

TO BE A MALE, A NEGRO, AND A QUEER: PEDAGOGY IN (SCIENCE) EDUCATION

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ERNEST GAINES (1993) WROTE: "I [A TEACHER] HAVE ALWAYS DONE WHAT THEY WANTED me to do, teach reading, writing and arithmetic. Nothing else – nothing about dignity, nothing about identity, nothing about loving and caring" (p. 191-192). If instruction is teaching the three R's and in this case science, and pedagogy is about loving and caring – desire – then "pedagogy exceeds the incorporation of ... content into the curricula and the worry over finding teaching strategies that make ... content more palatable to students" (Luhmann, 1998, p. 142). Therefore is the practice of pedagogy for me as a science educator — or for that matter a science teacher — a practice of desire? Can the content that I teach be my identity, my loving and my caring? Are my identity, my loving, and my caring my desire? In other words, am I an instructor because of my desire for the content — or is my desire for my students required for pedagogy and curriculum? More pointedly, if desire is identity, love, and caring, then is to learn science, to be a scientist, and to teach science — are these indicators of engaging in desire?

My vexation, with a broad stroke, is to impregnate the logos of science education with eros so that pedagogy evolves, is, and prevails. I want to profess and to practice pedagogy in order "to confront the complicated problem of how identification are made and sometimes refused" (Pinar, 1998, p. 21). Specifically, I wish to unearth, explore, and utilize the sensibility of students — the interface of self with its environment — so that the self can build an identity in which not only to trap itself, but also to allow that identity to know how to behave within the world that the self did not create. Along the way, I am vexed by how to make public, manifest, or show my sensibility — my looking, touching, shaping and listening to create meaning. Or do I come out to my students in "an act of self-acknowledgment, self-acceptance, self-affirmation, and self-revelation intimately linked to how my views myself and how I interacts with the world" (Merla, 1996, p. xvi)?

My race, ethnicity, language, and history along with my biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles, sexual behavior, sexual identity — and even my science content identity (with its gendered, sexual and racial roles) open large questions. When I look out into my classroom, I look for myself. I look for students who are black, "easily identified by color, [and] could not hope to run away without being caught" (Bell, 1987, p. 39) or who are "negroes" whereby:

the term *negro*...was initiated and originally used by racist European Americans to (1) physically classify all Africans conveniently by skin color, (2) as an instrument of subterfuge to force Africans to focus on their slave identity and to forget their original African identity, and (3) as a verbal insult that was, and still is a central component of racism (Ghee, 1990, p. 80).

I do not see me. The sensibilities of my students are situated in race (most often Whiteness) and heteronormativity (independent of the factors of sex and gender) and I am the Other. I am uncertain about how I should represent myself to those I teach. I fear exposing my sensibility to my students as if students' knowing my sensibility is necessary for them to learn; however, I do not fear my hypocrisy of needing the sensibility of my students in order to teach. I fear the eros that students may bring to learning. I fear my desire. I am a man, a Negro, and a queer.

One does not need to be a queer in order to queer. But to queer is to engage in pedagogy, a relationship, of desire. If pedagogy is desire, then the connotation of a man, a queer, and a Negro disrupts the (hetero)normative purpose of schools, "an institution which by its bureaucratic structure may make education more difficult rather than more likely" (Pinar, 2001, p. 26), because schools are female, straight, and white. However I believe that within the pedagogy of science education, the male teacher is feminized to teach identity, dignity and loving and caring. As a result, it is obvious that the queer exists as "multiple, conflicting, and even odd and abnormal—queer—identities" (Miller, 1998, p. 369) and the black body becoming white. But then, what can be said of a man, a Negro, and a queer whose profession is defined by science education?

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With the use of a constructivist epistemology and a conceptual change methodology, I challenge teacher candidates to inquire into what it means to teach (science). Inquiry places the teacher candidates into the real world of (science) teaching and becomes a space for teacher candidates to make sense of the (science) teaching world. (Science) teaching, as inquiry, extends the views of teacher candidates beyond the “what” of science instruction to the “who” are the science teacher. Therefore curriculum is: What do you, teacher candidate, want to learn about teaching (science)? For one teacher candidate, her inquiry has become formal (auto)biographical research. She will explore what teaching is and who is she as a teacher. Thus, though inquiry engages teacher candidates and the (science) teacher educator in discourse and dialogue, inquiry is a process where working collaboratively toward solutions while honoring the differences within each person opens a space for gaining knowledge. However, does inquiry teaching and learning, in addition to what I do as a (science) teacher or educator, involve who I am? In other words, as I engage in value-neutral (science) education research, I cannot find the man, the Negro, and the queer.

However, the undergraduate early childhood teacher candidate’s research into teaching (science) is not only inquiry, but sexual - the “passion within and between people and as passionate living and ask readers to think what sexuality has to do with freedom, liberty, and the fight to craft an interesting, relevant, and vital society” (Britzman, 2000, p. 37). In other words, for me to be, undergraduate teacher candidate education research must be pedagogy as desire or “the perversity of pederasty” (Sears, 1998, p. 99) whereas perversity “is the term that is used to describe the relations of desire ... that exceed the boundaries of heteronormativity” (Weems, 1999, p. 32). So science education research such as Snyder and Broadway (2004) becomes. What does my current research with a male early childhood teacher candidate on Daddy Teacher have to do with a man, a Negro and a queer.

To the male early childhood teacher candidate, I venture to manifest my sensibility, the knowledge claim that represents myself coming out of myself to understand my reality with the understanding that this reality of the self may not frame itself in language (Greene, 1971/1997). Also whereas “coming out entails being placed and read by others, as well as claiming a place and a voice for one’s self” (Fifield & Swain, 2002, p. 186), I venture to come out in a heteronormative world that privileges, if not champions, a masculinity that is individualistic and predatory and rapes and lynchings (Pinar, 2001). But, I have no idea of the male early childhood teacher candidate’s sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles, sexual behavior, or sexual identity world, but how can a male early childhood teacher candidate who represents the polar opposite of the nurturing mother figure be the teacher of young children (Weems, 1999, p. 30) or himself be nonsexual or nongendered?

I would like to remember, when I was an eleventh grader, that learning about solubility of substances was the first time I saw myself – the (silent, never spoken) man that loves men – in my science learning. Albeit that on the molecular level it was the same old “opposites attract” and “polar solutes dissolve in polar solvents.” But did I just memorize that chemistry to pass the test, to teach some high school students, or to create this story. I often thought and think that I was and am learning someone else’s (heteronormative) knowledge and as a Negro, I knew I had to learn that knowledge well. So when I gaze at a class of teacher candidates, now, most often early childhood majors – women, white women, and from the marriage talk or from the silence, heterosexual white women, and from the language, (upper) middle-class heterosexual white women – I wonder if I have my knowledge or their knowledge. I know that I need to deliver their knowledge and to be (white) male, white, and straight. Or do I? And that eleventh grade chemistry chapter came to an end, the test was passed, and back then, I moved onto more chemistry and most likely another example of opposite attract and now, the teacher candidates walk out of my course with their A’s. Silently, unknown, and by myself, I walk home a man, a Negro, and a queer.