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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on recent poststructural, psychoanalytic, feminist, and queer theorizing to analyze progressive pedagogies described by homosexual physical educators and professors. It is based on two life history projects conducted with physical educators. The overall purpose of the research was to examine the social construction of female sexualities within the physical education profession. The teachers' personal narratives described how their identities (whether they were racial, gendered, or sexual) shaped their pedagogies. One teacher came out as a lesbian to her students each year in a planned manner, then formally used her lesbian identity to illustrate the classroom management principle of pride as an element of respect. Another teacher made explicit the link between her lesbian desire and her ethical response as a teacher, though that link was only articulated in non-teaching conversations and was not part of a formal anti-homophobic pedagogy. Two other teachers' narratives made overt ties between racial identity and pedagogy. They outlined direct links between their teaching and different forms of racism. The links between lesbian identity and anti-racist responses were less explicit. (Contains 46 references.) (SM)

Pedagogies and Life Histories of Non-Heterosexual Physical Educators

by

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Introduction

This paper draws on recent poststructural, psychoanalytic, feminist and queer theorizing to present analyses of progressive pedagogies described by 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'queer' physical education teachers and professors.

Issues of sexuality, heterosexism and homophobia deserve particular attention in the context of women's physical education. Many women who teach physical education have been suspected of being lesbian and this suspicion has enveloped countless female teachers and coaches in a shroud of oppressive silence -- tolerated only as an open secret, an absent presence. The suspicion of lesbianism, explained Susan Cahn (1994), has functioned both as a homophobic repellent and as a magnetic sexual field of force in physical education and women's sport. I suggest this is due to the peculiar (some might say queer) location of women's physical education at the nexus of masculinist sport, gendered education, and pedagogies of the body (Burstyn, 1999; Dewar, 1990; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Pronger, 1999). Historically, women's physical education has provided a unique site within education where lesbian desire may be directed towards athleticized female bodies and expressed in women-only contexts (Cahn, 1994; Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, 1986). At the same time, within a society and profession where heterosexuality is regarded by many as normal, if not compulsory, and femininity in women valued more highly than masculinity, a constellation of psychic defenses and social norms has been enlisted to restrict the expression of queer desire and, particularly, lesbian desire. This paper explores how 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'queer' physical education teachers developed pedagogies in response to the complicated wounds inflicted by homophobic-racist cultures and a heteronormative profession.

Theoretical Framework and Method

One way to inquire into the impact of these defenses and norms is to listen to teachers who have lived the silences and pleasures of same-sex desire. Teacher's life history narratives have the potential to permit

greater understanding, and overstanding, into the accidental, circuitous and precarious ways teachers develop their teaching approaches. Resisting the oversimplification of chronology and humanism in my approach to teacher's life history, I have tried to heed what Deborah Britzman (1998) referred to as 'the curious time of learning'. She cautions against drawing straightforward connections between teacher's pedagogy and their life experiences by sketching some of the stranger psychic dynamics at play in this curious time of learning:

The term of learning acknowledges that studying the experiences and the traumatic residuals of genocide, ethnic hatred, aggression, and forms of state-sanctioned -- and hence legal -- social violence requires educators to think carefully about their own theories of learning and how the stuff of such difficult knowledge becomes pedagogical (p. 117).

The paper is based on two life history projects I have conducted with physical education teachers. The overall purpose of this research is to examine the social construction of female sexualities within the physical education profession. The first study, my doctoral dissertation, examined the life histories of eight 'Anglo-Canadian' female physical education teachers, three of whom self-identified as 'lesbian' and three as 'heterosexual'. My primary focus in this study was how the categories 'lesbian' and 'heterosexual' were constructed within a hierarchical binary. The second, larger study has documented the life histories of eighteen physical education teachers and professors in K-12 and higher education across the United States and Canada. In this project I interviewed 'non-heterosexual' teachers from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds with participants describing their sexual identities as 'gay man', 'lesbian', 'bisexual', 'queer' and racial identities as 'White'¹, 'Bi-racial', 'Latina' and 'Armenian-American'. This paper represents one theme from both life history projects and is derived from a feminist-poststructural approach to teacher's life history research.

Since the 1980s, standpoint epistemologies have informed much of the existing research about the life histories of teachers and lesbians (Casey, 1993; Goodson & Walker, 1988; Knowles, 1991; Lapovsky Kennedy, 1995; Lesbian Oral History Group, 1989; Middleton, 1993, 1998; Sparkes & Templin, 1992; Sparkes, 1994a, 1994b; Squires & Sparkes, 1996, Weiler & Middleton, 1999). Rather than relying on empiricist or standpoint epistemologies, my methodology relies more on poststructural assumptions about experience, subjectivity and discourse (Clough, 1993; Davies, 1990, 1991, 1992; Scott, 1992; Weedon, 1997) which enables me to focus on the 'dominations' of heteronormative silences, and how queer theorizing might illuminate what has been excluded from categories 'lesbian' and 'heterosexual'. Consequently, I incorporated poststructural and queer theories about identity *alongside* more traditional feminist life history methodology. This pragmatic 'feminist-poststructural' approach to life history has more than one purpose driving the analysis -- to 'understand' and 'overstand' the teacher's life history narratives (Sykes, 2001a). The notion of 'overstanding' draws on a distinction made by literary theorists Jonathan Culler (cited in Eco, 1992) and William Booth (1979) between

asking questions the text insists upon and asking questions the text does not pose. Thus, my method of analyzing teachers life histories draws from that impulse in queer theory that "offers education techniques to make sense of and remark upon what it dismisses or cannot bear to know" (Britzman, 1995: 154).

Pedagogies: Anti-homophobic and Anti-racist

The following narratives illustrate just a few examples of anti-homophobic and anti-racist teaching strategies used by lesbian physical education teachers. My interpretations of these narratives suggest that teachers are connected though a web of rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious, direct and circuitous tendrils to pedagogy.

Narrative #1

R.I.S.E. (Respect, Integrity, Sensitivity, Effort)

Brenda was a mentor teacher and union activist in her urban school district. At the time of interviewing, she had been teaching middle school physical education for eight years at the same school. She remarked on being the only White staff member in the school which had an Hispanic and African-American student population.

She recounted the moment when she came out to her sixth grade class in response to a student yelling 'Coach Schneider's gay!' This was a critical incident in Brenda's teaching career.

About six years ago, it was a week before school let out, I had walked out of my classroom over to my office and a student yelled from a doorway:

'Coach Schneider's gay!'

Brenda decided to confront the student:

I got what I needed out of my office, I went back to the classroom and I went right to the child sitting right by the door and I said,

'I need to see you outside.'

I said, 'I don't have a problem with the fact that I'm gay. I have a problem when I'm disrespected for it.' And, uh, this young man is African American and I said, 'I don't disrespect you for being African American, I don't expect you to disrespect me. Does that sound fair?'

'Yeah.'

Brenda explained to the student that being gay was positive rather than negative, deserving respect rather than disrespect. She then illustrated her point using an example of racism that she presumed the student would relate to. She relied upon an analogy between racism and homophobia, between harm experienced by herself and her student, to convince the student of his mistake.

Immediately after, she spoke to the sixth grade class she was teaching at the time about what had happened, coming out to the rest of her class in the process.

I got back in the room and I decided to tell them what I had to deal with. So I sat them down on the floor and I basically just repeated it to the class. And then kids asked some questions. 'When did you know?' and 'Does your family know?' and 'How are they about it?' and, of course, we got to, 'Do you have a girlfriend?' and 'How do you do it?' At which point I said, 'Okay well that's not appropriate for the classroom.'

This coming out incident profoundly altered Brenda's teaching practices. Since then, she has formally included lgbt topics in her physical education curriculum.

I don't have rules in my classroom. I have a model and its R.I.S.E. -- Respect, Integrity, Sensitivity and Effort. When I talk about Respect is where I bring it in. No put-downs, no name-calling.

As part of teaching about the 'respect' in R.I.S.E. Brenda focused on PRIDE, writing the following sentences on a whiteboard in her gym/classroom which students were then asked to complete:

PRIDE
I am proud of myself...
I am proud of my family...
I am proud of my community...
I am proud of my world...

On an adjacent whiteboard she had written her own responses:

PRIDE
I am proud of myself...because I am a positive lesbian role model.
I am proud of my family...because we all like each other and support each other.

I am proud of my community...because of it's diversity.

I am proud of my world...because we survive and keep growing.

Alongside her R.I.S.E. model, Brenda continues to use her personal experience to demonstrate to students the harm caused by phrases like 'that's so gay'.

Over the summer I decided that from that point forward, at the beginning of each school year I would totally come out to my kids. I do it kinda like through the classroom management lesson. We start talking about name-calling and I'll say, 'If somebody says 'Oh that's so gay' you know that hurts me because I am gay and, and you're insulting me and you're basically telling me I should feel bad about myself.' Depending on the class, we'll get into a discussion. I've gone through many variations on it on how to do it. You learn stuff too, like, to protect yourself. You do have to tie it into curriculum. You can't just get in there and go, by the way, here's the announcement of the day.

Brenda formally alerts her students to the possibility of tragic consequences, such as suicide, to homophobic name-calling.

I tell them my personal story. You know, I grew up with hearing a lot of anti-gay comments and it was a real hard struggle for me because, as I came to understand who I was, I had to also fight against that whole negative imagery cause I knew I wasn't a bad or evil person. I say, that wasn't necessarily what my parents, they don't really say it, but I heard it. I heard it on the playground just like your friends are hearing it right now.

Then I tell them about the risk of suicide and that your best friend could be sitting next to you and a few years from now they're gonna be gone because they've listened to you use the work 'faggot' all the time they've been growing up. They're gonna walk away because they know you won't accept them. Or even worse, they're gonna kill themselves. You know, you need to think about that every time you say that.

But that's my schpiel that I give them.

This part of Brenda's teaching approach to places considerable hope upon personal explanations and interventions to alter students' use of homophobic words. It seems to me this could be termed a *pedagogy of injury*².

The reason I do it and keep doing it is because I very clearly remember one of the little boys sitting in the class and his eyes just got majorly big as I was making this announcement. I know what was going on inside him is he was going, 'Somebody's talking about how I feel'. That's why I continue to do it because I want everybody to be educated, I want things to be better, but I really don't want another kid to have to grow up in the ignorance that I had to grow up in.

The last sentence offers a justification for Brenda's pedagogy of coming out -- that as an openly lesbian teacher she can now reduce the ignorance and injury she experienced growing up. Thus her pedagogy is grounded in correcting previous injuries suffered by not being able to be 'out'. This injury-based pedagogy closely mirrors Brown's (1995) notion of 'injury politics' seeking reparation for past wounds.

Brenda seemed only too aware how tenuous such pedagogy was, since student's lives often continued in unexpected, even tragic, directions despite her commitment and effort.

I had a student that I was working with a couple years ago who tells me he's not gay -- he knows I am and that's cool -- but he was using the term transgender...I started talking with him about what was going on. I don't know what he's going to discover about himself but he was definitely feeling different and feeling like he didn't fit in with the other kids. He was starting to receive some teasing, you know, like the other kids were saying 'Oh, like, you're doing all this stuff that's gay.' He ended up dropping out of our school and he went to another school and he also checked in to a mental health clinic for a few days...um...suicidal kind of thing.

Last year I had a transgender child in my seventh grade class who presented himself as a boy, would go and get changed in the locker room when the boys got changed in the locker room. There was family problems and he got pulled out and it wasn't until later that I was told this was a girl. You know, I was sorry that it hadn't been brought to my attention, that I didn't know, that I could have had more specific talks. On the other hand, I was very happy that this child had me for even just a brief time as a teacher.

Brenda spoke at length about difficult consequences of being out. She held a rather pragmatic view towards homophobic reactions of her Principal, colleagues and parents, finely captured in this narrative:

B: There been years where kids have been pulled out of my class because of it. You know, the parent has an issue with it. And when that started happening to that was one of those

things you choose your battles, uh, because I didn't like it. I didn't feel that that was appropriate.

H: How many times has that happened?

B: Over the six years, maybe a total of ten kids have been pulled out.

H: And are the parents, the families up-front about the reason they're pulling them?

B: Sometimes. Basically their complaint is, 'Why is she telling them she's a lesbian? I want my kids out of that class?'

H: And who makes that decision?

B: It's the principal. Like I said when he first started doing it, I checked it out with the union and it's sort of that gray area that the principal has a right to assign a child to which ever class they feel will be best for them. So you have to choose your battles and in Brampton I'm fighting a lot of battles because we have very terrible work environment conditions. I decided not to fight that one. I decided if I get three hundred kids that leaves two hundred and ninety-nine who are getting to know me. That's ten in six years, we're talking maybe one or two a year.

Below is one of the letters sent by a parent to the Principal in 1997:

"...my child, informed that the topic in Coach Schneider's class was about pride. Coach Schneider then went to openly discuss to the classroom how she was (came to be?) a lesbian, and how she struggled as a youth dealing with that. Now, first and foremost, I don't care what her sexual preference is. It is none of my concern nor is it my child's concern. I'm not sending Anton to school to learn about the lifestyle of a lesbian! Besides that I've failed to see the connection with Coach Schneider being proud of her gay lifestyle and teaching physical education! Please be informed that I'm extremely upset and I would really like to meet with you...But most of all I want Anton REMOVED FROM SCHNEIDER'S CLASSROOM!"

The Principal responded to this letter by writing the following memo to Brenda:

Your conduct violates the Education Code which excuses a student from health instruction and family life and sex education due to religious beliefs. This conduct also violates District policy in that health instruction in the area of sexual education is not part of the curriculum for P.E.

...The parent had complained that you introduced yourself to the class as a lesbian...

...I am directing you not to discuss your sexual preference with you students"

To assist in correcting this conduct, I offer the following assistance:

submit lesson plans as required indicating the content of instruction each Friday to my office.

Review with me any area of instruction in which you are unsure of whether it conforms to the curriculum.

I will provide a curriculum specialist to assist the department chairman in developing a unit plan of instruction which you will be required to follow.

Brenda's retort was that "*she had written the curriculum*", having created an elementary physical education handbook in her capacity as a District Mentor. In other parts of her life history, Brenda acknowledged the high emotional costs, in the form of stress, these battles demanded.

At first glance, coming out was a risky, even an irrational, way to develop an anti-homophobic teaching approach. Why did Brenda, like many other teachers I interviewed, return to the site of injury as the starting point for pedagogy? Why not explore pedagogies based on pleasure? There is so much in Brenda's narrative that explained the return to injury on a conscious level of remembering -- the increasingly stressful events leading up to coming out, the complicated individual and institutional responses, the tenuous impact on students' lives. Yet, this isn't a full explanation. Psychoanalytic ideas permit curiosity. Why are we, as teachers, so often drawn to a pedagogy of injury? Why, as Butler (1997) suggested, do we hold an attachment to subjection?

How are we to understand, not merely the disciplinary production of the subject, but the disciplinary cultivation of an attachment to subjection? (p.102).

In Freudian terms, masochism allows for a certain type of pleasure in pain -- a need for suffering. This might partially explain the paradox of risking injury to prevent injury. Perhaps we should be curious about the idea of a masochistic imperative in anti-oppressive teaching. Based on our life history interviews, I can only tentatively suggest that Brenda's pro-gay activism -- 'wanting things to be better' -- is nourished by a masochistic imperative that drives many other teachers and activists like her. Maybe her conscious reasons intermingle with this unconscious, therefore unknowable, masochistic imperative. Maybe this uneasy realization points to why teachers, like Brenda, risk returning to the scene of homophobic injury as one of the grounds for anti-homophobic pedagogy.

Narrative #2

"That Crazy Infatuation"

Earlier I asked why it is still rare to explore pleasure, rather than injury, as a basis for dealing with homophobia in education. Sex and eroticism typically become unthinkable as students learn how to become teachers. On rarely, has becoming a teacher been celebrated as an erotic position *vis-à-vis* students. In Feminist Accused of Harassment, Jane Gallop (1997) spectacularly rejects this by defending effective professor-student relationships as necessarily transference *and* amorous relations³:

In the general consensus that student-teacher relations demean and debase the student, an entire stretch of women's experience is being denied, consigned to silence. And it happens to be women's experience of feeling powerful and sexy, smart and successful (p.43).

Considering pleasure as an aspect of anti-homophobic pedagogy undoubtedly creates difficult ethical demands for teachers. But I encourage us to take up Honeychurch's (1996) incitement to make the sexual body and erotic comprehensible rather than "disclaiming the corporeal as a way of knowing" (p, 10). I offer this cautious suggestion because of the many stories about pleasure, desire and ethics teachers told me during the life history interviews. I think it also resonates with Kevin Kumashiro's (1999) call to "acknowledge ways in which harm is produced *through citation*" (p. 38). If anti-homophobic teaching repeatedly focuses on harm and injury, I think this may be sadly limiting if not, ultimately, harmful itself.

Again, I am drawn to the curiosity permitted by psychoanalytic ideas. Transference and counter-transference are key concepts in understanding the unique type of relationships that form between students and their teachers (Britzman, 1998; Felman, 1987; Gilbert, Brushwood, Matthews, & Britzman, 1999). Transference, in the psychoanalytic sense, is necessary for learning to take place. This is tied to the notion of counter-transference where, quoting Robert Ekstein (1969), the role of the teacher is to:

mediate between the child and society in order to create a system of checks and balances. He [sic] tries to help the child grow up and learn in and through that society: and as he attempts this, he moves back and forth between two impossible tasks (p. 67).

Isn't one of the tasks facing anti-homophobic teaching to create a system of checks and balances between pleasure and injury, between nurturing same-sex eroticism and alleviating verbal, physical and psychic harm? The following narrative was just one of several that I had the 'pleasure' of listening to during the interviews⁴ which speaks to the pleasurable aspects of same-sex desire in physical education.

Angela talked⁵ about having crushes on two student-teachers. She had been out as a 'lesbian' for about ten years and was a highly respected co-operating teacher in her school district. Angela described a student who played in the same women's basketball league, who then requested to do student-teaching with her:

She asked to come and student-teach with me. [sigh] I wanted her to come so bad! I thought it would be so much fun, you know, we just would have such a good time. But I couldn't do that professionally...So I ended up declining her as a student teacher.

I felt real bad about refusing her because at the time she thought it was because she wasn't a good enough student teacher to work with me. I wanted to tell her the real reason. I did a number of years later.

I'm glad that I didn't take her from the practical point of view. I can see myself as a professional making wise choices about things that I could have gotten in trouble for, you know, that I might have regretted because I did feel so strongly, and "ga-ga, and "oo-w-aa". But my whimsical side is like, "Ohh! For the fun of it! Whoa, cool!"

Angela was aware of her attraction towards the student. She was equally aware of what course of action to take, to decline working with the student. Quite soon afterwards, Angela was supervising another student-teacher:

A: Well, there was this other student teacher. She doesn't make any compunctions about the fact that she's a lesbian. I'm supposed to supervise her and we're chatting in the cafeteria, and she starts saying things like, "You know, my last lover."

H: This is your first meeting?

A: "Looked just like you. And she also had two children." And then she starts telling me some scenarios about what they did in bed with her kids in the next room, and, I mean.

H: This is in the first lunch?

A: Yeah. There's all these things that she did that were like come-on's to me. She obviously likes older women and I'm probably 20 years her senior. And what a personality she's got. She's on the softball team, and just real...It just took everything I could muster to not respond to this woman, because I wanted to so bad. I'm like, "Oh, she's so damn cute, God!" Well, that happens to me again! [laughing]...I can remember walking around the apartment going, "Oh, God, I want to call her. I probably should call her about that next thing." I would have to like take my hand, walk away, put a pin in it, and sit myself down

at the desk, so that I wouldn't call her! It's that same infatuation thing that I was telling you about in the relationship with the other young woman. It's just like the silly, crazy.

Angela was again, fully aware of her attraction towards the student and explored the eroticism of the relationship privately, in fantasy;

H: So when you, I don't know, but I think most of us do this, you have this professional life, and then there's another area of when you close your eyes and dream and let yourself go to those erotic sexual places, which are places we can't go in reality

A: Oh, absolutely, yeah. The trouble with that is that it fed the not being able to walk away from the phone because I would imagine going hiking with her in the woods, going out underneath some bush and making out, having orgasms, and kissing, and ooh! I frequently would allow myself to imagine all that kind of stuff, and then come back to reality. Well, so the things that I had to do to counterbalance that, I mean, if I was going to act in any sane, sane way about, and not get myself kicked out my job, or lose my lover [chuckle]. I know I can't do this. But I want to. Really bad.

At the same time, Angela did not seriously consider having a sexual relationship because she firmly believe it could not be 'equal' since she was in a position of power over the students:

I have really strong beliefs about how abusive it is for a person who has more power in knowledge or position over another person, that they would use that to gain favor, sexual or otherwise. So I don't think that I could live real easily with myself either. But, I still enjoyed all those wonderful feelings [chuckling]. Of course at the time I don't know that I would say that I was enjoying it. I was kind of tearing my hair out.

You know, there's plenty of places in society, forces that notice that and say, you know, "That's not acceptable." Maybe it is, as we talk about queer theory or when we start bringing some of these things out in the light, that people will understand the issue of, of that it is a power differential, and when that exists, you can't have an equal relationship.

Thus, Angela openly acknowledged and enjoyed her erotic feelings for these students while choosing not to act on them due to her belief that any relationship would be inherently abusive due to a teacher-student power differential. The necessity of not revealing these feelings to the student did cause problems when she was

unable to explain her reasons for providing a student-teaching opportunity. Ultimately, however, Angela found her own way of working through the antagonism between desire and duty.

Ken Gardner Honeychurch (1996) suggests it is imperative that the sexual body and the erotic be made comprehensible; moreover "once the sexual body's implications are claimed rather than disowned as prurient, the researcher is able to fruitfully explore the constituting effects of its agency" (p.9). Acknowledging eros in pedagogical relationships needs guidelines. Talking more openly about desire and counter-transference does not dissolve the tough decisions about how queerer teachers should act. On the contrary. If lesbian desire is more openly acknowledged, even celebrated, within pedagogical contexts, what are the ethical implications for educators who are both the object and subject of such desire? Does queering and eroticizing physical education place more or less onus on the teacher to express or suppress a lesbian erotic? James Sears (1999) bravely exhorted that "teaching queerly is not teaching sex. It embodies educators who model honesty, civility, authenticity, integrity, fairness, and respect". Yet sex cannot be displaced so easily, nor does sex stand neatly in opposition to the values listed. Nevertheless, focusing intellectual attention onto lesbian desires within women's physical education necessitates pragmatic guidelines regarding concrete practices within the profession. It is tempting to take recourse in moral certitudes, ethical proscriptions or technical guidelines, especially for new teachers in pre-service programs. Indeed, I still take recourse in "THOU SHALL NOT have sex with your students" proscriptions most of the time in my own teacher education classes. However, I do this as I struggle with ways to do justice to the pleasurable stories and life experiences of lesbian, gay and queer teachers I have interviewed. And as I encourage us to consider homo pleasures as an element with anti-homophobic teaching.

Narrative #3

Hate-Free Classroom

When I interviewed Donna⁶ she was a teacher education professor in her early thirties. In response to questions about her racial and sexual identities in my initial e-mail soliciting participants for the study, she described herself 'Armenian-American' and 'lesbian'. Much later on, towards the end of our interviews, I asked Donna to talk about various aspects of her teaching. She described how she tries to create a 'hate-free classroom'. Below are excerpts from her description and also short excerpts from her life history which provide some context and personal history for her remarks.

You don't have to give up on kids...If there is a kid in a situation that is involved with a gang, don't stereotype them cause they might end up being your professor. I was Armenian and I would have been jumped-in in a heartbeat, into the Bloods or the Crypts....

Life history permits some insight, albeit partial, into life experiences that coalesce to give rise to teaching philosophies such as this.

Donna came from a family of teachers. Her mother taught elementary school, her father high school. Her mother's family immigrated from Armenia to the Hunter's Point housing projects in San Francisco. Her father was born on an Indian reservation in Minnesota and grew up in his adoptive White family at the same housing project. Both elementary and high school were difficult academically for Donna. She grew up speaking Armenian at home which made interacting at her English-speaking elementary school difficult for her:

I remember carrying a basketball to school everyday when I wasn't speaking much English. It was the only thing I could identify with being good at.

In high school teachers compared her to her older academically high-achieving brothers and her teacher parents. This lack of understanding was compounded by a reading disorder which was not diagnosed until college.

People weren't understanding how hard it was for me so I focused on other things.

I started to go to the high school that my father taught at, on the other side of the bridge in a very affluent neighborhood. These kids were showing up in Jaguars and BMW's. I had never seen a BMW. I met Vicki at that high school and we hit it off because we both came from the same background...

...She was fourth generation Nortos. She spent most of her time trying really hard to keep me out. Protecting me. She wouldn't allow for me to be jumped in...She was born in. She had no choice.....I had a lot of remorse against her because I wanted to be jumped in....At that time, there were eight in Vicki's household. When I moved to college, Vicki had just died and there was only one left in her household.

I got into trouble selling drugs and became a ward of the court at 15.

Donna spent 8 months in a juvenile correctional facility and then went to an alternative high school, living in group homes until she was able to choose two gay men in San Francisco to be her foster parents. After having a learning disorder diagnosed, Donna then sailed through higher education, getting a doctorate and is now works in teacher education.

So when I taught at the alternative high school... I learned an awful lot about my own internal prejudices. I have a hard time with, and still do to this day, with white supremacy and swastikas. There was a huge population of white power in that area. I mean I could understand where the gang members were coming from, the Crypts, the Bloods, the XIVs. We always had gang members in our classes. But I just really had a hard time focusing and finding the good in the students that would come in with swastikas on their necks and their foreheads. So I struggled with that because I had this teaching style that stated within myself that I was gonna treat all my students equal. And it was really hard to look at somebody with a big ol' swastika on their forehead, tattooed in there, branded, and treat them with the same amount of respect as the known Blood that's sitting next to him or her.

At the beginning of classes I show my teacher standards. There are three that are just cut in stone, you don't have a choice with, they make up the rest of them to compile ten. My first one's attendance. The next one's turning in your assignments on time. Then this big one on, and I call it a hate-free classroom. Sexual orientation is there and individuals with disabilities there, and all the other "isms". I ask the class every time, "Am I forgetting a group of people we need to be sensitive to?" Any time during the semester, if there's another group of people we need to add to this, you all just tell me and we'll add it.

Heather: So it's not okay to verbalize and articulate hatred? It's not okay for the white supremacist to say as much as they like?

I think that's where it scares me 'cause they fit under that same hate-free classroom list. If the class wants to vote on adding white supremacy and they unanimously choose that that needs to be a part of this..... well, we could talk it through. But I know it's not gonna get placed on there.

[laughing]

Donna's description of her 'Hate-Free Classroom' raises crucial pedagogical issues that have implications for both anti-racist and anti-homophobic teaching.

Like all teachers, Donna's unique approach to teaching is deeply rooted in her life experiences. It is not until listening to these experiences that we learn more about her pedagogy, for example, how she defines and enacts 'respect' for students. 'Don't give up' and 'don't stereotype' kids could be Donna's *leitmotif* for her pedagogy. These phrases stayed with me long after our interviews had finished. For me, knowing about Donna's earlier experiences with the Nortés gang profoundly affected what these phrases meant, when she talked about the difficulties of respecting all students equally. "...it was hard to treat them with the same amount of respect as the known Blood that's sitting next to him or her".

At first, the inclusion of all groups appears to form the basis of Donna's hate-free classroom: "*If there's another group of people we need to add to this, you all just tell me and we'll add it*". What groups need to be included is negotiated between the teacher and her students. Thus hers is participatory and inclusive pedagogy. However, this strategy of inclusion becomes difficult when confronted with conflicting perspectives between 'hate-free' and 'hate'. How can a Hate-Free Classroom based on inclusion respond to a hate-group seeking inclusion? Which principle takes precedence – inclusion or hate-free? Are they mutually exclusive? Donna was not prepared to exclude the white supremacist students, for this would mean "*giving up on them*". However, she was prepared to direct and divert class' negotiations to make sure 'white power' was not included as a marginalized group. "*...we could talk it through but I know it's not gonna get placed on there*".

Thus Donna finds a way to respond to seemingly mutually exclusive principles in her pedagogy – what to exclude given a principle of inclusion.

Perhaps then, Donna's hate-free classroom may be more accurately thought of in terms of pluralism rather than inclusion. Jeffery Weeks' (1994) depiction of pluralism is helpful here:

Infinite variety of individual values and goals, and to the complexities of social belongings, in a culture where sub-groups and subcultures, interest groups, communities, identities and social movements proliferate, offering a density of possible belongings, and a potentially explosive tangle obligations and antagonisms (Weeks, 1994: 2).

In this case, the 'hate-free classroom' is not simply an 'inclusive' classroom where cultural diversity is gaily embraced. It is not, as might first appear, simply a matter of recognizing, listing and then welcoming all excluded identities, groups and perspectives. This unproblematic, additive notion permeates much of the discourse about cultural diversity in physical education.

The possibility of permitting, confronting and ultimately changing the white power values of the students forms a critical link between pluralism and solidarity in Donna's Hate-Free Classroom.

Negotiation and student participation permit a degree of 'solidarity' within her class. The class dares to promise the fragile possibility of sharing, of conversation, of community. But it is a brittle pledge. The antagonism between her hate-free philosophy and the white-power philosophy of some students has the potential to cut to the core of this solidarity. Yet, this 'potentially explosive antagonism' is not pre-determined, it is profoundly contingent. Diffusion is possible. Explosion is possible. As are wounding and healing. These are the contingent possibilities of teaching which depend so deeply upon the teacher, the students, the collision between their histories and which way the wind is blowing on any particular day.

My initial question, at the start of this life history research, was how non-heterosexual teachers' experiences of heterosexism affected their teaching approaches. Reluctantly I'm realizing that there is no

overriding, straightforward connection to take solace in. No provable link between marginalized identities and social justice teaching. The links I was seeking are rarely explicit, often circuitous, sometimes accidental and even irrational. As I reflect upon all that Donna taught me, I find myself learning how this 'lesbian' teacher invokes pluralism rather than inclusion to sustain a hate-free classroom that accommodates that very hate, albeit in a fragile way. Her narrative raises critical issues about antagonistic pluralism rather than tranquil inclusion as version of anti-racist teaching. Within it, somewhere, her experiences as a 'lesbian', as a 'coach', as a 'female gang member' are also circulating. But exactly or explicitly how remains just below the surface of what was said.

Narrative #4

"Say What We Think, But Think Before We Say It"

At the time of our interviews, Juanita was an Assistant Professor teaching sport studies in a southern state. When asked via e-mail, Juanita self-identified as 'latina' and 'lesbian'.

I'm at a different stage in my pride as a Latina than I am in my pride as a lesbian.

If I were at a cocktail party I'd be happy to contribute to a conversation based on my standpoint or epistemology as a Latina. Depending on the crowd, I wouldn't so readily say, "Well, as a lesbian this is how I feel". And I hate it as a scholar. There ought to be some comparison there but when you really find out how it works, it's not the same cause there's different consequences from each of those. When I say "I'm Latina" and for some people I'll say "I'm Hispanic", there's a very different response that I'll get than if I were to say "I'm lesbian."

I have to read my students each semester. With my grad students, I'm out to them. I don't mind if undergrads find out that I'm lesbian but I don't know yet in this particular group of students that I'm teaching. I don't sense that that would be a good thing. I already have some resisters. Some of our ESS majors often are like "Why should we study sport sociologically? Seems like a waste of my time." So I always fight that anyway, and then if I go up there and say, "Well, I'm this radical Latina lesbian and you're gonna get my perspective," that's just gonna push them even further away. So lately I'm most comfortable in my classroom just being a sociologist.

My enrollment can go up to ninety in this class. That confines me in a way too with that many students cause I'm not gonna get to know all of them.

I've had students at very different places on their thinking about race relations and coming to term with themselves as racialized people. I've taught predominantly white students.

This needs to be an environment where we can say what we're thinking. We will think before we say it to make sure we're not being hurtful to someone in particular, but we need to be able to say what we're thinking and deal with these issues.

I remember one day we had this girl who had obviously read some of the biological determinism literature. and she really believes that black people are better athletes because they're built better to be athletes and it's naturalized. My heart just went out to her because I knew these other students were gonna jump all over her. Probably half the class agreed with her and didn't want to say that out loud, but she said it out loud.

Someone started to jump on her about it and I just had to say, "Wait a second, let her finish what she's saying. We may not all take her perspective but we have agreed in here to let people say what their perspective is so let's listen to it. Then you can share yours with her and see if there's some place in there that we can learn from each other. I knew that I had to, not defend her, but defend everybody's right to be where they are.

Like the earlier narrative about Donna confronting students' white supremacist views as a lesbian of color, Juanita was confronted with a student's racist biological determinist views. The racism was cloaked in benign scientific neutrality, rather than the self-declared hatred of white supremacist versions of racism. Nevertheless, both teachers are faced with the pedagogical tasks of responding. What pedagogy is sufficient in the face of racist student perspectives such as these? How do teachers cope with perspectives that rival, and have the potential to deeply wound, the teachers own lived experiences and identities as, say, Latina, Armenian-American or African-American? Perhaps part of the issue is whether the students' racisms are experienced, immediately or belatedly, as opposing perspectives or as active hostility. The depth of the wounds and the length of the scars might be different in each case. Yet pedagogy holds the potential for both allowing and healing these wounds.

Growing up you know I had white friends who thought I wasn't like other Mexicans in California, other Mexicans or what we called 'wetbacks'.

So with that girl, even though she's a white woman who grew up in a rural environment who I have nothing really in common with, I understood something about her needing to be where she

was. The fact that stuff needs to be said. I do think that I'm a better educator because I've been through all that, because I've heard people make derogatory comments about me that weren't really about me. It makes me sensitive to a lot of things that other people can just brush away. This department is extremely white and, these are great people in our field and I'm happy to work with them, but I can tell you right now they're whitening me in their own minds. They're whitening me. They don't care that I'm Mexican and that matters to me. They should care and they should find out a way to care that's not racist. So, you know, that will always temper how I deal with my students.

Juanita's life history narrative illuminated some ways that her prior experiences of racism made her a "more sensitive" teacher and shed light on how she diffused the tension between racist and anti-racist perspectives. Her pedagogy accommodated conflicting perspectives about race and racism in order to 'defend everybody's right to be where they are'. For Juanita, this meant being confronted with students' overt racism, "*she really believes black people are better athletes*" and colleagues' more subtle racism "*they're whitening me in their minds*". Again, this required pluralism rather than inclusion to accommodate these conflicting perspectives. She held different expectations for colleagues than students in terms of their rights to hold onto racist perspectives. She was troubled by colleagues who avoided issues of personal and institutional racism: "*They're whitening me. They don't care that I'm Mexican*". Juanita's expectations were different in this collegial, rather than pedagogical, context. "*They should care and they should find out a way to care that's not racist*". This contrasted with her teaching approach where she understood students' "*right to be where they are*".

In the preceding narratives Donna and Juanita illustrated how, as lesbian teachers of color, they dealt with students' racism within their classrooms. Both Donna and Juanita's life narratives contained explicit statements about ways their racial identities and experiences of racism were linked to their teaching philosophies, such as 'don't give up on kids' and 'defending everyone's right to be where they are'. These explicit statements were determined attempts to teach me something about the complex intersections of racism and teaching. I hear my own echo asking "How do you cope with all that stuff in the moment of teaching"? And as I become more attuned to the impossibilities of representation, I recognize that stories about pedagogy have both shallow and deep roots that run beneath the ground of explicit description. I hoped my interviews might unearth the root networks between teachers' 'lesbian' and 'straight' identities and their teaching approaches. In hindsight, the connections between racial constructions, sexualities and pedagogies remain somewhat deeper down. There was little explicit articulation how Donna and Juanita's lesbian identities shaped their pedagogical responses to students' racism. But it's all there....somewhere.

In/Conclusions

These narratives tell us something about how teachers' identities, be they racial, gendered or sexual, shape their pedagogies. How the connections between identity and teaching varies in how explicitly they can be described within an interview. Brenda's model of R.I.S.E. provided the most explicit tie between an out lesbian identity and formal anti-homophobic curriculum. Each school year, she 'comes out' as lesbian to her students in a planned manner, and then formally uses her lesbian identity to illustrate the classroom management principle of PRIDE as an element of respect for her classes.

Angela's narrative made less explicit links between lesbian desire and informal pedagogy. Her response to her same-sex desire for student in a professional, ethical way provides an example of working through of same-sex counter-transference. She makes explicit the link between her lesbian desire and her ethical response as a teacher. However, these explicit links were articulated only within our interview, and possibly in private, non-teaching conversations. It is not part of a formal anti-homophobic pedagogy in the way that Brenda's incorporation of PRIDE was..

Donna and Juanita's narratives made overt ties are between 'racial' identity and pedagogy. They outlined direct links between their teaching and different forms of racism -- from subtle 'whitening' to 'white power'.

The links between 'lesbian' identity and anti-racist responses were less explicit. I feel this is partly due to shadows created by my own white privilege as the researcher. My interviews with White and non-White teachers differed in the extent and way race and racism was talked about. Ruth Frankenburg (1993), in her life history work with white women in the US, adroitly pointed out how "Whiteness and Americanness seemed comprehensible to many only by reference to the Others excluded from these categories" (p. 17). There were only rare occasions in this study when 'whiteness' was mentioned in my interviews with White women. These shadows of whiteness reveal much about how white privilege is constructed over lifetimes and even sustained by life history research such as this. White racial identity (and its normative, privileged position) was constructed as the absent yet privileged presence.

Unanswered questions remain because the explicit links between Donna and Juanita's 'lesbian' identities on their anti-racist pedagogies were not unearthed. The difficulty of moving beyond the often empty incantation 'race-class-gender' has been quite eruditely stated by Himani Bannerji (1995):

How to think of gender, 'race' and class in terms of what is called their 'intersectionality'... is a project that is still in the process of being worked out. Somehow, we know almost instinctively that these oppressions, separately named as sexism, racism and class exploitation, are intimately connected. But when it comes to showing how, it is always difficult, and strains the capacity of our conventional ways of speaking on such matters. And, if abstract theorization is partially

possible, the concrete understanding of how they actually work together continues to have an elusive quality about it. (p. 122)

My intent in asking and listening to teachers' narratives about student-teacher desire stemmed from concerns about the limits of anti-homophobic pedagogy as it is typically framed within physical education and social justice discourses. Britzman (1995) first pointed out the limits of seeking tolerance discourses, stating that ultimately the best that can be achieved subject positions of 'tolerant normal' and 'tolerated subaltern'. The ethically cautious introduction of homoeroticism into discussions about anti-homophobic pedagogy seeks a way beyond these positions. I suspect stories of homoeroticism stimulate stories of eroticism more easily, or perhaps just differently, than stories about homophobia give rise to stories about heterosexual privilege. Part of my interpretative journey is to wander towards and wonder how heteronormativity and straight privilege can be brought into the discursive frame of 'anti-homophobic pedagogy'. The strategic value of 'straight allies' in advancing lgbt issues in physical education has been grasped at school, school district and organizational levels. The recent struggle to establish an LBGTA Council within AAHPERD at the 2001 convention is a timely example. The 'A' of the acronym is my point here. Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender and ALLIES. Discursive and practical emphasis was placed on lobbying, including and thanking 'allies' who supported setting up a funded and constitutionally effective organizational structure to formally deal with issues facing sexual minorities in physical education profession. Increasingly widespread and sophisticated network of school Gay-Straight Alliances is another example, a movement that has become effective enough to draw the active political attention of neoconservative reactionaries seeking to ban or disband these groups. However, the inclusion of straight privilege and erotophobia still remains rare within discourse of anti-homophobic education.

Here the analogy with anti-racist pedagogy is instructive. White privilege, so often introduced via Peggy Macintosh's article and increasingly through critical race studies' sophisticated focus on whiteness, has been incorporated into the discourses of anti-racist education. At this stage I would do little more than speculate about analogies between erotophobia and xenophobia in anti-homophobic and anti-racist discourses. Yet I wonder about the boundary established, even in this paper, between 'anti-homophobia' and 'anti-racism'. This leads me back into Deborah Britzman's (2000) recent commentary about teacher education:

"There is nothing easy about encountering histories of woeful disregard. At the end of our century, teacher education has yet to even acknowledge the confusion of our times. Learning from the other's trauma is of a different order, one where application of knowledge is irrelevant because knowledge of trauma is other than the knowledge of mastery, application, and standardization" (para 24).

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¹ My use of the term 'White' is intended to, in part, counteract the normative process at work when only the racial identities of women of colour are noted. One of the central features of white privilege is not to 'see', discuss or research its own operation. Repeatedly naming some narrators and myself as White women is my process of becoming accountable for the operation of my white privilege in the construction of this paper and conduct of the research.

² I have explored this idea of a *pedagogy of injury* in more detail elsewhere, particularly the psychoanalytic implications (Sykes, 2001c).

³ I strongly recommend reading Feminist Accused of Harassment in its entirety because Gallop's personal evidence and corresponding intellectual positions are difficult to summarize out of context. Added to which, her text is persuasive, or should it be seductive.

⁴ Like the idea of a *pedagogy of injury*, I have written about transference between teachers and students in more detail elsewhere, (Sykes, 2001b).

⁵ Angela had seen me give a presentation about the early findings of this project, before we had finished our interviewing. After the presentation she decided to tell me about having crushes on two of her student-teachers.

⁶ All real names of people and places have been changed, and changes verified by interviewees, to protect their anonymity.

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