

Article No.1

A SCENARIO

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Abstract

This article addresses the mis-representation of sexualities in a drama class. The article attempts people to the nature of oppression that can readily occur in the drama space and the manner in which teacher might consider addressing the issues of stereotypical representation of Gay students.

Biography

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[Editor: There are many unrecoverable omissions in this article, occurring during the process of platform transcription. We have attempted where possible to restore the words or at least the meanings of these omissions (indicated in red). Our apologies to readers and the writer where these are not accurate or complete]

On supervising teaching practice recently a drama class of 16-year-old students declare that they want to **undertake** a play about 'Gays'. The student teacher is using Brecht as a catalyst to teach alienation, *verfremdung* (estrangement) and the stylistic devices inside Epic Theatre - what we might call acting technique. The lesson **is intended** to eventually compare naturalistic and epic theatre genres. The class depict strongly the techniques of Brecht, the teacher allows stereotypic devaluing generalisations to occur in the content of the group depiction. The **students** perform what they themselves call 'faggot' like; they sing "YMCA" after Village People and then attempt to **abduct** a child in a park from a pram. The parent (in-role) screams "**You** get your hands off my child you dirty dirty faggot." **Is this** this an atypical drama class when addressing sexuality? There are gross confusions inherent in this short **depiction**: stereotypes, paedophilia, child abduction and derogatory identity labels are all here. The intention for the **teacher** was to 'do Brecht' but the embedded learning is morally corrupt and the teacher fails to redress the morality of depicting LGBT people this way. So what is going on here?

Most of the readers of this scenario are skilled drama teachers who know that the students in this drama class **are 'at risk'** if this scenario is not considered from within the reflective mode of the drama workshop. These students **are** witnessing a form of depiction, which is warped and serves only to drop into a pathway of theatre having at its **centre** serious misconceptions of sexuality and identity. The theatre form is mediocre and warped notions of LGBT **identity** grossly misshape the content. What if there is a gay male student in this class; is he then compelled to live **with a** skewed legacy of identity, which he hopefully does not aspire to? The LGBT student is witness to a betrayal **of his or** her own sense of worth when the stereotypical depiction is left unquestioned.

Educational policies which emphasise inclusivity are now calling for greater attention to the voices which **have** traditionally been excluded or rendered invisible. There has been recently a stronger perception of a need for inclusivity in education (Kullick, 1995; Maynard, 1995; Macklin, 1995; Kaufmann, 1995; Steinberg, Epstein & Johnson, 1997) to accommodate those who have been previously categorised into marginality - the learning disabled, the gifted, women (or men), those of different ethnic backgrounds, those from socio-economic sub-**cultures**. In the push to enfranchise these groups one group still remains largely invisible, hardly the topic for respectable research, namely students who see themselves as LGBT but are often pressured not to reveal it. The **pressure is** often unintentional and invisible, as is evidenced by the comments of a Western Australian educationalist who **when** asked to explain why gay boys were doing distance education from their metropolitan homes, explained that **it was** for their own safety". There was no thought that the culture and practices of schools that made it unsafe for **the students to** be there might need to be addressed. The problem is removed, rather than faced.

Subjectivities:

Emerging descriptions of the fields of experiences of students are more frequently founded in biographical and autobiographical methods in which the physical reality is usually described and addressed. The students' **subjectivity** is what is considered missing in the above drama class scenario. The teacher attended to the physical reality **of** Brecht with assuredness. The movement beyond the physical realities to address the encounters, rituals and subjectivities of experience belonging inside the drama is left unaddressed: this is the depth **of the** field of drama as education.

The safe return to my own voice:

LGBT students still hold a positioned sociality of being 'other' and could too readily be generalised as a group of **'others'**. The intention **of this article** is to move beyond the generalised notion of 'one of them' or 'others'. To do this I need **to** address what the other means. The complex situation of being LGBT is not generalisable. No experience of LGBT student is generalisable to all LGBT Students. Hence the hope to **have a** 'safe return to my own voice' is a challenging call. This article will be suggesting that **a** drama space could be one place where that safe call can heard. Is the drama workshop a place for voice for all students?

The reply or use of voice might be seen as referring to the manner in which the individual and the social group **creates** what Bakhtin calls its own 'social dialect'. Henderson alludes to shared roles, perspectives and ideologies **which are** expressed by this dialect. She suggests that following on from Bakhtin's ideas language can be used to **ask** for social identity where consciousness, 'becomes a kind of inner speech reflecting 'the outer world' in a **process** that links the psyche, language and social interaction' (Henderson, 1992, p.146). Voice for the LGBT student drama class could be seen as being the **speaker** 'speaking' both to and from the position of the other. Henderson **quotes** Audre Lorde (1984) writing that this speaking must deal not only with 'the external manifestations of racism **and** sexism,' but also 'with the results of those distortions internalized within our consciousness of ourselves and another'. The voice that this article is calling for is both the internalised safe voice as well as the socially **constructed** voice. Can the LGBT student tell with efficacy and truth of the power of their individual experiences? Can drama **provide** role-reflection which attends to the nature of the private and public construction of sexualised identities for **LGBT** students?

The nature of experience.

Experience is the act that leads to the sensed knowing of being: holding to the idea that the blend of external influence impacting on the subjective feeling of being is both structural and psychological in nature. The **school** environments in which drama occurs are structural systems of experience which have psychological impact **on** drama teachers and students alike. The structural notion of experience has become the tool for the historian **who** reports on the personal and social production of authority at a particular chronological time: how the world was **made**. The psychological notion of experience is falsely often separated from structures and considered **secondary** as it attends to the manner in which the symbolic expression of affect occurs: how the individual believes he **is** made. The interplay of meaning between the structures of drama education and the sense of self is the **experience** "excluded" students bring to the drama space. The common denominator is that the structural and **psychological** exchanges, in rituals, activities and school practices culminates in a realisation and articulation of self and community. The self in the instance of this article is the LGBT student; the community is the school in which **the** students work.

Joan Scott writes that experience is the process of 'trying to understand the operations of complex and **chance** discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced and which processes are unrem...[.....] indeed achieve their effect because they aren't noticed '[My Italics] (Butler and Scott, 1992, p.32). Experience **of** LGBT students is the ascription of meaning that is often resisted: is ascribed as invisible and usually not [.....] The lack of marking is a familiar thread in the experience of the structural and psychological worlds of the **LGBT** students. Can drama be engaged then to redress the lack of ascription? Or can drama be used to ascribe **the** individual and collective notion of being LGBT?

There are representational challenges that beset educational theorists when considering the field of post-**essentialist** theories of sexuality and identity. The teacher is faced with a particular and specialised set of dilemmas **when** attempting to represent LGBT students' subjectivity. In Western Australia for example, where the writer is **located** these students are still enforced to indeterminacy and silence. LGBT students are defined and confined by **the** stereotypic gestures as depicted in this Year 11 drama that can only be alluded to by their very absence. In education which is conservative by tradition, the sexual thematic of outsiders' lives and the limited if not **absent** LGBT representation leads to an intentional ghosting. The figure and action of LGBT identities is made [...] ghost someone who is not 'real' or embodied. LGBT students are therefore subjected to enforced practices which **are** **a part** of the heteronormative strategies for their enforced concealment. LGBT students are excluded from inclusive learning opportunities, as in this Australian state they are legally non-voiced.

Drama is a way to bring the 'embodied' and 'voiced' experience of all students and the LGBT student into consciousness and thereby redress minimal or at worse derogatory exposure. The drama space can redress warped depictions; although these are important as they serve to tell us what we're not. The drama space [...] the corporeal images and models of understanding of the lives of LGBT students and can serve to move **beyond the** secure straight/gay binary which mainstream culture is so thoroughly authorised to maintain. Grosz (1994: 3) **calls** the body the "perceptual blind spot" and seems to be implying it has been ignored or that it has mainly been **an** object to be manipulated through the rigours of the natural sciences. The place of the political engagements, issues deemed relevant for the LGBT students as both individual and a collective can be redressed and **addressed** at the enacted and embodied level. This is the substance of the enriching drama workshop space. Grosz **alludes to** the body **as** the significant medium or vehicle for expression which can "render public and communicable **what is** essentially private" (1994:9). The body as our tool in drama is a vessel for ideas, thoughts, affect, beliefs and is not of necessity subjugated to the mind. Both mind and body have a role to inform how LGBT students **s** adapt to the 'conforming rituals' that are enacted in the

varied educational settings that students inhabit.

These suggestions are perhaps an agitation to the heteronormative thematizing of LGBT students' subjectivity. These students' subjectivities are their embodied practices and as such are not an attempt to disrupt gendered essentialism based on sexual orientation. The drama class at the opening of this article does not reveal an LGBT student's sexuality per se, but the anxieties LGBT sexualities produces in the straight students and policy makers' world. There is a seriously misinformed knowing around the ritual and identity of LGBT people for the straight members.

Drama class provides a space for the interrogation of the manner in which the conceptual category of all sex is produced, performed and engaged in the social practice of education. Sexuality can be categorised or defined variously belonging to the realms of sexual identity, sexual orientation, sexual practices or sexual drives. In [...] is it an endeavour for us as drama teachers to use the corporeal experiences of our students to examine the [...] that the lives of these students have been contested and constructed because of their sexuality? Sexuality that means identity, orientation; practice or drive as defined by our students themselves. The LGBT students in the drama space may well speak of the impulse of becoming who they 'really are' after psychoanalytic theory. They address the compulsion to act or behave in a set of ways which involves their embodied or disembodied sense of self - by which they are therefore self-defined or other-confined. They may speak of the self through the frame of their gender or choose to relate and explore the rituals by which they set out to be subjected to pleasure or [...] schools and the broader community.

The politics of LGBT performativity, performance and cultural production, or 'belonging' (after Probyn) must be considered as a central concern of what can and should happen in the drama class. The Year eleven class spoken about earlier is an occasion of naming homophobic and heterocentric practices that contribute to the inequities that experienced in the lives of almost all LGBT people. The naming of the rites and rituals that serve to dispossess student of the 'life-force' of sexuality as an impulse must occur: the public and private demeaning of acts of p[...] and desire that are 'LGBT' in nature has to be interrupted. The concealment of the visible presence of LGBT students must be ceased and the fullness of life that sexuality brings must be given to this group of people w contestation.

Hitherto as with all marginalised minorities within cultures or subcultures, the LGBT students have found limited cultural experiences for participation in education. The dominant culture has generally ignored or oppressed the epiphenomenon of LGBT students' identity. Gendered, hierarchalized dualisms have traditionally defined identity, ascribing to the body a notion of identity that has not looked beyond the binary notion of dualisms. The notion either/or always generates inclusion or exclusion. This dichotomous thinking leads to the place of playing off a privileged and a subordinated being. The insider is compared with the outsider. The practices in drama class give occasion of action that does not need to be seen as dichotomous and split. The variety of ascriptions and enactments that fit within the frame of excluding LGBT students are the

- unspoken realms of "don't ask don't tell" regulatory body attire
- the dominance of the heterosexualised celebratory self and
- edited or silenced notions of intimacy and affect

Drama class is a possible occasion of "telling" the tales of the self for the LGBT student; acknowledging their practices that create their individual and collective identities; moving into a place where there is an affirmation or 'celebration' of not only heterosexual selves and finally breaking silence or speaking out, as opposed to 'editing' personal narratives addressing intimacy and emotion.

In education, historically being 'different' has required alternative ways of negotiating. Educational culture must provide access for this population. The drama class is an occasion to inscribe the LGBT students' presence and provide an analysis of how they are produced. It must not deny or cause them to lose their identity. How can we theorise the materiality of the LGBT or lesbian student in relation to their cultural constructions? Inclusive theory attempted to address how others, who don't 'fit' are situated or located.

Inclusive theory would suggest that participation is not only assimilation. Can educational drama be an attempt to examine the affirmative meanings of the experiences and enactments that occur in education for LGBT student?

From the outset is it important to recognise the spaces that LGBT students inhabit? There is a philosophical opposition that is articulated in theory. The binary oppositions have set about related oppositional stances that become the ways of viewing LGBT students. They are seen to sit on the margin. The boundaries of their existence are occupied therefore as not belonging 'in this place'. The

dominant cultural production still excludes LGBT students. The dominant cultural values set by the educational rituals disseminate fatuous and uninformed information about who LGBT students are and the style of life they live. Very often there is no explicit representation; the affirmation of their sexuality, [...] as practice and they are considered only from a radical perspective or belonging the outside. Mainstream educational culture still prefers to be read as male dominated, straight, white and middle class. The cultural readings of LGBT students are not given legitimate status or considered as an arena for examination.

Out of the politics of the civil rights and women's liberation movements the radical imperative of making the otherwise hidden visible has become more popular. There is now a responsibility to acknowledge the ways the identities of LGBT students and their critical perspectives are mis-constructed and constructed by schools, communities, and especially themselves. Whilst this may be a general trend, the new critical visibility is based very much on an historical context of a complex moment. Gender studies in Academe are still threatened by a conservative right wing led political backlash; misogyny and homophobia still stand in the way of political consciousness for this invisible group of students. How can these students label themselves when they're invisible? The definition and design of the self is largely undefined, unclear and undecided. Are LGBT students a mere political context? Are they a form of criticism of heterosexual identity or are they a false production in the minds of those in positions of orthodoxy?

Drama education should be a place and source for cultural commentary: a place in which all students' cultural commentary is played or not played out. Thereby critical intervention will not only presume the function of LG students but also be an opportunity to address the manner in which an audience sees the LGBT people and rhetorical styles of LGBT communities.

If education is to lead to the liberation and emancipation of self and others there will always be a close connection between critical theory and living life as a LGBT student.

The assumption of only heterosexist and "natural" norms is one way of delineation and framing of difference. Alongside there is almost certainly an assumed singularity of identity that cannot be accepted in an article such as this. The article is encompassing varied forms of desires, rituals of enactment and embodied practices which into being only because these are seen by the insiders as being 'transgressive'. Sexual and gender expressions are compared only to so called "straight" gender activities and thereby are considered less acceptable because they belong outside the dominant form of gender and sexual expression.

The restriction of the embodiment of LGBT identity has required that the reader recognises that sexuality is part of the enactment of relationships. The place for serious consideration of relatedness in education is undervalued. Trivialising LGBT identity and education and the rituals that alienate LGBT students has occurred so frequently we have come to assume that their sexuality has nothing to do with the classroom. The enactment of sexuality is for some readers so difficult to appreciate. An open sexual understanding of this hitherto hidden population might not lead to anything constructive or indeed liberating if the value of the enactment of sexual expression is demeaned or diminished.

Education still resists the movement towards emotionality which can especially serve to question the value of dominant ideological structures. Education is not only a cognitive process of intelligences and we need to reclaim the role and place of emotional literacy (Carroll) of the lived experience. For LGBT students emotional expression, identity is hardly ever celebratory and indeed is frequently painful for these students. As Warner (1999) writes:

Women and gay people have been especially vulnerable to the shaming effects of isolation. Almost all children grow up in families that think of themselves and all their members as heterosexual, and for some children this produces profound and nameless estrangement, a sense of inner secrets and hidden shame. No amount of adult "acceptance" or progress in civil rights is likely to eliminate this experience of queerness for many children and adolescents in life, they will be told that they are "closeted," as though they have been telling lies. They bear a special burden of disclosure. No wonder so much of gay culture seems marked by a primal encounter with shame, from the dr[...] sadomasochism to the rhetoric of gay pride, or the newer "queer" politics. Ironically, plenty of moralists will th[...] to this theme of shame in gay life as though it were proof of something pathological in gay people. It seldom occurs to anyone that the dominant culture and its family environment should be held accountable for creating the inequalities of access and recognition that produce this sense of shame in the first place.

LGBT students embody and enact emotive issues that serve to question the ideology of equity and equality in education. They serve to define the range of difference and are perhaps still at the extreme

polarity in inclusivity theories. It is particularly urgent that the intense negative imagery that is associated with LGBT people in education be redressed. Do these LGBT students still sit on the edge waiting to be 'allowed in'? Are these LGBT students a confrontation to the ideologies that hold the power in education in this place? The theme of oppression is known to women and people of colour, people with disabilities and people from NESB. The legitimate inclusion of people of transgressive gender identities and status requires a place for questioning the dominant ideology. The stories of LGBT students are not attempts only to subvert the misrepresentation of the hegemonic constructed heterosexism that exist schools: their stories are contesting the place of such a limited view of gender and sexuality.

The LGBT student comes to education with an individual psyche having a socially constructed historical below. The excessive promotion of the norm of heterosexuality leads to inevitable shaping of invisibility. The manner which schools in Western Australia enforce heterosexuality in schools has hardly ever been challenged. It is presently against the law in WA to promote LGBT identities into schools as a positive. As alluded to earlier the culture of education based on the acceptance of only heterosexuality fails to offer an opportunity for the LGBT student to extricate his or herself from a place where they can connect with their view of culture; with their views of fantasy and desire; with their histories and stories. The occasion to hear the place of belonging, the unique cultural legacies that have created the 'LGBT' self and the potency of desire and sexualities are all denied the hidden student.

The concentration on what is visible in schools leads to the loss of occasion to be seen. The LGBT students identified as 'invisible' are subject to innuendo and the official subtexts of homophobic communities in school larger societies. The subcultured identity of the LGBT student is deliberately framed by the dominant culture to exclude voice, enactment or acceptance. This article is then a reclaiming of the denial of control over the story and of the self. The LGBT students have been denied the opportunity to tell their stories. Their identity is now being reformed as they are able to re-articulate the tale of the one not allowed to speak. Where there is suppression identity, homophobia and total absence of definition there is an incomplete knowing. In the incomplete knowing is a lack of definition.

The assertion of equality is what is asked for in this article. This article is not an attempt to bring down the privileged ascendant hegemony: it is however a hope to hear the tales of the field of lived and unlived experiences of these other students. Then we would not have the facetious, stereotypic encounter occurring in the drama class.

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