullying, and harassment: Strategies to end sexism and homophobia in schools

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Abstract: This paper will discuss the problem of bullying and harassment in schools that is influenced by gender, as well as the factors that influence teachers’ inconsistent responses to such incidents. This research aims to provide an understanding of this problem in order to improve the success and relevance of education and intervention programs aimed at reducing incidents of bullying and harassment in schools. These findings are based on a systematic review of the literature, analysis of school policies and case law in the United States in Canada, as well as in-depth interviews with six public school teachers in one urban school district in Canada. The author will conclude with recommendations to address this problem through pre-service and in-service teacher education. This is an excerpt of the presentation. For the full paper, please visit the author’s website.

On February 12, 2008, 15 year old Larry King was shot in the computer classroom of his California junior high school by another male student after Larry had asked him to be his valentine. Larry was known in his school not only for being openly gay, but for also wearing high heels, nail polish and make-up. This tragic incident is one of the more recent and extreme examples of why it was important to call attention to concerns about gender, bullying, and harassment. Educators, parents, and youth need more information and resources about how to address forms of bullying and harassment that are influenced by gender. Gender is an important force in shaping behaviors, and informs how we interact with each other and understand ourselves. Unfortunately, the role gender plays in many incidents of bullying and harassment is often overlooked or accepted as normal, which allows the problem to persist. This research intends to change this trend by providing a new lens for understanding bullying and harassment, as well as strategies for ending this phenomenon in schools.

Recent research shows that bullying and harassment are common and prevalent behaviors in secondary schools. In the first study to look at both bullying and sexual harassment simultaneously, researchers found that approximately 52% of students have been bullied at school and 35% have been sexually harassed (Gruber & Fineran, 2008). This study also found that students who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning their sexual orientation experienced more bullying (79%) and sexual harassment (71%) than other students (Gruber & Fineran, 2008). Finally, Gruber & Fineran (2008) concluded that although sexual harassment was less frequent than bullying it had greater impacts on health factors such as: self esteem, mental health, physical health, trauma symptoms and substance abuse. This study is important as it points to the need to address the issues of bullying and harassment separately, so important resources and training time can be allocated to adequately prepare educators to understand and respond appropriately to these different harmful behaviors. Most bullying studies and intervention programs do not explicitly address issues related to gender and sexual orientation which often allows these forms of harassment to persist (Meyer, 2007a).

The differences between bullying, harassment and gendered harassment

Gendered harassment is a term used to describe any behavior that acts to shape and police the boundaries of traditional gender norms: heterosexual masculinity and femininity. It is related to, but different from bullying. Bullying is defined as behavior that repeatedly and over time intentionally inflicts injury on another individual (Olweus, 1993); whereas harassment includes biased behaviors that have a negative impact on the target or the environment (Land, 2003). Although forms of bullying and harassment may overlap, they are different in two important ways. First, bullies intentionally inflict injury, whereas people guilty of harassment may be intentionally or unintentionally creating a hostile climate through their words and actions. Second, since harassment can target a specific individual or a group, such as girls, students with disabilities, or gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people, the impacts of harassing behaviors can be much more widespread. Bullying is targeted at a single individual. Harassment poisons an entire school community. Forms of gendered harassment include: (hetero)sexual harassment, sexual orientation harassment, and harassment for gender non-conformity (or transphobic harassment). These three forms of harassment are interconnected because the harassers’ behaviors

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reinforce expected cultural norms for boys and girls, and punish students who don’t fit the ideals of traditional (heterosexual) gender roles (Larkin, 1994; Martino, 1995; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Renold, 2002; Smith & Smith, 1998; Stein, 1995).

Although physical bullying is often the most obvious form of aggression that is acknowledged and addressed in schools, verbal bullying and harassment are also prevalent and often ignored even though they have been found to be quite damaging to students. Hoover and Juul (1993) found in their study on bullying that repeated verbal attacks by peers are as devastating as infrequent cases of physical abuse. Most bullying policies and interventions are not designed to get at the more persistent and insidious forms of harassment that occur in schools. Bullying and zero-tolerance policies tend to ignore the cultural and societal factors that lead to violence in schools. These policies and related intervention programs also ignore incidents of psychological violence (Walton, 2004).

**Recommendations for change**

Teachers must work within the guidelines of their school policy to address incidents of bullying and harassment. They can also play a key role in initiating policy and climate changes in their school community. Teachers can take these steps by:

a) building alliances with colleagues to create a unified front in responding to bullying and harassment;

b) pursuing opportunities to learn more about how to address gender, bullying, and harassment effectively; and,

c) creating an organized response protocol for your classroom that supports school policy and matches your teaching style.

In order to build alliances, teachers can start by working informally with a small group of colleagues to discuss these issues in their school. By exchanging ideas and expertise you can develop a supportive group of colleagues who can start implementing a more consistent response to bullying and harassment in all areas of the school. Teachers could also approach Department Heads or Vice Principals and ask them to support their initiatives by allocating staff meeting time to discussing school policy and intervention protocols.

Current educators can also pursue opportunities for their own ongoing professional development. As professionals, teachers must recognize their own blind spots and take proactive steps to improve their own understanding of issues that they find challenging. This can be done through reading books and articles, attending community events, and seeking out sessions at teachers’ conferences on these topics. Although much of this is a teacher’s own responsibility, it can only be effective and sustainable with the support of the school. Schools can support this work by paying for conference fees, offering pedagogical development days to teachers to attend workshops of the teachers’ choosing, and creating a culture that values ongoing development in its staff.

Related to issues of professional development are those of work load. The extreme emphasis on “covering material” and preparing for high-stakes exams forces teachers to attempt to teach large amounts of curricular content and ignore student misbehavior and other issues of community and citizenship in the school. One way to address this problem is to create a response protocol to be implemented in the classroom. Whether it is creating a classroom contract, tracking student behaviors in a lesson book, establishing an escalating punishment plan, or structuring a reporting procedure, having a system in place will make it much easier to address these incidents when they occur. For example, I would have students in my classes write a note explaining the incident to give to me at the end of class. I could then pass this on to a parent, administrator, or counselor with my explanation of the events. This reduces the amount of instructional time lost, and prompts students to take responsibility for their actions, as well as giving them the opportunity to explain their version of the event.

Pre-service teacher education programs must also take steps to better prepare educators to address these issues in schools. Elementary, Secondary, and School Leadership programs must address issues of bullying and harassment and school safety, but also teach about gender and sexual diversity and how to create inclusive schools and classrooms. Teaching about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals and families across the curriculum is an important first step to creating schools that will not
tolerate forms of gendered harassment. Pre-service programs must model such lessons and include sample books, films, and lessons to prepare educators to teach about these issues across the lifespan.

**Conclusion**

Gender is a major factor in most incidents of bullying and harassment because it is a powerful force in shaping human behavior. Asking people to think differently about how we understand gender and how it relates to bullying, harassment, sexuality and schooling is often controversial and challenging. Questioning traditional notions of masculinity and femininity is like tearing down the walls of the house you grew up in. These are the constructs we grew up with; the rules we spent our childhoods learning to follow and decode; and the basis on which all of our shared stories are embedded. They are familiar. It is what we know. They are so familiar, that they have become invisible and they are not talked about or re-examined. Although that childhood home can be familiar and comfortable for some, it can also be restricting and suffocating for many. Unfortunately, these familiar walls of gender that define so many of our behaviors and relationships, don’t seem to allow for the range of identities and experiences that exist in our world. These boundaries have been carefully taught and monitored. But in order to make room for everyone, they need to be looked at, questioned and reconstructed.

There is much work to be done. States, provinces and school districts need to write and/or revise laws and policies to explicitly include protections based on gender identity/expression and sexual orientation. Administrators need to initiate a process of school change that starts with updating school-level policies and manuals and educating themselves about these issues. Sexual harassment, sexual orientation harassment, and harassment for gender non-conformity need to be named separately from bullying in all policies and documents in order to effectively end them. By modeling a dedication to these issues, administrators can empower the school staff to be more proactive in addressing gendered harassment.

Teachers and other school staff need to work together to consistently respond to acts of gender-based harassment that they witness. They need to understand the long-term impacts of these negative behaviors, and their responsibilities in ending them. Students and families must also be actively engaged in this process to ensure lasting and meaningful change. This article is just one of many available resources to help parents, teachers, administrators and teacher-educators to take action to reduce gendered harassment in schools. It is not easy work. There will be many obstacles along the way. It is my hope that by providing some resources and guidelines this will empower youth and educators in communities to take a stand against sexism, homophobia, transphobia and heteronormativity in their schools and value and include students and families of all sexual orientations and gender expressions.

**References**


**Thinking beyond “Sexual Orientation”: Uncovering Heteronormative Tendencies in Training Programs within International Development Agencies**

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**Abstract:** Five gay male adult educators were asked to describe what kind of training was provided on sexual identity-difference in their pre-departure orientations prior to leaving to work abroad. Findings indicate that some aid organizations still operate in heteronormative ways, despite adopting “sexual orientation” within their anti-discrimination frameworks.

**Introduction**

The purpose of international development is to structure a transnational flow of Western expertise and financial resources into developing nations, in order to build infrastructure and “upgrade” knowledges and skills. This is facilitated through providing policy support and program delivery in various sectors, such as health, education and/or justice in hopes to reconstruct a more “developed” society (Ment, 2005). To reconstruct a society means to re-train civilians based on current knowledge, attitudes and skills in order to develop a highly functional citizenry on par with the West’s “standards” (Preston & Arthur, 1997). By re-skilling labourers through adult education, in particular, it is argued that developing nations can generate stronger economies to compete in the global market, establish adequate living standards, and incorporate Western tenets of “democracy” in their everyday lives (Kassam, 1987).

For the most part, recent research on the impact of the foreign adult educator points to how the transmission of knowledge is not as clear-cut as imagined by modernist approaches to development. However, social lives, inclusive of prejudices, preferences and behaviours, cannot be ‘checked at the classroom door’ and for some adult educators this manifests as a perceived need for credibility (Brown, Cervero & Johnson-Bailey, 2000). For example, Brown, Cervero & Johnson-Bailey (2000) noted that their study participants, who consisted of black female adult educators, confronted “negative credibility issues and classroom interactions” because of their race and gender when they drew from their personal experiences while teaching. With this mind, the transmission of knowledge from international consultant to the local counterpart has been described as a “culture-bound” process that takes into account individual differences in identity, practices and background between both the adult educator and the learner. Without a harmonious relationship between the educator and learner, learning does not occur, and can evoke negative stereotypes that generate unproductive behaviours (Leach, 1994).

However, the working relationship between the foreign adult educator and local adult learners could become an unstable one if the adult educator’s identity is considered controversial. Since homosexuality is considered controversial in most developing nations (Baird, 2007), I argue that the sexual minority adult educator needs to be adequately prepared by the employer, prior to departure, on issues relating to sexual identity-difference. Such trainings would enable the sexual minority adult educator to determine her or his degree of “outness” to adult learners, what curricula topics might be too risky; and what support systems (if any) are put into place. If there is insufficient training on how a) sexual minorities should respond to questions regarding to sexual orientation, and b) sexuality and gender are understood in the host nation, then sexual minorities could find themselves urgently trying to reconstruct their identity in the classroom. In turn, reconstructing a new sexual identity and becoming hyper-aware of what could be included in curricula could impact teaching practices, educator-learner relationships, and overall job satisfaction, all of which are crucial elements to create a healthy adult learning scenario.

**Project Background**

The topic of this paper is to research what kind of pre-departure training foreign gay male adult educators are receiving prior to arriving to work in a developing country. To investigate this research, I conducted a preliminary study whereby I interviewed five gay male adult educators who were sent to work in Kosovo for at least three months to teach, advise, mentor, or direct Kosovar adults on “improved” ways of working in their respective professions. I asked them to describe how issues relating to sexual identity-difference were dealt with in their pre-departure orientations. Three of these study participants
were American, one participant was Dutch, and one was Brazilian. Each of the study participants were adult educators who worked in the fields of population health, social work, communications, customs, and military, and worked for various governmental and non-governmental aid agencies. I chose Kosovo because I worked there for two years as a teacher educator; and therefore could connect to my participants on a deeper level.

I conducted my interviews via email or phone. Whenever possible, I used a web cam to have a videoconference in order to simulate a “face-to-face” encounter as much as possible. As a Canadian gay male adult educator who has worked in Kosovo, I wanted to build on my established rapport with the participants in order to ensure validity, criticality and rigour in the research (Patton, 2002). The research question which grounds this work is: What (if any) sexual identity training do foreign gay male adult educators receive in order to assist them with, and possibly shape, their assignment to Kosovo?

Data Findings

Absence of Sexuality

First, none of the research participants revealed that they received any kind of training on sexual identity-difference prior to departure for Kosovo. In fact, any reference to sexuality was made within a heterosexual context. For example, one participant shared, “it was actually assumed that I was heterosexual, since they talked about my wife and my family, and that they should not travel to that area. So it was assumed that I was not homosexual.” In another example, one participant attended safer sex training sessions that did not contain any reference to safer sex information for same-sex sexual encounters. Further, two participants reported that no training was received at all; that they were simply “air-dropped” into Kosovo, which meant that they had to fend for themselves when trying to live and work in Kosovo. The absence of sexuality-difference in these particular training sessions suggests a practice of exclusion within development agencies. These participants were expected to fit uniformly into the project culture, and “figure out” for themselves how to meet other gay men, navigate their sexual identity in their classroom, and feel “normal” in a place where their sexuality is considered forbidden.

Self-Training

Second, there is an element of “self-training” that emerged in the data. By “self-training” I mean that study participants needed to inform themselves on how to navigate their identity in the classroom and develop their own support systems. Such tactics include being discreet at work, avoiding topics that relate to sexual identity, not reacting to homophobic rants, and seeking out other foreign gay professionals through social networks or websites. One participant shared, “I had one conversation with someone from Atlanta who said that he was researching gay relationships in Albania in the middle-ages, and the history of early-marriage contracts between males in the middle-ages Albania.” In each instance, participants evoked the same tactics they used when they were younger and in the “closet.” One participant shared, “I could put on the heterosexual face. But yet again, it was very easy for me to find and live in the homosexual sub-culture that exists in Kosovo. So, I prepared myself by talking to friends who have lived there, and lived that sub-cultural life of Kosovar society, which exists.”

There was a shared history among these five participants. When they moved to Kosovo, they were reminded about their earlier experiences with homophobia in their home countries and decidedly went “back into the closet” in order to work through the initial period of adjustment, until they were able to locate support. In their home countries, there were moments where these gay male adult educators could not “come out” at work, bring their partner to social events, or relate life experiences in order to enrich curricula. Consequently, these five participants were unsurprised that their employer would not take their dissident lives into consideration. While they now felt protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation at home, their employment on foreign soil sets forth a new set of rules around being out at work. Mohanty (1986) warns that the desire to overlook is not cognitive, but performative in nature. To overlook important issues means “to acknowledge one’s own implication in the information” (Mohanty, 1986, p. 155). In this sense, addressing issues related to homophobia and heterosexism can be considered too radical of a departure from the aid agency’s own positioning, which can effectively stifle the foreign gay male adult educator’s success in places like Kosovo. What I mean is that aid agencies may fail to recognize the importance of introducing sexual difference when delivering pre-departure training because
such topics may jeopardize the aid agency’s reputation abroad. Yet, without proper training and supportive systems in place, these educators could end up wrongfully navigating their identities, practices and knowledges on their own, which could result in greater difficulties.

**Reconstructing “Sexual Orientation”**

This small study suggests that training on sexual identity-difference has taken a backseat in pre-departure training. Additionally, some employers fail to understand the risky situations gay male adult educators work in. While “sexual orientation” has been widely included within certain human rights charters in Western organizations, I argue that “sexual orientation” continues to be a guarded term that some employers cautiously engage. Based on what was revealed in the study, some employers are willing to accept and protect sexual minorities to a certain degree, but possess shortcomings when respecting “sexual orientation” might place the organization in a particular quandary. Sexual minorities, then, are relegated back to the closet when organizations fail to address shortcomings such as heteronormativity in the workplace. With this in mind, such exclusionary practices could possibly be “screening out” gay men from enjoying opportunities afforded elsewhere. For if gay men were to “rock the boat” by seeking information about sexuality differences in Kosovo, or come out in the workplace while living abroad, for example, then they could lose out on professional development opportunities or promotions. To work in foreign countries is a challenging endeavour, and some gay male adult educators might not want to take the risk to lose crucial organizational support if they were to encourage the employer to consider sexual identity-difference within their field operations. Therefore, to respect “sexual orientation” then takes on a new meaning that is defined by the employer and not by sexual minority employees. As one participant poignantly shared,

> It’s important to make people realize that discrimination and bad behaviour towards colleagues should not be tolerated and accepted and go unpunished. A specific briefing at the beginning of the mission work would be a good start. Then make the staff counselor available to discuss any issues and bad behaviour that might arise. Such training could be done as a mandatory online tool related to other behavioral topics covered in staff development training programmes. The important thing is that staff GLBT feels that they are looked after and protected from any sort of discrimination and bad behaviour. This approach may improve the situation in the work place.

**Concluding Thoughts**

This preliminary study was about examining how sexual identity is taken up in pre-departure orientations for five gay men who traveled to Kosovo to work as adult educators. Although greater research into this topic is needed, initial findings suggest that issues relating to sexual identity-difference are being excluded within pre-departure orientations, which places gay male adult educators who work abroad in precarious situations. As a result, gay male adult educators must cautiously navigate their sexual identity on their own and without much support from their employer.

**References**


Gender and Sexual Diversity as Cultural Identity in Health and Social Policy

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Abstract: The queer movement in Canada, the UK, and the USA has developed a distinct cultural identity that warrants a named category in health and social service policy to effectively address their unique needs. A critical analysis reveals inconsistencies regarding human rights legislation, professional ethics, education and training.

Queerness and Cultural Identity

Influenced by the events of Stonewall in 1969, the queer movement has developed and evolved over the past 40 years in North America and beyond. Part of its development and evolution has involved creating an identity, with its associated powerful act of coming out, and defining this identity by means of a queer sensibility. In fact much of this was already underway in the century prior to Stonewall (Bronski, 1984). For the queer movement, the figurative nucleus is built around the sexual orientations and sexual identities that fall outside the normative concept of heterosexuality. Even with respect to the diversity found within queerdom, this shared commonality has created a group force. What Potter (1996) would claim as a social movement.

Yet the restrictions that arise from constructed categorized collectives pose conflictual problems with the diverse fluid personal identities people embody. Some warn of the risks involved in categorization, such as the creation and sustenance of stereotypes, shifts in focus from representations to repertoires and group categories misrepresenting numerous group affiliations held by individuals (Francis, 1998; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). This includes multiple personal identities held by individuals from the perspectives of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality (DeCastell and Bryson, 1998), or the insularity that can develop in the inward focus of community development, at the cost of connecting with broader society (Altman, 1987). Others differentiate between collective and individual identity and their respective pragmatic pursuits. Thus, it is acknowledged that although identity can be limiting as an organizing principle, it nevertheless has a practical role in addressing a movement’s needs (Cain, 1998), such as mobilizing for strategic purposes (Butler, 1991). “When talking about the system, the institution, we need a unitary concept; but when talking about identities, practices and experiences we can afford to – indeed must – address diversity” (Jackson, 2003, p. 72). This is premised on a concern about macro-level, hierarchical, institutionalized heterosexuality, which Jackson (2003) feels radicalism is not addressing. The distinction between personal and collective identity is not to undermine their interrelationship, particularly the influence of the former on the latter. Weeks (2003) argues that identity is not fixed, but always in flux. Yet an acknowledged and identifiable identity is required for radical change.

The Structuring of Health and Social Policy: The Obfuscation of Queer Populations

In the absence of a homonegative focus is absence in and of itself. An absence of conscious thought regarding the existence of queer populations such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their particular and specified needs. This absence can be considered an aspect of heterosexism and cisgenderism, as the unquestioned normative nature of heterosexuality and gender binary defines the building blocks of social structures. Peel (2001) refers to the former as ‘mundane heterosexism’ that is ever present in everyday life, beguiling and undetected even by the well-intentioned (Hill, 1995). Absence itself is communicated by the recognition of the non-existence of an entity. Language in particular is a means by which the existence of queer populations can be determined, via an examination of social policies that support social structures. The powerful role of language in social policy can serve to maintain political perspectives, as well as be susceptible to change through recognition of omissions (Hoagland, 1988). Critical discourse analysis provides the opportunity to study social policy in text as to whether or not the concept of sexuality and gender identity is included therein. If so, normalized (read acceptable) heterosexuality and traditional gender roles are assumed, whereas other (read unacceptable) sexualities tend to be regulated (Carabine, 1996, 1998) or ostracized for the gender nonconformism. Once again, it is here that heterosexism and cisgenderism is prominent for it encompasses the broader structural and institutional elements of society.

Queer Issues in the Study of Education and Culture
Human Rights, Ethics, Education and Training

National legislative human rights protections, whether implicit (UK), explicit (Canada), or absent (USA) had little if any impact on recognition of queer populations in health and social service policy. The absence of legislative recognition was replicated in US policy. Whereas such recognition of human rights protections inclusive of services (health and social) did not translate in Canadian and British health and social service policy (Mulé, 2007). Although most codes of ethics of health and social service professionals (physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses and social workers) are inclusive of ‘sexual orientation’, associated formal education and training was highly uneven at best, if at all (Mulé, 2004, 2006). The concept of ‘gender identity’ is simply not captured in codes of ethics and rarely discussed in curricula. Human rights legislation, professional ethics, education and training are formal tenets that contribute to and inform the development of health care and social service policy. Yet queer populations have been absented due to a heteronormative infrastructure that either disappears or provides surface inclusion, but lacks substantiated recognition and infusion (Mulé, 2005).

Implications

Although personal/collective identities may be conflictual, they are not necessarily dichotomous, but rather dialectical in their influence on one another. Thus, it is the very existence of a collective identity, influenced by multi-personal identities and vice versa that challenge conventional social structures. Inclusion of ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity’ in social policy, with the ultimate goal of infusion of diverse sexualities and genders in same, poses challenges. This is apparent with bureaucracies that undertake a homonegative focus on conduct (behaviour) over orientation (identity) as seen with the HIV/AIDS issue. This effectively informs public policy (Russell and Bohan, 1999). Language in public policy contributes to how perceptions of merit, status, authority, deviance and causations of social problems are structured (Edelman, 1977). Also, a politically efficacious approach to policy development and implementation often overrides evidence-based issues provided by the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities that could contribute to policy design and impact (Omoto, 1999). Implications regarding the absence of recognition, impact negatively on directives, funding and programming in mainstream and specialized health and social services to queer communities and those who serve them.

Conclusion

Appropriate recognition of queer people in Canada, the UK, and the USA in health and social service policy is warranted given their distinct cultural identity and more importantly to effectively address their unique needs. A critical analysis of contemporary precepts and concepts guiding health and social policy exposes the lack of recognition of queer populations. Inconsistencies are revealed regarding human rights legislation, professional ethics, education and training. Unsubstantiated inclusion or outright omission of these populations in policy seriously implicates queer communities, service providers and the latter’s ability to provide accessible, equitable, and sensitive services. Acknowledgement of a queer sensibility, and associated accountable ethical responsibilities, would contribute greatly to a more inclusive form of cultural capacity.

References


False Liberation as a Modern Tool for Repression of Sexual Minorities

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Abstract: HBO’s “The Sopranos”, Showcase’s “Queer as Folk”, and Giuseppe Povia’s new song “Luca era gay” (Luca was gay) have all contributed to the widespread polemics and polarized debates among organizations that believed the portrayals of minorities were not true-to-life. Nearly four decades have passed since the American Psychiatric Association officially declared that homosexuality is not an illness or a disorder. Yet, the majority of homosexual individuals in the world are still not considered equal within their personal and professional spheres. The exploitation of the gay communities in so-called democratic countries like Italy, Canada, and the United States has not happened accidently, but as part of an ideology which seeks to marginalize a vulnerable group, via the usual search for power in capitalist states and radical Christian sects.

History

It can be perplexing to understand beliefs that use oppression’s eternal existence as a justification to eliminate the seriousness of its problematic nature. Oppression has always existed, but today it is significantly more difficult to identify subjugation. It is interesting that from 1533 to 1861 in England, like in many other countries at that time, sodomy was illegal but homosexuality itself was not (Nardi, 1998). This, of course, is no different than the stance which the Vatican maintains today: Having homosexual instincts is not wrong, acting upon them is. Here, the historical framework is a religious culture where there existed a need to protect the values of a traditional family.

In the fifteenth century, the Signori di Notte in Venezia and the Uffiziali di Notte in Firenze would monitor dark areas at night punishing those they caught engaging in homosexual activities (Nardi, 1998). The Renaissance would soon give birth to a live and let live attitude, even if homosexuality was still considered to be a medical condition and not something perfectly natural. The definitive roots of a tolerant behaviour towards gays who, nevertheless, had to lead a very discreet repressed lifestyle, are not clear, but in Italy can be witnessed during the 17th and 18th centuries (Nardi, 1998). These restrictions naturally lead to a very repressive Victorian period which Foucault (1990/1976) refers to as the guiding regime of “restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality” (p.3); where the only untamed expressions outside the norm quickly become associated with prostitution, clandestine and coded discourse.

In the 21st century, it seems like little has changed throughout the long saga of oppression: gay men today must still encounter situations which silence them; coded discourse having been replaced by the television and computer screens. The positive movements we witness exist within terms of an economic and political infrastructure. In 1982, the space for the first ARCI Gay office, an organization dedicated to civil and legislative equality, was donated by the city of Bologna. The first protest for gay rights had been held a whole decade earlier in Rome’s Campo dei Fiori. In 1992, the city of Rome donated space for OMPO, the organization dedicated to political movements. Then in 1994, Italy’s first Pride parade was held in Rome with the support of the mayor at that time (Nardi, 1998).

In Italy there are no predominantly gay communities like those in Berlin, Sydney, New York, or Montreal; though Rome has recently been developing a summer gay village dedicated to large music festivals. The continuation of the pride celebrations which change city from year to year, and the increase in stores, bars, and clubs which cater to gay clients, demonstrates the beginning of a trend which will influence future retail expansion. Referring to sexual identity, Dufour (2008) says, “It is in the market’s objective interest to make identities flexible and precarious” (p. 147). The post-modern mentality means that everything is possible. In practice, if everything is possible, even love then represents something to obtain and overtake, not a concept which stimulates us to live moral ethical lives. Dufour (2008) also points out that even though the market for love may be out of style, love for the opposite sex is still the acceptable model to follow. Suzzi (2002) depicts this shift in market by expressing how young people prefer to communicate via internet and sms, avoiding I love you in person; always concentrating on an image, the first kiss is no longer done in private - instead in a club or a piazza (Suzzi, 2002). Therefore, the technological market has even facilitated the idea of love; romantic courting or genuine flirtation.

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collapsing, communication along with it. The future is uncertain in the sense that we have managed to confuse human rights with the narcissistic pursuit of aesthetics and the great will to live the life. Today the post-modern sentiment means falling easily into the territory of false liberation.

**Politics and the Church**

We must consider if political and ecclesiastical bodies seek to control not only the body, but the mind of citizens, as well. Why do we so often allow a fear of sin to guide our moral conscious while simultaneously identifying capitalism as the root of exploitative social practice? One of the problems is that many sources depicting the negatives of capitalism also try and incorporate elements of this system into the particular community of interest, rather than abandoning political notions altogether to use social promotion in creating an understanding of mistaken ideologies which, perhaps, can be transformed through dialogue. Gay villages and ethnic ghettos are examples of cultivating communities which can have a strong effect on the economy and aid the government strategies at play. On the other hand, they provide a sense of security, friendship, and voluntary relationships; positive elements to communities with large gay populations (Nardi, 1998). But the possibility of living in peace, without fear, while initiating transgressive discourse on sexuality - criticizing the government – is questionable.

An American film “Hate Crime” develops the conflict between a radical church and one based on Christ’s message of love. Trey and Robbie’s new neighbour, Chris Boyd, is the son of a local pastor. Chris, a repressed homosexual, cannot tolerate his neighbours. His authoritarian father firmly believes that sodomites go to hell. Learning that his son’s neighbours are a same-sex couple, Pastor Boyd decides to kill Trey, convinced that God made him do it. An oblivious Mrs. Boyd gives her condolences to Mrs. McCoy, but is only concerned about protecting her image and the reputation of her son who has been accused of the murder.

In a less dramatic narrative, a recent article in Il Manifesto explains how the Vatican once again has stuck its nose in the politics of Italy, this time rejecting the UN’s Declaration on decriminalizing homosexuality. Mancuso (2008) explains how the real Christian message has gone astray long ago with the Vatican, as it aligns itself even with the worst regimes in a heretical history of domination and power rather than spiritual guidance. In Italy, gay identity alone is already a political expression of sorts, not something one lives freely with. Therefore, it is not so easy to organize movements which include both gays and their allies, because he risk of contaminating privacy - the only way to live a truly fruitful life - is all too high in another so-called democratic country.

**Identity**

The manipulation of the government, and the influence of the church, continue to be diffused in the lives of marginalized peoples who only want to live with integrity while partaking in democracy. However, in many countries, especially those where liberation is already spoken of in past tense, a strong hold over the identity of citizens has been achieved. Even gay festivals, which seem to be liberating events, risk illuminating certain aspects of gay culture, while ignoring the real diversity of voices found within a community. In addition, many writers choose their subjects according to a market theory. Mazzini (2008), a journalist and novelist of coming out literature, explains that we must follow the age of consent laws which are imposed. Fortunately or not, in Italy these laws do not distinguish between heterosexual or homosexual acts. He goes beyond the legal reference, however, to develop an argument that youth need to express their feelings when they are attracted to older men, even if this behaviour is not respected today like it was in some classical culture (Mazzini, 2008). The fetish of young lovers, therefore, is just another example of a product which can be sold. Cinema and television help the economic process to transform the gay movement into something consumable, like the growth of gay entertainment and gay tourism.

Many films function to annul a serious (transgressive) discussions on homosexuality. For example, “Mambo Italiano” uses stereotypes to describe the obstacles of being gay in an Italian-Canadian community. This movie fails to create a point of departure for gay Italians because its technique is a heavy exaggeration of all situations, which does not create a cathartic element for those who may really be living the life of protagonists Angelo and Gino. At least a film like “Arisan!” manages to analyze the conflict between sexuality and culture. In this case, that of Indonesia. The film does not depend on stereotypes which often limit the potential for dialogue; instead comments on those characteristics which
can brand someone, opening up a dialogue on the parallels and differences of the gay experience across various cultural communities.

With television, the presence of screens becomes an even more intimate element in our lives. Shows like “The Sopranos” and “Queer as Folk”, despite receiving reactions of concern against ultra-graphic portrayals of sexuality (and violence), actually come much closer to a polyphonic contextual reality, via metaphor, by avoiding the ambiguous plague of neutral narrative utilized by conservative government or church bodies. With the former, it would be easy to reduce the narrative down to criminal activity associated with honour and family. Each element, however – physical or linguistic – is actually a symbol of something greater. When Tony dreams of being a centaur, it is not just myth, but represents an obsession with power and control. The latter, exposes us to a family of intergenerational sexual minority characters whose experiences range from a middle-aged HIV positive male’s quest for health and happiness, to the discovery of repressed expressions of love during the Second World War. Needless to say, in a world of instant media acquisition, fun can sometimes become the sole outlet, but “Queer as Folk” proves that entertainment can be educational too. Today, internet has, without a doubt, helped to facilitate a degrading process, which is fragmenting more effective necessary forms of communication.

In January 2009, polemics began to emerge on major Italian talk shows, regarding a song by popular artist Povia, scheduled to be performed at the San Remo Musical Festival in February 2009. Before the official release, a parody magically surfaced online. Post-festival discussions would reveal a dialogue in many countries worldwide regarding the meaning of the lyrics. Not surprisingly, the only thing not brought to the forefront of the debate is the intent of the singer-songwriter or the societal implications of his song. We cannot dismiss the English translation of the title as not being lyrical enough as in its Italian form. Era is simply the imperfect form of the verb to be which implies that this phase lasted for a period of time in the past. If the singer-songwriter is not intentionally creating fuss, and in fact has nothing against homosexuals, then why not call the song “Luca pensava che fosse gay,” i.e., Luca thought he was gay, avoid all the ambiguity and save everyone a lot of questions. But of course, this would not create as much press. Ambiguity is a venerable strategy that ensures that we stay off track when it comes to understanding the actuality of differences among us.

What Remains

Necessity has been miscoded by technology, leading to a synthesis of authentic representation. Individualism is increasingly based on capitalist values, hidden behind beautiful pixelated images and attempts to impose a certain identity on citizens. Just because everyone’s talking about homosexuality in mainstream media, does not mean that we are combating prejudice. Talking about what we see in television, film, and online is the only way to positively reverse the effects of a culture which tends to accept everything it sees on screen, developing entire ideologies based on something that has never been fully explored. If, as a society, we have arrived at the point where we can no longer understand how media apparatuses are read and interpreted, it is possible to say that we are not processing irony and metaphor; we have difficulty separating fiction from reality; and finally, we must seriously question the role of representation. Perhaps liberation has become a spectacle of its own.

References

Queering Manitoba’s Ivory Towers – Student Activism and Participation are Critical in Advancing Equity in Social Work Education

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Abstract: Student advocacy, activism and participation are critical in advancing LGBTQ interests in post-secondary education. A multi-faceted approach of “ally activism and advocacy”, strategic use of institutional resources, developing expert knowledge, and dogged faith are required. Here, the author outlines her approach and reviews shared experiences working for queer inclusion.

Activism is Informed by the Everyday

Social action for social change arises out of everyday experiences and practices in fighting oppression (Conway, 2004). Each person gets many chances to address personal, interpersonal, structural and systemic inequities (Passante, 2009). One may do this visibly, with fervor against “the system”, or quietly, steadfastly, from within. We may advocate as individuals or group members - perhaps in solidarity with other groups. We may not consider ourselves part of a movement. That said, dealing with specific concerns that we encounter in our lives as particular people provides an opportunity for working towards positive social change.

Regnier speaks of how Aboriginal Anti-Racist pedagogy has developed out of real lived struggles against racism. He relates Canadian Aboriginal activist experiences to Freire’s assertion that people fight for a better way of being (in Regnier, 1995). I believe this speaks to the relationship between identity, experience, reflection, and action, and builds on Freire’s concept of praxis (1970). When we think about the work LGBTQ and their allies do everyday to fight against heterosexism and homophobia and for inclusion of queer interests, concerns, and healthy representation, it is easy to see how people working in the education system have a very important role to play in this movement towards queer justice and inclusion.

Identity-Based Social Action Movements

“Knowledge from the perspective of the marginal reveals the knowledge claims of the powerful not as universal, neutral and objective but as specific, permeated by political interests and informed by particular social locations” (Conway 2004, p. 62).

We must use the knowledges brought forth from the margins (see also hooks, 1984) to inform our work. The politics of social movements compel us to question dominant discourses of universalism, uniformity, and standardization (in education and social work, for example). Advocates for transgender rights, for instance, have been seeking basic protections through policy development and legislative reform (NAWL, 2003). In this way, the knowledges brought forth by identity-based movements bring us all toward an appreciation for particularity and diversity (Fairn herising, 2005), balancing both individual and group needs (Rice and Prince, 2003), and asserting that for equality to occur, we must develop an appreciation for the impact and nuances of difference (NAWL, 2003). We need us all (Passante, 2009).

As a graduate student in social work in Manitoba, I have had the opportunity to participate in Faculty committees and undertake initiatives advancing queer visibility and equity. I believe a review of these undertakings offers lessons for students in other sites. Attempting to do this work over time, I have learned that social justice work requires a multi-faceted approach – advancing equity interests and concerns across a number of levels.

A Multi-Faceted Approach to Queer Inclusion and Equity

Strategic Use of Institutional Resources

This section sets the stage for the others. In any setting, we need to know what we are working with, realistically assessing resources - including people and their strengths- as well as structures, formal policies, informal practices, plus the exceptions like loopholes, initiatives, and one-time grants that allow for possibility. At the University of Manitoba, the Faculty of Social Work has adopted an Equity Plan (one of few across the country in my discipline). The plan includes a comprehensive strategy for advancing
equity across areas which include curriculum; recruitment, hiring, and retention of Faculty; and student admissions and support. LGBTTQ persons are included in the equity plan and for the purposes of this discussion, this plan has been a foundational document upon which other equity work can flow.

For instance, BSW admissions have been changed (for the upcoming 09-10 year) to include LGBTTQ as an equity category. This is a direct result of the advocacy done by myself and a colleague, Chad Smith, in keeping LGBTTQ on the table and calling upon community stakeholders to write letters of support for its inclusion as an equity category.

Further, Chad and myself were both working as counsellors in University-affiliated Counselling Centres. We submitted an application for an Innovation Fund. The fund exists to support the development and offering of new summer courses. Of course, it targets existing Faculty (not Master’s students employed with the University). The loophole was that as employees of the University, we were able to apply for the funds. We spoke with Faculty committee representatives to get formal approval for course inclusion as a 4000 level special-topics class, entitled “Sexual and Gender Minority Issues in Policy and Practice”. We created and taught the course twice – once on our main campus and once on our Inner City Campus. It is the only course currently offered on sexual and gender diversity in our Faculty.

Developing Expert Knowledge in the Field

To address equity issues with firmness, conviction, and clarity, we need to know our material and our audience to advocate with (and against) the best. Having an interest in sexual and gender minority issues has required that I learn across disciplines. As much as I am not a fan of the word expert, I know that my academic and first-hand knowledge of LGBTTQ development, culture, interests, concerns and (better) practice approaches makes me an expert in my discipline. I bring all of that with me in my social work practice, as I study, teach, and act as a community worker or committee rep.

As well, not all experience needs to be professional or academic. The unpaid work we do can directly provide the opportunity to develop priceless expertise. I volunteered for 7 years at the Rainbow Resource Centre, our local long-standing but small grassroots organization. I was a Board Member, worked with others to do fundraising events coordination; supervised social work students and initiatives; sat on program development and evaluation committees; met with provincial government reps to advocate for operational funding; trained short-term counselling volunteers; counselled at the drop-in; facilitated workshops on anti-homophobia education; and acted as a consultant for professionals working in the public school system with questions related to working with queer youth. In these many roles, I learned personally as well as gained superior social work experience directly related to working in the LGBTTQ community.

Dogged Faith and Determination

As an approach in life, and as a coping strategy, I need to believe that individual and collective actions have an impact on the whole. I know that change is incremental, and structural change requires an approach advancing that change on a variety of levels concurrently. I consider my part an important part, and participate ardently to make that small part happen (Passante, 2009). I know that I enjoy the effects of many other peoples’ ‘small’ contributions.

There was a time when I was a burning-out social worker. I was feeling our collective wounds deeply. The effect on my spirit was a sense of hopelessness. There was a man I worked with at the time, John Schellenberg of Village Clinic (serving PHAs). He and I volunteered on the Street Outreach project, handing out snacks, safer sex supplies, needles and health information to men working in the sex trade. I commented to him about how I wished at the time that I could be as fierce and committed as him in articulating my politics. He said something like: we need all of us working in each of our ways to fight for what we believe in. I have held onto John’s lesson and try to share it with others. Each of us, in our own way, needs to make sense of how to speak up, advocate for queer-positive change, and do our part, however “small” our insecurities may make it seem. In that, we need like-minded folks to support and gain support from in those moments that feel hopeless.

Ally Activism and Advocacy

There are many students and Faculty interested in advancing equity at the University of Manitoba. That said, the structures that bind us also limit the progress that may be made. Connecting with
like-minded others has been imperative in advancing equity concerns for all (including sexual and gender minorities, women, people living with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples, immigrants and refugees, and visible minorities).

On U of M’s campus, we have the “Identifying Allies, A Safe Space Project”. This is an anti-homophobia education project for staff and students on campus designed by my colleagues Chad Smith and Lisa Seymour to address concerns about climate for sexual and gender minorities. Chad is a social worker, counsellor and student supervisor at the Men’s Resource Centre, a Social Work affiliated training centre. Lisa Seymour works at the Student Counselling and Career Centre, another University-based counselling Centre.

Chad had heard about queer ally projects operating on other campuses across the country. Lisa Seymour worked with him and Equity Services (again by using institutional resources strategically) to develop the Identifying Allies Project. At the time, Chad was a student that had worked as a front-desk person at the Counselling Centre. When Chad did his Social Work field placement, he wanted to have the experience of writing a funding proposal. He did his placement at the Rainbow Resource Centre; where I was his supervisor. We identified what needed to happen for Chad to gain that experience.

Chad facilitated focus groups in the community, completed a lit review, initiated the campus partnerships required, and wrote a proposal requesting funds from the Department of Justice (Community Mobilization). The Identifying Allies project received almost $50,000 and has since trained hundreds of allies. From the start Chad and Lisa emphasized the importance of connecting with others and across oppressions to address social justice. The project seeks to create a community (a critical mass) of folks committed to being allies.

**Conclusion: Working Together**

I do see myself as part of a movement - towards greater awareness, education, and acceptance of sexual and gender minority interests and concerns. I am fueled by the work others do and inspired by their faith that the work we do matters. I need allies and our collective energy to feel hopeful. Where I am privileged, I can act as an ally for other groups addressing equity concerns. In turn, I need straight allies to stand up against heterosexism. In my experience, the relationships among members representing equity groups have been instrumental in collectively moving social justice work forward in the Faculty of Social Work, at the University of Manitoba.

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Abstract: Queer theory has largely been concerned with disciplinary practices that seek to confine subjects to specific spaces and tasks. This paper considers the ongoing shift from discipline to control by offering new ways to think about life’s virtual productivities through the intersection of knowledge economics and biotechnological innovations.

A significant amount of scholarly and activist work has led to the emergence of queer theory in the early nineties. Since then, queer theories have largely been concerned with disciplinary techniques/technologies that subjugate bodies by confining them to specific spaces and tasks. These movements have for the most part been fueled by Foucauldian analyses interested in the transition from humans to subjects. We see this clearly in the vast amount of literature focused on identity politics that primarily seeks to expose the ways in which bodies become intelligible through identity norms.

Foucault’s first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978) has been central to such theorizations where *scientia sexualis* provides a framework for thinking about the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of identity formation. The confession has specifically become a central lens that can account for how bodies confess themselves as identity-subjects in order to circulate “successfully” in social spaces. Moreover, such readings highlight how internal “truths” are productions of political life where subjects must confess themselves to experts. Panopticism, as outlined in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), has concurrently influenced these analyses where subjects are self-disciplined through its visible and unverifiable characteristics.

A concern with the transition from humans to subjects is certainly not divorced from educational practices and many queer theorizations have adopted Foucauldian notions of power to reconceptualize education itself. We see this in the confessions of educational life where, for example, students confess through identity norms that are deeply rooted in heteronormativity and how academic bodies confess coherent scholarly identities in order to circulate within academic disciplines. Panopticism is also present in educational spaces that are organized to ensure self-obedience through continuous observation. Tenure review processes, course evaluations, publication procedures, and conference presentations are a few examples of the hierarchical observations, normalizing judgments, and examinations that discipline bodies as academic subjects in a higher educational context. Whether it is the normative developmental models of early childhood education or the subjugating practices of higher education outlined above, a concern with how subjects are formed through individualizing practices and how they are normalized through disciplinary discourses has for the most part influenced the intersection of queer and education. A common thread throughout these projects is an interest in “the subject” and more generally subjectivity, discourse, and language. There are, of course, many ways in which these analyses have played out and it would be impossible and inappropriate to account for such developments in this limited space. My intention is not to paint these important advancements with a single discursive brush stroke, nor is it to discount their contributions. I want to instead focus on what unites them — disciplinary practices — so as to offer new ways to think about the intersection of queer theory and education by rethinking queer’s relationship to subjectivity.

At the heart of this paper is the ongoing shift from Foucauldian disciplinary societies to Deleuzian control societies. I argue that the global complexities of contemporary neoliberal capitalism are creating new ways to think about the productions and negotiations of bodies where life itself is no longer exclusively disciplinary. Rather than focusing on how subjects are produced through discourse and how they function through representations, significations, and identifications, this paper seeks to examine the ways in which life is directed towards the future through virtual productivities that control bodies (rather than discipline them) through such mechanisms as knowledge, information, and communication. I argue that the subjugated transition from humans to subjects is becoming deterritorialized as a result of the vast speed of contemporary politics that no longer confine bodies to specific spaces and tasks. For example, rather than being concerned with how student-subjects are produced through fixed classroom spaces,
standardized curricula, and normative educational ideals, this paper will expose how new life forms are produced through the virtual productivities of knowledge economics and biotechnological innovations of which educational research is clearly a part of. It is my hope that such an analysis can reinvigorate queer studies and theories by paying tribute to the ways in which life is produced in the future rather than the present.

The shift from discipline to control is ongoing: it is not that control societies have replaced disciplinary societies but that control mechanisms emerge out of the incapacities and inefficiencies of disciplinary practices. In disciplinary societies subjects are differentiated through specific spaces and tasks and are individualized through such measures. For instance, the subject is individualized through educational practices as a student and professional practices as a worker. Dividualization replaces individualization in control societies, where subjects are not differentiated amongst each other but within themselves. For example, the worker-subject and student-subject becomes a worker-student-subject, respectively. As Deleuze states, “In disciplinary societies you were always starting all over again…while in control societies you never finish anything” (1995, p.179). The dividualizations of control societies reflect the desire for continuous flows of production that exemplify neoliberal capitalism and globalization. Production, in control societies, is quite different from production in disciplinary societies. Fixed institutions and products are replaced with interconnecting networks and production is replaced with metaproduction: the purchasing of raw materials and the selling of finished products is replaced with the selling of services and the buying of activities (p.181). The metaproductions of control societies speak to the ways in which life is becoming deterritorialized.

As the title of this paper suggests, life is becoming more rhizomatic than arborescent. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) philosophize the important difference between arborescence and rhizomes — a distinction that I consider to be key to the shift from discipline to control, respectively — as follows. A tree symbolizes arborescence where every part of a tree is always and only in relation to the central root. In theory, this suggests that all movement is in relation to a central core. I see this to be how disciplinary societies function whether it is a subject, a factory, or an academic discipline. Grass functions quite differently: it is rhizomatic where movement does not require a priori intelligibilities; it does not refer back to a central core. Rhizomes are indefinite connections that are forever becoming-other. Control societies function rhizomatically rather than arborescently because production is always a metaproduction that does not require a fixed core. For example, the individualizations that characterize disciplinary societies operate arborescently where the body’s movement always refers back to the subject itself. Contrastingly, the dividualizations of control societies function rhizomatically because there is no constant reference to a fixed subject per se; because bodies are indefinitely deterritorialized through control mechanisms.

I consider higher educational research to be a part of these rhizomatic networks. Knowledge economics, as a metaproduction of higher education, is a unique commodity in that it does not follow the traditional supply and demand models of production, where goods are produced and subsequently purchased. The metaproductions of knowledge, information, and communication grow exponentially, where their value increases as they continuously expand. Rhizomatic productions such as knowledge are distinct in that they can be indefinitely produced through a vast range of networks that do not require any central reference. My interest here is how knowledge economics has become a central mechanism of control through the production, dissemination, circulation, and reproduction of information and communication.

To think of knowledge in such a way is to remove conceptualizations of it as an abstract ideology so as to bring it closer to the materialities of life itself. I want to turn to an intersection between knowledge economics and biotechnological innovations in order to highlight how new control mechanisms are produced through the virtual productions of life itself. Kaushik Sunder Rajan’s work on biocapital (2006) explains how researching biological materiality attains biological information; and how the innovative knowledge that results from this interaction informs future research on biological materiality. The history and complexity around the politics of biotechnologies is too great to account for here, and so I want to specifically focus on how such innovations when linked to knowledge economics produce new life forms by controlling social processes. The highly experimental nature of genomic research (for example, mapping the body in the Human Genome Project) explains how
information is materialized and how materiality informs information. This is a Bakhtinian dialogic relation that always produces something new through something given. It is vastly different from performativity and the incessant reiteration of norms because info-material knowledges can grow exponentially and are not limited by or within discursive frameworks. As I argue elsewhere (Ruffolo, 2008), biotechnological innovations and knowledge economics speak to the virtual productivities of life. In contrast to the real/possible that can only function on a predetermined grid (like we see with performativity), the actual/virtual is a potentiality that is forwardly directed. The “subject” that has dominated queer theorizing over the past few decades has functioned within the real/possible, where movement is always on an identity grid even if the intention is to displace such a matrix. In agreement with Massumi (2002), this results in a “back-formation” where movement is always a possibility rather than a potentiality.

The virtualities of control societies sketch how new ways to think about life are produced outside of subjectivity, discourse, and power. These potentialities no longer function within the disciplinary apparatus of confinement by launching life into the future. Life is becoming rhizomatic through control networks that desire continuous expansion rather than confinement. In addition to thinking about these masochistic negotiations, it is also critically important to consider what Gargi Bhattacharyya (2005) refers to as the “underbelly” of capitalism and globalization: the illicit movement of people and things that exploit life through neoliberal agendas. Consequently, it is critical that we begin to consider how knowledge economics is becoming a neocolonial strategy that controls life through rhizomatic networks. A quick example of this is the seed wars. As Hardt and Negri explain: “The wealth of the north generates profits as private property, whereas the wealth of the south generates none since it is considered the common heritage of mankind” (2004, p. 183).

Biotechnologies and knowledge economics are just one example of controlling mechanisms that virtually produce life. They offer new ways to think about the relationship amongst bodies, identities, and culture where life is no longer subjected to the discursive grids of subjectivity. I map the ideas of this paper more thoroughly in my upcoming book Post-Queer Politics where I plateau the queer/heteronormative dyad through what I refer to as dialogical-becomings. The vision of this paper is threefold: to move queer theory away from disciplinary practices by introducing new and creative ways to think about how life is virtually produced through control mechanisms; to reinvigorate queer politics by considering the materialities of life itself rather than how life is materialized through discourse; and to hopefully create spaces for queer scholars and activists to think about how their work might contribute to such rhizomatic networks.

References
A Queer Shaped Portal? Visioning Gender Inclusive Admissions Policy

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Abstract: Heterosexism in Canadian society infuses our public schools with relational barriers that devastate queer youth by denying them feelings of safety and belonging. Under these conditions, attendance is a daily hurdle, and learning is a challenge on the order of Herculean accomplishment. Queer teachers are needed to remedy this situation.

The Case for Recruiting Queer Teacher Candidates

Late this April, memorials to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1991a, 1991b) have highlighted her straight woman’s struggle to diminish the social power of heterosexism and homophobia. On a personal level, Eve’s passing both saddens and fortifies me to continue this battle. I became concerned about the challenges facing LGBTQ youth while working as an Ontario secondary teacher in the mid-1990s. Fifteen years later, as a doctoral student researching admissions policy within an urban Canadian teacher education program, I have been privileged to engage with three queer applicants on the subject of heterosexism and homophobia within public education. Building on their experiences and my observations, this paper responds to Callaghan’s call for “school environments in which LGBTQ teachers can be out at work” (2008, p. 215) and makes a strong case for recruiting queer teacher candidates.

Too frequently educational discourses about human diversity include differences of class, race, sex, physical ability, and sometimes even culture or language, but seldom do they include differences within genders. Haraway describes a heterosexual material culture that consists of “gender paraphernalia and daily gender technologies: the narrow tracks on which sexual difference runs” (1991, p. 250). Examples of this binary depiction of gender are evident even in open access digital textbooks that might be expected to cater to the broadest range of audiences (Seifert, 2008). Many schools also aggressively undermine LGBTQ students by refusing to tolerate queer teachers and by failing to resist the exclusive entitlement of a few privileged groups, such as whites, males, heterosexuals, Christians, and middle and upper classes (Sleeter, 1995; Solomon, 2001; Wallberg, 2004).

Other school cultures generate debilitating social tensions through their tacit or even open support for traditional status inequities within multiethnic populations (Ryan, 2003; Zeichner, 1991). Until all gender minorities are represented in the teacher workforce and empowered to provide queer and straight school children with authentic role models and mentors, many queer children will continue to fail, and as members of a marginalized community suffer the work force consequences of an inadequate education (Chou, 2005; OECD, 2004; Stead, 2005). Conversely, in programs like the Triangle Classroom, with a mission to provide “a classroom where Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth can learn and earn credits in a safe, harassment-free, equity-based environment . . . [that] includes and celebrates LGBT literature, history, persons and issues” (Toronto District School Board, 2009, digital), the needs of queer youth are front and centre.

Vital and successful as these exceptional programs are, they divert political and administrative resources away from efforts to make all schools healthy learning environments for queer students and teachers. More recently, the culturally mediated damage caused by heterosexism and homophobia (Conchas, 2006), damage such as queer youth’s higher rates of suicide and lower rates of matriculation, is increasingly being taken up by equity-minded administrators responsible for policy implementation within North American schools systems and faculties of education (Casey, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1995: Frankenberg, 2009). Among those who favour bringing all genders into the respectful and playful circles of classroom learning, there is a will to urgently increase the number of LGBTQ teachers across all grade levels and subject specializations. This is a monumental task given the widespread, though unwritten and unspoken, and yet unconstitutional practice of denying employment to LGBTQ teachers and firing those who come out in the classroom.

As a feminist activist who supports state provision of a safe and successful public education for all students, I believe that children and youth must have access to teachers whom they can trust and from whom they can learn. Trust and learning often occur when students and teachers share common identities,
cultures, and life experiences (Kezar, 1999). But how often do queer students get a chance to be around teachers who share their sexual identities or administrators who take their predicament seriously? For example, McCaskell (2005) asks us to consider whether a typical school is more likely to respond with serious consequences for students who get caught smoking or for students who make heterosexist remarks. Callaghan (2008) describes comparable permissiveness in the ways that school officials ignore or even abet homophobic taunting.

If we take the high road and assume that ignorance is at the root of this dehumanizing behaviour, we are still left with a pervasive kind of school culture that sanctions the abuse of gender minority students (AACTE, 2004; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, and Cooper, 2003); causes them high levels of depression, aggression, low academic performance, and low completion rates; and forces them to exist outside of any sense of school community. John Abbott describes communities as “places in which we can feel secure, because the likelihood is that people will understand and support us … [and] we can feel comfortable enough simply to be ourselves …” (2004, p. 3). The question is therefore, how better to provide security, understanding, and support for LGBTQ students except by giving them teachers with whom they can bond and thrive?

A Policy for Bringing Gender Minorities into the Teacher Workforce

The preparation of LGBTQ teachers faces many obstacles despite full legal sanction. For example, Section 15 of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) offers the children of all citizens, residents, and legally landed immigrants entitlement to free public school education. Yet most teacher education programs implicitly and explicitly discourage LGBTQ minorities from declaring their gender either as program applicants, teacher candidates, or certified teachers. With such marginalizing policy these programs (re)produce teachers who are unprepared to establish transformative relationships with students from many socially marginalized groups. But this practice is becoming increasingly unacceptable. Banks advocates that “Teachers must not only understand how the dominant paradigms and canon help keep victimized groups powerless but also must be committed to social change and action if they are to become agents of liberation and empowerment” (1994, p.160). Conchas (2006) states that teachers need to be sources of students’ nonfamilial social capital and to provide them with the support and information that they need to set and accomplish their educational goals. With these points in mind, it is possible to envision admissions policy implementation that supports gender minorities (DePalma & Atkinson, 2007; Green & Kehler, 2008; Pinar, 1998; Rofes, 2005; & Russell, 2008).

For a policy to be creditable, it must encourage LGBTQ applicants to identify themselves by listing gender as one of several minority categories that might also include race, religion, ability, sex, age, and nationality. More nuanced identification would vary from site to site as issues of structure (policy and protocols) and agency (individual and group activity) interact within cultural contexts that continuously mediate policy outcomes (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Through interviews or open essay questions, a program must provide opportunities for queer applicants to describe their identity management strategies and experiences of sexuality; to articulate the insights they would bring to teacher education discourse; and to express personal goals for engagement in the classroom and as school system leaders.

From an assessment perspective, admissions personnel must be supportive of gender minority applicants and be well trained in the ways in which experiences of gender marginalization may have contributed to the opportunities and barriers encountered by these individuals during their own schooling and other life experiences. A supportive policy must also be explicitly transparent about how any minority status information will be stored and disseminated, an essential step in protecting applicants’ identity. In addition, a well designed policy must make it publicly clear what its stance is on affirmative action and how, if at all, information about an applicant’s gender minority status will be weighted in relation to other eligibility criteria.

In conclusion, within a program of teacher preparation, admissions policy that overlooks any of these features will contribute to the (re)production of a heterosexist and homophobic teacher workforce, and fail to meet the needs of queer students everywhere.

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Making the Case for Inclusive Safe-Schools Policy: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools

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Abstract: This paper presents the results of a national survey of Canadian high school students undertaken in order to identify the forms and extent of their experiences of homophobic incidents at school and measures being taken by schools to combat this common form of bullying. The paper presents key findings re experiences (unsafe spaces, homophobic comments, direct victimizations), impacts (feeling unsafe, skipping school, discomfort talking to staff and peers, lack of school attachment), institutional responses (safe school policies at school and divisional levels, GSAs), and impacts of institutional responses (feeling safer, more comfortable, more attached, less victimization). I conclude with recommendations for safe school policy development at the Ministerial, District, and School levels.

High school students are exposed to homophobic incidents that range from hearing “gay” used as a synonym for “stupid” or “worthless” to insulting and assaulting students because of their sexual or transgender identity or their perceived sexual or transgender identity. This report discusses the results of a national survey of Canadian high school students undertaken in order to identify the forms and extent of their experiences of homophobic incidents at school and measures being taken by schools to combat this common form of bullying. The study has been funded primarily by Egale Canada with additional support from the University of Winnipeg, and SVR/CIHR.

Phase One of the study involved surveying almost 1700 students from across Canada through two methods: individual online participation and in-school sessions conducted in four school boards. This report analyzes the data from individual online participation. We reached participants by advertising the survey widely through news releases and direct contact with organizations across the country that had LGBTQ youth memberships.

The survey was done through was a fifty-four item questionnaire made available online and in print, and consisting mostly of multiple-choice questions of three kinds: demographic (e.g., age, province, gender and sexual identity), experiences (e.g., hearing gay used as insult, being verbally harassed), and institutional responses (e.g., staff intervention, inclusive safe-school policies). Quantitative data were tested for statistical significance through bivariate analysis that compared the responses of various groups of students (e.g., LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, LGB and transgender, current versus past).

Key Findings

Unsafe spaces

• Three-quarters of LGBTQ students feel unsafe in at least one place at school, such as change rooms, washrooms, and hallways. Half of straight students agree that at least one part of their school is unsafe for LGBTQ students.
• Transgender students are especially likely to see these places as unsafe (87%).
• LGBTQ students see more places as unsafe for LGBTQ people than do straight students, and transgender students most of all (4, 2, and 5 unsafe spaces, respectively).

Homophobic Comments

• Three-quarters of all participating students reported hearing expressions such as “that’s so gay” every day in school.
• Half heard remarks like “faggot”, “queer”, “lezbo”, and “dyke” daily. Over half of LGBTQ students, compared to a third of non-LGBTQ reported hearing such remarks daily.
• LGBTQ students were significantly more likely than non-LGBTQ to notice comments about boys not acting masculine enough or feminine enough every day.
• A third of transgender participants heard derogatory comments daily about boys not being masculine enough, compared to a quarter of LGB students. Transgender students were more than twice as likely as LGB students to report hearing comments about girls not being feminine enough.
• LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ individuals to report that staff never intervened when homophobic comments were made.
• Half of transgender students reported that staff never intervened when homophobic comments were made compared to 34.1% of LGB respondents.
• Current students were even more likely than past students to hear expressions like “that’s so gay” in school.
• Current students were also more likely than past students to hear homophobic comments from other students every day.

Victimization
• Six out of ten LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation.
• Nine out of ten transgender students, six out of ten LGB students, and three out of ten straight students were verbally harassed because of their expression of gender.
• One in four LGB students had been physically harassed about their sexual orientation.
• Almost two in five transgender students and one in five LGB reported being physically harassed due to their expression of gender.
• Two-thirds of LGBTQ students and just under half of non-LGBTQ have seen homophobic graffiti at school. One in seven LGBTQ students had been named in the graffiti.
• Over half the LGBTQ students had rumours or lies spread about their sexual orientation at school, compared to one in ten non-LGBTQ.
• One third of LGBTQ participants reported harassment through text messaging or on the Internet.

Impacts
• Three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of transgender students felt unsafe at school, compared to one-fifth of straight students.
• Over a quarter of LGBTQ students and almost half of transgender students had skipped school because they felt unsafe, compared to less than a tenth of non-LGBTQ.
• Many LGBTQ students would not be comfortable talking to their teachers (four in ten), their principal (six in ten), or their coach (seven in ten) about LGBTQ issues.
• Only one in five LGBTQ students could talk to a parent very comfortably about LGBTQ issues. Three-quarters could talk to a close friend.
• Over half of LGBTQ students did not feel accepted at school, and almost half felt they could not be themselves, compared to one-fifth of straight students.
• Transgender students (over a third) were twice as likely as LGB students to strongly agree that they sometimes feel very depressed about their school that they do not belong there, and four times as likely as straight students.

Institutional Responses
• Fewer than half of participants knew whether their school had a policy for reporting homophobic incidents.
• Of those, only one-third believed there was such a policy.

LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much more likely than other LGBTQ students . . .
• to feel their school community was supportive (one half compared to fewer than one-fifth),
• to feel comfortable talking to a counsellor (one half compared to fewer than one-third), and to feel comfortable talking to classmates (over a third compared to one-fifth),
• to believe their school was becoming less homophobic,
• to hear fewer homophobic comments and to say staff intervene more often,
• to report homophobic incidents to staff and their parents,
• to feel attached to their school.

LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much less likely than other LGBTQ students . . .
• to have had lies and rumours spread about them at school or on the Internet,
• to have had property stolen or damaged,
• to feel unsafe at school,
to have been verbally or physically harassed. The results were similar for students who believed that their school districts had such policies.

*Catholic Schools*

Only one-tenth of students in Catholic schools believed there was such a policy in their school or school district. Students from Catholic schools were much more likely than students from non-Catholic schools . . .

- to feel their school was not supportive of LGBTQ people,
- that teachers were ineffective in addressing homophobic harassment,
- that they could talk to at least one adult in their school.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

This survey has provided statistically-tested confirmation of what LGBTQ students and their allies have known for some time: that despite Canada’s leadership on human rights for LGBTQ people, a great deal of verbal and physical homophobic harassment goes on in Canadian schools, that they are more likely to be aware of it than are other students who are not its main targets, and that the response has more often than not been inadequate.

The survey also shows, however, that the situation is much improved where schools and school divisions have developed safe-schools policies and procedures that explicitly address homophobia and made them known to students. In such schools, LGBTQ students are less likely to hear homophobic comments or to be targeted by verbal or physical harassment, they are more likely to report it to staff and parents when they are, and staff are more likely to intervene. They feel safer, more accepted, and more attached to their school.

Developing inclusive safe schools policies and making them known to students are not the complete solution. However, this survey has identified big differences between schools with and schools without inclusive policies. We therefore strongly recommend the following:

1. That schools implement anti-homophobia policies and make these well known to students, parents, administration, and all staff as a positive part of their commitment to making schools safe.
2. That school divisions develop anti-homophobia policies to provide institutional authority and leadership for schools. Although our analysis showed that students are less likely to know about division-level policies, it would of course be helpful to principals to know that their school-level efforts had strong divisional endorsement in the form of official policy at that level.
3. That schools strongly support the efforts of students to start Gay-Straight Alliance clubs (GSAs).
4. That in schools where students have not come forward, administration should ask teachers to offer to work with students to start a GSA club. It is not safe to assume that LGBTQ students would prefer to go through high school isolated from their peers and teachers.
5. That provincial Ministries of Education mandate the inclusion of homophobia in safe schools policies and programs, including those of Catholic schools, along with steps for the implementation of the policies, to provide support and motivation to divisional and school staff.

What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works, and that they want the adults in their lives to do their part, too. They are weary of seeing teachers and principals look the other way. And they are grateful to the many dedicated school staff who have worked to make schools safer for everyone in their care – not everyone but them.
What Doesn't Kill Us Makes Us Stronger or Beyond Analysis by Gender: Implications for Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration

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Abstract: This doctoral study had similar results to another study when analyzed by gender, and significantly different results when analyzed by gender*sexual orientation interaction. Results indicate discrimination could possibly propel gay and bisexual individuals toward a higher level of personality development.

Overexcitabilities
Researchers have found all five overexcitabilities (Psychomotor, Intellectual, Imaginational, Sensual and Emotional) to be stronger among gifted individuals (Ackerman, 1997; Gallagher, 1985; Miller, Silverman, & Falk, 1994; Piechowski & Colangelo, 1984, 2004; Piechowski & Cunningham, 1985; Silverman & Ellsworth, 1981). Overexcitabilities (OEs) are “modes of enhanced mental functioning; they can be thought of as channels of information flow that can be widely open, narrow, or operating at a bare minimum” (Piechowski & Colangelo, 2004, p. 129). Overexcitability does not mean “overly excitable” but actually implies an intensified and expanded way of experiencing in these five dimensions (Dabrowski, 1938; Piechowski & Colangelo, 2004). Piechowski and Colangelo (2004) described OEs as representing the kind of natural quality that nurtures, improves, empowers, and magnifies talent, and without them, “a talent would be no more than a computational device” (p. 129).

Rationale for Study
Gifted gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) students frequently find themselves in a dilemma in which they must choose between academic success and social acceptance. Schools have been unresponsive to the needs of gifted GLB students and lack of understanding that the sexually diversity of these gifted students has only contributed to their challenges. Long considered a non-issue in K-12 education, GLB youth have more recently become visible enough that even reluctant educators must now consider the implications of having these students in their classrooms (Gevelinger & Zimmerman, 1997). Therefore, I explored this general question: What, if any, differences among the dimensions of overexcitability are related to sexual orientation, giftedness, and/or gender?

Methodology
Requests for participants containing a URL for an online survey were distributed through education, gifted, diversity, and GLBT listservs at eleven geographically-dispersed universities and via MENSA e-mail lists/newsletters. Quantitative research methods were utilized to study variations in which 965 heterosexual, gay, and bisexual individuals possessed overexcitability characteristics as measured by the Overexcitability Questionnaire II. The Bem Sex Role Inventory measured gender role.

Results
This study replicated Bouchet and Falk’s (2001) study published in Gifted Child Quarterly. They concluded that gender role explained differences in OE scores between males and females. This study had similar results when analyzed by gender, but significantly different results appeared when analyzed by gender*sexual orientation interaction that were not affected by gender role. Gay and bisexual individuals scored significantly higher in every OE dimension except Psychomotor. Each subpopulation had unique strengths and weaknesses. Comparisons of results by gender and by the gender*sexual orientation in Figures 1-4 demonstrates that analysis by gender alone does not give an accurate portrayal of students.
Implications for the Theory of Positive Disintegration for GLB Students

In the Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD), the term disintegration is the process of development. Whereby, a person's current personality structure comes apart and reintegrates at a higher level. It is considered to be positive because it contributes to personality development. Dabrowski (1967) believed that conflict and inner suffering were necessary for advanced development, in order to move from what is to what ought to be, and consists of a hierarchy of values based on altruism. This process involves: “(1) disintegration of a primitive mental organization aimed at gratifying biological needs and mindlessly conforming to societal norms, and (2) re-integration of a higher level of functioning in which the individual transcends biological determinism and becomes autonomous” (Mendaglio, 2008, p. 18).

Level I is a primitive self-centered and society-conforming stage. Level II is a transitional stage in which one regresses, moves ahead, or ends in suicide or psychosis (Dabrowski, 1967; Tillier, 1998). The higher rates of suicidal ideation (Peterson & Rischar, 2000) and feelings of depression and isolation (Peterson & Richar, 2000; Levy & Plucker, 2003) experienced by gifted gay and lesbian students could occur during this stage. At Level III, dissatisfaction with oneself, feelings of shame and/or guilt could occur due to perceived incongruity between external reality and the ideal self (Piechowski, 1975; Silverman, 2008). This incongruity could be between their non-heterosexual orientation and giftedness, and what society considers to be normal, heterosexuality and average intelligence. For gifted GLB youth, there may be some parallel to Level IV in the stage of the “coming out process” when they achieve self-awareness and acceptance of their own sexual orientation and/or giftedness.

According to this study, TPD applies differently to GLB and heterosexual males and females. The big question is why do OE scores differ? Are higher levels of OE demonstrated by bisexual and gay individuals actually “innate” tools bestowed in order to assist in traversing hostile environments, or were those OEs actually strengthened due to social factors? Rather than gender roles, could the very social factors and their concurrent crisis-causing events and discriminatory actions that bisexual and gay
populations experience actually increase the level of OEs? Do these crises in combination with overexcitabilities and dynamisms serve to propel them towards higher levels of personality development? More studies need to be conducted in order to clarify these issues.

References
Supporting Trans-Identified Students: Strategies for a Successful In-School Transition

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Abstract: In this brief paper I overview the experiences of trans-identified youth in K-12 schools and highlight strategies to help parents/caregivers and students to develop a Transition Plan to help support a successful in-school transition.

In 2003, the Alberta Teachers’ Association became the first teachers’ association in Canada to include gender identity as a protected ground against discrimination in a Code of Professional Conduct. Increasingly, most human rights’ statutes across Canada also now interpret gender identity as a prohibited ground of discrimination. These protections are necessary as trans-identified or transgender adults experience higher levels of unemployment, homelessness, job discrimination, harassment, and physical and sexual assault when compared with their heterosexual peers (APA, 2008; D’Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006). Trans-identified youth are particularly at risk for some of the most severe forms of bullying and violence in schools (Egale Canada, 2009; GIRES, 2008).

In 2008, Carol Allan, Gayle Roberts, and I were commissioned by the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities (www.sacsc.ca) to develop a guidebook to assist teachers in understanding the significant health, safety, and educational needs of trans-identified students in Alberta schools (Allan, Roberts, & Wells, forthcoming). This guidebook will be published as part of the Society’s Respecting Diversity resource series, which features publications on supporting students of all faiths, students of all races, newcomer students, and students who are Aboriginal, Arab and Muslim, and Lesbian and Gay. This pre-conference paper represents a selective overview of the forthcoming guidebook on gender identity and identifies recommended approaches to support transitioning transsexual students in Alberta K-12 schools.

Most transsexual individuals transition from presenting as their natal (birth) sex to that of the opposite sex when they are in their twenties or older. In most cases, this transition occurs while these individuals are employed or are attending a postsecondary institution. However, an increasing number of children are now transitioning while enrolled in K-12 schools (Cohen-Kettenis, Delemarre-van de Waal, & Gooren, 2008). In some cases, youth as young as 16 years of age have begun medically supervised transitions. Not surprisingly, this is a relatively new social phenomenon and very few schools are familiar with the health, safety, and educational needs of transitioning students and have not yet developed policies and procedures to support them or their families. Understanding issues related to gender identity are critical in creating safe, caring, and inclusive schools and are vital in supporting trans-identified students and their families. Students who experience discrimination whether it is based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, or cultural background deserve to be protected in schools. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms mandates that all publicly-funded schools must be non-discriminatory entities, and this includes trans-identified students.

Contemporary research demonstrates that homophobia and transphobia are common in most schools in North America (Egale Canada, 2009; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006). Among those youth who face the greatest difficulties are trans-identified youth (Wyss, 2004). For trans-identified youth, the coming out and coming-to-terms processes are complex and often fraught with physical, verbal, and symbolic violence. For example, Wyss’s qualitative research study explored the lived experiences of twenty-four “out” trans-identified high school students in the United States. Her research revealed that:

- Twenty-three of the twenty-four youth participants reported being victimized (to varying degrees) in their high school;
- Eleven reported being “shoved, pushed, smacked, and/or kicked by others in school” (p. 716);
- Six reported being sexually assaulted or raped (p. 717);
- Seven reported dropping out of high school because of the violence and harassment they endured (p. 719); and
- Three youth identified being suicidal (p. 719).
As Wyss relates, “these experiences, especially when coupled with a belief that one’s oppression is justified, often leads to low-self esteem, anxiety, rage, social withdrawal and depression, as well as to self-destructive behaviors like hitting or slashing one’s body, the abuse of prescription of illegal drugs, dropping out of school, unsafe sex and suicide” (p. 718).

Despite these risk factors, many trans-identified and gender queer youth learned to develop protective strategies and personal resiliency in the face of adversity. For example, these youth engaged in various coping mechanisms and defensive strategies, which included:

- Avoidance – staying away from students who threatened to assault them, cutting classes, and skipping school;
- Invisibility – hiding during lunch and breaks, arriving early, and leaving late after school;
- Hyper Masculinity – projecting dominance by acting tough and/or developing a reputation as being fearless and mean;
- Vigilance – constantly monitoring the behaviours and actions of their peers and the imminent possibility of attack or danger; and
- Preparedness – wearing steel toe boots and chains; working out at the gym; using profanity; and threatening to counter attack as survival strategies to deal with impending violence that could not be prevented (pp. 720-721).

Once these youth had suffered an assault, they had to face the difficult decision to determine how best to deal with the trauma and its aftermath. For many, they internalized the victimization, remained silent, and withdrew inward. Often they felt as though they could not confide in their friends because they would not understand the level of brutality and violence they experienced as a direct result of the rampant homophobia and transphobia they experienced (p. 722). Most were unwilling to confide in teachers or school staff, which further alienated them from crucial support systems. Some youth even went back into the closet by reverting to gendered appearances that would most closely be associated with their natal (birth) sex. For example, many youth felt they had to act “hyper-straight,” overtly feminine, or “normal” to achieve some semblance of safety and security within their school environments (p. 723).

These occurrences are not limited to the experiences of trans-identified high school students. Students in elementary and junior high school may also experience transphobia. For example, transsexual children who have not had their gender issues cared for by significant adults in their lives may learn to hide their identity. Some transsexual teenagers learn to exaggerate their natal sex gender expression in order to hide their actual gender identity. These hidden gender issues can cause frustration, depression, and suicide. The teenage and pre-adolescent years can be difficult for trans-identified children and youth because they sense their difference from their peers. Some of these children and youth try to fit into the heterosexual mold and in their older teenage or early adult years even marry and have children, hoping that this will make their frustrating gender issues disappear. Yet, other children and youth may be so sure of whom they are that they begin to transition while in school. With support, those children who have understanding parents/caregivers and professional assistance may begin to live as the gender of their inner being while still in their pre-teenage years.

**Strategies to Support a Successful In-School Transition**

No two students will transition in exactly the same way. The following strategies are designed to provide practical suggestions to help parents, caregivers, teachers, and administrators to support a student through the in-school transition process. We strongly recommend that each school, in direct collaboration with the student, parents/guardians, and healthcare professionals, devise and implement strategies that maximize the likelihood of a successful in-school transition for the student – in other words, develop a comprehensive Transition Plan.

Because each transitioning student is unique, as are his or her parents, and each school has its own distinct culture, the Transition Plan developed for a particular student in a particular school will also need to be unique. For example, elementary and junior high schools students may be supported in a social transition, which does not involve hormones or surgeries, rather the focus is on changing the outward appearance of a student’s gender. However, in high school, students may be in the process of hormonal treatments and, in some rare cases, surgical treatments to physical change his or her sex. In either situation it is advisable to consider the development of a Transition Plan. Below and on the next page are
some suggestions to consider in developing a Transition Plan. These recommendations are written primarily for parents/caregivers as they will most likely be the central decision maker when it comes to advocating for appropriate educational care and supports for their transitioning child.

1. A parent/care-giver and transitioning son or daughter must be flexible. This may be difficult if the son or daughter is very young, such as in early elementary. A plan should be formulated, but preparation should be made to change the plan if circumstances warrant it. This plan may include parental/guardian conversation with carefully selected parents of children in the school, the school’s teachers and administration, officials within the district office, and the provincial/territorial teachers’ union or association.

2. Remember, that it may be difficult to keep the transition of your son or daughter a secret from others. Include and prepare for this reality in planning for and with your child.

3. As a parent/caregiver, you should be cautiously open with others regarding your child’s transition. Parents/caregivers should always choose their allies carefully. As a parent/caregiver, you may need to assist your child in finding his or her best allies. Your level of assistance may depend upon your child’s age.

4. Welcome questions about your child’s transition and attempt to be patient with inquiries. Try to avoid angry or hostile responses. Be natural about your child’s transition. Remember, for many individuals, this will be their first exposure to issues of gender identity. Work with your child on answers to questions that he or she may face.

5. Stress the medical aspects of your child’s condition. Be knowledgeable about and be able to direct individuals to appropriate professional resources that briefly describe gender identity, gender dysphoria, and the possible causes of transsexualism. Work with your child in helping him or her understand the medical aspects of transsexualism in age-appropriate ways.

6. Enlist the support of the district and/or school administration, counsellors, and teachers. In some cases, you and your transitioning child may find minimal support. Be prepared to deal with the possibility that there may not be institutional support for you or your transitioning child to rely on. Encourage the school to engage in age-appropriate language and discussion to teach about gender diversity as part of classroom activities and curricular study.

7. Depending on the stage of your child’s transition, he or she should dress appropriately in his or her gender role. Your child should avoid sending out “mixed messages” regarding gender.

8. Underplay rather than overplay the “ordinariness” of your child’s transition. Remember, it may be difficult for your child to immediately act “normal” and “appropriate” in his or her new gender. Voice, intonations, gestures, and actions may be overdone or underdone as your child reflects what he or she perceives to be within “normal” gender roles. Assist your son or daughter in adopting these gendered behaviours.

9. Be aware that some students and parents may object to your child’s transition and continued presence within the school or district. Have a plan to deal with this possible outcome. At times, you and your child will need to be mindful to maintain your self-confidence and determination. Assist your child in developing his or her resilience to successfully move through this time of transition while maintaining their educational focus.

10. Consider scheduling the transition of your child, so he or she “presents” for the first time in his or her adopted gender either at the beginning of the school year or during the last week or two of the school year. The latter may facilitate a smooth start to the new school year the following September. A third strategy would be to request a placement in a different school.

Concluding Reflection

All schools are required by law to be non-discriminatory spaces. For trans-identified youth, schools are too often considered to be dangerous and risky spaces for their identities to be revealed. Most of the harassment and violence directed towards trans-identified youth is premised on a rigid sex/gender binary, which presumes that there are only two sexes and only strictly male and female genders. Despite recent medical evidence to the contrary, narrow identity constructions still operate overtly and covertly in schools to severely limit the creation of a diverse school environment. Accordingly, schools should work to foster environments that challenge binary representations and, in turn, embrace the fluidity of sex.
sexuality, and gender. Students learn more than just academic knowledge in their schools; they also learn governing norms, rules, and socially acceptable behaviours from observing the actions and non-actions of their peers and teachers (Wyss, 2004). What will students at your school learn? Will your school take the responsibility to develop an educational environment safe for all youth?

**References**


