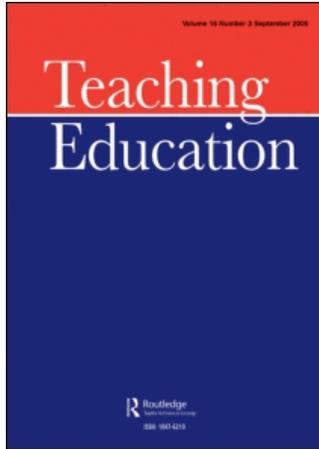


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Safe, Positive and Queering Moments in Teaching Education and Schooling: A conceptual framework

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This article introduces a conceptual framework for thinking about the development of anti-homophobia education in teacher education and schooling contexts. We bring the safe, positive, and queering moments framework to bear on three distinct anti-homophobia education practices: coming out stories, homophobic name-calling analysis, and Pride Week activities. Our analysis of these education practices through the lens of our conceptual framework illuminates its usefulness for thinking through both the intent and impact of anti-homophobia education within classrooms. Importantly, our analysis also reveals that within a classroom of students who are taking up anti-homophobia education in different ways any one moment can be all three—safe, positive, and queering. We advocate an approach to anti-homophobia education that seeks change through the creation of all three moments, and that locates anti-homophobia strategies on points in a constellation of “safe moments”, “positive moments”, and “queering moments”.

Introduction

In this article we present a conceptual framework for thinking about the development of anti-homophobia education (AHE) in teacher education and schooling contexts. Our safe, positive, and queering moments framework has evolved over a period of several years and is grounded in the anti-homophobia school and teacher education research we have been involved in as well as the anti-homophobia educational initiatives we have participated in. In particular, the framework is grounded in Goldstein’s research study (2002–2005) on challenging homophobia and heterosexism in Toronto elementary schools, secondary schools, and teacher education (Goldstein, 2004a; Goldstein, Collins, & Halder, in press).

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We begin by describing in detail the notions of “safe schools”, “positive schools”, and “queer schools”, and providing a brief overview of the safe, positive, and queering moments framework. We then examine three AHE practices that are popular in teacher education programs and in elementary, middle, and secondary schools—coming out stories, homophobic name-calling analysis, and Pride Week—through the lens of our framework. Importantly, our analysis reveals that within a classroom of students who are taking up anti-homophobia education in different ways any one moment can be all three—safe, positive, and queering—and we use this analysis to argue the importance of educators thinking through both the intent and impact of anti-homophobia education within their classrooms.

Safe, Positive, and Queer Schools: A literature review

Our framework of safe, positive, and queering moments emerged from research addressing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (queer¹) issues in public education. This research emerges out of a history of broader discussions of ethical and equitable education practice in relation to a diverse range of marginalized communities. Griffin and Ouellett (2003) suggest that over the past 80 years, there have been three broad historical eras in the US during which particular discourses of queer issues in education have dominated. It is within two of these discursive contexts, identification of queer youth as a population at risk and schools as a risk environment for queer youth that the impetus for creating safe and positive schools rests.

Safe Schools

Clarksean and Pelton (2002) define safe school planning as a “systematic process to create and maintain a place where students can learn and teachers can teach in a warm and welcoming environment free of intimidation and fear” (p. 32). In an Ontario context (Toronto schools are governed by the provincial government of Ontario), the provincial *Safe School Act* (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2000) and accompanying Code of Conduct, Ontario Schools (retrieved July 8, 2004 from www.edu.gov.on.ca) exemplify this approach. The safe school plan represents an agreement among school boards, administrators, and educators that no student should be harassed or discriminated against in a school—whatever their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. A safe school discourse acknowledges that agreement does not require the acceptance of the religion, philosophy, or “lifestyles” of others (Clarksean & Pelton, 2002, quotation marks are ours). Thus, strategies and activities that are undertaken in safe schools promote tolerance but not acceptance of sexual diversity and differences.

A safe school model may allow educators to redress homophobic slurs, stereotypes, and violence within school environments. However, this approach to providing safety and protection is limited for queer students because it builds, in part, upon a discourse that homogenizes queer youth into one hopeless category (Harbeck, 1995) of victims of homophobia who are at risk of suicide, substance abuse, homelessness,

prostitution, and violence.² It also individualizes the problems queer youth face while simultaneously normalizing heterosexuality (Quinlivan, 2002). As a critical space, safe school models do not allow for the direct expression of acceptance and affirmation of queer sexualities by educators. In this way, safe school models fall short in their ability to protect queer students against the harm to “self” that is administered when the subjectivities of queer students are ignored, silenced, dismissed, or misrepresented within classrooms, hallways, and playgrounds. Moreover, by individualizing the harassment of queer youth, schools abdicate their responsibility for challenging power systems and culture that privilege heterosexuality over homosexuality. And finally, safe school models are unable to adequately address the issue of sexuality, generally. A safe schools, anti-harassment approach constructs sexuality as private rather than political, thus, (heteronormative) sexual education is “closeted” within the private domain of the family and/or health and physical education classes. Importantly, within this context queer issues are erroneously conflated with sexuality. This further erases homophobic violence and discrimination experienced by queer youth.

Positive Schools

Positive school models rest on equity-based policy and are generally broader in scope than safe school models. Positive school models not only commit to meeting the needs and safety of students, but to the needs and safety of employees, trustees, parents, volunteers, visitors, permit-holders, contractors, and partners who identify on the basis of sexual orientation as well (cf., e.g., Toronto District School Board, 1999). Fulfilling this commitment requires system-wide change that addresses not only issues of curriculum but also issues related to policy, assessment, hiring and promotion, and school–community relationships. In this way, positive school approaches to anti-homophobia education embrace strategies and thinking that more fully address systems of oppression in schools.

A positive school, equity approach sees education systems and schools as having a number of organic tools to challenge homophobia and heterosexism. Rules developed through policy can be used to address homophobic harassment, bullying, and violence. This aspect is congruent with a safe schools approach to generic bullying. Students and staff learn to tolerate one another by conforming to the rules. However, a positive school approach also recognizes that rules and codes of conduct rarely challenge systemic expressions of a heteronormative school culture. Speech codes may simply suppress the most blatant forms of violence and harassment in an authoritative and top down manner. The problem is that incidents reoccur when the authority is removed (the teacher leaves the classroom; no complainant pushes the process forward; there are no consequences for administrators who do not follow policy). Within a positive school framework, an anti-homophobia approach must be internalized where students and staff learn to respect, accept, and affirm their own identities and those of others. Curriculum and teacher education are seen as powerful tools to challenge homophobic ideas and stereotypes. Finally, political tools are also taken up

alongside curriculum in order to address systemic expressions of bias. Thus, a positive school approach seeks to redress homophobia through individual change *and* institutional and structural (systemic) change (McCaskell, 2005). Support, advocacy, access, negotiation, and engagement with queer staff, students, and the wider community is acknowledged as vital to positive schools' anti-homophobia education project.

Yet, even though a positive schools discourse looks beyond safety and tolerance towards inclusion and affirmation, it continues to construct sexuality as a private issue rather than a public matter. This means that—like a safe schools approach—a positive schools approach is unable to adequately address sexuality, in general, and queer sexuality, in particular. A statement released by the Toronto District School Board Equity Department (2000), for example, emphasizes that “anti-homophobia education is not sex education. It does not involve the explicit description or discussion of sexual activities”. As well, a positive schools approach that locates queer sexuality within a “time of difficulty” (Britzman & Gilbert 2004, p. 84) forecloses the possibility of thinking about queer sexuality outside of the effects of heterosexism and homophobia. In this way, the possibility of queer sex(uality) cannot be fully realized.

Queer Schools

The task of defining queer schools is somewhat challenging given their impossibility within existing school board safe school and equity policies that confine queer sexualities within the discourses of anti-harassment and anti-homophobia policy. Thus, we examine the notion of queer schools by examining the critique queer theory brings to the safe and positive schools literature. Of particular significance to our discussion are the effects of safe and positive schools to normalize Others, individualize homophobia, and naturalize and unproblematize sexual identity categories.

The normalizing effect emerges within safe and positive teacher education and schooling contexts when the notion of equity is interpreted as a state of sameness rather than as a state of fairness (Bryson & de Castell, 1997a). From a queer perspective, equity strategies based on a notion of sameness constitute a re-assertion of traditional rules and roles that promote the right of marginalized persons by receiving the right to speak as Others. The problem is that the dominant group must sanction the voice of Others. This constitutes a normalizing effect in that Others must become “just like” the dominant group (Bryson & de Castell, 1997a). Within positive schools where equity-based anti-homophobia policy is offered as a remedy for homophobia, the “equality” as “equity” equation creates a learning space where only a particular version of queer identities—those that are just like heterosexual—are possible. In this way, the yoking of homophobia discourse to equity-based anti-homophobia policy requires, and thus, produces normative knowledge claims about queer lives (Britzman, 1997; Pinar, 1998).

Within the context of positive, equity-based schools homophobia is, once again, located within the psyche and knowledge of individual students and educators. Consequently, new knowledge that challenges homophobic attitudes, stereotypical

beliefs, and discriminatory behaviours is prescribed as one remedy for homophobia. This approach presupposes the availability of both complete and non-biased knowledge about lesbian and gay Others. It also assumes that full knowledge is possible (Kumashiro, 2002). Importantly, teaching only about the Other ignores the equity needs of straight students who transgress gender norms and are harassed because they are perceived to be queer, students who are not out, and/or children of queer parents (Kumashiro, 2002). And finally, locating homophobia within the individual psyches and knowledge of students and educators ignores the fact that homophobia is locally situated (within classrooms, schools, staff rooms, etc.) and, consequently, forecloses the probability of institutional analysis (Kopelson, 2002).

The use of complete and unbiased knowledge often (re)presents queer sexualities as “naturally” emergent fundamental Truths about the self (Kopelson, 2002). This (re)presentation ignores the fact that every sexual identity—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender *and* straight—is unstable and shifting, and constitutes a social relation (Britzman, 1997). Thus, equity-based anti-homophobia policy fails to disrupt the heterosexual/homosexual binary (Bryson & de Castell, 1997b). Moreover, the privileging of naturalized and unproblematized sexual identity categories constructs queer subjects as singular, unified, and static based on the marker of sexuality (Britzman, 1997). This does not take into account the multiple and intersecting “nature” of identity based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and disability, among other social markers. As a result, a queer identity is often (re)presented as a “White” identity (Lugg, 2003). This is problematic in that all not all queer students are White.

Given the critique as described above, a queer schools model would require pedagogical practices that trouble the official knowledge of disciplines; disrupt heteronormativity and promote an understanding of oppression as multiple, interconnected, and ever changing. This suggests that a queer schools approach would not only aim to promote the acceptance, tolerance, and affirmation of queer students and educators, but also, seek to transform how we think about sexuality and desire. As importantly, a queer schools approach would ask us to consider how the sexualities and desires of queer—and straight—students and educators are recognized and acknowledged as well as denied, negated or distorted through normative pedagogical practices. To this end, the deconstruction of heteronormativity would not be seen as an independent and discreet project but rather one that necessarily implicates normative notions of sex/gender, race, class, and religion among other social locations.

The possibility of creating queer schools brings to the foreground some considerable barriers. First, it is difficult to imagine a queer schools approach within the context of district school boards of education that privilege heterosexual reproduction while prohibiting the inclusion of sexuality *per se* in the school curriculum of sex education. And second, a queer schools approach may be foreclosed within the context of current western LGBT rights movements that depend upon categorical identities to remedy injustices of misrecognition (i.e., invisibility, distorted visibility, denial, negation) through an increased visibility of queer people within mainstream institutions (Moran *et al.*, 2001). However, Britzman and Gilbert’s (2004) discussion of a bathhouse in Harlem, New York, that employs a full time education director and

that offers a graduate education diploma program for queer youth who have dropped out of school serves as an example of what a queer schooling approach looks like. Importantly, as Britzman and Gilbert’s (2004) suggest, at the moment, such an approach can only be realized outside of the mainstream education system.

From Schools, Models, and Approaches to “Moments”

After several years of engaging in a variety of research and teaching activities concerning AHE in public schools and teacher education programs, we believe that AHE strategies (whether they be policy, curriculum, or pedagogical activities) can be usefully located on points in a constellation of “safe moments”, “positive moments”, and “queering moments”.

The notion of “moments” emerged from a series of discussions amongst the authors about the benefits and limitations of safe and positive schools, and the (im)possibilities of queer schools. As illustrated below, we believe that the notion of safe, positive, and queering “moments” more accurately captures the reality and potential of current AHE strategies and practices than do the notions of “schools”, “models”, and “approaches” that are currently used in the literature. Crucially, the notion of “moments” is important given the limited theoretical potential of queer theory within the seemingly limited spaces of safe schools and equity policy. Safe schools and equity policy may pre-empt queer schools while restraining queer sexualities within anti-harassment and anti-homophobia discourses. However, they do not necessarily foreclose the surfacing of queering moments.

Three Popular Anti-homophobia Education Practices

Coming Out Stories

The proliferation of the coming out stories of queer youth as an anti-homophobia educational approach in teacher education and school settings is rooted in the idea

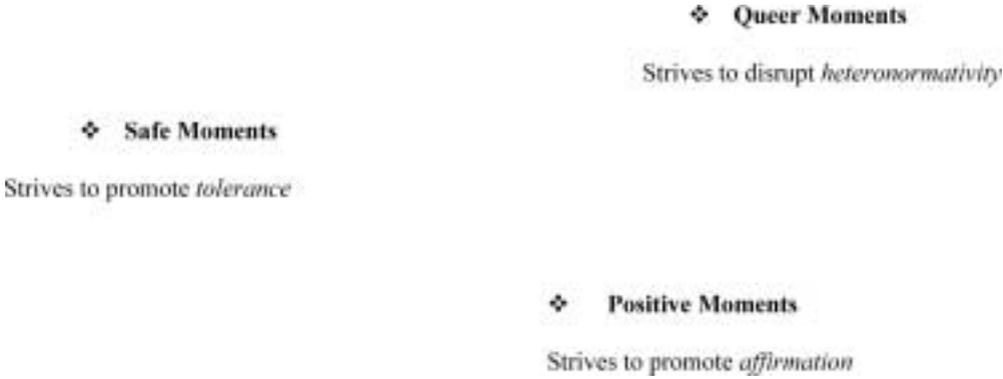


Figure 1. Anti-homophobia education constellation

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that “a school with an openly lesbian or gay teacher is a better school ... where truth prevails over lies ... where isolated students at last have a place to turn for support” (Jennings, 1994, p. 14). It is as strong a discourse among progressive educators today as it was when it began to rear its head in the early 1990s. This is evident by the sheer volume of written materials where coming out is both essentialized and valorized in the struggle against homophobic oppression (DeJean, 2004; French, 2002; McCarthy, 2003; Melillo, 2003; Rasmussen, 2004; Rofes, 2000; Silin, 1999; Toronto District School Board, 2000, p. 27, section 3.8.6).

Teens Educating and Confronting Homophobia (TEACH) is one Toronto example of a group who relies on this approach. TEACH is a peer-based program of youth volunteers run by Planned Parenthood of Toronto. *Hear me out* (Planned Parenthood of Toronto, 2004) is a collection of the coming out stories that many of these youth have told over and over again in elementary and secondary schools as well as teacher education conferences across Ontario and Canada. The educational objective for the sharing of personal coming out stories, particularly with youth facilitators, is the reduction of homophobic prejudice and the building of empathy among students and teachers belonging to dominant groups (Britzman, 1995; McCaskell, 2005; McCaskell & Russell, 2000). However, there are other more personal goals that youth articulate for themselves.

The stories of TEACH volunteers put a human face to otherwise dogmatic and abstract ideas of sexuality. They take away the comfort of “I was raised to think this way about gay people” or “I’ve never known anyone who was a lesbian”. Well, now you do, and guess what? We like the same kind of ice cream and have the same taste in music. This is the power of peer education and those are the kinds of bridges personal storytelling can build ... stories are one of the most powerful, but underused tools available to youth for self-preservation, identity and empowerment. (Planned Parenthood of Toronto, 2004, pp. 9–10)

In Russell’s work in Toronto schools as a consultant with the Equity Department, she and her colleagues worked with queer youth facilitators or peer educators that were diverse in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and class. Through both the telling of their stories and their identities, this group of youth facilitators not only challenged the pervasive stereotype that queer equals White, middle class, and male but they also assisted other students to think through the similarities and differences in the ways that marginalized communities deal with and resist oppression. The coming out stories of youth generally deal with a range of issues such as relationships with parents, school experiences, lover relationships, homophobia and violence, and internalized homophobia.

Coming Out Stories: The framework applied

At the very least, creating a space in a school auditorium, classroom or conference room where queer youth facilitators tell their stories gives LGBT issues a legitimacy and representation in school curricula. Applying the practice of coming out stories to our framework, we see the possibility of safe moments weaving their way through this

representation since queer students may begin to feel an increased sense of confidence in their school's desire and ability to challenge homophobia. Indeed, during workshops incidents of homophobic harassment are often named and dealt with in ways that are congruent with safe schools policies. As well, positive moments emerge for queer students as they begin to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and for straight students who begin to learn about the Other (Kumashiro, 2002). These positive moments are realized through the implementation of equity policies via inclusive curricular practices. As rich as these safe and positive experiences may be, there are at least two limitations. The first problem lies with definition. Who is defined as Other? As mentioned earlier, many students are harassed because they are perceived to be queer—not necessarily because they are queer. Or, some are targeted because they have queer parents. The second problem arises when coming out stories are not part of a more integrated anti-oppression curriculum. On their own, stories do not necessarily address systemic issues of power and privilege (McCaskell, 2005). These issues must be addressed in order to help students understand how systems of oppression work so that they can begin to move beyond their own complicity with dominant ideologies. As troubling as these safe and positive limitations are, queering moments do surface occasionally to complicate matters and they can be used in creative ways when we, as educators, recognize them in our classrooms, schools, and teacher education contexts.

The queer or queering moments of our framework often hide in the crevices of anti-oppression education making them more difficult to find. However, if we focus less on the impact of coming out stories on the students who hear them and more on the process of telling stories and how they are constructed, we come closer to queering moments. When queer youth tell their stories, they are engaged in an active process of both constructing narratives and performing them. In *Hear me out* (Planned Parenthood of Toronto, 2004), a number of queer peer-educators describe how the process of storytelling helped to inform and transform who they were and who they are.

Emmy: After a while it got boring to tell the same stories over and over again. Sometimes it would seem as though it wasn't even true anymore, anyway. The words would be true, the details would be true but the story itself was not really the story you wanted to tell. Sometimes we weren't in the mood or were feeling particularly vulnerable, so we'd tell a different story. Narratives would shift as our moods and identities would shift. (Planned Parenthood of Toronto, 2004, pp. 33–34)

Emmy, one of the founding members of TEACH, resists telling her coming out story by entitling her narrative, *This is not a coming out story*. Here, she plays with and questions the notion of truth-telling and the existence of a stable, unified self/identity as she talks about shifting moods and identities almost as if she perceives them to be the same thing. Shawn, on the other hand, reflects on the contradictions between who he performed himself to be, who he was, and how storytelling blurred the boundaries and narrowed the gap between the two.

Shawn: I think I stayed with TEACH for so long, and support it to this day, because it allowed me the opportunity to heal. When the funny boy came in and bounced

around and told his cute story, it was great. But the reality behind the barrettes and one-liners was that I was sixteen, in an alternative school I could never graduate from, already drinking and experimenting with drugs and becoming increasingly isolated from my family ... I think I was really just telling people over and over again that it was okay to be me until I finally believed it myself. (Planned Parenthood of Toronto, 2004, p. 85)

By engaging the intersections of performance, fluidity and self, both Emmy and Shawn's narratives seem to point to a queer moment in the practice of sharing coming out stories.

Another example of a queer moment in the telling of coming out stories lies in a change of focus. While positive moments almost exclusively focus on stories about the Other, queering moments put "dominant" at the centre in order to interrogate it. To this end, when straight-identified youth are part of a panel, as they often are with the TEACH group, they have the opportunity to describe their work as allies engaged in AHE work. Straight folks engaged in AHE also have stories of struggle, crisis, and resistance that—at least for a moment—might disrupt normative spaces.

Homophobic Name-calling Analysis

A second popular approach to AHE is homophobic name-calling analysis. Like the educational goal of coming out stories, it works to build empathy in dominant groups of teachers and students for those marginalized on the basis of sexual orientation. Name-calling analysis rests upon the notion that "individuals are members of social groups and that differences among social groups structure relationships" (McDonald, 2005, p. 422). In a society, where some groups are privileged and others marginalized, equity approaches in educational settings—like name-calling analysis, for example—requires that those group differences are acknowledged and attended to in order to challenge oppression (Young, 1990, p. 3). There are numerous classroom activities that teacher educators and K-12 teachers use to help students understand the deeper sociocultural and historical contexts of verbal harassment and derogatory name-calling targeting specific social groups. Generally the goal of these activities is to work with students to deconstruct stereotypes and understand issues of power, oppression, and privilege. *It's elementary: Talking about gay issues in school* (Chasnoff & Cohen, 1996) and *Apples and oranges* (Ferne, 2003) are two videos with teachers' guides that demonstrate examples of classroom activities addressing homophobic name-calling. Below, we describe "The porcupine activity", one version of an educational approach to name-calling analysis that has been used across Toronto elementary and secondary schools since the early 1990s.

Purpose:

- To examine the nature of homophobic name-calling and stereotypes.
- To identify the ways in which homophobia affects queer youth.

Instructional strategies:

- The teacher or facilitator begins by drawing a large circle on the chalkboard with the labels gay, lesbian, bisexual in the inside of the circle.
- The group brainstorms a list of the stereotypes and derogatory names about lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.
- The names and stereotypes are recorded on the board connected to the circle by “spokes”.
- Together the group unpacks and deconstructs the names and stereotypes. The facilitator shares information about the historical and sociocultural context from which these stereotypes emerge. Generally, the stereotypes fall into a number of themes: homosexuality is a disease; homosexuals are a threat to children; homosexuals engage in gender transgressions; homosexuals were abused in childhood; homosexuals have AIDS; AIDS is a curse from God; homosexuals are predominantly White; homosexuality is against God/religion. The facilitator records these themes on the board.
- The facilitator crosses out the label lesbian, gay, and bisexual, replaces it with the word “ME”, and asks the group to brainstorm a list of the feelings they might experience if they were the target of these stereotypes and derogatory names. The group’s responses are recorded and connected to the circle through another set of spokes.
- Finally the group is asked how gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth might behave or react given these feelings. After a preliminary discussion, the facilitator shares information with the group about the reality facing lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. This includes statistics on the rates of homelessness, substance abuse, sex-trade involvement, and dropout rates. It is important that the facilitator also gives a clear message that queer youth are not only an “at-risk” and victimized population. A description of the resistance and activism of queer youth is given at this point in the workshop.

Name-calling Analysis: The framework applied

In order to explore safe, positive, and queer moments in the practice of name-calling analysis, it is helpful to remember that intent and impact are not the same thing. The intention behind this activity is twofold. The first intention is congruent with safe moments because it gives educators a vehicle for dealing with incidents of homophobic name-calling, which complies with safe school policies. The second intention is more linked to positive moments in its potential to help students think critically about homophobia, power, and privilege. Unfortunately, the impact of name-calling analysis may well be an increase in harm toward those students who are queer or perceived to be so. In this activity, students are publicly given permission to use slurs and offensive terms and ideas that target queers, some of whom may be in the classroom but not known to others. Unsafe moments may occur in a number of ways. Some students learn new derogatory terms that can be used in subsequent

interactions with classmates. Others use body language—rolling eyes, knowing looks, and nods—to further target already marginalized students while engaging in the classroom activity. And, finally, there is that which is unsaid. Most students in the class are quite aware of who gets called homophobic names. If the lesson is used on the heels of a name-calling incident in the school, victimized students often are blamed. In some ways, however, these unsafe moments can be seen as queering moments in that they have the potential to remind us that individual students can take up the very ways we teach differently. Even though we may seek to create inclusive classrooms, students may be excluded and/or harmed in the process. As educators, we must be aware of the possibilities and limitations of our approaches to AHE.

The possibility for at least two queering moments also arises toward the end of the porcupine activity. First, when educators ask students to put themselves in the shoes of those targeted by homophobic harassment, by crossing out the words *gay*, *lesbian*, and *bi*, it is with the intention of creating the positive moment of empathy building. Ostensibly, straight students come to understand how horrible it is to be harassed for being queer. However, it is conceivable that at this moment some students may also begin to question their own sexualities: What if this really is me? What if I'm queer? Or, grow up to be? How do I know if I'm straight or gay? What is straight or gay? This interrogation of self and this blurring of binaries are consistent with the queering moments described in our framework. Secondly, in addition to asking "What if this was me?" educators might direct their students or teacher candidates to ask themselves "How am I complicit in perpetuating this system of homophobia?" This moves the task beyond a safe or positive project of empathy building towards a queer exploration of our own resistance as a way to maintain privilege. Kumashiro (2002) suggests that asking students to examine their resistance can send them into crisis and that students must be offered the space and support to work through this crisis. To Kumashiro, crisis is not only an inevitable part of anti-oppression education but also a desirable part. Working with the conceptual framework presented here to identify safe, positive, and queer moments in their AHE practice assists educators to better understand the impact of work on both their students and themselves. And, with this understanding, comes the possibility of working through crisis—both the students' and the teachers'.

Pride Week

A third popular way of undertaking AHE in both teacher education and schooling contexts is to plan, design and implement a Pride Week. The planning of such a week was one of the AHE initiatives that Goldstein (2004b) chose to dramatize in her ethnographic research-based play *Snakes and ladders*. The play tells the story of an alliance between secondary school teacher Rachel, the faculty sponsor of the school's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), and her colleague Anne, the faculty sponsor of Students and Teachers Against Racism (STAR) who have decided to organize an "Anti-racism and Pride Week" at their school to commemorate March 21, the

International Day for Eliminating Racism. The following excerpt from *Snakes and ladders* dramatizes the tensions and negotiations that arise in the planning of the event. When Rachel and Anne present their proposal to put on a “whole week of events that not only challenge racism, but other forms of discrimination as well” there is resistance and discomfort from the GSA and STAR students who have not worked together before.

- Ray (STAR student): Why do we have to have Gay Pride Day during Anti-racism Week?
- Diane (STAR student): Yeah. Why don't they celebrate it sometime in June when other gay people celebrate it? March 21 is supposed to be about racism ...
- Sherry (STAR student): If we help out with Gay Day, people might think that we're gay.
- Helen (GSA student): I'm going to help out and I'm not gay.
- Sherry (STAR student): But some people may think you are.
- Chris (GSA student): What's wrong with people thinking that you're gay?

In an attempt to move the discussion forward, Anne asks student teacher Roberto Rodriguez to tell the group the ideas he and Rachel have come up with for the anti-homophobia education component of Anti-racism and Pride Week. Unbeknownst to the teachers and students the principal of the school, Karen Diamond, was standing—unseen—at the classroom door and listening to the group's conversation.

- Roberto (Stu. teacher): OK. We talked about inviting a group called TEACH to come and do an anti-homophobia workshop with us. TEACH. stands for Teens Educating and Confronting Homophobia. The members of TEACH. identify as LGBTQ and straight.
- Helen (GSA student): Are they all White?
- Roberto (Stu. teacher): No. The group is mixed. And as part of the workshop they tell their coming out stories. The story of when they first knew they might not be or weren't heterosexual. We also thought about holding a special game of snakes and ladders on Canadian minority history.
- Chris (GSA student): What about a queer talent night? And a drag contest?
- Diane (STAR student): What's drag?
- Gail (GSA student): It's when guys dress up like girls and girls dress up like guys.
- Chris (GSA student): Or maybe we could put on an “Ask Dr Ruth” show with questions and answers about queer sex.
- Karen (Principal): [Loudly interrupting.] Good afternoon everyone. [People are startled to hear KAREN's voice.] I'm sorry I'm late. [ROBERTO gets up off his seat to provide a seat for KAREN. KAREN smiles and takes his seat.] Thank you Roberto.
- Roberto (Stu. teacher): You're welcome.
- Karen (Principal): [Looking around the room, at each member of the group.] Ms Davis and Ms James have talked to me about the idea of Anti-racism and Pride Week and I've been listening to the last part of your discussion. I have some thoughts. [Addressing

- Roberto.*] First, I think Mr. Rodriguez makes a good point that some people experience both racism and homophobia and that it is helpful to educate people about both forms of discrimination. That's also what the Board Equity policy says. So you have my support for a set of different Pride Days that teaches about tolerance for others.
- Rachel (Teacher): It's not really about toler—
- Anne (Teacher): [Interrupting.] Thank you Karen.
- Karen (Principal): [To RACHEL.] Ms James and the STAR group have a lot of experience conducting anti-racist education and I am sure that this experience will be helpful to the GSA. [RACHEL is silent. KAREN waits for some kind of response. RACHEL nods her head. KAREN Turns back to the whole group.] But I am concerned about the some of the ideas I have heard you talk about. I read the Board's pamphlet on "What Anti-Homophobia Education Is and What It Isn't". [Addressing CHRIS.] The Board is clear that anti-homophobia education is [emphasizing] *not* sex education. So there will be no question and answer show about sex.
- Chris (GSA student): But—
- Karen (Principal): [Interrupting.] Which brings me to another concern, which is about language. Lots of people don't like that word you used.
- Chris (GSA student): Which word?
- Karen (Principal): Queer. It makes them uncomfortable. So I suggest, insist really, you not use it. Since there is some confusion about the term LGBTQ and about the term transgendered, I also suggest you stick with the name Gay Pride Day.
- Chris (GSA student): But not all queers are gay. Some are bi, some are—
- Karen (Principal): [Interrupting.] People will understand that you are using the word "Gay" to mean all people who are not heterosexual. Finally, [looking directly at RAHIMA] given the religious diversity present in this school, we need to be careful not to offend anyone. This is a school, not a nightclub. So no gay talent night and no drag contest. The TEACH workshop is approved by the Board so it's fine. You can contact someone at the Board's Equity Office for a list of other resources. [Looks at her watch, stands up to leave.] I'm sorry, but I have to go. Good luck in your planning. Keep me informed of your progress. I want to see the final program for the entire week.
- Anne (Teacher): No problem. Thanks for your time.
- Karen (Principal): You're welcome. Have a good evening.
- Anne (Teacher): You too.
- [KAREN exits downstage left.]
- Chris (GSA student): If the school is not a nightclub, how come we have straight Talent Night?

There are many interesting moments that emerge in the preceding excerpt that are useful for AHE. Here, we will examine just one, which begins as a positive schooling

moment when GSA student Chris suggests that the group consider putting on a queer talent night and an “Ask Dr Ruth” show with questions and answers about queer sex. Chris’ efforts are immediately stymied when the principal, who has been listening to the group discussion from outside the classroom, chooses that exact moment to walk into the classroom and interrupt the group’s brainstorming activity. As the school principal, Karen has the authority to choose which moments she will try to create and promote in her school and which moments she will choose to avoid. While she gives the students and the teachers her support for a set of different Pride Days that teaches about “tolerance” for others (creating a safe schooling moment), she will not support any attempts to queer Anti-racism and Pride Week. Addressing Chris in particular, she informs the group that the school board is clear that anti-homophobia education is not sex education, and that there will be no question and answer show about sex. When Chris tries to protest, she interrupts him and brings up another concern, a concern about language. Having heard the word “queer” widely used as an epithet in her heterosexual community, Karen tells Chris that she and “lots of” other people don’t like hearing the word “queer”. She insists that the group not use the word queer during Anti-racism and Pride Week or the “confusing” term LGBTQ. She wants them to “stick with the name Gay Pride Day”. When Chris tries to explain that “not all queers are gay” (once again working towards an inclusive positive schooling moment), Karen interrupts him once again. She tells Chris that people will understand that the word “gay” means “all people who are not heterosexual”.

In her regulation of the language that the group might use during Anti-racism and Pride week and in her lack of understanding of the struggle for inclusion within lgbtq community that spawned the term “lgbtq”, and the reclaimed meaning the word “queer” has for many (though not all members) of the lgbtq community, Karen misses the opportunity to provoke a dialogue and moment of learning around the terms “queer” and “lgbtq”. In missing this opportunity for dialogue, she misses the opportunity to provoke a positive schooling moment.

Returning to the play’s discussion of the school board’s stance that anti-homophobia education is not sex education, a stance that Karen wishes to promote in her own school, such a position poses a difficult dilemma for the anti-homophobia educators who work for the school board. While promoting AHE as human rights education (“and not sex education”) allows for a variety of anti-homophobia safe schooling projects and even some positive schooling projects to take place within the school board (like the coming out storytelling and name-calling analysis activities mentioned earlier), it ultimately limits the range of projects that might take place. As limiting as they are, Anne agrees to Karen’s restrictions on the anti-homophobia programming for Anti-racism and Pride Week so that some—safe schooling—human rights educational work can begin. Chris speaks to and symbolizes the frustration that many anti-homophobia educators feel by such restrictions when he ends scene nine with the line, “If the school is not a nightclub, how come we have straight Talent Night?” However, for Anne, even the more limited impact of a safe schooling moment is worth pursuing.

Anne’s support of the principal’s management of Anti-racism and Pride Week reminds us of that many of our current practices construct AHE as a “time of

difficulty” (Britzman & Gilbert, 2004) that is characterized by the violence of name-calling, omissions, pathology and ostracism. While Britzman and Gilbert believe that addressing hostility is important, they also suggest that in a time of difficulty, there is only hostility. They remind us that there is more to thinking about gayness than surviving social hatred. They ask, “What happens when gayness can be conceptualized without homophobia?” While we continue to think and struggle towards “a different time”, a time where realities other than social hatred exist, anti-homophobia teacher educators who work in partnerships with school boards which limit AHE to moments of safe and positive schooling, can promote discussions and reflection among their student teachers about what it means to work both within and against restrictions on AHE activities such as Anti-racism and Pride Week.

(In)Conclusion

In this article, we have introduced a conceptual framework for thinking about the development of anti-homophobia education in teacher education and schooling contexts. We believe that the usefulness of the framework is that it brings to the foreground of AHE the issues of intent and impact. It serves as a guide for teacher educators wanting to think more intentionally about the moments that may be produced or that may have emerged or that have been restricted during anti-homophobia, or more broadly, anti-oppression education activities. The safe, positive, and queering moments framework offers teacher educators a useful tool for locating a full range of potential impacts—safe, positive, and queering—through AHE practices that effectively challenge homophobia expressed through curriculum/education in the classroom, policy, and political organizing and community outreach. While the pursuit of queer schooling moments largely remains an impossibility in the “time of difficulty” that currently characterizes AHE in public schooling, the framework leaves space for educators to not only interrogate how particular AHE practices not only produce safe and positive moments but to also begin *looking beyond* existing curriculum, policies and practices towards the realization of queering moments in schooling that will work towards a different time when gayness might be thought of without homophobia.

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Notes

1. Some lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people have reclaimed the term “queer” to signify a self-affirmed lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) identity, however, it is

also negatively associated, for some LGBT people, to experiences of homophobic violence. Thus, some people within LGBT communities choose not to use the term “queer” as a self-identifier. In this context, the term “queer” is used to signify a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity. Alternatively, the term “queering” (moments) refers to the disrupting or contesting of heteronormativity—the belief that heterosexuality is the ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ sexuality—through social relations. This would include, for example, activities, events, and exchanges that deconstruct the heterosexual/homosexual binary, that uncover the effect of discourse to produce sexualities, and that create space for the possibility, recognition and acknowledgement of homoeroticism and desire.

2. For literature exploring the effects of homophobia on queer youth, see Fisher (1999), GLSEN (2001), and Grethel (1997).

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