Queer Theory/Pedagogy and Social Justice Education

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Abstract

Queer theory and pedagogy can inform social justice education in ways that have teachers and researchers question how their teaching practices and philosophies reinforce social norms such as heteronormativity. Queer theory is post-structuralist, and while it is most often used to analyze queer subjects, it can be used to analyze the social and institutional norms in any subject. Queer pedagogy, stemming from queer theory's call to deconstruct heteronormativity and other boundaries, works to expand the way we look at educational practices and research. Through it, one can examine the norms, boundaries, and limitations of not only curriculum and teaching practices but also schooling and learning as concepts. This chapter first offers a brief history of queer theory and then gives background information on queer pedagogy's origins and recent definitions and manifestations. Then, frameworks for using queer pedagogy specifically with

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social justice education are explored. Discipline-specific examples from subjects ranging from music to science are detailed, which will give teachers of all disciplines ideas for queering their own classrooms. As queer theory and pedagogy are interested in intersectional identities and queer people and issues are affected by many other aspects of identity, particular attention is paid to recent research considering race within queer pedagogy research. Finally, applying queer pedagogy to teacher education and professional development is considered. In conclusion, final thoughts on the future of queer pedagogy in regard to social justice education are offered.

Queer Theory/Pedagogy and Social Justice Education

Queer theory and pedagogy have much to offer social justice education. Queer scholars urge us to consider the ways in which heteronormativity – the societal assumption that everyone is heterosexual and cisgender and that these identities are the default and therefore normal – shapes our world. Our social norms (such as asking a man if he has a girlfriend), our policies and laws (such as many states requiring people to list their sex assigned at birth on government identification cards), and even our physical spaces (such as bathrooms) are heavily influenced by heteronormativity. Social justice educators are also concerned with rethinking how we see, or read, the world (Freire, 2000), and so together queer theory and pedagogy along with social justice education can challenge educators to consider and dismantle social norms that dictate who is considered more valuable, or as queer theorist Judith Butler (2011) posited, whose bodies matter more than others? This chapter begins with a brief background on queer theory, before diving into queer pedagogy and its origins. From there, queer pedagogy's relationship with social justice education is explored. Lastly, sections outline particular considerations of queer pedagogy including race, transgender and non-binary issues, discipline-specific examples, and using queer theory in teacher education.

Queer Theory: A Brief Introduction

Often, those unfamiliar with queer theory assume that it and queer pedagogy are solidly bonded to queer identity (Queer, when used as a stand-alone term in this chapter, means anyone who is not heterosexual or cisgender (which means someone whose gender assigned at birth corresponds with their gender identity or how they feel internally about their gender. Queer encompasses sexual orientations including lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and gay and gender identities including transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and gender fluid. Queer also includes intersex people, which is a biological term for someone who does not have strictly male or female characteristics. Intersex people may have any gender identity or sexual orientation.). Meaning, it is a common misassumption that to use queer theory and pedagogy, you must be analyzing a queer subject, such as queer historical figures, queer characters in texts, or queer events such as pride parades. Instead, queer in this context is a verb, not a noun or an adjective. "To queer" or "queering" indicates that one is challenging, deconstructing, and questioning norms, particularly norms surrounding heteronormativity. The term queer theory, which came into being around 1975 (Turner, 2000), was not coined by name until 1991, when film theorist Teresa de Lauretis used it to distinguish the field from gay and lesbian theory (Turner, 2000, p. 30). Lauretis and other scholars were dissatisfied with what they saw as the limitations of gay and lesbian studies, as it relies on a gender binary (i.e., gender as male and female only) that many queer people reject. Transgender issues were often frequently left out of gay and lesbian studies, whereas queer studies and theory were more open to these identities and issues. Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler are also some of the first queer theorists (Turner, 2000), though Judith Butler's work in philosophy and gender studies was considered part of queer theory before she herself identified as a queer theorist (Barker & Scheele, 2016). Butler's (2004, 2011) work on troubling our notions of gender is vast and includes work on language, performativity (meaning the way in which our gender expression is performed unconsciously through socially constructed, everyday acts; not to be understood as simply deciding to put on a performance as a certain gender), and deconstructing drag. Sedgwick's work, including *Epistemology of the Closet* (2007) and *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), continues to influence contemporary queer theorists. Queer theory is post-structuralist, and theorists point out how ideals which are viewed as normal or natural are actually social constructions.

Despite the above examples which focus mainly on queer people (Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling* being an exception), queer theory is not exclusive to queer subjects. As heteronormativity affects everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, so too can everyone/thing be critiqued through a queer lens. For example, the popular dystopian middle grades novel *The Giver* has no queer characters, yet the concept of "sameness" that the citizens are expected to uphold can be analyzed as a heteronormative construct (Pennell, 2015). In Lowry's 1994 acceptance speech for the Newbery Award, she mentions several people and events that influenced the book, including a lesbian housemate in college who was

ostracized by the rest of the women as they all dressed the same in skirts, while this woman wore jeans. Lowry stated "she is different, somehow alien, and that makes us uncomfortable...we ignore her...somehow, by shutting her out, we make ourselves feel comfortable, familiar, safe." (Full speech available here: https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/8033. Though outside the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting that when most people write about Lowry's influences for *The Giver*, they mention the male artist she met who turned blind and lost his ability to see color or her father's loss of memory in his old age. No one seems to mention the lesbian housemate or other women who influenced her work.) This feeling, and her later sorrow at their reaction to a queer encounter, contributed to the menacing sameness she created in the novel. Everyone in this world is paired with a partner of the opposite sex and raises one boy and one girl. Anyone who deviates from the social norms of the community is "released," their euphemism for euthanasia. Sumara and Davis (1999) have also analyzed this novel through a queer lens and used it to enact queer pedagogy. Their analysis looks at the "stirrings" or what the community call feelings of sexual desire that begin at puberty. To control the citizens, everyone takes pills that suppress these desires. In their research study, Sumara and Davis (1999) found that discussing "stirrings" with parents and students brought out ideas of how knowledge around sexuality is created for everyone. Given these two examples from one novel, the possibilities for using queer theory are numerous, as with any critical theory. This queer lens is also fruitful for analyzing educational concepts and practices, which morphs into another theoretical subset: queer pedagogy.

Definitions and Tenets of Queer Pedagogy

Before diving into an explanation of queer pedagogy, it is important to distinguish it from queer-inclusive teaching and curriculum. While queer pedagogy is about queering (the verb), queer inclusion is about queer the noun and adjective. This distinction is akin to the one between queer theory and gay and lesbian studies. Queer-inclusive teaching practices include school policies that protect and affirm queer students, staff, and families in nondiscrimination and anti-bullying policies. It also means including queer people in the curriculum and discussing their sexual orientation in the same way that most high school English students learn that William Shakespeare's wife's name is Anne Hathaway. Fully queer-inclusive curriculum would also involve sex education, which often focuses on preventing sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy in heterosexual partnerships but does not discuss ways that nonheterosexual sex can be safe or how any kind of sex can be pleasurable and exist outside of reproduction. Queer-inclusive education serves social justice goals of equity by ensuring that queer people, a marginalized group, have a place in curriculum. It shows queer students that they are not alone and gives them role models in an otherwise heterosexual landscape.

However, queer inclusion does not necessarily mean that teachers are asking students to interrogate systemic heteronormativity and question their own place within that system. If using queer inclusion alone without this consideration,

educators run the risk of the failings of multicultural education without a critical lens, for example, only discussing African-American historical figures during Black History month without a broader discussion of systemic racism in America and its current ramifications or only discussing multicultural identities in a broad way with a focus on flags, food, and festivals (Skelton, Wigford, Harper, & Reeves, 2002). Mentioning Harvey Milk, the gay rights activist and politician who was murdered while serving as the San Francisco City Council Supervisor in 1978 (Milk Foundation, n.d.), is important and is an example of queer inclusion. Yet without helping students see how Milk's murder fits into a larger system of oppression and heteronormativity, there is an absence of queer pedagogy. Many queer pedagogy scholars have written about this difference (e.g., Britzman, 1995; Britzman & Gilbert, 2004; DePalma, 2010; Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007; Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004). This chapter will not include a discussion of scholarship that falls solely into the queer inclusion category – queer the noun – though much of it overlaps with social justice education. Instead, the focus here is on education scholarship that combines queer pedagogy – queer the verb – as well as an explicit focus on social justice education. It should be noted that there is plenty of overlap between queer inclusion and queer pedagogy, as the literature will illustrate. Kai Rands (2009) noted the difference between these ideas in hir (Rands uses pronouns ze/hir/hirs) article *Mathematical Inqu[ee]ry* that queer *inclusion* in an elementary math lesson could mean word problems that incorporate families with same-sex parents. However, ze noted that queer *pedagogy* in a mathematics classroom would include discussions of what makes a family and thereby question heteronormative family structures.

The most influential queer pedagogy scholar is Deborah Britzman. Her seminal article, *Is there a queer pedagogy? Or stop reading straight* (1995), is easily the most heavily cited piece in the field, and all other queer pedagogical work stems from her concepts of queer pedagogy: questioning norms, limits, boundaries, and reading practices. Questioning norms includes the questioning of heteronormativity and of heterosexuality as a discrete category (Quinlivan & Town, 1999). This stems from the queer theory method of focusing on *identifications* (as fluid ways of naming oneself) rather than *identities* (static categories of naming oneself and others) (Ruffolo, 2007). Engaging students in examining heteronormativity is vital to creating equitable school environments, as it causes students to consider the oppressive structures surrounding them and question how they can challenge these structures (Blackburn & Pennell, 2018). This can be done simply by having students name cisnormative stereotypes and noticing how their physical spaces are heteronormative, which can then cause them to consider how they can queer these spaces and make them more inclusive (Blackburn & Pennell, 2018; Pennell, 2017). This questioning of heteronormativity should thus extend to the school itself as an institution (Meyer, 2007) and to the role of the teacher as implicated in upholding institutional and societal norms (Britzman, 2012).

By reading practices, Britzman was not solely referring to media but also to ways of reading institutions and social practices. Examining reading practices allows teachers and students to reflect on how their own knowledge is formed, how the

knowledge in the text is formed, and consider from what representations these knowledges draw (Britzman, 1995). This allows readers to "explore what one cannot bear to know" (Britzman, 1995, p. 165) and helps prevent them from resting in willful ignorance as a way of resisting this unbearable knowledge of differences. Looking at individual reading practices can also cause people to explore why they may be stuck in a "performative ignorance" (Luhmann, 1998). Luhmann (1998) suggested asking not only what is the text saying but also "What does this information do to one's sense of self? What does the knowledge ask me to reconsider about myself and the subject studied?" (p. 150). Queer reading practices go beyond the text (defined broadly) to include reflections on the world, one's place within it, and how one's biases and preferences are shaped by societal norms.

Since Britzman's (1995) work, queer pedagogues have discovered additional tenets. DePalma (2010) describes letting questions "hang," meaning not providing students with immediate or clear answers but instead letting them sit with uncertainty. This tenet of having students gain comfort in being uncomfortable is echoed in social justice pedagogy (e.g., Hytten, 2008). DePalma (2010) also described teachers queering everyday moments, such as finding ways to organically discuss gender norms with students during read alouds. Schippert (2006), Krywanczyk (2007) and Lewis (2012) all used their own bodies as a performative mode of instruction. Schippert (2006) employed a false persona and told her students "I forbid you to pay attention to my penis" (p. 281) to draw attention to the social construction of identities. Krywanczyk (2007) and Lewis (2012), in contrast, used their own identities as examples of queerness. Krywanczyk (2007) was a white queer woman teaching middle school and led her students in open discussions about homophobic slurs rather than simply forbidding the language. Lewis (2012) used her identity as a Black queer femme to physically counter stereotypes of lesbians as always being masculine in appearance. This example also shows combining queer bodies with queer pedagogy, as Lewis' body served both as an example and as way for students to confront their own norms.

Other scholars have investigated how queer pedagogy can affect learning activities. Sheldon (2016) suggested that queer pedagogy should include group work. He stated that "an optimal pedagogical situation, much like an optimal (gay) sexual situation, maximizes the frequency, novelty, and flexible positionality of (pedagogical) exchanges between two (or more) people" (p. 447) and thus calls for "versatility" to be considered. This model also focuses on student-centered work, where the teacher acts as a facilitator while also working to "disrupt status hierarchies" (p. 451) such as assigning strict roles to each group member. Pennell's (2016b) study also found that group work was key for student learning via queer pedagogy and that along with the shared tenet of many critical and social justice pedagogies of dialogue, processing and engaged play were evident practices of middle school students engaging in queer pedagogy in tandem with social justice. Processing refers to deep reflection, both with peers and individually, that ties into Britzman's (1995) call for questioning norms and limits and Luhmann's (1998) suggestion to have students question how they are implicated in an issue. Engaged play, rather than referring to students playing a teacher-created game, refers to students playing with the material in a way that contributes to their own learning. In Pennell's (2016b)

study, students made up songs about the material and imagined they were on a podcast while engaging with the audio recorder used for research. This play helped them interact with social justice topics in a way that was age appropriate and allowed them to think of the audience as they considered how to construct their messages on topics such as marriage equality.

Frameworks for Using Queer Pedagogy in Social Justice Education

While the previous section focused on tenets, in this section, queer pedagogy scholars' conceptual frameworks for using queer pedagogy in the broader construct of social justice education are considered. Since research involving queer pedagogy has gained momentum since the mid-1990s, other scholars have offered additional frameworks for considering schooling and teaching through a queer lens. These frameworks also incorporate a social justice mind-set, as researchers seek to be inclusive of intersectional and diverse queer people within school contexts. However, as Talburt and Rasmussen (2010) pointed out in their examination of queer research in education, there is still a danger in creating exclusion in our attempt to include. Because queer people are often discriminated against or erased from school policies (a fear that is more salient in the United States as the current president issued a memo on defining sex narrowly as male and female only at birth, negating trans and intersex experiences (Green, Benner, & Pear, 2018)), there is "a tendency to place woundedness as a foundation in queer research" (Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 3). This tendency also creates a feeling that queer students are "'our children'…who have a 'right' to be gay, to be happy, and to have a better future" (p. 3) perhaps to the detriment of those who did not fit into this notion of "ours." Additionally, some educators who claim to include all queer identities only consider gay and lesbian students, when truly "diverse representation must also consider sexual identities and gender expressions in ways that are both inclusive and precise" (Blackburn & Schey, 2017, p. 54). As Kumashiro (2001) noted, it is important not to leave out those on the "margins of the margins" meaning those who are trans, gender-nonconforming, and also queers of color. With that caution in mind, this section will explore scholars' work who have considered ways to be inclusive of queer students while also queering their pedagogy and considering how regulatory norms affect all students.

Goldstein, Russell, and Daley (2007) created a framework examining safe, positive, and queering moments in education and further examined how those notions of "safe" and "positive" moments can be queered, thus bringing queer pedagogy to queer-inclusive practices. As mentioned in the previous section, queer-inclusive practices are limited, and Goldstein et al. (2007) noted that "safe and positive schools . . .normalize Others, individualize homophobia, and naturalize and unproblematize sexual identity categories" (p. 186). Instead, the authors suggest a "queer schools model" which would:

> trouble the official knowledge of disciplines; disrupt heteronormativity and promote an understanding of oppression as multiple, interconnected, and ever changing…[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. . . . 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. (p. 187)

This highlights the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) of queer pedagogy, as it can (and should) consider norms that relate to all identities, not just queer individuals. Goldstein et al. (2007) offered examples of queering a typical "safe" schools method of having a panel of queer people share coming-out stories, by pointing out that these narratives are not static and that individuals may change their narratives depending on their moods and current situations. This queers the idea that coming-out narratives have a traditional narrative structure. They further suggested that when discussing queer slurs (which can be problematic as students may have had those slurs used against them so hearing them in the classroom may cause pain), educators may ask all students to explicitly consider how they would feel if those words were used against them. This could cause students to question not only their own homophobia but possibly their own sexuality for the first time.

Moving from safe and positive moments to queering moments allows for a consideration of heteronormativity and other oppressive normative structures that affect students and teachers. This distinction between "safe" and "queer" schools is similar to Payne and Smith's (2016) discussion of gender policing rather than the "risk- and deficit-based" (p. 127) anti-bullying programs focused on LGBTQ youth in mainstream schools. The authors instead suggested that thinking of bullying in terms of gender policing works to "shift the common understanding of the problem away from individual student behavior and toward a regulation of gender difference that reproduces systemic oppression" (p. 134). This queer framework thus works within a social justice pedagogical realm of addressing systemic inequity. Though Payne and Smith (2016) were discussing bullying here, the use of gender policing as a conceptual framework could be extended to analyze texts and norms within disciplinary boundaries.

Pennell (2019) offered an additional model for considering queer pedagogy in social justice educational contexts, which uses concepts from kayaking and was developed from an ethnographic study in an interdisciplinary middle school course. The model has several interconnected elements that imagine the students as kayakers paddling their own kayaks (symbolizing their learning mind-set) down a river (symbolizing a school course). The first element, primary and secondary stability, refers to the mobility needed by students to navigate difficult material. In primary stability, their boat is flat on the water, and this allows students to practice skills and stay in their comfort zone. In secondary stability, students lean their kayak as they move through rapids, or more difficult material, and show that they can take calculated risks and keep moving despite feeling off-balance. Portaging in kayaking is when a boater must go out of the water and move down the shore around an obstacle. In a classroom, this might occur at a point where the material is too far beyond students' current ability levels or when students' and teachers' energy levels are lagging, which can happen when studying heavy social justice topics. A combat

roll is when a kayaker's boat tips over in a rapid, and they use the motion of their body to roll back up and continue paddling. In a classroom, this can relate to a space where a student has a difficult problem or text that initially causes them confusion, but if they continue working through the difficulty, they may stay in the course and work through the material. Lastly, eddies are relatively calm spaces in the water used by kayakers to rest or to survey upcoming rapids. In a classroom, eddies are necessary for students to reflect on their learning and plan their future moves, especially when faced with difficult tasks. Together, this conceptual model can allow educators to envision how students can work through a queer pedagogical approach to social justice, as this requires students to be flexible, consider issues from multiple angles, and know when a rest is needed in order to continue the work. This is important in social justice education, as social justice issues do not have easy solutions and take immense stamina.

The fields of English education and literacy studies include many queer pedagogues who have created additional frameworks to consider queer identities and queering pedagogy under a social justice umbrella, including Miller (2015, 2016), Helmer (2016), and Leent and Mills (2018), that can be considered cross-curricularly. Miller's (2016) queer literacy framework offers educators a way to be inclusive of transgender and gender-nonconforming students and "is intended to be an autonomous, ongoing, nonhierarchical tool within a teaching repertoire; it is not something someone does once and moves away from" (p. 33), highlighting the need for an ongoing commitment to social justice. While Miller developed the framework for literacy teachers, it can be applied broadly across all educational contexts. This framework encompasses ten principles:

1. "Refrains from possible presumptions that students ascribe to gender"
2. "Understands gender as a construct which has and continues to be impacted by intersecting factors (e.g., social, historical, material, cultural, economic, religious)"
3. "Recognizes that masculinity and femininity constructs are assigned to gender norms and are situationally performed"
4. "Understands gender as flexible"
5. "Opens up spaces for students to self-define with chosen (a)genders, (a)pronouns, or names"
6. "Engages in ongoing critique of how gender norms are reinforced in literature, media, technology, art, history, science, math, etc."
7. "Understands how Neoliberal principles reinforce and sustain compulsory heterosexism, which secures homophobia; and how gendering secures bullying and transphobia"
8. "Understands that (a)gender intersects with other identities (e.g. sexual orientation, culture, language, age, religion, social class, body type, accent, height, ability, disability, and national origin) that inform students' beliefs and thereby, actions"
9. "Advocates for equity across all categories of (a)gender performances"
10. "Believes that students who identify on a continuum of gender identities deserve to learn in environments free of bullying and harassment" (Miller, 2016, p. 36)

While some of these principles are more focused on inclusion (such as numbers five, nine, and ten), the majority employ queer pedagogical techniques of questioning and challenging norms.

Helmer's (2016) work specifically references critical literacy (Luke, 2012), which is an intentionally political approach to literature that asks students to consider issues of power relations within texts, and is frequently used in literacy instruction for social justice. The queer literacies approach (Helmer, 2016; (not to be confused with Miller's simultaneously developed queer literacy framework)) was developed from her ethnographic study of a gay and lesbian literature course at a public high school. Helmer (2016) offered six dimensions for her queer literacies framework: (1) recognizing as legitimate bodies of knowledge and making the focus of inquiry the stories, experiences, cultures, histories, and politics of LGBTQI people; (2) developing an understanding of the dynamics of oppression related to normative systems of regulation of sexuality, gender, and sex (i.e., homophobia, heterosexism, heteronormativity, cissexism, genderism, transphobia); (3) troubling commonsense, partial and distorted understandings of sexuality, sex, and gender; (4) using the critical method of deconstruction for the literary and social analysis of discourse and text; (5) engaging with and producing counter-narratives that open spaces for new imaginings about sexuality, gender, and sex; and (6) creating spaces where students can enter and work through feelings of discomfort and crisis. These dimensions share similarities with Miller (2016) though they are intended for a broader range of queer identities and include specific queer and social justice pedagogical practices such as counter-narratives (which stems from critical race theory, known as CRT), troubling knowledge, and investigating systems of oppression. As with Miller's (2016) work, this framework can be utilized by teachers in all subject matters as queer subjects or the possibility for queering subjects are present – whether or not they are openly acknowledged – in all disciplines.

Lastly, Leent and Mills (2018) offer a queer and critical media literacy framework useful to all educators using media in their classrooms. Their framework shows how teachers can incorporate queer media content in a way that will allow them and their students to "critically interrogate gender-normative and heteronormative assumptions within media texts in digital communication environments at school" (p. 401). Leent and Mills (2018) described four components to their framework – "recognizing rights, reflecting dialogically, reconstructing representations, and reconnecting intersectionalities" (p. 403) – which allow for a consideration of the societal structures that affect how queer people are represented in media. The authors point out that these components also seek to avoid essentializing queer experiences as singular by considering other factors such as race and class that affect queer identities. Additionally, they point out that "human rights are often read in heteronormative ways…[and] By intentionally asking questions about human rights regarding diverse genders and sexualities, teachers can take a position that encourages students to recognize the rights of people who identify as LGBTQ+" (p. 404), thus queering understandings of how human rights and related policies are formed. This framework could be especially useful in social studies classrooms, where students examine who writes history and how that shapes representations of nonnormative groups.

Discipline-Specific Examples of Queer and Social Justice Pedagogy

In addition to the examples listed above from literacy and English education, scholarship on queering pedagogy in other disciplines can be found in diverse school subjects such as music (Gould, 2013), physical education (Larsson, Quennerstedt, & Öhman, 2014), science (Fifield & Letts, 2014; Snyder, & Broadway, 2004), mathematics (Baker, Fede, & Pennell, 2020; Pennell & Fede, 2017; Rands, 2009), and social studies (Lapointe, 2016). Additional scholarship from elementary literacy practices (Hermann-Wilmarth, Lannen, & Ryan, 2017; Ryan, & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018) and early childhood education (Bower-Phipps, Powell, Bivona, Harmon, & Olcott, 2017) are also examined in this section. As with previous sections, this one will not include scholarship that is focused only on queer inclusion without considering queer pedagogy's larger focus on disrupting heteronormativity and other societal norms.

Electives such as music and physical education (PE) may be subjects where queer and social justice pedagogies are unexpected, but Gould (2013) and Larsson et al., (2014) demonstrate that there are possibilities. Gould (2013) discussed the need for music classes to include music written and performed by queer people and to discuss these identities with students. This inclusion also queers expectations of music classes and shows that "queer lives [are] worth living musically in the world, as it expresses outrage to confront the terror of gender nonnormative students in all of our classrooms" (p. 197). She also discussed the intersectionality evident in a group of singer-songwriters from the 1970s who were "radical lesbians" (p. 197) and included American sign language interpreters, free child care, and wheelchair accessible seating at their performance venues. By discussing this group with students, they can consider the norms of music as a discipline and a performance art, as well as who has access to music.

Larsson et al. (2014) found Swedish PE teachers were also inspired by lesbians, but in this case, it was their own students. As the authors discussed, PE is bound in binary norms of gender as different exercises or sports are associated with boys or girls and that boys tend to earn higher grades than girls as more "masculine" activities are privileged in the curriculum. When speaking with PE teachers, the researchers found that they were inclined to think of these gender differences as normal and natural and that they rarely reflected how gender norms affected their teaching. Yet, when one teacher was doing a Swedish cultural dance unit as required by the national curriculum, three girls rebelled and asked why they had to dance with boys, saying they were lesbians. This "queer potential... [could be] viewed as a counter-site" (p. 137) to heteronormativity, and in this case, the teacher was responsive and praised the girls for pointing out the "heterosexual normativity" (p. 143) of his assumptions. This changed the way he taught the class, and instead of teaching "male" and "female" roles, he partnered the students randomly and taught them both the lead and follow parts. In both of these discipline-specific examples, real-world connections led to a rethinking of gendered assumptions, which ultimately pushed back against heteronormativity.

As science is a subject where sex, gender, and sexuality are discussed, queer pedagogy can add a much-needed critical lens to curriculum and teaching. In their analysis of eight commonly used high school biology textbooks, Snyder and

Broadway (2004) found that five of the books "were completely void of any reference to sexuality outside of the heterosexual norm" (p. 625) and that even in those that did include homosexuality it was only in the context of AIDS. As the authors pointed out, "embedded in the heteronormative treatment of sexuality in the biology textbook is the message that only heterosexual behaviors exist and are acceptable" (p. 630). Fifield and Letts (2014) go further with their queering of science education, pointing out that while inclusion of nonnormative identities is important in science, educators should also relax their views of objectivity so that "ambiguous borderlands" are examined (p. 400).

Snyder and Broadway (2004) encouraged science educators to use queer theory in the classroom as it causes the "invisible [to be] made visible, [so that] scientific literacy becomes more than the propagation of sameness" (p. 621). Using queer theory could "portray science education as a complex array of social codes, forces, and institutional powers that interact to shape the ideas of what is normative and deviant at any particular moment" (p. 631). Fifield and Letts (2014) made similar observations about the curriculum and noted that queering science education "demand[s] that scientists and educators not rest comfortably in some myth of objectivity, but that they critically account for the broader cultural beliefs that necessarily empower, advance, limit, mislead, and bias scientific knowledge" (p. 398). Acknowledging that cultural norms shape the way science is reported and mythologized is a queer method that ultimately serves social justice purposes, as this inquiry asks whose voices are included in science education, whose are left out, and what this erasure signifies in our culture.

Another subject that is often supposed to be "objective" is mathematics. Critical mathematics scholars, a social justice approach, note that mathematics should instead be thought of as a way of reading the world (Gutstein, 2005). Rands' (2009) work, as discussed in an earlier section, is an example of queering mathematics to have elementary students not only tackle math problems about queer individuals but to consider broader questions about how queer people are seen in society. Baker et al. (2020) suggested additional ways to queer mathematics with early elementary students by having them examine the concept of equal in both a numerical sense and with concepts of diverse gender expressions. The authors suggested having students consider questions such as "How can boys and girls act differently from one another and still be seen as boys and girls (or as genders outside of the binary) equally?" This will allow students to see that different gender expressions are all equally valid. Moving from gender norms, Pennell and Fede (2017) incorporated queer pedagogy with critical mathematics to study queer-inclusive topics such as same-sex marriage with middle schoolers. The teaching was queered by giving students freedom to create their own mathematical questions and by incorporating some ambiguity into the lesson. For example, students used data from a newspaper article written after same-sex marriage became legal in their state that included a range of numbers for the average number of couples getting marriage licenses at a county courthouse. The students then all had slightly different answers, which challenged their ideas of what counted as a "right" answer, as they expected from their experiences in more typical math courses.

While social studies can be an obvious place to have queer inclusion, such as specifically discussing queer historical figures like Frida Kahlo or laws and policies regarding queer rights, there is less literature specifically on using queer pedagogy (rather than queer-inclusive practices alone) in teaching social studies. Lapointe (2016) studied a gay-straight alliance in a Canadian secondary school and suggested that social studies teachers can learn from what the student members were doing in their club. Lapointe found that students were engaging in social media and suggested teachers could harness this interest by having students "learn to critique. . .anti-LGBTQ messages in the media. . .and facilitate activities that enable students to critically examine their messages, intentions, and impact" (p. 210). This goes beyond queer inclusion to a queering, as students are digging beneath the surface and examining the social norms behind the messages. Students were also "deconstructing heteronormativity through student-led dialogue" which led Lapointe to note that:

> Social Studies educators can benefit from following the queer pedagogical lead of these GSA members as a means to enhance their capacity to teach for social justice – a significant theme in Social Studies curriculum. Queering the student/teacher relationship may inspire educators to learn about and understand LGBTQ topics in queer ways, and ultimately integrate queer pedagogy in their classrooms. (p. 214)

As with previous examples, this goes beyond LGBTQ inclusion to a queering and thus rethinking of the way subjects are taught in the classroom. These forms of questioning relate directly to Britzman's (1995) original ideas on queering pedagogy.

These questioning practices and examination of media relate back to literacy education practices. Hermann-Wilmarth et al. (2017) discussed how critical literacy practices can be used with upper elementary students, particularly through teaching the middle grades novel *George* (Gino, 2015). In this text, the main character knows she is a girl named Melissa, but everyone sees her as a boy named George. Fourth and fifth grade students in Hermann-Wilmarth et al.'s (2017) study discussed gender norms and wrote letters to the author which caused them to find out Gino uses gender-neutral pronouns, which caused further research on how to begin a letter without using Mr. or Ms. By learning about the honorific Mx., students' understandings of both gender and writing norms were queered. Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth's (2018) book *Reading the Rainbow: LGBTQ-Inclusive Literacy Instruction in the Elementary Classroom* offers a broad range of suggestions for queering the classroom which are applicable to any age group. The researchers noted that queer can be thought of as messy thinking and that "when teachers and students learn to notice and 'mess up' categories – particularly those related to bodies, gender, sexual orientation, and love – as they read, write, and talk in their ELA classrooms, they are making those categories more inclusive" (pp. 57–58). Working with even younger students, Bower-Phipps et al. (2017) discussed ways that gender categories can be queered with preschool students. Some of this disruption can be as simple as offering princess dresses to all students during imaginative play, not just the girls. This queers students' notions of gendered behaviors, as even in young children these societal norms are beginning to seem natural.

The teaching examples in this section can be applied to many disciplines, but it can be helpful to teachers to see the specifics of how to queer learning in their subject area. Overall, these researchers demonstrated that heteronormativity can be questioned in all subjects. Doing so not only makes the classroom a more inclusive space for queer people, but it also requires students to engage in inquiry and critical thinking. As these are desired outcomes for all students, queer pedagogy benefits not only social justice goals but traditional ones about student learning in all contexts. Queer pedagogy in disciplinary-specific spaces also helps educators notice the norms of their own subjects, which often remain unquestioned.

Considering Race Within Queer Pedagogy Scholarship

Queer theorists and pedagogues recognize that queer identities do not exist in a vacuum and that intersectionality must be addressed to recognize the complexity of student and teachers' identities in relation to schooling, which is important for a social justice mind-set. Abustan and Rud (2016) called for educators to be "allies of intersectionalities [who] seek to become allies to students, people, and communities they do not identify with" (p. 15). They believe that this stance will encourage educators to learn about individual and systemic forms of oppression, so that they can "implement informed actions and policies that seek to alleviate . . .discrimination for all marginalized students" (p. 18). This ideology fits with Rasmussen and Allen's (2014) call for applying "queer concepts to interrogate racial politics outside the realm of sexuality" (p. 435). By queering systemic racism, the norms within which it operates can be exposed. This idea relates to Msibi's (2016) concept of "bitter knowledge," which he took from South African scholar Jonathan Jansen (2008), to indicate the racist knowledge white students have that they learn through accultura-tion. Msibi suggested that by addressing the bitter knowledge students hold, "one is able to teach beyond the politics of race and sexuality, to speak more about the intersectional ways in which systemic discrimination works. Once this is done, the heterosexual matrix can then be addressed through. . . presenting clearly definitions of gender, sex, and sexuality" (p. 31). This queer teaching method focuses on individual reflection and unlearning, both important concepts in social justice pedagogy.

However, despite the usefulness of queer pedagogy to interrogate racism broadly, it is still important to study queer people of color using a queer pedagog-ical lens, as this group faces multiple forms of marginalization. Scholars engaging in this work include Brockenbrough (2015, 2016), McCready (2004, 2010), Pennell (2016a), and Wargo (2016). Brockenbrough's (2016) work drew on Ferguson's (2004) analysis of Black queer subjects to analyze the unique experi-ences of Black queers (outside of educational contexts), especially as they deviate from the queer white mainstream. As Brockenbrough (2016) noted in his research with queer Black male teachers:

> Centering the lived experiences of Black queer male teachers enabled a QOC [Queer
> of Color] critique that troubled the emphasis on coming out that pervades much of

the scholarship on (White) queer teachers. More than a space of queer abjection, the closet – when understood through the racially mediated experiences of Black queer male teachers – may serve as a protective and agentive space. (p. 289)

As Brockenbrough (2016) found, a focus on coming out assumes that it is safe for everyone to do so. The Black male teachers he studied expressed that staying in the closet at work allowed them safety as well as the ability to do their job without additional scrutiny. Wargo's (2016) research took a similar approach by using Johnson's (2012) invocation of a quare theory and Paris' (2012) culturally sustaining pedagogy for use specifically with queer youth of color "whose gender and sexual identity is always already enmeshed within larger markers such as language, ritual, desire, and cultural practice" (p. 303). By recognizing the larger systems of oppression queer youth of color face, educators enact a "[q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy" (p. 303) that is intentionally political.

Two additional ways to view queer people of color's experiences in education are utilizing a multidimensional framework (McCready, 2004) and a queer cultural capital (Pennell, 2016a) lens. As McCready (2004) found when interviewing, "gay and gender nonconforming Black male students...[they experience] hierarchically arranged masculinities that afford some...more privilege than others" (p. 141). McCready suggested educators could combat this by "recognizing and teaching their students to affirm multiple masculinities and the range of ways men and women express their gender and sexual identities" (p. 142). By demonstrating and allowing space for multiple gender expressions, more Black queer students will feel safe and comfortable in school. Additionally, educators can continue to queer expectations for Black masculinity from all students, queer or otherwise. Pennell's (2016a) queer cultural capital framework also offers an expansive way to view queer experiences, particularly queer people of color. Drawing from Yosso's (2005) work on cultural capital in communities of color, queer cultural capital has the same dimensions – navigational, familial, linguistic, aspirational, and resistant – and offers an additional dimension: transgressive (Pennell, 2016a). This model allows educators and researchers to view intersectional queer communities from a place of strength: a strength that comes because of, not in spite of, their queer identities. With queer transgressive cultural capital, defined as queer people going around boundaries in a playful manner, educators can point to creative ways queer people have made space for themselves to point out how heteronormativity permeates society. As with McCready's (2004) multidimensional frameworks, queer cultural capital can allow educators and researchers expansive ways through which to view queer people of color and queering education.

Teacher Education and Professional Development

Lastly, it is necessary to consider how teacher educators can encourage their pre-service teachers to enact queer pedagogy. This work is not easy: as Whitlock (2010) noted, teacher educators cannot forget queer issues (queer the noun) while trying to

fulfill goals of queering pedagogy. Pre-service teachers can also face homophobia, and creating safe spaces must be dealt with before most are ready to talk about queering their classrooms. Often, queer inclusivity and queer pedagogy can work in tandem, as many examples in previous sections have shown. Additionally, straight students can also have queer experiences which may "spark alliance and interest across other differences" (Mayo, 2007, p. 184). The following examples illustrate different approaches to queering teacher education.

Queered education practices are not limited to a particular group or subject matter. Bower-Phipps and Powell (Bower-Phipps et al., 2017) introduced a group of early childhood teachers to queer pedagogy through an action research group that served as professional development, and the three teachers who also contributed to their book chapter enacted it in multiple ways. Having the group meetings to discuss their attempts, brainstorm ideas, and problem solve situations such as working with resistant co-workers enabled their success and resilience. One teacher, for example, continued to work with her co-teacher on using inclusive language and not grouping students by boys and girls. Shelton (2018) examined how one of her pre-service English teachers, Lulu, used queer pedagogy and intersectionality within a standard secondary literature course focused on canonical texts. Lulu found that when she asked students to simply find personal connections to the text, this "did not challenge students to critique their personal positions" (p. 4). To get students to go beyond these initial responses that often resulted in stereotypical views of subjects such as women's sexuality, she "adopted elements of a queer reading pedagogy…[that asked] students to interrogate the sociopolitical elements….[asking them] what was normal [and] what determined normalcy" (p. 13). This led to students having to sit with their discomfort as they examined not only what their responses to the literature were but where these responses came from. Lulu's work was supported by her teacher education program, which also gave her the theoretical tools to interrogate her students' learning and her teaching practices.

Gutierez-Smith and Heffernan (2016) used a method of public pedagogy with their pre-service teachers through a program called TeachOUT. Students engaged in their choices of public acts that marked them as queer or queer allies, such as wearing a gay pride lanyard or reading an obviously queer book in public. They also assisted with advocacy work such as fundraising for a queer prom, attending high school gay-straight alliance meetings, and participating and hosting a queer education summit. In the first activity, students became aware of their own insecurities in trying to fit in, and some felt more comfortable being themselves (which was not always attached to sexuality) after the exercise. As the authors noted:

> this critical praxis of centering on the experiences and learning of marginalized identities within the education community, the simple shift from *you* to *we*, is what is at the heart of the anti-oppressive pedagogy this course aspires to develop each year. (p. 248)

This course combined theory not only with practice but with embodied personal experience that highlighted for the future teachers the ways that they could queer spaces and the ways queer individuals may feel in heteronormative spaces. While

this was a special course on queer education, teacher educators could try similar assignments in any social foundations, social justice, or multicultural education course.

While the above are only a few examples, teacher educators can draw from the depth of queer pedagogy scholarship discussed in the rest of this entry for inspiration. Pre-service teachers can, and should, consider not only how they can be inclusive of queer students in their classrooms but how they can queer their own curriculum. Doing so requires a critical reflection on how curriculum is built, why certain texts or ideas are highlighted while others are erased, and how pedagogical techniques are contributing to educating lifelong learners and critical thinkers. Infusing social justice with queer pedagogical practices can enrich teaching practices and bring an even deeper reflection that in turn can lead to transformative outcomes for teachers and students.

Conclusion

Queer pedagogy has a place in every classroom, from early childhood education to teacher education courses, and works well within a social justice framework. Rasmussen and Allen (2014), in their investigation of queer theory in education, stated that queer research can cause education researchers to interrogate our "attachments to particular ideas about what is 'good' in education, and to think about how these fantasies of the good can come undone or go awry" (p. 438). This questioning is also vital in social justice teaching. For whom is education and schooling "good?" What practices are considered "good" by researchers, teachers, and students? How can we encourage "good" practices while not limiting teachers to a set of prescribed techniques? Queer pedagogy and social justice teaching practices both encourage educators to continuously reflect and question our practices, motivations, and mind-sets. As Coll and Charlton (2018) called queerness "a unique opportunity to experiment, take risks, explore new forms of research, and share experiences, perplexities and hopes" (p. 308), so too can social justice pedagogy be this space of reaching for new ways of creating knowledge. By thinking of teaching as a process, rather than a set practice, we can keep working toward equity and inclusion as new social groups and identities continue to form.

Constant questioning means that social justice pedagogy is not sought out by educators who are complacent with comfortability; nor is queer pedagogy. This also means looking carefully at our failures, as Rasmussen and Allen (2014) suggested by examining the "good" (borrowing from Halberstam's use of failure, 2011) and Coll and Charlton (2018) noted is a way to "to productively explore the cracks that emerge in the research process" (p. 318). Queering our social justice research practices can allow scholars to look for new lines of inquiry, which may lead to considering not only a broader range of identities but school subjects, power structures, teaching practices, and education mind-sets with our pedagogical investigations.

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