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"White People Are Gay, But So Are Some of My Kids": Examining the Intersections of Race, Sexuality, and Gender

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Miranda[1] rolled her eyes and smacked her lips. "Seriously? We're going to talk about this again?" The other focus group members shifted uncomfortably and looked between Miranda and Andy. The group, 17 English education students, had been actively discussing the ways that most of them believed that the civil rights battle for their generation was that of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) rights. Lulu, who self-identified as a Black cisgender heterosexual woman, had summed up the conversation by saying, "Yeah, my mom keeps saying that the [US] Civil Rights Movement and the gay rights movement aren't the same, but I'm like, 'Yes they are, Mom!' And, I'm excited to see what all gets accomplished. I mean, the Civil Rights Movement's protests integrated schools and changed education, so I'm excited to be a teacher who's on the verge of another big shift." The optimism and excitement that permeated most of the group met firm resistance when Andy spoke up, however.

Andy had been listening for nearly 10 minutes of the group discussion. She had told the group during the first meeting that she wanted a "masculine sounding pseudonym" to encompass her identity as a "gender-fluid Hispanic lesbian," and throughout the semester she had been a solo but active voice for intersecting issues of race with those of gender and sexuality. (For a more detailed discussion of Andy's intersecting identities, Andy's contributions to the group, and the group's resistances to Andy, see Shelton and Barnes, 2016.) At this moment, she said, "You know, y'all talk about racism like it's over, and you talk about gay rights or queer rights or whatever like they don't ever matter as far as race. I mean, there are queer kids of color, right? And people who deal with racism and homophobia. It's stupid to separate them." Her contribution earned an eye roll and dismissal by Miranda, a White cisgender heterosexual woman. Miranda was a clear leader in the group dynamics and discussion, and she was the most actively resistant to Andy and to Andy's contributions in terms of connecting race with LGBTQ issues.

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1   All participants' names are self-assigned pseudonyms.

During this and all other focus groups, I worked primarily as an observer, at times becoming a participant-observer either by choice or by invitation or insistence from the group. As I reflect on the ways that my presence shaped the research on pre-service teachers' understandings of gender and sexuality in secondary schooling, I acknowledge that multiple identities unquestionably mattered. In addition to being the researcher, I was the participants' instructor in a Secondary English Education foundations course. They knew that I had worked for a decade in secondary schooling. I also openly identify as a lesbian cisgender White woman.

Due to my interlaced researcher/instructor roles and personal identities, I held numerous positions of authority within the research context. Due to my teaching experience and my role as the participants' instructor outside the research setting, for example, they often looked to me to learn how to successfully implement various curricula. Similarly, because of my instructor role and my lesbian identity, they understood me to be an expert on LGBTQ issues, though I had never claimed to be. When they needed to resolve a disagreement on questions related to gender or sexuality, they turned to me for answers. Most important to this paper, perhaps, my dual identities as White and lesbian potentially reinforced for the participants the idea that LGBTQ equaled Whiteness. Andy was certainly present as a queer woman of color, but my multiple authoritative identities likely muted, or at least minimized, her contributions. Unintentionally, I reinforced preexisting notions of LGBTQ identity while maintaining multiple positions of power within the group.

The Participants

The focus group was comprised of members of a senior-year undergraduate English Education teacher preparation program cohort at a research-intensive university in the southeastern United States. In the field-based foundations course that I taught, I consistently asked students to examine issues of social justice that arose during their fall semester practicum placements. After several weeks of students' questions pertaining to LGBTQ issues, I realized that there was insufficient course time to address all of the topics that my students were asking about and also fulfill programmatic requirements. I therefore established a voluntary research study focused specifically on LGBTQ issues in education for all of my foundations students who were interested and available.

Seventeen of the 24 students enrolled as participants, and their interactions included biweekly focus groups and one individual interview per participant during the academic year. Of the 17, 13 self-identified as White cisgender heterosexual women; two self-identified as Black cisgender heterosexual

women; one self-identified as a Chinese American cisgender heterosexual man (though I should note that he rarely participated in group discussions and maintained that his participation was due to his romantic interest in one of the women who was involved in the study); and one (Andy—one of four people of color and the only self-identified LGBTQ) self-identified as a Hispanic gender-fluid lesbian.

Following my students' graduations at the end of the first year of the study, I extended it for two additional years. The inclusion criteria required that participants be full-time in-service teachers and take part in at least one in-depth individual interview per academic semester. Of the 17 from the first year, five were available and participated consistently for the next two years, as they adjusted to being, as they put it, "real teachers."

The Larger Context

Unsurprisingly, my participants' contributions mirrored many concerns represented in the literature. The US-based Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found in a survey of over 7,800 middle and high school students that 85% reported being verbally harassed at school, and 65% reported hearing queer-specific hate language, such as "fag" and "dyke," in their schools (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). LGBTQ students were "disproportionately at risk for experiencing negative psychosocial well-being and health problems" (Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, & Russell, 2011, p. 175), in addition to decreased academic performance. Throughout both pre- and in-service teaching experiences, the participants described similar bullying in their schools—students who identified as or were perceived to be LGBTQ were at greater risk for school-based harassment than those who were presumably heterosexual and/or cisgender. Several participants described severe consequences of that harassment for LGBTQ students' well-being, including homelessness, self-injurious behaviors, and excessive school absences. Harper, for example, had been nearly in tears as she described to the group a day in which a high school student, who she described as gender-nonconforming due to the student's androgynous appearance and affect, was called "faggot" by peers at least four times over a short period during class, with no intervention from the veteran classroom teacher. Mango had come to the group several times with her concerns for a ninth grader who often missed school and was homeless because his parents had discovered that he identified as gay.

The participants worked consistently to build effective LGBTQ-ally teacher identities; however, as they discussed their efforts collectively in the focus groups and individually in the interviews, I realized that the issue of race in relation to LGBTQ topics was hotly contested and often avoided (Shelton &

Barnes, 2016). As preservice teachers, the participants—with the exception of Andy—actively separated racialized oppressions from oppressions that affected LGBTQ individuals. When Andy explicitly linked race, sexuality, and gender during the focus groups, the others, especially Miranda, aggressively silenced her. Miranda maintained throughout the study's first year that race was an antiquated notion that no longer applied to contemporary experiences. She told peers during a focus group, "Andy's always trying to make discussions about racism, but that's not something that kids today necessarily deal with. I hear 'faggot' and 'gay' all the time, so I know that the focus today is LGBTQ issues." She, like nearly all of her peers, understood LGBTQ identities to be completely separate from racial identities.

Miranda was one of the five who continued her participation in the second and third years of the study. It is because of her outspokenness during the first year and her longitudinal participation that I focus on her in this paper. During the first year, she had been the most assertive in the group in separating race and sexuality, but as she began her in-service experience, she found that the new context challenged her previous ideas. She remarked in her preservice interview that she had attended a small, highly selective private high school where nearly all of the students and teachers were like her: White and upper middle class. Her university had been a similar environment, with over 70% of the students self-identifying as White, and most self-identifying as middle class or wealthier. She said of her in-service school, "I know that I'm in a new world for me. I'm the minority now." She taught in a location where, according to state data, 99% of the student population self-identified as Black, and 78% were "economically disadvantaged." Over the course of the next two years, Miranda wrestled with how to reconcile her preservice teacher ally identity, which had separated race and LGBTQ issues, with her in-service efforts to serve students whose views, experiences, and self-identification contradicted both her personal experiences with education and her understandings of LGBTQ identities.

The following research question guided this analysis:

How do racial identities and other race-related factors intersect with issues of sexuality and gender to shape the participant's teacher ally identity development?

Miranda's significant contextually informed shifts over the three years of the study are the focus of this paper. Her binary assumptions as a preservice teacher aligned with much of the existing literature, in that racial and LGBTQ identities were assumed to be separate; her in-service reflections, however, explored the intersections of race, sexuality, and gender in ways that allowed her to acknowledge her White and heterosexual privileges while better appreciating her students' multifaceted identities and her complex role as a teacher ally.

Examining Education Research for Intersections of Race and Sexuality

There is a significant body of sociological literature that examines the importance of ways that race and ethnicity interconnect with sexuality and gender. For example, Garcia's (2012) examination of Latina girls' efforts to navigate complex identities included considerations of the ways that racism, sexism, and homophobia shaped the girls' lives. Cohen (2010) explored Black youths' navigations of politically charged and value-laden identities that inevitably and inextricably connected race with gender and sexuality (see, in particular, Chapter 3). Ferguson's (2004) work extended examinations of the intersections of race and sexuality to thoughtfully theorize the ways that sexuality becomes a means of maintaining racialized differences that are also class based. There is, then, some substantive work being done in the social sciences that explores the ways that race, sexuality, and gender are constantly connected and sometimes at odds.

However, in educational research specifically, a significant body of LGBTQ-related literature ignores the intersections of race with sexuality and gender (identity and expression). There are some important exceptions. For example, both Brockenbrough (2012) and Melvin (2010) explored how teachers of color, specifically Black men and Black women, respectively, often feel enormous pressure due to their racial identities to remain "in the closet" in terms of sexuality and/or gender identity. Mayo (2014) and McCready (2004) examined the ways in which LGBTQ students of color often lack the same resources and support systems as LGBTQ White students, because education often ignores the two identities as simultaneously relevant. Kumashiro (2001) has actively critiqued bodies of educational research for ignoring the important intersections between race and sexuality. However, while these researchers offer important perspectives, their work is an exception in larger discussions of education. Indeed, a number of education research sources that focus on LGBTQ issues completely omit race as a topic (e.g., DeWitt, 2012; Murray, 2015), reinforcing the notion that race is irrelevant in discussions of sexuality and gender.

Other resources create a different sort of division. Some researchers discuss race in relation to sexuality and gender, but do so in ways that deny how the concepts intersect for individuals and within society. For example, Lehr (2007) discusses race in relation to biblical arguments against homosexuality—making the case that slavery was also justified on the basis of religious belief before societal acknowledgment that Scripture was an insufficient rationale for the practice (p. 40). This position is not so different from Miranda's comparing racism to LGBTQ oppression in ways that disavowed the connection between the two. Whitlock (2007) discussed race in the southern United States as one of many "kinds of evil in

the world" (p. 72), along with homophobia, poverty, and violence, but did not take the additional step of considering how issues such as race, poverty, and violence related to LGBTQ identities and research on LGBTQ issues. These approaches nod to racial oppressions but do so in ways that understand LGBTQ-targeted oppressions to be a separate set of issues.

As these sources suggest, LGBTQ topics are often discussed as if Whiteness is a preexisting parameter for queerness. Media depictions of the LGBTQ community consistently feature White celebrities and characters, thereby implying that LGBTQ issues are synonymous with Whiteness (Camilleri, 2012). Additionally, race is always sexualized, no matter which racial group is involved. Mayo (2014) pointed out that "non-White sexuality is non-normative" (p. 43), while Cohen (1997) noted that White sexuality, no matter the sexual group, is normalized. Historically, non-White groups have had their sexuality presented in extreme terms.

People of color tend to be hypersexualized in caricatured and damaging ways. Sillice (2012) discusses how, both historically and contemporarily, Black identity has been equated with sexual promiscuity and barbarism. The oversexualized "Jezebel" figure historically justified slave masters' sexual assaults on, and presently permits media representations of, oversexed Black women (Blair, 2014; Collins, 2009). And while most discussions of racialized sexuality focus on Black women and men, other racial groups are equally vulnerable. Asian women often serve as passive but sexualized objects for (typically White) male pleasure in media and real life (Shimizu & Lee, 2005). Latino men work against the confining notions of masculinity afforded by the *machismo* culture (Davila, 2012, p. 61).

These hypersexualized stereotypes pair non-White identity with assumed heterosexuality. The Jezebel seduces men. The passive Asian woman is an object of pleasure for men. The Latino man enacts his masculinity through relationships with women. All of these caricatures reinforce the notion that LGBTQ identities are reserved for White people and effectively erase LGBTQ people of color from existence.

Schools and Sexuality

This erasure carries serious consequences in school settings. Gilbert (2014) wrote, "There can be no education without the charge of sexuality" (p. x). Though schools often actively avoid discussions of sexuality in the curriculum, the sexual identities of students and teachers affect the ways that schools work and the modes of being that schools permit within their walls. Again, the data on the

vulnerability of LGBTQ students shows that risks and abuses are higher for LGBTQ students of color (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). A GLSEN study that focused on identity factors including race found that students of color were more likely to be harassed than White students due to their intersecting racial and sexual identities (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006). McCready (2004) pointed out that LGBTQ students of color often had no access to necessary support resources due to "overwhelming Whiteness and uninterrogated racism" in relation to gender and sexuality (p. 43). The consequence of "whitewashing" LGBTQ identity is that "racialized subjects may not find themselves inside any of the terms [within the LGBTQ acronym] on offer" (Gilbert, 2014, xvi). Their exclusion emphasizes their racialized identities in continuously sexualized terms that prohibit them from existing outside heterosexuality.

Expanding Queer Theory to Include Discussions of Race

Queer theory has historically separated racial and sexual identities (Kumashiro, 2001), creating "the illusion that they are parallel, rather than intersecting" (Somerville, 2000, p. 4). However, queer theory rejects one-dimensional or static identities. In examining dynamic identities, queer theory itself continues to shift, prompting a call for queer theoretical work that includes examinations of racial as well as sexual and gender identities. Kumashiro (2001) points out that the term "queer" is one that traditionally has included all LGBTQ individuals, but because there is a constant interrelationship between race and other identity markers, queer research offers unique possibilities for "highlight[ing] the interrelationship among sex, gender, sexuality, and even race" (p. 3).

In noting the ways that LGBTQ research fails "to account for the intersections of racism and heterosexism, and of racial and sexual identities" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 1), my theoretical use of queer theory insists that queer identity include acknowledgment and examination of racial identities in addition to sexual and gender identities. Race is always sexualized, and the identity politics afforded through queer theory provide valuable means of examining the ways that race and sexuality are both critical to researching LGBTQ topics in education.

In considering the ways that Miranda's positions shifted over the course of the study and the ways that she described her students' complex identities, queer theory is also helpful in that it problematizes the ways that social structures normalize and enforce particular behaviors. In throwing norms into question, the theoretical framework blurs or "queers" sociocultural boundaries and normative forms of self-expression. Kumashiro (2001) discusses how identifying one's self as "queer" is a transgressive

action that pushes against normative understandings of gender and sexuality. To be queer is to challenge the notion of any static identity across intersecting categories.

Hearing the Participants' Voices

In an effort to provide participants as much opportunity as possible to reflect on and discuss their personal positions and experiences, this study began as a series of focus groups and interviews aimed at supporting preservice teachers' discussions of LGBTQ issues in education. The research was a space for crafting clear and consistent participant voices that accommodated members' shifting, and even contradictory, identities. However, the new focus became examining the ways that the participants considered race and racism in relation to LGBTQ issues.

Individual Interviews

In the first year of the study, I conducted at least one semistructured interview per participant. The interviews were face-to-face and scheduled at the convenience of the participants. The protocol evoked detailed narrative responses through the use of phenomenological questioning (deMarrais, 2004), asking participants to provide "detailed descriptions of the particular experience being studied" (p. 57). I transcribed the individual and focus group interviews, providing the transcriptions to participants for approval prior to analysis as a form of member checking.

In the second and third years of the study, the participants engaged in individual interviews via Skype. To elicit rich narrative responses in relation to the participants' experiences and understandings, the interview protocol followed the same questioning approach.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a productive method for engaging in critical conversations on social justice issues and for invoking narrative-based responses (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008). The critical work that focus groups make possible aligns well with this paper's theoretical framework. Madriz (2000) wrote that focus groups served as a means for "the advancement of an agenda of social justice" (p. 836), specifically in relation to women of color in her own research, and that the shifting identities permitted in these exchanges allowed for greater and "different dimensions of power" (p. 839) than standard interviews. Madriz's point that focus groups permit spaces in which marginalized (and racialized) voices might be heard and valued is also relevant to this research.

The meetings were on campus, convenient to most participants' practicum and student teaching placements, and typically lasted 60–90 minutes, depending on the participants' schedules and availability. The meetings were unstructured, in that there was no set discussion protocol. Instead, the discussions opened with a shared text or prompt that I selected in response to a questionnaire that the participants filled out prior to the first meeting, related to the goals for the focus group.

Considering Miranda's Contributions and Experiences

As I had selected methods that would ensure narrative responses, my intent in analyzing the data was to attend "to the temporal and unfolding dimension of human experience" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16) by considering the ways that Miranda worked to "configure […] events into an explanation" (p. 16) through her narratives, while I also worked to develop "concepts from the data" (p. 13) in order to consider the "content and meaning exhibited in the storied data" (p. 14). I understood both the group's and Miranda's individual responses to be cohesive accounts in which her and other participants' responses were fully contingent on specific contexts. As a result, I only permitted myself to excerpt from the transcripts if the excerpted text retained what I had interpreted to be the overall point of the whole narrative.

After I had analyzed both the group's and Miranda's individual narratives, I began to code to identify "aspects of the data as instances of" themes (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 21). To code, I first read and analyzed each individual interview (especially Miranda's) and focus group discussion and considered possible themes based on what issues, terms, and people the participants mentioned often or discussed in detail. After this step, I conducted a cross-case analysis (Brooks, 2012) and compared and contrasted repeated concepts across the transcripts.

In relation to the research question, I examined the interviews and focus group conversations while focusing on Miranda's discussions of her understandings of race and racism, rather than on LGBTQ topics, because the latter were inherent to the study. While the individual interviews and focus groups were designed to encourage discussions of particular topics and events, none of the questions explicitly introduced issues of race; participants brought those up without being prompted.

During the analysis, I established the themes "Gangs Matter When Teaching LGBTQ Stuff" and "Slave Narratives Don't Include Gay People" as ways to clearly organize the findings in relation to the research question. Given my efforts to preserve Miranda's narratives during my analysis, these were in

vivo themes, based directly on quotations that she provided during individual interviews. The themes captured Miranda's efforts to understand herself as an LGBTQ ally while examining the ways that race and racism shaped her and her students' contexts and identities.

Miranda: Resisting the Intersections of Race and LGBTQ Issues

My review of the literature suggests that though there is extensive research on LGBTQ issues in education, little of that work examines the ways that LGBTQ topics intersect with those of race and racism. Mirroring that research, my participants consistently discussed race as separate from gender and sexuality throughout the first year of the study. Perhaps most adamant about the division between the concepts was Miranda.

During a focus group meeting in the fall semester of preservice teaching, Andy, who identified as a Hispanic gender-fluid lesbian, told the group, "Teachers really have to think more about queer kids like me—ones who aren't White." Miranda forcefully responded, "Nobody wants to hurt Black kids, Hispanic kids, whatever. Nobody here's racist. But, dragging race into all of this makes things too crazy when they don't have to be. I mean, there are rules for when kids use the n-word, but nobody does anything about saying 'faggot.'"

Though Andy had personally experienced instances when her school setting had ignored specific aspects of her identity, Miranda led the group in dismissing race or ethnicity as irrelevant to LGBTQ identity. Miranda began by positioning herself and the others as not racist. Doing so challenged any argument that Andy would have, as the only LGBTQ person of color in the group, to insist that the group examine race. If Miranda and the others weren't racist, then they were presumably open to arguing for racial equality if they felt that a particular form of oppression appeared to be an instance of racism.

Miranda then extended her effort to negate Andy's comment by arguing that intersecting race with gender and sexuality was "too crazy." Andy was "dragging" race into it, which implied that it was an irrelevant topic, made all the more inappropriate because, Miranda suggested, bringing it up put too much of a burden on the other participants. Additionally, Miranda pointed out that schools typically punished racist language in ways that they did not punish homophobic, transphobic, or heterosexist language—an argument that established racism as addressable and possibly solved, while LGBTQ students did not have the same protections as students of color. Miranda's participation in this instance

and throughout the academic year consistently dismissed Andy's efforts to examine race in light of LGBTQ topics. Miranda maintained that race was a source of social injustice but that addressing it was not as critical as working for LGBTQ-positive schools and classrooms. She discussed race and LGBTQ topics as distinct issues.

In future focus group meetings, Miranda consistently shut down Andy's efforts to discuss race in conjunction with LGBTQ issues. For example, during a later discussion, Andy asserted that students who used religious beliefs to justify homo- and transphobia "should be dealt with so that their beliefs don't make the whole classroom toxic for everyone else. I mean, yeah, okay, religious freedom is good, but you beating the Bible doesn't mean that you get to hate on a queer kid." Tying her point back to race, Andy pointed out, "People used to use the Bible all the time to justify slavery, right? This isn't different. If it's not okay to hate a Black or Hispanic kid because of religion, then it's definitely not okay to hate a gay or trans kid."

A long pause followed Andy's comments, and then Miranda broke the silence: "I guess I get your point about slavery and all, but that's from forever ago. Why even bring it up? There are definitely kids out there who can point to [Bible] verses that explain why they are anti-LGBTQ. I obviously don't agree with them. I wouldn't be here if I did, right? But Bible-based racism was shut down centuries ago; we're dealing with religiously based homophobia every day. I know that I am where I'm student teaching, anyway."

Several other participants agreed with Miranda that they too had students who based anti-LGBTQ sentiments on religious beliefs, and the conversation shifted, ignoring Andy's points about race as salient. As the researcher and discussion facilitator, I attempted to reintroduce Andy's point, but Miranda again insisted, "We need to talk about what I'm going to deal with tomorrow. I know if a kid's racist, my mentor teacher will write him up; if a kid calls another 'fag,' though, I'm going to have to act if anything gets done."

Miranda's points were valid in that she and all of her peers, including Andy, agreed that their supervising mentors were prepared to shut down any explicit racism, while only a few mentors even cursorily addressed overt anti-LGBTQ statements. As a novice educator with little classroom authority, Miranda positioned sexuality and gender as the issues that needed her attention because she could not trust the veteran teacher to intervene (Meyer, 2009). However, Miranda's desire for practical discussion and application resulted in both historicizing race and bifurcating race and sexuality. In making the

statement that "Bible-based racism was shut down centuries ago," Miranda clearly established her belief, as before, that race had been a social issue at one time but was no longer relevant. To that effect, because race was no longer a concern, the issue of "religiously based homophobia" did not include racial identity for Miranda, or presumably for the others, since they readily left Andy's point about racism behind as they moved forward in their discussions about their school placements.

"Gangs Matter When Teaching LGBTQ Stuff"

Miranda's bifurcated position shifted in her first year of in-service teaching, however. During an individual interview during her fall semester, I asked her, "Describe a way that you're working to address LGBTQ issues in your classroom." Miranda shook her head and said,

> I was so stupid last year. I thought that my one big challenge was going to be teaching LGBTQ stuff. It's not easy, but that's not my biggest concern. Like, we have so many gangs. We have all of these faculty sessions on how to identify and respond to gang activity. And, I have this one kid who I know is in a gang—I see his colors, his signs, all the stuff I've been trained to see. But I know from his journal writing that he's gay. Like, he just sort of came out to me. So, I look at this kid and I think, "How in the hell am I supposed to teach him? Protect him?" He has all of these competing factors in his life. He's in a gang, and I very seriously doubt that they know he's gay given what I hear his crew say about "faggots."

> But, he's also in the school full of Black kids who live in poverty. Like, I don't even have a dry erase board in my room; I have a chalkboard. The school is like the community—no resources, no money. So, being in a gang makes sense to him because it's a means of income, a means of belonging, but it's also something that makes him hide part of who he is. So, now when I teach LGBTQ-related stuff, I keep him in mind. I've realized, gangs matter when teaching LGBTQ stuff. Most of my kids are in gangs, at least one of my kids is closeted while in a gang, and the resources I get focus on LGBTQ bullying or gang activity. Never both. I just have to figure those connections out the best I can.

As Miranda reflected on the previous year of the study, she acknowledged that her new context gave her a greater appreciation of the ways that race, gender, and sexuality intersected, as well as of socioeconomics. Previously, she had maintained that school policies addressing racism equated to racism being solved; however, as an in-service teacher, Miranda realized that a range of factors influenced what mattered

in schools. Given her school's student body of predominately socioeconomically disadvantaged Black students, Miranda could not ignore race and class as highly relevant factors. She continued to identify as a LGBTQ ally, but she now recognized the ways in which race was an inextricable aspect of her students' identities, and therefore just as critical to her teacher identity.

Additionally, community contexts included high gang activity that affected day-to-day schooling. Importantly, Miranda never dismissed the gang activity as a symptom of having a large student-of-color population. She observed that the gangs organized on racial lines, but that race was not the sole factor, and that the few White and Latino students in her school tended to be gang members too. Miranda noted that the gang presence was so pervasive that she had attended multiple faculty trainings related to gangs, but she continued to struggle with how to incorporate an acknowledgment of gang presence into a LGBTQ-positive curriculum.

Specifically, Miranda examined her efforts from the perspective of serving a closeted gay gang member in her classroom. In considering the ways that this student's intersecting and competing identities mattered, Miranda challenged dominant literature on LGBTQ-ally work. She asserted that "gangs matter when teaching LGBTQ stuff," thereby noting the ways that the racial, socioeconomic, and cultural factors associated with gangs also shaped efforts to address LGBTQ matters.

In the spring semester of the same year, I again asked Miranda how she was working to address LGBTQ issues in her classroom, particularly in conjunction with the concerns that she had shared in the fall about gang activities and students such as the one who had provided the journal entry. Miranda paused for several seconds and then responded,

> You know, I never realized how good I had it as a kid. Like, this isn't an "Oh my God, my poor kids have terrible lives" comment. I mean, my kids are great, and they work hard, and their parents work hard, so this isn't knocking them at all. It's that I'm realizing that I just took for granted that my teachers had plenty of paper to make copies of assignments, that I had up-to-date books that weren't falling apart.

> I mean, your question is about LGBTQ stuff, right? But that's the thing—I had thought "I want to protect LGBTQ kids because I didn't have to deal with all that they do because I'm straight," right? But my kids go to a shitty school with freaking chalkboards and no projectors in this day and age. That isn't because they're gay or straight. That's because they're Black and

brown and poor. Because they're not middle class White kids, like I was growing up. I mean, any LGBTQ kids are dealing with all of that, on top of having no fair shot because their school sucks, because gangs constantly disrupt their lives and our classrooms, because they're the wrong race and class.

Miranda's response showed critical reflection that not only permitted her to interrogate her students' educational experiences in relation to race, class, sexuality, and gender, but also to examine her own privileges not just as cisgender and heterosexual but as White. In the previous year, Miranda had dismissed Andy's various attempts to connect race, gender, and sexuality; now she realized that while LGBTQ issues still mattered very much to her and her students, her school's lack of resources and support were race- and class-based.

The shift came not by any magical revelation, but by an active comparison of how she had experienced schooling as a student and how she was forced to enact schooling as a teacher. She had known since the beginning that the school in which she worked had lacked basic materials and resources, such as dry erase boards and standard technology; she had also known that there had been no such resource deficits in her own school when she was a secondary student. She had also noted early on that gang activity was new to her and that she had needed the mandatory training to recognize evidence of gangs. What was new in this interview was the realization that the differences in those experiences had been due to racial and socioeconomic inequalities. She recognized her own race- and class-based privileges because she recognized the school resource allocations that her students lacked.

Additionally, unlike the previous year, Miranda saw the intersections of LGBTQ identities with race and class. My question framed LGBTQ issues as the focus of the interview, so when Miranda returned to my question, she noted that "any LGBTQ kids are dealing with" all of the complexities of being a sexual and/or gender minority, in addition to the challenges of attending a poorly equipped school in which "gangs constantly disrupt their lives and our classrooms, because they're the wrong race and class." Miranda understood that race was a contemporary concern for both her and her students, in that they were all affected by the various sociocultural implications of racialized inequality, such as limited educational funding and threats of gang violence.

"Slave Narratives Don't Include Gay People"

In the fall semester of Miranda's second year as a teacher, she had shifted even further away from her preservice teaching stances. Her attention was on working toward making the curriculum intersectional, addressing racial identities and poverty while emphasizing gender and sexual fluidities. She struggled with how to support her efforts while teaching the required curriculum—particularly since her students had to take a state-mandated course content test. I asked her, "tell me about a lesson or unit that you're planning that deals with these intersections [of race, gender, and sexuality] that you've talked about." She responded,

> We're doing slave narratives. Let me tell you: Slave narratives don't include gay people. I mean, there were definitely queer slaves, right? We don't have those stories. I just have [Olaudah] Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Phyllis Wheatley. No mention of sexuality at all. I feel like I have to decide that we're gonna do race, or we're gonna do class, or we're gonna do gender. I wish that my kids' lives were organized that neatly, but they're not. They're whole people, and I feel like what I have to use is incomplete. Like, Langston Hughes was gay and Black, but do you know that the textbook doesn't even mention sexuality? Nothing. But there's a little blurb about Whitman being gay. So, White people are gay, I guess. But so are some of my kids.

As a preservice teacher, Miranda had emphasized the divisions between racial and LGBTQ identities. In the following year, settling into a near-foreign context for her, she began to focus on how specific students provided counternarratives to her previous positions. In her third year in the study, she had fully embraced her students as "whole people" whose experiences and understandings were typically omitted from the compulsory curriculum. This interview narrative was a reflection of the ways that the curriculum created the same bifurcations that she had insisted on two years before as well as a consideration of the ways that she might challenge such divisions. She recognized the complexities of her students', and even some literary figures', identities while also noting the simplistic ways that her textbook presented various authors. Only in the case of Walt Whitman did her curriculum offer students an acknowledgment of a writer's homosexuality, but as Miranda noted, that inclusion erased queer people of color.

In the spring semester, Miranda more actively wrestled with her own identity as both useful and limiting to her in teaching the curriculum. As she prepared to teach a poetry unit, Miranda described her plans to diversify her curriculum by integrating rap songs and spirituals as audio and written texts, in addition to the mandated curriculum. She noted,

It'll be easier that way to make sure that I have LGBTQ representation, and that all of the poets aren't just a bunch of dead White guys. I always know statistically, whether they come out or not, some of these kids are LGBTQ. They need to exist in what we learn. Like, they love Frank Ocean [a Black singer and rapper who openly acknowledged same-sex attraction], so I can use him. But, I'm also afraid. Like, what do I know about rap? I don't want my kids to think "What is this White lady doing? Trying to be all cool with this rap stuff in class?" That's not what it's about—I'm going to try to hit up front that I'm trying to make sure that who they are, what they love, what they live is what we're going to discuss. That, yeah, I'm out of my element here, but it's because I want what we're learning to matter more to them.

In her final interview, Miranda noted the complexities of trying to integrate LGBTQ people of color into the curriculum and of addressing students' perceptions that she was tokenizing aspects of their culture in order to have a "cool" lesson. In doing so, she examined the ways that her own identities were a part of her curricular considerations and her students' reactions to the texts and her teaching approaches. She had fully accepted that some of her students, whether they came out to her or not, were likely LGBTQ; in doing so, she understood that their multiple identities as students of color, as potentially LGBTQ, and as probably economically disenfranchised were relevant in her classroom and needed to be relevant in her curriculum. In integrating these intersections, she actively considered the ways that her own experiences, understandings, and (lack of) knowledge shaped her decisions and her students' perceptions of her as the teacher.

Discussion

Initially, Miranda did not have to examine the ways that race mattered in LGBTQ issues because she lived in a society that presented queerness as synonymous with Whiteness (Cruz, 2014; Lang, 2013). Instead, when Andy worked to encourage her peers to consider queer people of color, Miranda consistently dismissed Andy's efforts as burdensome and outdated. Miranda rejected intersecting race with gender and sexuality because to do so was making "things too crazy when they don't have to be." Instead, Miranda's stance positioned LGBTQ topics as solely White matters and erased race from the discussion altogether. Returning to the guiding research question, Miranda initially defined her LGBTQ-ally identity as one that focused solely on issues of sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression. She maintained that factors such as race distracted from what she saw as her primary objective in identifying as a teacher ally.

Once Miranda's context shifted and she was forced to consciously examine the importance of race, as well as other factors, her mindset and self-considerations shifted. She first humanized the intersections of racial and LGBTQ identities by considering the perspective of a gay gang member in her class. She then reflected on her own White privilege in relation to schooling and the ways that sexuality, gender, race, and class shaped her and her students' everyday experiences in the school.

In the following year, she began to actively trouble the binary between her students' lives and the curricular representations she had to teach. She began to appreciate the ways that subjugating systems such as racism, homophobia, and sexism interlocked to create complex sites of oppression. She also began to actively critique the curricular resources she was forced to use that reinforced the problematic and dichotomous position that she had taken two years before. Importantly, she continued to extend the self-examination from the previous year to consider the ways that not just her students' identities, but also her own identities shaped curriculum and learning.

In considering the shifts in Miranda's understanding and that because she is a White cisgender heterosexual woman, her demographics mirror those of much of the teaching profession. I would argue that preservice teacher education and in-service teacher training should encourage educators to interrogate their own privileges, as well as contemporary racism, especially in schools. Following that necessary component, there is then a need to connect race and racism with sexuality, in an effort to promote greater intersectional understandings and actions. In this particular study, there was a clear need for Miranda's preparation program and faculty meetings to have discussed race and sexuality's intersections. Teachers need opportunities to actively consider the ways that many identity elements, such as race, gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality, as well as other factors such as class and ethnicity, constantly intersect for all people at all times.

Additionally, I would call for LGBTQ-related research to more consistently and thoughtfully examine how race matters in relation to sexuality and gender. In relevant literature on ally identities, many resources discuss LGBTQ topics without ever mentioning race. Numerous scholars work to understand the ways that educators might support highly vulnerable populations of LGBTQ students; researchers also need to consider the ways that LGBTQ students of color are both erased from the literature and more likely to be harassed than their White counterparts. Failing to do so perpetuates the bifurcation that Miranda and her peers asserted initially, in effect obliterating LGBTQ students of color from existence and replicating some of the very systemic oppressions that social justice-minded researchers purport to challenge through their work.

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