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ABSTRACT

The caring and nurturing of children, which characterize primary education culture, have tended to shape a public perception of primary teaching as "women's work." Several social factors influence men's underrepresentation in the profession of primary education, such as parents not wanting their children exposed to "soft" males. Male primary teachers are characterized as "feminine," "homosexual," and "pedophile," and these characterizations control the number of men who choose to enter primary education and manipulate those men who do teach young children. Some gay primary teachers feel compelled to monitor themselves carefully because of other educators' and parents' beliefs that social contact with homosexuals is harmful for children. Such self-censoring preempts caring relationships with students. The use of touch in classrooms is very suspect as a behavior and also requires self-monitoring. Feeling paranoid about their sexual orientation, gay and lesbian teachers have adopted coping strategies that reduce their effectiveness as teachers. Social constructions that have worked against males teaching in early grades can also be found in the implicit but pervasive relationship that has been drawn between primary male teachers and pedophiles, a relationship not supported by data. Bullying and excluding gay males who may provide nurturing and caring in ways that are especially productive for young children are clearly inappropriate. (Contains 27 references.) (JDD)

# Uncommon Caring: Primary Males and Implicit Judgements

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*** Please read before February 4th Rhodes Collegium Meeting***

Uncommon Caring: Primary Males and Unspoken Concerns

My colleague Betty entered my office, sat down in the chair by the door, and tilted her head back through the doorway, to have a look up and down the hall. Arching back in, she hooked her small fingers around the edge of the door and clicked it shut. Something was up.

She had come, she said, to talk about an undergraduate, Steve, who would soon be student teaching. As the director of field placements, Betty was concerned for Steve because she thought his overt feminine behaviors would be a burden in his student teaching. I knew Betty to be "gay-friendly," and in fact my partner and I had dined with her on a previous occasion. Betty's concern for Steve seemed genuine. I was comfortable talking about Steve with her. We agreed that it would be a good idea for Steve to hear Betty's concerns, with an option of talking with me if he chose to do so. In retrospect, I am not so comfortable with our conversation.

What Betty and I did was evaluate Steve's options based on our interpetation his sexual orientation, or others' apprehension of it. We both used what we agreed was Steve's "marked" or effeminate behavior as an indicator of his homosexuality, which

we determined would cause problems in his student teaching and later in his teaching career. Now, our decision seems like a serious compromise of Steve's rights. The manner in which we solved Steve's "problems" was little less than an attempt to solve our problems with Steve's "homosexuality." Our "solution" has potential legal ramifications because students in our state are protected relative to sexual orientation (even though university teachers' rights are not protected). But, there remain ethical concerns about violating Steve's rights, about Betty coming to me as "the gay faculty voice," and about our dispensing with the Steve issue so "efficiently."

Many decisions in teaching are made intuitively, in conversation, and "for the good" of others. In making Steve an other, we were able "to solve 'his' problems" without his voice. The issues embedded in the story about my discomfort with Steve's self representation are the same ones that surround other gay men when they choose to teach in the early and elementary grades.

A public perception is that men who teach primary grades are often either homosexuals, pedophiles, or principals (in training). These commonly held, but seldom voiced presuppositions have had a strong impact on men's decisions to teach young children. Furthermore, such perceptions insure that the men who do choose to be primary teachers are frequently seen as "suspect." While the rhetoric from the education culture overtly entices young men to consider elementary teaching, we covertly monitor those male teachers who aren't married, and who

"act funny." In this chapter, I do not intend to speak against the careful monitoring of who is, and who is not encouraged or not allowed to teach children. In fact, I believe it is crucial to evaluate prospective teachers' suitability for work with young children. Yet, as a former primary teacher, as a teacher trainer, and as a gay man, I wish to examine some of the frameworks that have been used in the covert monitoring of male primary teachers, and to suggest that some evaluation frameworks for prospective teachers are misguided. When primary education is viewed as a context of caring, men's work as care givers can be seen as a problem.

Uncommon men in a context of care.

Teaching in the primary grades is a complex endeavor. Nais (1989) describes the experience as one that requires teachers who are comfortable teaching from their personal values, most especially 'caring for' and 'loving' children. While caring is an important part of teaching at all levels, love and care as well as other nurturing behaviors are privileged attributes in primary teaching contexts. One could even say care is requisite or synonymous with primary teaching. Further, primary teachers are described by Nais as teaching in integrated ways. Nais intends to include both curriculum and relationships. That is, primary teachers integrate subject areas such as math, science and literacy into cohesive, inclusive learning activities. Similarly, primary teachers interact with students, as well as

other teachers, in ways that build and maintain close relationships and a sense of connectedness.

I agree with Nais's characterization of primary teaching, and suggest that this dichotomy of academic subjects and relationships is likewise one that is imploded, causing even more thorough integration. So, subject area boundaries are breached and interpersonal relationships are part of the class curriculum. Integration of subjects and relationships leads to teaching in ways that hinge on social and affective reference groups. Social groups are found among colleagues, with student groups, and across levels of school hierarchy.

The caring and nurturing that characterize primary education culture are themes that are parallel to feminist views of females' moral development (Gilligan, 1982), feminist accounts of caring (Noddings, 1984), and women's ways of learning and knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). In fact, Nodding's (1984) Caring: A feminist approach to ethics and moral education and Nais's (1989) Primary Teachers Talking have much in common in their conceptualization of teaching as acts of caring. Noddings suggests that entering the profession of teaching is to enter a "very special - and specialized - caring relationship" (p. 174). She characterizes teachers' (the one caring) professional moves as ones centered on students (the cared for). "When a teacher asks a question in class and a student responds, the teacher receives not just the 'response' but the student [as well]" (p. 176). The answer is less important than the

engagement between the student and the teacher. According to Noddings, teachers accomplish their focus on students by "be[ing] totally and nonselectively present to the student - each student - as he [sic] addresses me" (p. 180, emphases mine). While Noddings addresses these arguments to the ethics of teaching, I suggest that they are particularly well suited to primary teaching culture. Further, while it is my hunch that "nonselectivity" was intended by Noddings to indicate all students, I suggest that all of the teacher is also a crucial issue. Being there for children means freedom to be there as a whole person. How we construct ourselves as persons for our students is a purposeful act. Teachers who are comfortable with who they are are able to "be there." Those who are preoccupied with life issues outside the classroom are less able to center on children and their needs.

For many, these attributions by Nais (1989), Noddings (1984) and others have tended to shape (or been reproductive of) a public perception of primary teaching as "women's work." And in fact the numbers from a NAEYC (1985) survey suggested that only about 5% of direct child-care providers were males. Yet, there is no systematic evidence suggesting that men are inappropriate persons to provide the nurturing and caring thought to be essential for learning contexts involving primary and preschool children. Therefore, it is important to examine how it might be that men are so dramatically under represented in the profession of primary education.

Hearing (and Ignoring) the Call

Seifert (1988) has suggested that males' experiences as fathers means that they can successfully engage in caring nurturing behaviors. Yet, he is careful to point out that the caring provided by men as fathers is at least differentiated from that provided by teachers in the length of fixed units of time spent caring for their children. Teachers are required to care for longer intervals than fathers customarily provide. Since they characteristically have greater numbers of employment options, men more readily choose other work alternatives in preference to early childhood teaching. It is also quite possible that fathers fill the role of number two caregiver, often a helper or a supplement to mom. In caring, male classroom teachers are on their own.

Seifert suggests that the reasoning behind the rhetoric, "We need more men teaching primary grades," may also be problematic, and negatively influences men's selection of primary teaching. The first argument to support the need for greater numbers of men in primary teaching is a "compensation hypothesis," which simultaneously suggests that males can provide "sex appropriate" role models for boys, and offer children of both sexes models of caring, nurturing males. But, Seifert sees these two issues as contradictory. It is quite possible that a sensitive, nurturing male could be perceived by others as providing a role model that is inappropriate for young boys. Some parents may not want their

children exposed to nuturing, caring and "soft" males. It is not a perspective that I share, but one that I know to exist.

Sometimes when I teach primary grade students, or when I talk with my young neighbors, I intuitively know the very real differences in myself when I center on the "cared for" (Noddings, 1984). I can drop my adult privilege, and enter a space that respects and values humans of all ages; where participants agree to honor the "other" like self, tell "the truth," and suspend personal agenda. It is an experience redolent with senses of "being there." The payoff is being there. It is my personal connection with women's ways, the feminine, and a self-identified gay spirit (Roscoe, 1988) that enable these small connections. But crossing over gendered behaviors is risky business. I examine this paradox of gender assigned social behavior as it relates to sexual orientation in a following section of this chapter. For now, suffice to say that perhaps the role ambiguity and resultant confusion inherent in disrupting the expected, gender related social behaviors is related to some men's decisions not to be primary teachers. Seifert's (1988) second argument is a "social equity hypothesis" which proposes that men entering primary teaching may enhance the stature of what is perceived to be "women's work." This, too, is a problematic assumption that I examine in the following section.

Primary Teaching and the Problem of "Women's Work"

Most germane to the arguments that follow is Seifert's discussion of gender bias regarding the society's construction of

"early childhood teacher" or "primary teacher." In colleges of education, we systematically direct male students away from primary grades (Seifert, 1983). In the profession, teachers also gender-type teacher's roles along traditional perceptions of gender. Seeing primary education as "women's work" is problematic for many reasons. First of all, from recent feminist perspectives, nurturing and caring (Noddings, 1992), or connected knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986) are strengths that are particular, though not exclusive, to women's (and girls') experiences in our culture. So in that sense, being female can be seen as a predisposition for primary education, when teaching, especially primary teaching, is seen as caring (Noddings, 1984). My interpretation of the intent of this feminist essentialist argumentation is to create an understanding of women's perceptions and theories of the world and how those constructs might differ from patriarchal knowing. Yet, when that same model of knowing and being is mapped into patriarchally controlled work places, such as schools, contradictory messages emerge. In fact, the special characteristics accorded women in these recent feminist epistomologies have also been used to devalue women's job skill and expertise in hierarchially organized and competitive workplaces. According to Reskin (1991):

> "...women's assignment to child care, viewed as unskilled work in our society, illustrates these patterns. Women are said to have a "natural talent" for it and similar work, men are relieved from doing

it; society obtains free or cheap child care; and women are handicapped from competing with men (p. 147)."

If nurturing and caring are "skills" that are rewarded inside the profession of child-care, they are also devalued outside the profession. Because others outside early childhood education see our requisite skilled behaviors as "natural," or as feminine predispositions, they may not feel compelled to reward those competencies with appropriate compensation. Or, since child-care job skills are acquired prior to their execution at the worksite, the skills themselves are not seen as job specific. Again, economic reward is unnecessary.

Reskin's (1991) arguments relative to gender typing and sex segregated work are also helpful in understanding men's small numbers for reasons other than compensation for work. Reskin proposes that dominant groups (men) maintain their economic advantages by differentiating work, and that they support that differentiation through physical segregation and behavior differentiation. Since "difference" is a necessary presupposition for dominance, physically segregating men and women is necessary. Reskin proposes that men actively keep men and women in different working contexts because working as equals minimizes perceived differences and threatens to reduce the dominance of men. Task social differentiation by gender also preserve males' hegemonic positions. Reskin suggests that when women and men work as equals in the same physical and

psychological space, equal pay for equal work is a more plausible outcome.

Of course, females who teach are rewarded more equitably in relation to males who teach. However, when salary schedules for public school teachers are differentiated by grade levels, elementary teachers make less money than most other teachers ( ). So while primary teachers do better than women's sixty cents to each dollar of men's pay, they are still be a "good buy" for the culture. Allowing men to participate in elementary culture may cause a shift in prestige and salary for both men and women in primary and preschool contexts (Seifert, 1988). In order to reduce the likelihood of that possibility, the social construction of "primary teacher" has been loaded with features that surround the constructs of "female" and "mother." The relationship between social constructs for primary teacher and mother are nearly isomorphic in the minds of the culture. Given the implicit fear of "the feminine" and misogynistic responses to that fear, men will be disuaded from primary teaching.

ref needed here

When a male does choose to break the social tabu of working with women, there are serious consequences to be paid. "Primary male" (or male primary teacher) has been so crafted that it implicitly includes negative, low prestige features, such as "feminine," "homosexual," and "pedophile." These cultural and semantic loadings on the "male primary teacher" are, in my opinion, why the voices of these professionals are muted. And with silence, we lose the chance to interrogate those unspoken

accusations. I am suggesting that these associations, construed negatively by the culture, are being used to control the number of men who choose to enter primary education, and to manipulate those men who do teach young children. Further, it is apparent that the appropriation of the constructs of "feminine," "homosexual," and "pedophile" reveals much about the misogyny and heterosexism implicit in these devaluing comparisons.

this section has been omitted (pp. 12-13)

Teachers' sexuality

Primary teaching has been considered "women's work." In addition to cost control for child care, the professional persona for that work has also been influenced by patriarchal constructions of "women who work" (with children). Until the 1930's, female teachers in many areas were expected to be virgins. They were often required to be single and were not allowed to date. When they married, they left teaching. Later, when marriages were allowed, pregnant women were forced out of teaching. Essentially, only chaste women were allowed to teach.

To teach, women were required to lack sexuality. Through the Victorian mores of sexual repression, female teachers were expected to represent themselves as having no sexuality. This repression is related to Western Victorian morality which essentially split caring from sexuality. One could not be nuturing and sexual since Eros was the feared demon that, if unconstrained, would overwhelm the goodness of a caring relationship with base, evil sex.

To return to issue of gay men teaching children, one can see the problem in combining the categories of "gay" and "teacher." In popular culture, gay men are defined by sexual difference. By extension of that perceived difference, we are often constructed as oversexed or sexuality not properly restrained, and as sexuality turned bad, or evil. In this sense, a gay man may be seen as the opposite of the chaste woman American culture wanted (wants?) teaching its children. In the 1930's Waller wrote:

> ...the real danger is that [a homosexual man] **may**, by presenting himself as a love object to certain members of his own sex at a time when their sex attitudes have not been deeply canalized, develop in them attitudes similar to his own. For nothing seems more certain than that homosexuality is contagious (1932, pp. 147-48, emphasis mine).

Waller's belief that one's sexual orientation is subject to conditioning is now largely discredited in the medical and psychological communities. Yet, teachers still deal with the tenacious fallout from earlier times. Further, at least Waller had the compunction to condition his argument with **may**. Current accusations against male teachers are not so careful. He may be the last person parents want with their children. However, it is also important to point out that these social constructions about groups of people are essentially not accurate.

The costs of caring covertly

A common perception of men who teach in primary grades and in preschools is that these men are homosexuals. Another common perception is that homosexual males are effeminate. The effect of these largely inaccurate mappings between homosexuality, teaching, and gendered behavior have had disastrous effects on teachers. As a closeted, gay primary teacher, I constantly monitored my behaviors around my children. I was anxious about how other teachers, parents and principals would interpret my interactions and relationships with my students. The paradox that my self-monitoring engendered is complex. As a strong child advocate, I valued the concern that I and other adults have for children. Therefore, like others around me, I was and am careful about the influences that prevail on the children I teach. Yet, how can I, by virtue of my sexual orientation, be unhealthy for kids? Because I was aware that others believed that social contact with homosexuals was harmful for children, I monitored myself carefully.

I remember deciding what to say to other teachers, who I should sit with at lunch, how "artistic" I could be with my classroom decor, and how I would justify so many plants in my classroom. Self monitoring was also a ubiquitous part of making a self representation with my students. When I saw my students in K-Mart with their families, I was often embarrassed, flushed, and felt trapped. I now understand that my own homophobia had much to do with my fear that the parents had "figured me out."

In monitoring my embarassment, and in checking to see if I had let anything slip, I found the data for my own self hatred. So, while I support the need to be scrupulous about who influences our children, I think that the automatic suspicion of gay men is something quite different.

Rofes (1985) presents a compelling portrait of his struggles as a closeted gay teacher. He goes through successive stages of representation, with the constant struggle of trying to have an integrated life. He ultimately leaves teaching, frustrated that he cannot be simultaneously gay and a teacher. But his decision to leave teaching is not based on any conflicts between his sexual desires and his behavior towards his students. Rather, his departure is based on his frustrations about fragmenting his life, his personal guilt about dishonesty, and fear that his self representation as a gay man would reduce his teaching effectiveness. Nais's (1989) description of "feeling like a [primary] teacher" hinges on themes of "being yourself," "being whole," "being natural," and "establishing relationships with children" (pp. 181-186). Likewise, Noddings' (1984) analysis that teachers "be totally and nonselectively [emphasis mine] present to the student" (p. 180) is arguably the conflict. I do not read Noddings as saying, nor am I arguing for, teachers' (gay and straight) "rights" to be sexual with children. Nor does this argument suggest that gay and lesbian teachers should discuss their private lives in ways different from heterosexual teachers. The important point about gay teachers freedom for self-

representation is a release of internalized paranoia and self loathing that can preempt us from "being there" for children. Of course, these characterizations are very difficult when gay teachers feel threatened to be themselves.

Feeling paranoid about our sexual orientation, gay and lesbian teachers have adopted coping strategies that, in my opinion, reduce our effectiveness as teachers. In an interview study of British gay and lesbian teachers, Squirrel (1989) describes closeted gay teachers trying "to pass" as non-gay teachers. With students, the teachers ducked answers to questions that had any relation to their gay lives. They were also secretive about their lives outside of school. They made themselves physically and psychologically distant from their students in an effort to conceal their sexual orientations. While some would argue that teachers, in general, <u>should</u> separate home and school lives, my own perception is that such separation is difficult, taxing, and fragmenting. Separation, distance, and lack of self disclosure are the conditions in teaching that Noddings (1992, 1984) has argued against. These conditions are certainly unlike what Nais (1989) has described as typical for primary teachers. And a further consideration is the issue of choice as to whether or not a teacher will choose to segregate home and school. Homosexuals usually don't choose to be closeted. And, to suggest that <u>only</u> gay and lesbian teachers should conceal their outside of school lives is an example of the

discrimination that gay and lesbian teachers are working to reveal and overturn.

Working from a cultural assumption that homosexuality is inappropriate, the teachers in Squirrels' study struggled with the "inappropriateness of revealing their own sexuality..." Lesbian teachers chose not to speak up with the understanding that speaking as lesbians, their words would discredit the cause for which they spoke. The self-criticism inherent in such positioning is both painful and understandable. Gay men reported creating a facade of heterosexuality. They frequently had special female friends that would pose as partners. At this writing, my partner, Rick, and I are going on a "date" with a lesbian couple, Brenda and Dianne, who teach together at a local high school. We will be going to their faculty party as two "straight' couples. Our covering is not a perfect or simple solution. We are caring about our friends (and perpetuating mythology).

Squirrel (1989) suggests that an underlying homophobic assumption in the culture is that lesbian teachers will "neuter" young boys and "recruit" young girls to lesbian lifestyles. There are very serious costs to be paid in living with the "recruitment argument." My internalized awareness of "recruitment" influences my relationships with students. A colleague who observed my teaching for a semester noted that I avoided classroom interactions a "handsome" male undergraduate. There are countless examples of self monitoring and self

censoring that actually preempt caring relationships with students. A second assumption is that gay male teachers desire sex with boys. Understanding this relationship of "othered" peoples (homosexuals, pedophiles, and pre-adult males) requires re-construction of how and why homosexuals came to be "outlaws."

Gay male teachers and work differentiation

I do not intend to claim that teachers, certain teachers, percentages of teachers, or types of teachers are or aren't gay or lesbian. That is their personal and professional business. However, the fact that sexual orientation is an issue at all in teaching is related to a cultural and economic use of "homosexuality." Homosexuality as a construct is relatively new. It is a social construction from the twentieth century created for political and economic control of people, especially men. Following the arguments of Foucault (1978) and Sedgwick (1985), Owens (1992) reasons that homophobia is a ritualized mechanism of social control. Owens suggests that there is great utility in viewing homosexual men as outsiders or others. Then, given the public perception that all men are, or should be, heterosexual, they can be blackmailed with accusations of homosexuality. The success of appropriating sexual orientation as a lever for social control depends on creating and intensifying the crimminality as well as the feminization of homosexuality. While such homophobic practices are most certainly oppressive to women and gay men, Owens suggests their more pervasive influence is in regulating the behavior of all men. "The imputing of homosexual motive to

every male relationship is thus 'an immensely potent tool...for manipulation of every form of power that [is] refracted through the gender system--that is, in European society, of virtually every form of power' (Sedgwick, pp. 88-89)" (pp. 221). I would also reinforce the obvious, but no less significant point that homophobic social control invests heavily in misogynistic practice by "feminizing" homosexuality in order to devalue it.

The same arguments can be mapped onto the gatekeeping that restricts men's participation in primary education. These hegemonic moves appropriate females' cultural space with the intent to devalue both homosexuality and primary males. Both moves preserve men's dominance. In addition, the gatekeeping that occurs at the entrance to primary teaching also appropriates the cultural space of homosexual men. The hidden message to men who choose to teach primary grades is that "those teachers are usually homosexual." And given the undesirability of homosexuality, men may be dissuaded. Yet, with the growing legitimacy of gay and lesbian theorizing (Brown, 1993; Fuss, 1991; Plummer, 1992), homosexuality as a criminalized state may be losing some of its potency. To remedy this inefficacy, more recent accusations of pedophilia have been infused into homosexuality and primary teaching to create a mistrust of men who teach young children.

There has been a history of mappings between homosexuality and sexual relationships between adults and young people. According to the Gay Left Collective (1992), "'child molesters'

and 'exploiters of children' are the new social monsters," (p. 429). Because campaigning against homosexuals is less effective than it used to be, right wing moralists' search for new ways to vilify and recriminalize homosexuality. So, to "protect childhood," anti-gay groups are currently drawing a one-to-one relationship between gay men and pedophiles.

Yet, gay activists have not spoken out or written about such inaccurate groupings. Two of the many issues that warrant discussion are definitions for pedophilia and children's constructions of sexuality. Pedophilia is defined legally to mean sexual activity between those above the age of consent with those below the age of consent. Considering the frequency and variety of sexual experiences that occur before the age of consent, such definition does little to explore the issues which underlie the relationships. The onset of puberty has also been considered as a criterial attribute for the construction of pedophilia, though such a position presumes a parallel relationship between physical and emotional maturity, that is, to say the least, not axiomatic. However, for purposes of this discussion it is at least productive to define a pedophile as someone attracted toward prepubescent people. When self defined, the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) in Great Britain suggests "sexual love directed toward children," with children operationalized as "both in prepuberty and early adolescence," (GLC, 1992, 432).

Another issue in factually defining pedophilia is that the majority of pedophilic relations occur between heterosexual men and young girls, usually inside family boundaries. However, the largest percentage of self-identified, or "out," pedophiles are characteristically male, and boy lovers. This percentage makes more sense when one considers the sexual options that are available to diffenent constituencies in our culture. It is clear that women have limited opportunities for expression of autonomous sexual desire (Fine, 1992). Further, in current sexual mythology, older women initiating young males, as well as adult males "deflowering" a young "virgin" are special, if not accepted cultural practices. Consequently, adult/child relationships which are homosexual become "unique," and appear in high relief, when compared with the previously mentioned cultural myths that support the existence of sexual relations between the "young" and the "mature." In this way, pedophilia is inaccurately mapped onto homosexuality. Then accusations of homosexuality, with implicit semantic features of pedophilia, are used to control men's appropriation of female teaching space. And based on arguments by Seifert (1987) and Ruskin (1991), that conflation of gendered work categories would mean greater status and higher salaries for the professionals who currently work for less than other professions, even less than teachers at other grade levels. Yet, there remain several underlying issues in the use and misuse of pedophiles to further criminalize homosexuals.

Gay teachers and accusations of improper caring

Men who teach young children within Nodding's and Nais's ideologies of teaching as care may be at risk. Anderson's (1966) powerful narrative "Hands" details the costs of a man who cares for children in teaching contexts. By the end of the story Wing, the teacher, is a ruined man. In writing about Wing's years as a teacher, Anderson describes him as "...meant by nature to be a teacher of youth. He was one of those rare, little men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness" (p. 31).

Later in the story, Anderson creates in his character, Wing, the power to teach, care, and change lives through touch.

> Here and there went his hands, caressing the shoulders of the boys, playing about the tousled heads. As he talked his voice became soft and musical. There was a caress in that also. In the way the voice and the hands, the soft stroking of the shoulders and the touching of the hair were parts of the schoolmaster's efforts to carry a dream into the young minds. By the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself. He was one of those men in whom the force that creates life is diffused, not centralized. Under the caress of his hands, doubt went out of the minds of the boys and they began also to dream... (pp. 31-32).

But Wing's touching of the students is understood differently by the townspeople and through the character of of

the saloon keeper, who beats and kicks him, Wing is warned, "I'll teach you to put your hands on my boy, you beast" (p. 32, emphasis mine) and "Keep your hands to yourself" (p. 33). Wing is driven from the town, and endures his shamed hands by keeping them out of sight, and himself away from others. He becomes a recluse. I'm intrigued by the choice of Anderson's words "I'll teach you" spoken by the attacker. Physical abuse of children in school contexts has historically been tolerated to greater degree that has caring touch.

In "Hands" Anderson uses the character of Wing to teach readers about the injustices of misinterpreting touch and misunderstanding teachers' caring. Wing is victimized by the misinterpretation that was was born of bigotry and fear. Yet, when I was reading the previous paragraph, I recoiled at the words caress and stroking. These intimate physical acts of caring made me uncomfortable when I read them and now when I write them. I thought about how I use my hands as a teacher. I have told myself that touch is a productive and ethical teaching move. I have conditioned my hands that they only touch my students on their shoulders, arms, and upper backs. I have further instructed my hands that touch means quick "pats" and not message. I have constructed a cage of permissable touch.

I think my rules of touching in classrooms are good ones. I do not mean to suggest that I think that I or other teachers should touch in ways that different from my rules. But it is important to interogate how it is that touching is so suspect a

behavior, and paddling is not. I think this says much about our culture's values regarding children's rights, and simultaneously a resistance to interogate our own motives for touch and paddling.

Social constructions that have worked against males teaching in early grades can be found in the implicit, but pervasive relationship that has been drawn between primary males and pedophiles, as well as between gay men and pedophiles. A first paradox, and there are several, is that pedophilia is mapped on gay men in general. As I stated previously, the data do not support this association. While there are pedophiles who target male children, they are the minority. The only relationship that connects homosexuality and pedophilia is the biological sex of the desired. However, since children are perceived to be asexual by the mainstream culture, the sex or gender of the pedophilic desire seems less important than the fact that they are children.

Though molestation happens in a sexual context, the act is closer to an act of control and manipulation of power. Children are chosen by pedophiles because they are children. In contrast, sexual acts between consenting adult males seem a likely context to test these very issues of power, equality, and reciprocity in sexual relationships. Two adult males who choose to inhabit a shared life have endless opportunities to analyze the effects of patriarchal, sexist, and male dominated ways of knowing (Isenee, 1990; McWhirter & Mattison, 1984) So, the connection that is being drawn between homosexuality and pedophilia is not only

numerically incorrect, but from political and moral perspectives, the connection masks a deeper issue in pedophilia, the manipulation of power and abuse of adult privilege in sexual contexts. And because the mapping is inaccurate, I am left to conclude that there are unstated reasons for this construction.

Further problematizing the inaccurate conflating of pedophilia and homosexuality (and finally primary teaching) are cultural mysticisms surrounding sex, confusions and anxieties imploding around "the protection of children," and appropriation of children's lives to justify adults' bigotry and fear. Using pedophilia to further criminalize homosexuals in the minds of the public is dishonest and unethical. Refusing to examine the complexities of the relationships that do occur between adults and persons not yet adults likely exacerbates the sexual abuse of children and the exploitation of pedophiles. It is more important to distinguish between abusive, forced relationships, and "consensual relationships," while not so important to consider gender, if in fact, the sexuality of the child is inchoate.

Some final thoughts

At this economic moment, families are straining to accomodate to the related demands of two career and single parent households. Socially, we celebrate women's increased options that allow all of us to claim our rights to professional and work lives. But, the stress these rights have placed on child rearing is palpable. Classrooms which are embued with caring teaching

are a likely support for troubled families. In fact, males have much to contribute to a caring gap in children's development. And gay males, with feet on both sides of the chasm of gender politics, may provide nurturing and caring in ways that are especially productive for young children. Yet, bullying and excluding gay males, based on homophobic bigotry is clearly inappropriate, especially in contexts that intend to be caring ones. Likewise the decisions that I made for Steve's "own good" are problematic. Steve taught me that teachers can be either committed or uncommitted in their caring for children. Their construction of teaching as caring is based on their own philosophies about learning and children. Sexual orientation has evidently little to do with whether or not Steve would have been effective as a teacher. It is others' use of their own perceptions of caring and Steve's effectiveness that became my problem. That is what I would try to say to Steve now. I would also try to convey that caring for children in our teaching is something that we constantly build, monitor, and reshape, based on the evolving relationship between the carer and cared for. At this time, part of that construction for men who do chose to teach young children is awareness of what others are making of our caring.

I want more out of this ending piece. But, not sure how yet - suggestions

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