

Your questions

1. As a prolific scholar and educator, how have you challenged heterosexuality in your pedagogical approach?
2. In your introduction to *Queering Straight Teachers* you write, “The status of queer theory within the academic field of education is an ongoing scandal. In a profession presumably dedicated to diversity and equal opportunity, queers remain the last legitimate target of ‘straights’” (p. 2). Reflecting back on this claim, do you still hold this to be true? If yes, what would you identify as primary barrier to diversity and opportunity? If no, how has the field of education progressed?

My (quick) replies

Re: #1. For me “pedagogy” is less an “approach” than my participation in the complicated conversation that is the curriculum. I challenged heterosexuality – as a normativity – first in my ’83 critique of Apple, Giroux and other neo- (I derided them as macho) Marxists then dominating North American curriculum studies, juxtaposing Hocquenghem’s affirmation of anal eroticism (“from behind we’re all women”) with object-relations theory in psychoanalysis (summarized by Chodorow), which postulates that the symbiotic relationship of the infant to the maternal body renders the male’s bedrock identification as female. Exclusively heterosexual masculinity requires repudiation of this fundamental identificatory formation, inviting violent and repeated affirmations of heterosexuality and interrelated attacks on homosexuality. From there I moved to anti-racist education (there’s a bit of that in the QST collection), focusing on the gendered structuring of racism, first in the U.S. (in lynching and interracial prison rape) and then in the West more generally (focused on the Curse of Ham). (To the extent I acknowledge having a “pedagogical approach” I would say that In the early years I taught a little like pillow talk, a feigned and formal intimacy that startled straight girls and boys, as identitarian and generational distance is prerequisite to their maintenance as utterly separate and distinct.) Following the anti-racist work, I focused on Pasolini to show one (for me) powerful instance of a queer public pedagogy, and on Jane Addams and Laura Bragg as lesbian public intellectuals using their nurturance of others as (in part) a challenge (rather than submission) to gendered (and specifically anti-lesbian) expectations. In old age pillow talk becomes creepy so I focus on formality, acting a bit the role of the kindly knowing grandfather, a queering of the stereotype when especially straight male students remember I should be a threat. I am no threat. Truth is, I’ve lost interest in challenging heterosexuality. That game was lost and is over, at least for now.

Re: #2. I wrote that line while working in the U.S. where it remains in some places true. (The Republican candidate [Roy Moore] for the U.S. Senate in Alabama – as you may know – names sodomy as one of the curses of contemporary godless America; Moore promises to make it illegal once again.) On the West and Northeast (not southeast) coasts targeting is much more subtle, accomplished (as it can be in Canada) by incorporation, e.g. minoritizing “queer” as another victimized identity that must be acknowledged. Safely quarantined in identity, queer is stripped of its critical edge. Especially in Canada

opportunity exists. (Our dean – the wonderful Blye Frank - is openly gay; in the U.S. I'm not sure that is a possibility still. In the U.S. one might be dean of liberal arts and be gay, but not of education, as the child predator fantasy remains silently in place.) The price of inclusion is political neutering, not the worst deal to make but one must make knowing that the myth of heterosexuality goes unchallenged.